



## STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY 2021

Today is International Literacy Day 2021!

The world has been suffering from a global pandemic in the face of the COVID-19 virus for almost two years, and due to this, education and literacy have been hampered a lot. This year's theme, "Literacy for a Human-centred Recovery: Narrowing the digital divide" emphasizes the need to blend language and digital learning mediums to achieve literacy.

According to UNStats, over 80 percent of Children in Sub Saharan Africa are not proficient in reading.

In Ghana, according to UNICEF, only 7 percent of children in Grade 3 have the expected reading skills for that grade.

Achieving higher literacy levels in primary school is key to meeting targets under SDG Goal 4.

Yesterday, Ghana's Ministry of Education with support from USAID launched "Transition to English (T2E) Plus", a program to improve literacy in 5,000 low performing public basic schools using a bilingual instructional policy and digital instructions through pre-recorded local language lessons among others.

Even though the use of a community's indigenous language to teach at early years of schooling before transitioning to English at mid-primary is well documented across the continent, the policy has suffered instability and local ownership in Ghana over the past two decades.

A well-funded, uninterrupted, and effectively mainstreamed bilingual instructional policy with adequate teaching and learning materials and requisite alignment to teacher deployment policy is key to improving literacy levels and learning in low performing basic schools, especially in rural Ghana.

The launch of the T2E Plus brings some hope to children in low performing public schools, but this must be complimented with an alignment with teacher postings, and ensuring teachers posted to these schools have the requisite local language proficiency to teach.

Beyond USAID's Support, Ghana's Ministry of Education must plan to own and fund all programmes under its bilingual instructional policy for sustainability of outcomes.

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