

## The Basics: The Power of Education

New pencils, a fresh notebook, and an eager child waiting to learn – the first day of school is full of excitement and potential. The power of education is clear – brighter futures, healthier communities, and increased economic growth for individuals and countries. U.S. partnerships with developing countries have built stronger education systems and drastically decreased the number of out of school children around the world. Actions by developing countries to abolish school fees, build infrastructure, and train teachers, paired with commitment from donors to support local efforts, have seen incredible results in just 15 years. **In 1999, over 100 million primary school-aged children around the world were denied access to an education. That number has dropped to 59 million children out of school today.**<sup>1</sup>



Photo credit: Global Partnership for Education

Despite these efforts, recent progress has stagnated. Even among those children who do make it into a classroom, a staggering global total of 250 million kids – nearly 40 percent of the world’s children of primary school age – can’t read a single sentence.<sup>2</sup>

Primary education isn’t the only challenge. Quality early learning programs like preschool often remain out of reach. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 20 percent of children have access to preschool. In the Arab States, it is 25 percent.<sup>3</sup> Children who have access to quality early childhood programs are more likely to enroll in primary school, less likely to repeat grades or drop out, and show higher achievement once in school. Inequality also persists, with the poorest and most marginalized children the least likely to have access to preschool. This is despite the immense return on investment: **halving the proportion of kids not in preschool in sub-Saharan Africa would result in economic benefits of \$33 for every \$1 spent.**<sup>4</sup>

While countries have made significant progress towards closing the gender gap, girls remain less likely to enroll in primary school than boys. In places like sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest girls are almost nine times more likely than the richest boys to never set foot in a classroom.<sup>5</sup> Sixty-five million adolescents are currently out of secondary school.<sup>6</sup> And with growing conflicts and crises worldwide, education is often an afterthought. Among refugees, only 50 percent of children are in primary school and only 25 percent of adolescents are in secondary school.<sup>7</sup>

While the challenges are vast, U.S. investments and leadership, including through the Global Partnership for Education, are giving countries the boost they need to provide their most vulnerable children with a quality education, helping them become thriving, productive citizens.

## The Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the only multilateral partnership exclusively focused on achieving quality education for all. In 65 developing countries, the Global Partnership brings together education stakeholders to develop, implement, and fund national education plans. By putting its developing country partners at the front and aligning donors and other partners behind them, GPE helps build strong, sustainable education systems that will provide children an education for generations to come.

Since 2002, the Global Partnership has worked with partners to enroll 61 million more children in primary school in the poorest countries. At the same time, partner countries have increased the number of kids completing primary school to 72 percent, up from 63 percent in 2002.<sup>8</sup> And contributions to GPE help leverage commitments from developing countries – in fact, in 2014, developing country partners pledged an impressive \$26 billion to finance the strengthening of their own education systems.<sup>9</sup>

GPE is working with its partners to deliver on three strategic, ambitious goals to ensure all children and youth receive a quality education:

1. Improved and equitable **learning outcomes** so all students finish school with the knowledge and skills they came to school to learn.
2. Increased **equity, gender equality, and inclusion** for the most marginalized children.
3. More effective and efficient **education systems** to ensure quality education for the long term.

U.S. contributions to GPE have steadily and increasingly grown since an initial investment in fiscal year 2012, up to a contribution of \$70 million in fiscal year 2016. As the Global Partnership seeks to deliver on its goals for the poorest children worldwide, the U.S. must show leadership by increasing its annual contributions to the Global Partnership for Education.

## Why Education Matters: Building Healthy, Prosperous, Stable Communities

Achieving access to quality education worldwide is critical to fulfilling global development goals, breaking cycles of poverty, fostering economic growth, and promoting U.S. national security:

- **Poverty:** If all students in low-income countries were to leave primary school with basic reading skills, 171 million people would be lifted out of poverty.<sup>10</sup>
- **Health:** Worldwide, 5.9 million children die each year before reaching their 5th birthday, but children of mothers with a full primary education are 40 percent more likely to survive to the age of five.<sup>11</sup>
- **Gender Equality:** For each year of school completed, an individual's wages increase an average of 10 percent. This impact is even greater for girls. On average, for a girl in a poor country, each additional year of education beyond fourth grade will lead to 20 percent higher wages.<sup>12</sup>
- **Economic Opportunity:** Education is a prerequisite for short- and long-term economic growth – no country has achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without at least 40 percent of adults being able to read and write.<sup>13</sup>

