

The Education for All Act of 2013 (H.R. 2780)

To strengthen U.S. investments in basic education, Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Dave Reichert (R-WA) introduced the Education for All Act of 2013 on July 22, 2013.

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The Challenge

Around the world, 57 million children are still out of primary school and 250 million children – nearly 40 percent of the world's children of primary school age – are failing to acquire even basic literacy and numeracy skills. The world has made steady progress toward universal education since 2000, but unless more effective policies are implemented and there is greater international financial support, more children may be out of school in 2015 than in 2008. Millions more will receive a low-quality education and not be able to read, write, and count.

Achieving universal access to quality education is critical 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. **A well-resourced, holistic U.S. global education strategy is needed now to ensure the U.S. Government contributes to realizing universal access to quality education for all children around the world.**

What does the Education for All Act do?

The Education for All (EFA) Act seeks to ensure that the United States provides resources and leadership necessary for a successful international effort to afford all children a quality basic education. To achieve the goal of universal quality basic education, the EFA Act lays out U.S. policy that includes working with other countries, international organizations, and civil society to:

- assist developing countries and strengthen their educational systems;
- assist nongovernmental and multilateral organizations; and
- promote education as the foundation for community development.

The EFA Act lays out the following principles for U.S. support for global basic education:

- **Authorizing Multilateral Assistance:** Calls on the U.S. to integrate bilateral and multilateral assistance to achieve maximum impact. It authorizes the U.S. to support a multilateral education initiative, such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the only multilateral partnership exclusively focused on ensuring all children have access to a quality education. The Global Partnership is an innovative model, working directly with developing country governments and their partners to develop and fund national education plans. It is also a proven, effective model, having already helped support quality education for 22 million children in poor and conflict-affected countries. Its unique model brings together all partners working on education in a country, including international donors, the private sector, and community groups, around a single national education plan, focusing resources to have the biggest impact in developing countries. Thanks to the Global Partnership's model, countries like Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are now implementing their first-ever national education plans.
- **Increasing Access:** Seeks to increase access to quality schools and teachers for all children, with a focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as: girls, children affected by or emerging from

armed conflict or humanitarian crises, children with disabilities, children in remote or rural areas, children who lack access to safe water and sanitation, religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children impacted by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking.

- **Improving Quality:** Focuses on increasing the quality of education through improved literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, and civic education. It directs improved monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of basic education programs.
- **Coordinating within the U.S. Government:** Calls for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to lead efforts to increase coordination between U.S. Government departments and agencies to ensure effective and efficient use of resources.
- **Supporting Communities of Learning:** Seeks to utilize schools as the foundations for community development and build them as centers of integrated development assistance programs.
- **Building Country Capacity and Country Ownership:** Calls for the U.S. to help developing countries create and implement national education plans and requires the U.S. to align assistance to support these plans.

The bill also directs the President to create a comprehensive strategy to achieve the targets and goals of Education for All as laid out in this bill. Elements of the strategy will include:

- Specific objectives, indicators, and approaches to increase access to and the quality of education;
- Capacity building within developing countries to ensure sustainable development;
- Efforts to improve coordination and reduce duplication within the U.S. and with foreign donor governments and international organizations at the global and country levels;
- The utilization of appropriate public-private partnerships in order to leverage resources;
- Support for efforts to reduce the adverse impact of HIV/AIDS, including through prevention and support activities;
- The promotion of gender equity as well as safe schools and equal access to education for women and girls;
- Work with governments of conflict-affected states to limit the effects of conflict on students, teachers, and schools; and
- The adoption of a “Communities of Learning” approach that integrates school and educational programs with other development interventions.

Country ownership is a key component of the Education for All Act. To ensure that U.S. education investments are sustainable, the bill authorizes assistance to create policies, processes, and infrastructure to develop and implement national education plans, prioritizing countries with the greatest need. This assistance may be used to train quality teachers, design and implement effective curricula, implement monitoring and evaluation systems, support the elimination of school-associated fees, carry out activities supported by the Global Partnership for Education, and more.

The bill also places a needed focus on countries affected by conflict or crises, including efforts to ensure a continuity of educational activities, reestablish formal education services and/or provide safe places for learning, promote out-of-school programs and flexible-hour schooling, provide infrastructure for education services, provide necessary materials to train and support teachers, and promote efforts to reintegrate teachers and students of conflict.

The Education for All Act also directs:

- The administrator of USAID to appoint an **Education for All Coordinator** to oversee and carry out Education for All policies, ensure coordination within the U.S. Government and with NGOs and international partners, and convene an annual meeting to evaluate progress in the U.S. strategy for Education for All.
- The President to submit an **annual report to Congress** that will include efforts to achieve the goals and implement the strategy.