

Out of School Youth Assessment



More than 750 million adults worldwide cannot read and write. 250 million young people are failing to acquire basic literacy skills. In low-resource contexts, vulnerable girls, people with disabilities, refugees, and young people living in poor or rural areas feel the lack of quality opportunities most profoundly.

Strong literacy and critical thinking skills are more important now than ever. Improving young people's literacy and life skills builds their dignity, independence, and self-efficacy, and enables them to contribute more to their communities.

As educators and policymakers work to create equitable and inclusive pathways to learning for all, they will need reliable tools to assess the foundational skills of youth learners, to place them at appropriate levels, and to measure learning gains.

EDC's Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment (OLA), is a robust tool that quickly measures the foundational literacy skills of older youth and adults. Backed by evidence, OLA has been approved by experts in international assessment, psychometrics, adult literacy, and second-language acquisition. USAID has also selected OLA as a suggested reading assessment tool for measuring youth reading skills.

OLA is part of EDC's Ready Right Now Literacy toolkit for children and youth.

WHAT DOES OLA DO?

OLA assists with data collection for evaluation, accountability reporting, and program management and implementation, providing educators with an effective way to assess participants' literacy skills and to build appropriate benchmarks into literacy initiatives. OLA:



Orally assesses foundational reading skills, including letter naming, word recognition, and connected text reading and comprehension



Is designed for older youth and adults, particularly those who are living in extreme poverty or post-conflict environments



Incorporates real-life reading items, such as locating words or information on medicine labels, into assessments, allowing for the assessment of youth's functional literacy skills



Builds on reading research and best practices in adult literacy instruction



Can be modified for different alphabetic languages and cultures

Tell Me More

How is OLA used?

OLA is used as a diagnostic and evaluative tool with youth enrolled in literacy and non-formal basic education programs. It also provides data that can be used to inform development and revision of instructional approaches, curriculum, and materials. Demographic data allows for the analysis of literacy skills among subgroups, such as male/female learners, language groups, and youth from different school completion levels.

How is OLA administered?

OLA is administered individually and takes approximately 15 minutes per respondent. During the testing, each respondent is provided with print stimuli with text and pictures, and the test administrator records responses on a tablet, laptop, or mobile device.

Where has OLA been used?

OLA has been used to collect data in Liberia (in English), Sierra Leone (in English), Rwanda (in Kinyarwanda), Mali (in Bambara and Songhai), Guyana, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Lesotho.



Praise For OLA



“It’s a strong tool for assessing literacy skills, in particular the task that addresses real-life reading skills. Participants could instantly relate to images and texts sourced from their daily lives, for example, Liberia’s \$10 bill, a bag of rice, a building’s opening hours, etc. I think it provides a more informed picture of the learner’s ability and skills based on their lived experiences.”

—Pauline Tee-tee Browne,
USAID Advancing Youth Project,
Liberia



“At the beginning of Skye Guyana Work Ready Now, we quickly realized that many of our youth beneficiaries were struggling with reading course materials. Many of our participants were not starting from scratch, but we needed to pinpoint where they were at. Through using OLA, we learned the intricacies of assessing literacy, especially of youth. The OLA subtask results gave us an appreciation of how they had used their problem-solving skills to navigate literacy in their environment.”

—Ann Hershkowitz,
SKYE Program, Guyana



“Using OLA in Sierra Leone helped IRC assess participants’ real world and prior knowledge. This is not always captured by standard literacy tests. OLA helped identify where the key competencies were, and where we needed to adapt our program to ensure our beneficiaries needs were met. The OLA findings helped inform ongoing research on alternative education practices and policies in Sierra Leone.”

—Michelle Kearns,
EAGER program, Sierra Leone