

April XX 2013

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Graham:

We are writing to urge you to strongly support international basic education programs in the FY 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Through robust funding of basic education, we can help alleviate poverty through economic growth, build markets for U.S. exports, enhance stability and security, and promote effective development across sectors.

Improving the education of the world's poor is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty and to creating true self-sufficiency. It is a humanitarian and moral imperative that transforms individuals, families and whole nations. In addition, education is vital to our own national interest, spurring economic growth overseas that widens opportunities for U.S. trade and commerce. Today, the fastest-growing markets for America's goods are in developing countries, representing 40% of U.S. exports and one out of every five American jobs. As populations around the world continue to rapidly grow and the U.S. economy continues to struggle, education programs will help to expand the U.S. consumer base in the developing world and build the stable trading partners that growing U.S. export markets require.

In these increasingly complex and dangerous times, the U.S. must proactively work to ensure that children and a burgeoning youth population are learning in school, so they are better able to make good choices and participate in the economic and political life of their country. The number of young people is increasing rapidly in many parts of the world. In developing countries alone, the population aged 15 to 24 reached over 1 billion in 2010. Many of these children and youth are uneducated, marginalized and without hope for gainful employment. The Arab Spring has revealed a powerful demand for democracy and social change in Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab countries. As these fragile, emerging democracies continue to take shape, our efforts to give hope to millions of disenfranchised youth will directly impact the stability of these and other countries beset by conflict and unrest.

Perhaps most importantly, education promotes effective and sustainable development. In many countries, the school is the center of the community and can serve an important role in facilitating other development efforts, such as global health and food security. In addition, quality education has been shown to lower child and maternal mortality rates, increase life expectancy, and significantly decrease vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases. For example, a girl who completes basic education is three times less likely to contract HIV. A recent study found that half of the reduction of child mortality, totaling 4.2 million lives saved over the past 40 years, was due to better education of women. In fact, mounting evidence shows that educating girls is one of the most cost-effective ways to spur development, creating a ripple effect throughout society.

For these reasons, we urge your Subcommittee to strongly support international basic education programs in the fiscal year 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,