

## ICYD Study Sheds Light on Ways to Improve Reading Scores in Ugandan Schools



**Image description:**

*An ICYD enumerator and a primary 3 student sit outside together for an Early Grade Reading Assessment.*

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## Cohort 2 Baseline Evaluation Success Story

As educators, our goal for students is to learn—ideally, in an environment where they can foster a love for knowledge, receive support from teachers and peers, and access the materials they need. However, for too many students learning is more challenging. When teachers leave every year or there are insufficient resources, such as a school library, students may struggle, fall behind, or leave school all together.

Thankfully, for students in Lusoga- instructional areas of Uganda, some of the barriers to learning are being alleviated. Since 2020, USAID/Uganda’s Integrated Child and Youth Development (ICYD) activity has been working with the Government of Uganda to improve the government’s ability to deliver basic education and services to children and youth in Uganda. This spring, the activity conducted a literacy study that also considered the regions’ school environment. And the findings are promising.

A study of Grade 3 students and teachers at Lusoga-instructional schools in Uganda, found that elevated levels of teacher retention were associated with improved reading fluency scores. **Of the 63 teachers included in the study, 97% said they had taught in the same school since 2020.** Furthermore, a quarter of those teachers had been in the same school for at least 10 years.

Scholarship and experience tell us that longer tenures enable teachers to better understand their students, build relationships, and become better literacy instructors. In schools supported by ICYD, teachers have the opportunity for frequent classroom observations and lesson plan reviews. This type of professional development and refinement can be an invaluable resource, especially for newer teachers struggling to find their place in the school. The more teachers feel supported in managing their classrooms and curriculum, the more likely they are to stick with the school. And as the results of ICYD indicate, students benefit too.

This same study found that the presence of a school library was a strong predictor of students’ reading scores. **ICYD-support schools with libraries were more often associated with higher reading scores than their library-less counterparts.** Although the lack of libraries is yet to be resolved, it is something ICYD can help with in its future activities. Whether through direct interventions (such as library construction) or furthering policy initiatives (including those that prioritize school libraries’ funding and use), ICYD has the potential to foster an exciting and enriching learning environment.

As always, there is more to be done. Students and teachers in Uganda’s Lusoga-instructional regions face economic hardships. Many lack access to essential health, sanitation services, and food security. Combined these adversities negatively impact the quality of the regions’ education—and students’ ability to learn.

As ICYD continues to collect comprehensive information on Ugandan schools and student literacy rates, new challenges will inevitably be identified. Fortunately, conducting these studies will also help deepen our understanding of how we can continue to help and improve students’ lives and education.

### Pullout Quote

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## **Background Information**

In March 2022, ICYD activity assessed students' reading abilities in ICYD-supported schools in Lusoga-speaking regions—the second cohort of schools to be supported by ICYD. Students were assessed at the beginning of their Grade 3 academic year to represent performance at the end-of-year Grade 2.

The objective of this assessment was to measure students' reading abilities and infer the extent to which ICYD interventions targeting improved teaching and learning are achieving their desired results.