

LITERACY: TRANSFORMING LIVES FOR THE BETTER

Literacy is more than one's ability to read. Literacy is the ability to understand, process, interpret, and act on the information one reads, hears, and sees every day.

The International Literacy Association (ILA) believes that literacy is the foundation for successful societies, healthy communities, and prosperous economies.

In short, **literacy transforms lives—for the better.**

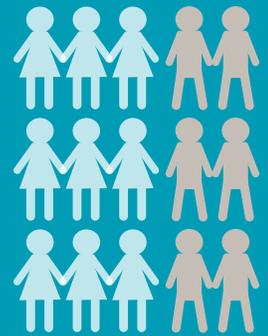
THE ISSUE

Nearly 800 MILLION people are ILLITERATE worldwide—more than 60% of whom are female.¹

Globally, Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia have the lowest rates of literacy.¹

Literacy rates are below 50% in 14 countries: Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Sierra Leone.¹

There are 32 million adults in the United States—or 14% of the population—who can't read.²



THE IMPACT



Those who are literate are **more likely to vote, to be involved in their communities, and to seek medical help for themselves and their families.** They are also **less likely to live in poverty and face early mortality.**³

Countries that have experienced surges in literacy rates by 20–30% have seen simultaneous increases in GDP of 8–16%.⁴

THE AGE OF LITERACY

Illiteracy is a solvable issue—and the time to act is now. The future will be determined by how well we equip children and adults to live productively in a society where literacy is increasingly critical.

With the support of our Members, councils, and partners across the globe, ILA is working to make this the Age of Literacy—one in which each of us works to transform lives by advancing literacy for all.

¹ Adult and Youth Literacy Fact Sheet. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/fs-29-2014-literacy-en.pdf> (September 2014).

² U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Literacy (2013).

³ Education for All Global Monitoring Report. "Why Literacy Matters." UNESCO. http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt5_eng.pdf (2006).

⁴ Fiske, Edward B. "Basic Education: Building Blocks for Global Development." *Academy for Educational Development* (1993), pg. 16.



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