



# EQUIP1

Educational Quality Improvement Program  
Classrooms • Schools



The quality of life for people and societies everywhere can be improved by realizing the ideal of a quality education for all. EQUIP1 will heed lessons learned, promote best practices, encourage creative thinking, and develop innovative approaches to meet the challenge of promoting educational quality in classrooms, schools, and communities throughout the world.

## EQUIP1

EQUIP1 is a multi-faceted program designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching and the level of student learning by effecting school-level changes. EQUIP1 serves all levels of education, from early childhood development for school readiness, to primary and secondary education, adult basic education, pre-vocational training, and the provision of life-skills. Activities range from teacher support in course content and instructional practices, to principal support for teacher performance, and community involvement for improving school management and infrastructure. EQUIP1 works with food for education issues and contributes to the provision of education and training in crisis and post-crisis environments.



EQUIP1 is a combination of programs, processes, and activities that contribute to the Office of Education of USAID’s Pillar Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT) by:

- responding to a variety of capacity building and technical assistance needs;
- developing innovative and effective approaches and analytic tools; and
- establishing and sharing research, communication, and networking capacity.

As a Leader with Associates mechanism, EQUIP1 accommodates “buy-in” awards from USAID bureaus and missions to support the overall goal of building educational quality in the classroom, school, and local community.

## **EQUIP1 is a Formidable Partnership**

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the lead organization responsible for implementing EQUIP1. AIR is an international leader in the behavioral and social sciences, with a distinguished staff of over 800 professionals working over the past three decades in more than 80 countries. As an independent, not-for-profit corporation, AIR has delivered on the promise of its vision to provide research, analysis, technical assistance, and communication support aimed at improving quality of life. AIR, through activities such as EQUIP1, will continue to encourage and strengthen a blend of scientific excellence and creative insight as a successful strategy for fostering positive change.

AIR is joined by 14 remarkable partners:

Academy for Educational Development  
Aga Kahn Foundation  
CARE  
Discovery Channel Global Education Fund  
Education Development Center  
International Reading Association  
Howard University  
Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation  
Juárez and Associates  
Michigan State University  
University of Pittsburgh  
Save the Children Federation, Inc.  
Sesame Workshop  
World Education, Inc.

The partnership is never complete without the active involvement and collaboration of the host country. What makes the EQUIP1 partnership most formidable is the embracing of USAID missions, country-specific governmental institutions and professionals, local NGOs, and private institutions—from the design, through the implementation, to the ownership and sustainability of outcomes.





*“Public schooling is the largest and most important collective enterprise undertaken by modern society. It generally consumes more money (aside from debt repayment in many developing countries), employs more people and it is commonly believed, has a larger influence on the values, skills, and work and leisure habits of citizens than any other set of public institutions. Small wonder that there is such concern in so many countries about the quality of their schooling systems.”*

[Getting Learning Right, Taylor & Vinjevold, eds. 1999, pg. 14]

## **EQUIP1 Focuses on Classrooms, Schools, and Communities**

EQUIP1 is committed to improving the quality of education through focusing on classrooms, schools, and communities—three of the most crucial structures of our education systems.

## In Classrooms

Actions to improve quality must build on knowledge about the learning experiences of individual students, or groups of students, and build on what takes place in the classroom. Consequently, efforts to define quality and improve learning must be gauged, in large part, at the classroom level and involve ongoing systematic assessment.

EQUIP1 is committed to the premise that efforts to address quality must focus on process, as much as on inputs or desired outcomes. EQUIP1 underscores the need to focus on the meaningfulness of what is happening to the learners, not only in terms of learning outcomes but also in response to broader issues dealing with the whole child—their health, parental support, family dynamics, and cultural context.

Classroom-anchored reform efforts may include (but are certainly not limited to):

- classroom observation and interaction,
- student learning assessment,
- content and curriculum reform,
- effectiveness of educational technology,
- reflective teaching practice,
- pre- and in-service teacher training, and
- professional standards, supervision and support.



## **In Schools**

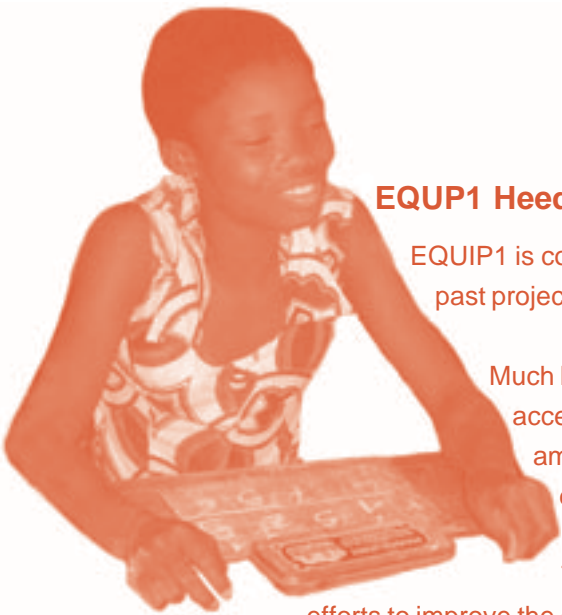
Never entirely distinct from individual classrooms, reform at the school level has direct impact on overall quality of learning and achievement. Change at the school level can be effected through support to teachers, improved school management and infrastructure, increased capacity of school principals, and exploration of benefits from programs focusing on food for education or school feeding, among other interventions. Quality education at the school level depends upon the successful interrelationship of classroom teaching/learning practices and school management and support.

