

ACTION SHEET

Congress Must Protect Global Health & Education During COVID-19 Crisis

As the world faces its most significant global pandemic threat in a century, the United States must urgently respond to contain and mitigate the global spread of COVID-19 and protect hard-fought gains in global health in low-income countries. **Although the virus threatens near universal disruption, it's the communities facing poverty and already pushed to the margins that face the greatest risks.** The challenge of meeting global resource requirements will be heightened by the toll of COVID-19 on countries' economies.

Sub-Saharan Africa may be particularly vulnerable. The majority of countries rated "least prepared" to respond by the [Global Health Security Index](#) are in Africa. While a warmer and more humid climate, a younger population, and more recent and relevant experience confronting epidemics may prove to be protective factors, there are many challenges that may exacerbate the toll of COVID-19. These include:

- Higher rates of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malnutrition, and other serious underlying conditions;
- Difficulty implementing social distancing in crowded urban settings;
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitation;
- Critical shortages of health workers; and
- Limited capacity to detect and treat COVID-19 patients. *Kenya, for example, has just 155 intensive care beds in public hospitals in a country of 50 million people.*

An urgent concern is not just the direct toll from COVID-19, but the impact on other disease efforts as health workers mobilize to confront COVID-19. During the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, there were over 10,000 additional deaths from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and up to 16,000 additional deaths from measles as 1 million children missed out on vaccinations for the disease.

We are particularly concerned about the interaction between COVID-19 and tuberculosis. People with TB may be more likely to get sick with COVID-19, and many of the resources required to fight TB — lab capacity for diagnosis, health care workers to do contact tracing — will need to be marshalled to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the impacts on health, there is widespread disruption of education. [More than 90 percent of the world's students are affected by school closures.](#) Existing disparities

in access to quality education will be exacerbated as schools close or attempt to implement distance learning.

Take Your Message to Legislators Via Meetings and the Media

1. Congressional Meetings. Congress will be on recess for at least the month of April, but policymakers are already formulating plans for a Phase 4 COVID-19 bill that they expect to move on this spring. Your “virtual” lobby meetings in April with members of Congress and their staff could be the difference in whether partner nations get the support they need. See the [“Training Webinars”](#) section of our website for guidance on using technology for virtual meetings and organizing successful virtual meetings with congressional offices. Invite people in your network who are hungry to make a difference to join you for the meetings. Contact us at grassroots@results.org or reach out to staff for coaching for your meetings.
2. Generate Media and Support Others to Get Published. The media will also be an important influencer as Congress grapples with the next step in the COVID-19 response. Use [our online action](#) or the template below to write. Also, engage others in your network in virtual letter-to-the-editor writing workshops (see the sample meeting outline below). Join our [upcoming media training workshops](#) to sharpen your media skills.

Sample letter to the editor

Engage: As the world faces its most significant global pandemic threat in a century, in addition to responding at home, the United States must urgently respond to contain and mitigate the global spread of COVID-19 in low-income countries.

Problem: Because it’s the communities and nations already that face the greatest risks.

Inform: The US should lean on organizations with a global reach like Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria to aide with the response.

Call to Action: And as Congress develops a Phase 4 COVID-19 response package it should include measures that:

1. Support low-income countries and communities to respond to COVID-19, building on the progress we’ve made in global health.
2. Ensure other health programs that address diseases of poverty are not undermined by the COVID-19 response.
3. Address the non-health impacts of the pandemic, particularly access to quality education and other areas that disproportionately affect the poor.

Virtual Letter-to-the-Editor Writing Workshop Agenda

If you could use assistance in arranging technology for a virtual meeting, contact us at grassroots@results.org. In preparing for your meeting, distribute materials – including the April Action Sheet - electronically or do a screen-share in your online platform. Also, consider delegating pieces of the agenda ahead of time with members of your group so many voices can take leadership and be heard during the meeting.

Below is a sample agenda and script for putting people in your community into action. When people take action, they get inspired. Adapt the 60-minute agenda below.

I. Setting the Stage – 15 Minutes

2 min: Welcome and acknowledge people for being there.

“There are a lot of ways you could be spending the day, and I want to thank all of you for coming out and learning more about how YOU can play a role in the movement to end poverty. As we pass around the sign-in sheet, we can share a bit about why we’re here.”

3 min: State the purpose of the meeting.

“Our purpose today is to inspire you all about the difference you can make, working with others, to create the political will to end hunger and poverty. In the next few minutes, we’ll . . .

- *Learn a bit about RESULTS, the group organizing this.*
- *Learn about an issue of poverty.*
- *Take powerful action on the issue: we'll be writing letters to the editor in hopes of being published in advance of the virtual lobby meeting we have booked.*
- *And, finally, see who is interested in continuing to make a difference with RESULTS.”*

10 min: Center the group and do introductions.

“Let’s see who has gathered and get in touch with why we are here. Please give us your name and tell us briefly why acting on issue of poverty is important to you.”

“Thank you all for sharing what is important to you. We have a lot in common.”

II. The Basics of RESULTS – 10 Minutes

“RESULTS is movement of passionate, committed, everyday people. Together we use our voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. As volunteers, we receive training, support, and inspiration to become skilled advocates. In time, we learn to effectively advise policy makers, guiding them toward decisions that will improve access to health, education, and economic opportunity. Together we realize the incredible power we possess to use our voices to change the world. “You can also [read our Values Statement](#).

1. Share an example of success: Example: *“We protected development assistance for FY20 after the President proposed cutting it by 30%. We worked with Republicans and*

Democrats to help secure the highest number ever of congressional supporters for AIDS, TB, and malaria; global education; and maternal & child health, sending a message to the President that these programs should be protected and strengthened.” You could also read something from [our 40th Anniversary brochure](#).

2. Share a local example of our role in creating change (perhaps a way in which you moved a legislator to take action).
3. A few more details if you have time:
 - *“RESULTS partners meet twice per month to plan and take action.”*
 - *“During one of our meetings, we connect to a national webinar to learn about an issue, learn to speak powerfully, and take action to influence Congress.”* Give an example.
 - *“We also develop plans for influencing our decision makers through face-to-face meetings, the media, and other community actions.”*

III. Issues and Action Component - 30 Minutes

1. Introduce the issue with a story or video about a request area (not an exhaustive list). This can be done through screen-sharing or just read a story aloud.
 - a. *Global Fund:* <https://tinyurl.com/VidforGF>
 - b. *Gavi:* <https://tinyurl.com/VidforGavi>
 - c. *Global Partnership for Education:* <https://tinyurl.com/VidforEd>
2. Read the April Action Sheet together, taking turns paragraph by paragraph - including the sample letter.
3. Utilize our [lobby preparation materials](#) to plan the agenda for your virtual meeting with your senator(s). Make sure everyone has a meaningful role to play.
4. See if anyone has any questions about the logistics of the meeting (date/time, how to join, etc.)

IV. Invitation to Attend the Next Meeting & Closing - 5 Minutes

“Lastly, we are planning to have future meetings like this one to guide people in becoming powerful advocates. We’ll continue by following up on the meeting(s) we must decide on next steps to take. Who is interested in joining us again to take our next action?”

Say thank you, capture contact information: name, phone, email, address. Add them to your Action Network list and stay in touch with them. Send contact info to Ken Patterson or Lisa Marchal for the RESULTS national database as part of your group’s Action Network. Your new people will receive actions on a regular basis. They can also sign up [here](#).