
Our mission

RISE builds primary schools in rural Angola to educate children, empower communities, and contribute to the rebuilding of the country. Every child has the right to education, and RISE works to give children the chance to go to school in areas where accessibility is limited or non-existent. We focus on vulnerable and marginalized children who have been impacted by years of war and its aftermath, those living in poverty, that face multiple barriers to education. Since 2003, RISE has built 201 schools, which give over 147,000 children access to education each year.

Brief history

A Portuguese colony for nearly 500 years, Angola endured a war for independence followed by a brutal 27-year civil war, which ended in 2002. The conflict left its cities, buildings, and infrastructure decimated; its people displaced and suffering, most without access to clean water, healthcare, and education.

RISE International, originally the African Refugee Committee (ARC), was founded in 2001 in response to the overwhelming needs among Angolan refugees in Namibia and Zambia. Through ARC's efforts, refugees received shipments of blankets, food, clothing, and supplies, as well as small business loans and college scholarships. With the arrival of peace in Angola, ARC changed its name to RISE International in 2003 and began to operate within Angola, with a **Schools for Angola** program, focusing its efforts on giving children access to education.

Many communities lacked a dedicated school building, with kids under trees and in makeshift “classrooms.” Without a building, children are exposed to the elements, and if there is rain, cold, or wind, there is no class. Many children walk long distances to attend. It is estimated that more than 2 million children do not have access to primary education. Initially building simple mud-block schools in rural villages, RISE brought the opportunity for education to thousands of children who would not otherwise have the chance for years to come. At the request of those in Angola, the school design was changed in 2007 to a larger, permanent structure. The building is foundational, providing safety and access, a key variable affecting student morale and learning. A safe, quality learning environment is critical to increasing student attendance, engagement, as well as learning and literacy outcomes.

Our work

We build critical infrastructure, a fundamental starting point, in order to give children access to education. Schools get built through the generosity of many in the US, local Administrations, parents and communities in Angola, and solid partnerships. RISE has established a trustworthy reputation, an established network of valued relationships, a solid track record, and experience in a challenging place. RISE delegates decision-making and authority to RISE Angola, our implementing partner. We work with mutuality and rely on their wisdom and insight to build relationships, oversee and implement logistics and construction in-country.

School sites are identified in collaboration with the local government and Ministry of Education – they provide desks, chalkboards, textbooks, set the curriculum, and hire and pay the teachers. The local community participates, establishing a sense of ownership, commitment to the process and to the education of their children. Upon completion of construction, the school is turned over to the community and Ministry of Education, at which point they become responsible for ongoing oversight and maintenance and are empowered to carry the process forward.

RISE measures results, quantifying our work and impact. Enhancing the impact of our primary mission, RISE has drilled wells at 30 school sites, established libraries in 5 RISE-built schools, and provided jobs for our in-country leadership and building teams, teachers, and principals. We have implemented a substantial Monitoring and Evaluation component to collect, track, analyze, and assess both student and school data.

Cost

The school cost varies depending on the number of classrooms, generally 6 to 8, based on the number of out-of-school children and the needs of the community. The budget is established per site, with a current cost of approximately \$500 per student to get the school built. Children will be in those classrooms for the next 25 years, which breaks down to about \$20 per year – an amazing return on investment.