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Help Fulfill Malala's Dream: Support Quality Education for 29 Million Children

Since members of the Taliban boarded her school bus and shot 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai in the head, the Pakistani education activist has proved unstoppable. But her work is far from finished: quality education is still a distant dream for millions of children. This spring, the U.S. government can help change that.

While U.S. school children count down the days until spring break, roughly 57 million primary school-aged girls and boys around the world are not attending school at all. And even among those students who do make it into a classroom every year, many still struggle with basic reading, writing, and counting skills. According to just-released UN data, a staggering total of **250 million girls and boys — nearly 40% of the world's children of primary school age — can't read a single sentence.**¹

In the early 2000s, the world cut the number of children out of school nearly in half. But progress has stalled since 2008, paralleling a decline in financial support from donor countries like the United States. This spring is our chance to get back on track, when donors pledge resources for the Global Partnership for Education, the only international organization exclusively dedicated to achieving education for all.

The Global Partnership has already helped support quality education for 22 million children in poor and conflict-affected countries. This spring, **the Global Partnership aims to raise \$3.5 billion** to support education for **29 million** more of the poorest and most vulnerable children. It is time the United States pledges to do its part, helping build a better educated world by **committing \$250 million over two years.**

The persistent lack of access to quality education outside U.S. borders has real consequences within them — affecting our security, economy, and moral standing in the world. Even as we work to strengthen schools in our own communities, we can and should help ensure the hardest-to-reach children worldwide also get the chance to learn.

Why global education matters there *and* here

Malala has reminded the world that education is a human right — and that a quality education can radically change the trajectory of a child's life. But the benefits extend far beyond an individual girl or boy, helping create a healthier, more secure, and more prosperous world for all of us.

- **Economic Development:** Education is a prerequisite for economic growth: no country has achieved continuous growth without at least 40 percent literacy.² Every \$1 invested in a person's education yields \$10-15 in economic benefit over that person's working lifetime.³ As countries succeed economically, they become better trade partners — currently, 50% of U.S. exports are purchased by developing nations.⁴
- **Maternal & Child Health:** A child born to an educated mother is more than **twice** as likely to survive to the age of five. As women's education levels increase, immunization rates go up, preventable child deaths go down, and nutrition improves.⁵
- **Security & Democracy:** People of voting age with a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than people with no education.⁶ Countries with higher primary schooling rates and a smaller gap between rates of boys' and girls' schooling tend to enjoy greater democracy and stability.⁷
- **Gender Equality:** Education increases self-confidence and decision-making power for girls, as well as their economic potential. 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.⁸

Our chance to get back on track: Investing in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

In places like South Sudan, a young woman is more likely to die in childbirth than she is to finish 8th grade.⁹ That's why the Global Partnership for Education invests its energy and resources in the poorest and most fragile countries, helping build lasting systems to educate the most vulnerable children.

The Global Partnership unites ministries of education with international donors, the private sector, and community groups, who all work together to develop, fund, and implement education plans in nearly 60 countries. Because of this approach, countries like Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and post-conflict Afghanistan are now rolling out their first-ever national education plans. Demand for the Global Partnership's support is on the rise as more countries see its success catalyzing long-term, effective education systems.

Overall, poor countries currently provide almost 90% of funding for the basic education of their own children.¹⁰ These countries are politically and financially committed to building strong systems to educate children into the future. The Global Partnership helps make that vision a reality, but it depends on donor country support to fill the critical remaining financial gaps.

"Support from the Global Partnership since 2007 has contributed to a transformation in our basic education sector. We are close to achieving universal primary enrollment and the percentage of children completing primary education has climbed by over 20% in just three years."

- Hon. Dr. Mathias Harebamungu, Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education, Rwanda

The Global Partnership aims to raise \$3.5 billion from donor governments at a pledging conference in June 2014. With \$3.5 billion invested by donors, the Global Partnership can help unlock an additional \$16 billion from developing country governments themselves. By 2018, that investment can:

- ✓ Support quality education for 29 million children, largely in fragile and conflict-affected states
- ✓ Reduce the number of children not completing primary school from 7.6 million to 4.8 million
- ✓ Help more girls get through school: increase primary completion from 74% to 84% and increase secondary completion from 44% to 54%
- ✓ Increase core reading and numeracy skills by 25% (from 16 to 20 million children)
- ✓ Reduce drop-out rates in primary and lower-secondary school by 10%
- ✓ Reduce repetition rates in primary and lower-secondary school by 10%

Time for the United States to lead on education

In 2011, the last time GPE solicited donor support, the United States made its first-ever pledge of \$20 million, a step in the right direction. The U.S. figure, however, paled in comparison to those of many other donor governments – including much smaller countries like Denmark and the Netherlands – who pledged 10- or 20-fold more than the United States.

Members of Congress and advocates across the country have called on the Administration to increase its support, committing \$125 million annually to the Global Partnership. **This year, the United States should show leadership on education, committing \$250 million over two years to the Global Partnership.**

A better educated world means a healthier, more stable, more prosperous world – for all of us. Malala was willing to risk her own life demanding the right to education for all. This spring our leaders should make a pledge worthy of that commitment.

¹ [Education for All Global Monitoring Report](#). UNESCO. 2014.

² [Teach a Child, Transform a Nation](#). Basic Education Coalition. 2004.

³ [Overcoming inequality: why governance matters. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009](#). UNESCO. 2009.

⁴ "International Policy." U.S. Chamber of Commerce: International Policy.

⁵ [Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Development Goals](#). UNESCO. 2011.

⁶ [Putting Education to Work. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012](#). UNESCO. 2012.

⁷ [Education and Development](#). World Bank.

⁸ [What Works in Girls' Education](#). Herz and Sperling. Council on Foreign Relations. 2004.

⁹ [Building a better future: Education for an independent South Sudan](#). UNESCO. 2011.

¹⁰ [Education for All is affordable – by 2015 and beyond](#). UNESCO. 2013.