

Strengthening U.S. National Security and Economic Opportunity: The Education for All Act of 2013 (H.R. 2780)

“What we must do is use our full complement of powers — defense, development and diplomacy — to help troubled nations build stable governments and address the needs of their people, not just for food, water and shelter but also for health, education and the opportunity to learn marketable skills. To do this, we have to invest in our future by bolstering the nation’s international affairs budget. This is something the two of us — and Democrats and Republicans as a whole — agree on.”

– Former Senate Majority Leaders Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Bill Frist (R-TN), in an op-ed for *Politico*, June 7, 2010

Around the world, 57 million primary school-aged children are still not in school.¹ And many more children who are in school are failing to acquire even basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills. The world has made steady progress toward universal education since 2000, but progress has stalled over the past several years. If the global community continues along its current path, 72 million children may be out of school by 2015.² Millions more will receive a low-quality education and not be able to read, write, and count.

Achieving universal access to quality education is necessary to fulfilling global development goals, breaking cycles of poverty, fostering economic growth, and promoting U.S. national security. In fact, 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.³

The bipartisan Education for All Act is critical to ensuring the U.S. government effectively contributes to realizing universal access to quality education for all children around the world.

Why does global education matter to the United States?

Building Peace and Security Through Education

Education is a critical building block for the development of an inclusive, democratic society and must be a central component of U.S. efforts to promote global security. Without education and hope for the future, the chance for a long-term stability is threatened.

- **Children are in war, not school:** The global community has left behind children in conflict-affected and fragile states. Although they only make up 22 percent of the world’s primary school aged children, they account for half of the 57 million children out of school around the world.⁴
- **Schools are centers of reconciliation:** Research on primary education in Rwanda shows that schools are among the major influences on identify and attitudes toward the other – both in the lead-up to conflict and in reconciliation and peace-building. As such, education is key to conflict prevention and human security.⁵
- **Educations spurs democracy:** Education, even at the primary level, nurtures citizen endorsement of democracy. People of voting age with a primary education were 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than people with no education. This rises to three times more likely for an individual with a secondary education.⁶
- **Education provides a key alternative to extremism:** Studies reveal that every year of schooling decreases a male’s chance of engaging in violent conflict by 20 percent.⁷ The Education for All Act cites the findings in the final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, also known as the 9/11

¹ Education for All Global Monitoring Report and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. “Schooling for Millions of Children Jeopardised by Reduction in Aid: UIS Fact Sheet.” June 2013, No. 25.

² *The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011.* UNESCO. 2011

³ *Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Goals.* UNESCO. 2011.

⁴ Education for All Global Monitoring Report. “Policy Paper 10: Children still battling to go to school.” July 2013.

⁵ Elisabeth King. “Policy Brief: The Human Security Impact of Education in Rwanda.” The Canadian Consortium on Human Security. 2006.

⁶ *Overcoming inequality: why governance matters. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009.* UNESCO. 2009.

⁷ Save the Children. *Where Peace Begins: Education’s role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.* 2008.

Commission. The report stresses the link between strong U.S. leadership against extreme poverty and creating security: “The United States and its friends can stress educational and economic opportunity. The United Nations has rightly equated ‘literacy as freedom.’...Education that teaches tolerance, the dignity and value of each individual, and respect for different beliefs is a key element in any global strategy to eliminate Islamist terrorism.”⁸

Fostering Economic Opportunity

Through education, children learn to read, write, think critically, and acquire the important life skills needed to build their communities and lift themselves out of poverty. These skills have broader effects, helping countries productively engage in the global economy.

- **Education enables economic development:** 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.⁹ Every \$1 invested in a person’s education yields \$10-15 in economic growth over that person’s working lifetime.¹⁰
- **Growing U.S. trade through education:** Developing countries represent half of all U.S. exports and are the fastest growing markets for American goods. Trade with developing countries is critical to the U.S. economy, with one in every five U.S. jobs now linked to exports and imports.¹¹ For every \$1 billion in new exports of American goods, more than 6,000 additional jobs are supported here at home.¹² The economic growth spurred by education enables countries to become stable trading partners for U.S. export markets.
- **Education increases income:** 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 third or fourth grade will lead to 20 percent higher wages.¹³

The Role of the Education for All Act

Effective, coordinated, and transparent U.S. global education programs will strengthen global security and lead to sustained economic growth and trade opportunities. To contribute to these efforts, Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Dave Reichert (R-WA) introduced the Education for All Act on July 22, 2013.

To co-sponsor, please contact Talia Dubovi in Rep. Lowey’s office (talia.dubovi@mail.house.gov) or Ashley Johnson in Rep. Reichert’s office (ashley.johnson@mail.house.gov).

“So let us wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution.”

-Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani schoolgirl shot in the head by the Taliban, addressing the United Nations General Assembly, July 12, 2013

H.R. 2780 builds upon current U.S. efforts to ensure universal access to quality education for children throughout the world. The legislation works toward reaching the 57 million children around the world who remain out of school, and improves the quality of education for those already enrolled. Specifically, the legislation calls for:

- Developing a comprehensive integrated U.S. strategy that includes improving educational opportunities and address key barriers to school attendance, retention and success for all children;
- Ensuring a continuum of education services for children in conflict and other emergencies;
- Coordinating U.S. government efforts to efficiently and effectively manage resources;
- Working with countries to strengthen systems that lead to sustainability;
- Engaging with multilateral global education initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education to leverage overall impact and best reinforce U.S. bilateral assistance; and
- Requiring specific indicators and objectives with which to measure progress in improved access to quality basic education in developing countries.

⁸ The 9/11 Commission Report. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 2004.

⁹ Basic Education Coalition. *Teach a Child, Transform a Nation*. 2004.

¹⁰ *Youth and skills: Putting education to work. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012*. UNESCO. 2012.

¹¹ Trade Partnership Worldwide, LLC. *Trade and American Jobs: The Impact of Trade on U.S. and State-Level Employment: An Update*. July 2010.

¹² Office of the United States Trade Representative. “The Pending Trade Agreements: More American Jobs, Faster Economic Recovery Through Exports.” October 2011.

¹³ Barbara Herz and Gene B. Sperling. *What Works in Girls’ Education*. Center for Universal Education. April 2004.