- **National Security and Stability:** Education offers the hope of a better future for millions of vulnerable and marginalized populations living in dangerous and difficult circumstances, including the poor, people with disabilities, and women and girls. Without an education, children are more vulnerable to the pull of extremist groups, at greater risk of contracting infectious and deadly diseases, and more likely targets for forced labor, trafficking, and child marriage. Research has shown that each additional year of formal schooling for males reduces their risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent.<sup>14</sup>

## The Opportunities

### Increasing Impact and Accountability through Legislation

The U.S. government has long been a leader in supporting developing countries as they work to educate their children. But more must be done to increase the effectiveness and impact of this work. A well-resourced U.S. global education strategy coupled with increased transparency and accountability is needed now to ensure the U.S. government effectively contributes to realizing quality education for children around the world. The bipartisan Education for All Act (H.R. 4481), introduced by Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Congressman Dave Reichert (R-WA) will help drive U.S. global education efforts in this direction.

The Education for All Act builds upon current U.S. efforts to ensure equal access to quality education for children throughout the world. The legislation ensures the U.S. government continues to develop a strong, coordinated strategy accompanied by rigorous monitoring and evaluation efforts and a yearly report to Congress and the public. In doing so, it works toward reaching the 124 million children and youth around the world who remain out of school, improves the quality of education for those already enrolled, and builds sustainability and country independence.

#### Specifically, the legislation calls for:

- Developing a **comprehensive integrated U.S. strategy** that improves educational opportunities and addresses key barriers to children's school attendance, retention and completion;
- Ensuring a continuum of education services so that **children affected by conflict and crisis** don't fall behind because they don't have access to schools;
- **Coordinating** U.S. government efforts to efficiently and effectively manage resources;
- Working with countries to strengthen systems in order **to build long-term sustainability**;
- **Engaging with key partners** including other donors, civil society and multilateral global education initiatives, including the **Global Partnership for Education**, to leverage U.S. contributions to achieve a greater overall impact;
- Requiring specific indicators and objectives with which to **measure progress** in improved access to quality basic education in developing countries; and
- **Improving the transparency and accountability** of our basic education programs, ensuring taxpayer dollars have the most impact for children worldwide.

Schools can serve as the centers of communities – bringing together parents, students, teachers and government officials and offering services that support and lift up families and societies. Sustainable and lasting change requires the resolve of the U.S. government to centralize and coordinate efforts to increase effectiveness.

## Building Congressional Education Champions

In June 2015, Congressman Dave Reichert (R-WA) and Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) founded the first-ever International Basic Education Caucus. This bipartisan caucus provides opportunities for members of Congress to join together to support international basic education and act quickly to respond to global events affecting access to quality education.

**Through the establishment of the International Basic Education Caucus, members of Congress will:**

- Help increase support in Congress for international basic education programs;
- Increase member and staff understanding of global education challenges and build bipartisan support to address these issues; and
- Establish a platform to respond quickly to global events such as recent terrorist attacks on schools in Nigeria and Kenya.

**Potential Caucus activities might include:**

- Caucus-sponsored briefings or other events on basic education issues for members of Congress and their staff;
- Letters to the Administration and world leaders surrounding global events; and
- Floor speeches around key basic education opportunities such as global events or international days like International Literacy Day, International Women’s Day, and Education for All Global Action Week.

## The Stories

### Inspiring Stories

- [Helping Moldova’s Kids Learn and Grow](#)  
In Moldova, where many preschools have been closed, the Global Partnership for Education is helping the government restore and reopen early childhood development centers for the poorest children.
- [All Girls Deserve Education Beyond Primary](#)  
Malala Yousafzai, Nobel laureate and education activist from Pakistan, talks about the young women who inspire her.
- [In Rwanda, a Family’s Experience with Education](#)  
A look at a Rwandan school and the dedicated students and staff that meet there.

## Inspiring Videos

- [In Chad, making quality education a reality for a million children](#)  
In Chad, access to quality education remains a significant challenge. The Global Partnership for Education together with UNICEF and other partners are supporting the government of Chad to strengthen education for almost a million children.
- [Meet Ami. She wants to be a pilot.](#)  
Ami tells the story of what she wants to do when she grows up, and the role that governments like the U.S. can play to make it happen.
- [Just Bring a Chair](#)  
In Jordan, where the Syrian crisis has led to over 600,000 additional people taxing already overburdened schools, hospitals and social services, some people still find reasons to open their arms and make it work. Ms. Maha is one of those people.

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