CAPACITY
STATEMENT

World Learning
EDUCATION | DEVELOPMENT | EXCHANGE

**World Learning Education Programs—
Approach and Capacity**

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1932, and with experience in more than 100 countries, World Learning is one of the oldest international education non-profits in the world. Our mission at World Learning is to empower people and strengthen institutions through education, sustainable development, and exchange programs.

OUR APPROACH

World Learning's approach promotes ownership and leadership by local organizations and educational institutions – strengthening their capacity for deep engagement with students, teachers, families and government. Through this approach, World Learning builds the sustainability of these organizations and promotes innovation by local leaders who know community needs and opportunities best. World Learning implements this vision through two interrelated themes that form the bedrock of our approach:

- *Ecological approach to education reform:* teacher change is sustainable when the whole system supports and promotes improved teaching and learning practices.
- *Experiential learning:* authentic change is the result of relevant learning experiences.

World Learning maintains a strong commitment to inclusion and strategies to promote inclusion for all are woven through the design of each program. We recognize that the positive impact of our programs is increased when individuals and the system promote the inclusion of traditionally vulnerable groups, including women and people with disabilities.

An Ecological Approach to Education Reform
World Learning uses an ecological approach to education reform that acknowledges the interconnected and complex interactions between different stakeholder groups: policy makers, curriculum and assessment designers, school managers, teachers, students, private sector partners, and community groups. To affect sustainable change and improve student outcomes, education reform programs must reflect the perspectives of all these stakeholders. Elements of the

education system to consider during design include:

- **Policy Makers:** What is the best model for improved teacher education or student learning in the local context? What national or regional policies and standards must be in place for implementation? What is the process for determining these policies?
- **Curriculum and Assessment Designers:** Are the existing textbooks and materials sufficient? How can 21st Century skills and competencies be included in learning outcomes What kinds of technological resources are needed for an effective school? What is the most effective way to assess student learning and skills development?
- **School Managers:** What kinds of training and support mechanisms are necessary to develop effective school principals and leaders?

What role do guidance professionals play in preparing students to plan for advanced education or entry into the workforce?
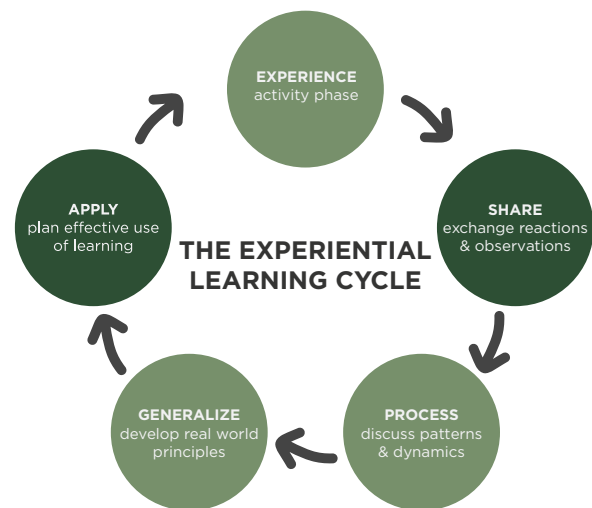
- **Teachers:** Are teachers equipped with the necessary training and resources to be effective in the classroom? How should teachers be recruited and evaluated? What teacher training systems and materials does the MOE need to have in place to support them?
- **Students:** What keeps youth in school and performing well? Are programs accessible to all students, including girls, students with disabilities, and minority groups? How can summer programs and vocational options improve student retention?
- **Private Sector:** How do key private sector partners engage with schools? How can increased interaction improve curricula and funding for innovative programs?
- **Community Groups:** How can community groups and parents supplement classroom learning? What role can they play in student retention and parent engagement?

By asking these questions, World Learning's ecological approach ensure that program designs strengthen the already existing education system, rather than creating parallel systems that will become unsustainable when donor funds are no longer available.

Experiential Learning

World Learning's approach is grounded in the principles of experiential learning, a hallmark of all of World Learning's education, development, and exchange programs. World Learning designs engaging programs that promote active student-centered learning, activities and experimentation with innovative curricular materials. Consistent with the experiential learning model, World Learning schedules time throughout the programs for guided analysis to allow participants to reflect on their observations, interpret their experiences, relate their learning to the school or learning context, and make informed plans to establish effective processes, policies, and practices for the schools in their regions. By the end of the program, students, teachers, and education leaders are able to enact change within their schools and communities.

THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

- EXPERIENCE activity phase
- SHARE exchange reactions & observations
- PROCESS discuss patterns & dynamics
- GENERALIZE develop real world principles
- APPLY plan effective use of learning

OUR EXPERIENCE

Basic Education

World Learning works across a range of countries and contexts. Our success in basic education stems from three main approaches: first, a focus on experiential learning that results in long-lasting change; second, an emphasis on locally identified activities that make education more available and relevant; and third, a sensitivity to the particular educational needs of vulnerable children and youth, including refugees, child laborers, those with HIV/AIDS, orphans, and those excluded by gender, disability, or ethnicity.

In Egypt, World Learning works with the Ministry of Education to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) model schools that serve as a catalyst for change in system-wide education reform. While in Lebanon, working with the Ministry for Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Center for Education and Research and Development (CERD), World Learning aims to enhance the

learning environments in public schools and provide dynamic learning opportunities for school administrators and teachers, while increasing parent and community involvement in the public school system development. To address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, World Learning built the capacity of primary schools to manage their care and support, linking them with existing services in their local communities.

Higher Education and Workforce Development

Countries worldwide are struggling to adapt to unstable economic environments and a global marketplace that increasingly relies on innovation in science and technology. In this rapidly changing context, governments need a skilled workforce that provides the human capital necessary to prosper in a modern economy. Furthermore, the more than one billion young people in developing countries are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Education systems are failing them, leaving millions to drop out before acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Those who continue on to higher education often graduate without the requisite skills to meet the needs of the labor market. The situation is further exacerbated in fragile states where rising youth unemployment threatens to destabilize efforts to create vibrant and healthy democracies.

In Algeria, World Learning works with university faculties of business and English to align curriculum with private sector needs and introduce flexible methods of course delivery such as simultaneous video web casts and online distance learning. World Learning also develops career centers that provide students with practical skills training, access to internships, and career counseling. Our model, emphasizing the interface between universities, the private sector, and civil society, is also being implemented through a career center network at three universities in Egypt. In addition, World Learning works with at-risk populations, who are often denied access to skills training and other opportunities. In Mexico, World Learning has partnered with Cisco to provide training opportunities in entrepreneurship and technology for youth affected by the

violence of gang warfare and drug trafficking, and worked in Myanmar to pilot Cisco's Passport 21 to Entrepreneurship in partnership with the University of Computer Science in Yangon, Bahan, and Mandalay. World Learning's Youth Leadership and Civic Engagement Program in Nigeria is currently working with local organizations in Jos and Kano to build their capacities to implement engaging programs that will promote positive youth development and help youth become more resistant to the pull of violent extremism. A key factor in the success of the program will be the capacity development of its implementers and both its youth and adult facilitators.

Teacher Training

Our customized teacher education programs are designed to provide teachers with valuable resources to advance their careers and improve students' performance. Our approach places a premium on experiential learning and hands-on teaching. Low participant-to-trainer ratios in our courses ensure a supportive learning environment and individualized attention from licensed trainers. Through experiential learning, teachers develop the attitude, knowledge, and skills to make meaningful, effective changes to their work. In Burundi, World Learning worked with Burundian English language teachers and administrators, along with public service organizations, NGOs, CSOs, and government ministries to strengthen English Language Learning and Teaching capacity by assessing the English language needs of government employees and training teacher participants on topic areas, such as lesson planning, teaching interactive lessons, and developing ideas for how to help support other teachers in order to meet the government's needs. As mentioned above, World Learning works in Lebanon to provide teachers with training on the English language to improve the delivery of teaching in English, training for teachers with advanced language skills on language instruction and methodology, intensive coaching on how to integrate ICT in the classroom, and training on the organization and delivery of extra-curricular activities.