## **In Communities**

With community involvement, “mobilized communities” has come to mean far more than fund-raising and building construction. Successful interventions mobilize communities to become involved in educational decision-making, school management, curriculum development, and appropriateness of subject content and teaching styles. Experience has demonstrated that community involvement helps to mitigate many of the main obstacles to a child’s education—lack of school resources, limited access, low parental motivation, inequality, and poor quality of teaching. Participation of community members has been found most effective when it is on-going, appropriate for the intended outcome, meaningful, and structured.



The core value of EQUIP1 Associate Awards is that all activities will be carried out locally, with country nationals through country-based interventions, with on-going consideration of crosscutting issues such as gender, equity, and the impact of catastrophic diseases.



## EQUIP1 Heeds Lessons Learned

EQUIP1 is committed to build on the successes and challenges from past projects to inform plans for new interventions.

Much has been learned from efforts to increase educational access, improve the quality of teaching and learning, ameliorate factors that impinge on learning potential, and extend educational opportunities.

The following lessons learned are selected from myriad efforts to improve the quality of education. EQUIP1 will not only heed these lessons but will continue to surface new ones in an on-going process toward change.

- **Emphasize basic education among development priorities:** Basic education must receive a minimum level of financial support before it can have a meaningful effect on an individual's life circumstances or a country's economy.
- **Focus on process:** Educational efforts that focus solely on getting learners into school and neglect issues related to quality tend to suffer from high learner and teacher attrition and low learning outcomes.
- **Acknowledge teachers as important change agents and resources for improving educational quality:** Mastery on the part of teachers in their subject content areas and the ability to adapt their teaching practices to accommodate learner needs are key to improved learner achievement.
- **Enhance parental involvement and stakeholder engagement:** School-level reforms tend to be more successful when a broad range of stakeholders is included in the decision-making process.
- **Build private-public partnerships:** Creating partnerships among private, public, and non-governmental entities can be an effective strategy for mobilizing resources and support for educational reform.

- **Acknowledge that issues of educational inequality extend beyond gender:** The increasing international focus on the issue of gender inequality in education has led to a realization that there needs to be more focus on other forms of education inequality as well. Educational policymakers and practitioners need to become more sensitive to the educational needs of other special populations (e.g., rural poor, street children, orphans, learners with disabilities, and religious minorities) if we are to achieve quality education for all.
- **Provide more local autonomy through decentralization of services and resources:** Transferring substantive decision-making authority from national and regional levels to individual schools and the communities can result in more effective uses of resources to meet school needs.
- **Build on existing structures:** Educational initiatives have a greater chance of success if they work within existing organizational and political structures instead of trying to affect change from outside the system.
- **Expand awareness of the educational needs of the “whole” learner:** Educators need to present the same information in different ways to reach students with different learning styles and need to be more aware of the deleterious effects of health problems (such as hunger and malnutrition, vitamin and iron deficiencies, and HIV/AIDS) on an individual's learning capacity.
- **Linking what is learned to life skills:** Educational lessons that help learners to link existing knowledge with new information and provide enough to synthesize the two can create a deep level of understanding and improve learners' critical thinking skills.
- **Reach children before it is too late:** One of the greatest challenges to achieving quality education for all learners is that many children, particularly girls, get a late start to their education and often receive fewer years of education before they leave school to be married or work full time.

## **EQUIP1 Provides Communication Links and Outreach**

EQUIP1 houses and supports the EQUIP Information Communication Center (EICC), the communication and dissemination hub for all three EQUIP awards. The EICC is committed to being proactive, responsive and interactive, and to ensuring that lessons from all EQUIP activities become integrated appropriately into country, regional, and international dialogue about reform in educational policy and practice.

The EICC is located at AIR's headquarters in Washington, DC, and it will project its presence through an array of tools, reports, Internet portals, and people throughout the world.

The EICC facilitates a process of communication with Associate Award in-country stakeholders and international counterparts through success stories, articles, educational statistics, and press releases.

The EICC links communication and education centers of USAID and our partners and capitalizes on those linkages to create a virtual network for professionals actively involved in interventions to improve quality education.

The EICC captures EQUIP1 experiences in cogent and meaningful ways and will discover methods to communicate that information through appropriate and innovative uses of traditional and new media.

The EICC hosts the EQUIP1 website which can be accessed through [HTTP://WWW.EQUIP123.NET](http://www.equip123.net).



## Advantages of Choosing EQUIP1

1. **No competition.** Associate awards require no competition, shortening the award process.

2. **Quick turnaround.** The EQUIP1 partnership is already established and has quality personnel and capacity in-hand.

3. **Open dialogue and negotiation.** EQUIP1 Associate Awards are either cooperative agreements or grants. The details can be determined through free and open dialogue with AIR.

