Basic Education



Coalition

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The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chairman Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs 127 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Ranking Member Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs 290 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Graham:

We, the undersigned members of the Basic Education Coalition, write to thank you for your consistent and strong leadership in providing knowledge, hope and opportunity to children throughout the world.

As you work to complete the fiscal year 2012 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill, we ask that you prioritize investments in effective development and humanitarian programs, such as basic education, that work together to help alleviate poverty, strengthen societies, foster stability and security, and spur economic growth at home and abroad.

We urge you to support no less than the House Subcommittee allocated amount of \$800 million for basic education. We believe any further reduction in the United States' support for quality basic education, especially the deep and disproportionate cut of nearly 20% from current funding levels proposed in the Senate bill, would be a significant setback to the tremendous progress that has been made toward achieving the Education for All goals. The number of children out of school worldwide has dropped by 39 million since 1999, and primary enrollment is now nearly 90% in the developing world. In addition, gender parity at the primary level has risen to over 90% in 52 countries.

The United States, with strong Congressional leadership, has made an invaluable contribution to this global progress. USAID now operates education programs in 56 countries around the world, and its reach extends to some of the world's most difficult and dangerous places. In addition, the U.S. holds a distinct comparative advantage in implementing basic education programs, particularly in capacity building, technology and innovation, improved learning outcomes, and technical expertise.

Despite our gains, much work needs to be done to expand access for marginalized and vulnerable groups, and to improve the quality of education. This is especially important as youth populations rise, and the global economy continues to struggle.

Basic education increases security and stability. Today, more than half, or 39 million, of the out-of-school children around the world live in areas impacted by conflict or fragility and these numbers continue to grow. Schools provide security and a sense of normalcy for children in emergency or conflict situations, and education provides a foundation of tolerance and understanding to begin rebuilding a peaceful society. Research has shown that each additional year of formal schooling for males reduces their risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20%. Additionally, access to a quality basic education is one of the best ways to prevent child labor, child soldiers, child marriage and trafficking in children.

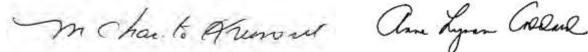
Basic education spurs economic growth. In a time of economic uncertainty, global basic education programs are directly in the U.S. national economic interest. Today, the fastest-growing markets for American goods are in the developing world, representing roughly half of U.S. exports and one out of five American jobs. For every 10% increase in U.S. exports, there is a 7% boost in employment in the U.S. Educating the world's poor is essential to building the stable trading partners that growing U.S. export markets require. Indeed, no country has achieved sustained economic growth without nearly universal primary education. Moreover, recent research has found that the quality of education—measured by what people know—has powerful effects on individual earnings, on the distribution of income, and on economic growth. It is estimated that if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty – equivalent to a 12% cut in global poverty.

Basic education multiplies our investment. Our investments in global basic education also carry beneficial results across other development sectors, helping to ensure their success and reduce overall cost. For example, we know there is a strong association between educational attainment and lowered risk of contracting HIV; that is, girls who complete primary school are three times less likely to contract HIV than those who did not complete primary school. Half of the progress that has been made in lowering death rates for young children is strongly linked with better education of women. Children born of educated mothers are half as likely to be malnourished, and twice as likely to be immunized against disease. Therefore, UNESCO estimates that in 2011 approximately 1.8 million children's lives in sub-Saharan Africa alone could be saved if their mothers had a secondary education. Healthier and better educated women reinvest the money in their family and community, helping to lift them out of poverty.

In a time of limited resources these investments are also highly cost-effective. For every \$10 million, we can expand access to a good quality education for an estimated 100,000 children annually. An investment of \$10 million also allows an estimated 4,700 more teachers to be mobilized annually to educate children in the world's poorest countries.

For all these reasons, we urge you to provide the greatest possible support for basic education in fiscal year 2012. Specifically, we strongly encourage you to provide no less than the House Subcommittee approved amount of \$800 million for quality basic education programs. We also encourage you to maximize Development Assistance spending to ensure that our basic education programs are alleviating poverty by educating the world's most vulnerable children.

We again thank you for your leadership on this vital issue and we look forward to working with you to ensure that all children have access to a quality basic education.



M. Charito Kruvant

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