Institutional Strengthening

From helping government ministries to improve their management practices, assisting NGOs to more effectively advocate for policy change, working with villages to support children affected by HIV/AIDS, to training teachers to apply innovative techniques in their classrooms, the World Learning approach to capacity building is comprehensive, systemic, and highly adaptive. We use an innovative approach to improve performance management that includes: systematically researching current capacity, collaboratively setting performance goals and objectives with key stakeholders, identifying organizational shortcomings at the three levels of performance (institutional, systems, and individual), identifying environmental, cultural, and other challenges, implementing systemic, strategic, and measurable capacity strengthening solutions including technical assistance, training, resource enrichment, and more. Many of our staff are certified in Performance Improvement methodology, a designation granted by the International Society for Performance Improvement. We also employ capacity development tools, such as our Participatory Institutional Analysis (PIA), to provide programs with the necessary flexibility and technical know-how to meet partner needs.

In El Salvador, World Learning is conducting needs assessments based on participatory Human Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) to study organizational assets and priority improvement needs of seven El Salvadoran Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In addition, World Learning will also implement strategies to strengthen the capacity of the faculty in upgrading English language content of industry-linked programs to international standards and pilot Career Centers at the seven HEIs. World Learning is working with Egypt's Ministry of Education to develop trans-disciplinary and project-based learning curriculum that is relevant to the Egyptian context. Through co-design, pilot testing, and extensive training, World Learning supports the MOE curriculum and assessment officials to institutionalize STEM education across the national education system. In addition to supporting curriculum and student assessment, World Learning and its partners have also worked directly with the MOE's teacher training academy to ensure there is a pipeline of qualified and certified STEM teachers.

Professional Training and Scholarship Programs

Since 1982, World Learning has administered U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) participant training programs for over 102,876 people. These programs provide people with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills and are designed to address the needs of participants, as well as the needs of their workplaces and communities. We carry out training programs for participants around the world in sectors including agriculture, economic development, education, public health, youth leadership, and more. Trainings can take many forms—some are long-term academic degree programs, while others are short or long-term non-degree technical courses, non-academic seminars, workshops, conferences, on-the-job learning experiences, observational study tours, or distance learning exercises. These programs may take place in participants' home country, the United States, or a third country.

In Malawi, World Learning is providing opportunities and funding (through USAID) for 433 health professionals from Malawi to pursue training at the master's degree level in the United States, Kenya, South Africa, and other African countries. The program aims to build the capacity of health care workers in Malawi to promote health care service delivery and manage health programs. To date, students placed in the U.S. are attending Virginia Tech, Michigan State University, and Emory University. Those students studying in other African nations attend the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana), Makerere University (Uganda), Great Lakes University of Kisumu (Kenya), University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), University of Cape Town, and University of the Western Cape (South Africa). In Pakistan, World Learning is leading the development of teaching and learning skills in the English language and is

also administering 6,454 scholarships to Pakistani pre-service and in-service teachers to complete either 2-year Associate Degrees in Education or 4-year Bachelor of Education (Honors) Degrees in selected institutions. World Learning will also lead implementation of project activities across components in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK).

SIT Study Abroad

SIT Study Abroad, a program of World Learning, offers more than 70 accredited semester and summer study abroad programs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, as well as the International Honors Program, which offers comparative programs in multiple locations. These programs entail rigorous academic programs through a field-based, experiential approach, undergraduate research through an Independent Study Project, and cultural immersion through fieldwork, language classes, and urban and rural homestays with local families. Essential to the mission of SIT Study Abroad is a focus on critical global issues and preparing students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals, and citizens. To achieve this mission, World Learning works closely with local NGOs, government leaders, and educational institutions, giving us access to a variety of partners worldwide.

SIT programs are overseen by experienced, locally-based Academic Directors and supported by 3 or 4 fulltime staff plus several part-time staff. Programs have conference space and are equipped with overhead projectors, screens, white board markers and other teaching aids. Academic Directors have established close partnerships with leading regional government and non-governmental agencies.

SIT Study Abroad Academic Directors do not only facilitate study abroad programs for American students; they also facilitate cross cultural exchange and learning programs for students. Custom programs are rooted SIT's experiential learning pedagogy, and, because SIT is an accredited institution of higher education, can be academic-credit-bearing. Academic Directors work with local and international partners to facilitate these programs, and can be flexible in program length, themes, and locations.