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## Media Room

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## Media Room

### Basic Facts about Literacy

- Literacy is the ability to read, write, compute, and use technology at a level that enables an individual to reach his or her full potential as a parent, employee, and community member.
- There are **774 million** adults around the world who are illiterate in their native languages.
- **Two-thirds** of the world's illiterate adults are women.
- In the U.S., **30 million** people over age 16 — **14 percent** of the country's adult population — don't read well enough to understand a newspaper story written at the eighth grade level or fill out a job application.
- The United States ranks **fifth** on adult literacy skills when compared to other industrialized nations.
- Adult low literacy can be connected to almost every socio-economic issue in the United States:
  - More than **60 percent** of all state and federal corrections inmates can barely read and write.
  - Low health literacy costs between **\$106 billion** and **\$238 billion** each year in the U.S. — 7 to 17 percent of all annual personal health care spending.
  - Low literacy's effects cost the U.S. **\$225 billion** or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.
- Globally, illiteracy can be linked to:
  - Gender abuse, including female infanticide and female circumcision
  - Extreme poverty (earning less than \$1/day)
  - High infant mortality and the spread of HIV/Aids, malaria, and other preventable infectious diseases

Weekly Newspaper for Adult  
Learners



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