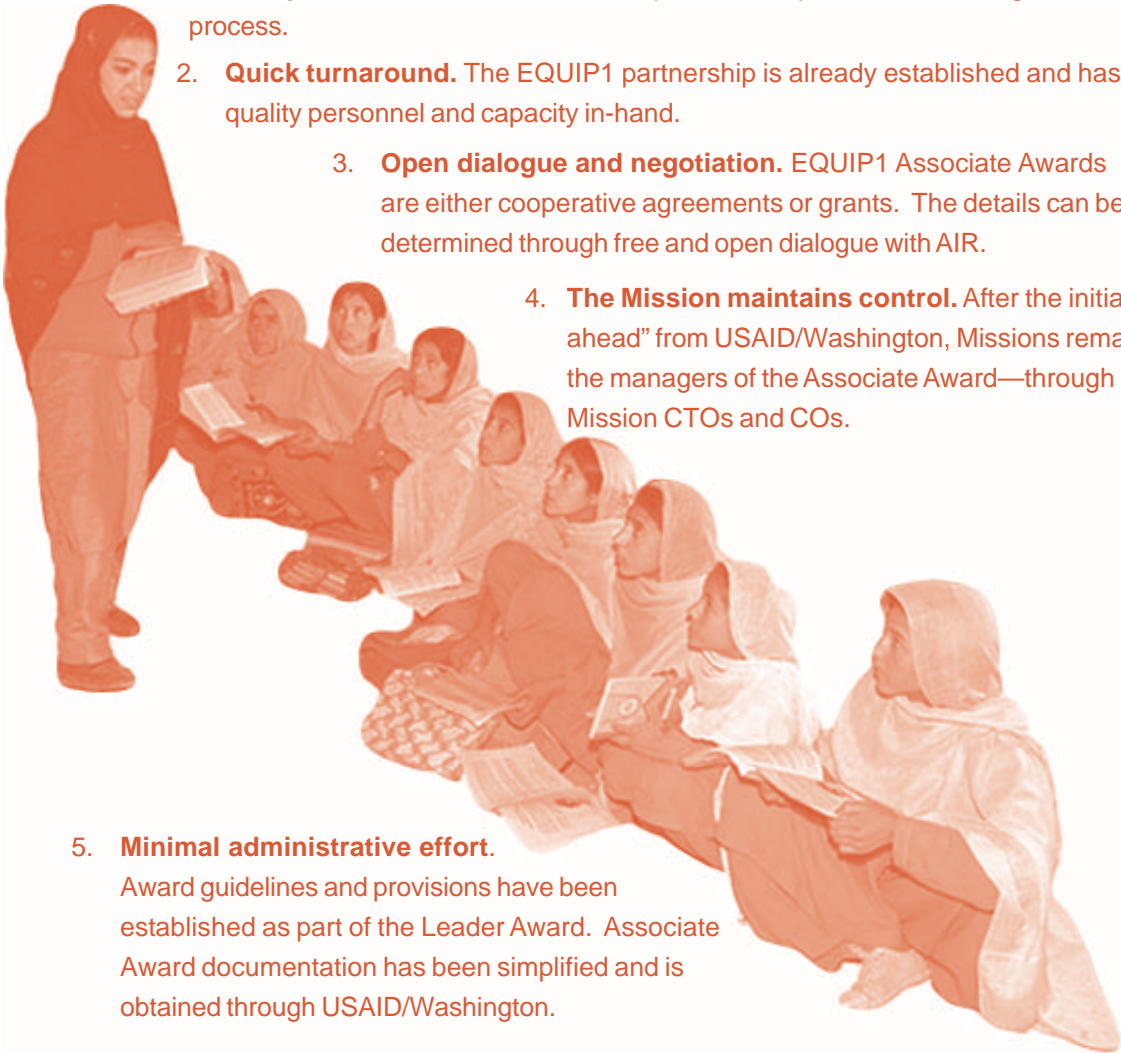
4. **The Mission maintains control.** After the initial “go ahead” from USAID/Washington, Missions remain the managers of the Associate Award—through Mission CTOs and COs.

5. **Minimal administrative effort.**

Award guidelines and provisions have been established as part of the Leader Award. Associate Award documentation has been simplified and is obtained through USAID/Washington.

6. **No funding limit.** EQUIP1 has an unlimited ceiling for Associate Awards.

7. **A ten-year window.** EQUIP1 has an initial duration of five years, followed by five one-year options, bringing the expiration date to January 29, 2013.



## How to Access EQUIP1

1. Prepare a program description, indicating funds available and established time frame.
2. Contact the USAID EQUIP1 Cognizant Technical Officer for concurrence that your described program is within the purview of EQUIP1.

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3. Contact EQUIP1 Project Director to begin dialogue and negotiations.

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with

Academy for Educational Development - Aga Khan Foundation - CARE  
Discovery Channel Global Education Fund - Education Development Center - Howard University  
International Reading Association - Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation - Juárez and Associates  
Michigan State University - Save the Children Federation, Inc. - Sesame Workshop - University of Pittsburgh - World Education, Inc