

# **Recommendations for U.S. Leadership in Global Education**

As members of the international development, humanitarian, and education communities, we urge the Biden-Harris Administration to prioritize global education as a critical element in U.S. foreign policy. **We must maintain our existing investments in children and young people around the world while scaling up effective interventions to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and begin to rebuild.**

Failing to act risks losing decades of progress in global education and severely limiting the opportunities for a generation of young people. In contrast, a unified global effort could not only stave off the worst impacts of the virus, but could lay the foundation for fundamental improvements to education systems around the world, so we all can build back better.

## **We recommend that the Biden-Harris Administration:**

### **➤ Strengthen bilateral efforts in international basic education, including:**

- Advancing the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education with explicit support for inclusive early childhood education, children and youth with disabilities, girls, children and youth in crisis settings, and marginalized groups.
- Scaling up effective strategies to address education challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
  - Inclusive remote learning methods to reach children and youth most at-risk.
  - Financial support for teachers and education support staff, so they will be able and available to return to the classroom when schools reopen.
  - Support for remedial education and reenrollment for the most vulnerable children and youth once it is safe for schools to reopen.
- Requesting increased funding for international basic education in the annual President's Budget Request.

### **➤ Restore U.S. leadership in global education by supporting multilateral organizations with the experience and technical capacity to respond to current and ongoing needs, specifically:**

- Rejoin the *United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization* (UNESCO) as a full member and continue U.S. support for the *United Nations Children's Fund* (UNICEF) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), which both fund important education interventions for children and the forcibly displaced.
- Increase contributions and support a new multi-year pledge to the *Global Partnership for Education* (GPE), which brings together ministries of education and public and private partners to build and sustain quality education, including supporting 355 million of the most vulnerable learners during COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>
- Increase contributions to *Education Cannot Wait* (ECW), which supports education in emergencies with built-in agility and emergency design that allow for the quick deployment of resources, including an initial COVID-19 response across 35 countries to address the needs of refugees, displaced and at-risk children.<sup>2</sup>
- Undertake efforts to further Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, including by supporting measures to protect education from attack during armed conflict, and considering U.S. endorsement of the *Safe Schools Declaration*.

## **Supporting Evidence**

### **Investing in global education is effective, critical foreign policy.**

- Education is a force-multiplier for international development, critical for economic growth and security on individual, community, and national levels.
- Education has a high return on investment. For every \$1 spent on education, as much as \$15 can be generated in economic growth.<sup>3</sup>
- In a crisis, education is lifesaving, providing children and youth with safe places to learn and play, life skills, stability, and protection from child labor and early child marriage.<sup>4</sup>
- The World Bank estimates that cumulative learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic could result in \$10 trillion dollars of lost earnings for the global economy.<sup>5</sup>

### **U.S. foreign assistance has made significant strides in improving international basic education.** From September 2018 to March 2019, USAID provided:

- 33.5 million primary and secondary students in 51 countries with opportunities to learn literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills.
- More than 485,000 teachers and educators with training and professional development to improve instruction quality.
- Distribution of more than 32 million textbooks and teaching and learning materials.<sup>6</sup>

### **The impacts of COVID-19 on education are broad and deep.**

- At the height of school closures, 1.6 billion children – 90 percent of the world’s student population – were out of school.<sup>7</sup>
- Girls are at higher risk of dropping out as pandemic-related closures make them more vulnerable to risks such as child marriages and/or early pregnancy. Experts estimate that 20 million additional girls could be out of school following the crisis.<sup>8</sup>
- Very young children are at home, unable to attend early childhood programs and likely missing out on critical opportunities for development.<sup>9</sup>
- Struggling with economic instability, child care, work, and social isolation, families face higher risks of toxic stress and violence against children, which can have long-lasting, damaging effects on developing bodies and brains.<sup>10</sup>
- Experts caution that school closures, school fees, and economic crisis could result in a rise in child labor, including work that is hazardous and/or exploitative.<sup>11</sup>

### **Developing country partners need support to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on education.**

- While remote learning can be effective, more than 31 percent of school children worldwide (463 million) cannot be reached by broadcast or Internet-based programs.<sup>12</sup>
- Students with disabilities currently face significant barriers to education, including discriminating attitudes and inadequate accommodations to address different learning needs, which remote learning exacerbates.<sup>13</sup>
- Fifty percent of low-income countries reported that they do not have the necessary resources to follow public health protocols, such as hand washing and social distancing, to ensure the safety of learners and staff once schools reopen.<sup>14</sup>

## Additional Information

- <sup>1</sup> Global Partnership for Education (GPE), [GPE and COVID-19](#)
- <sup>2</sup> Education Cannot Wait (ECW), [COVID-19 and Education in Emergencies](#)
- <sup>3</sup> Center for Universal Education at Brookings, [Investment in Global Education: A strategic Imperative for Business](#)
- <sup>4</sup> World Vision, [Education in Emergencies](#)
- <sup>5</sup> The World Bank, [COVID-19 Could Lead to Permanent Loss in Learning and Trillions of Dollars in Lost Earnings](#)
- <sup>6</sup> UNESCO, [Reopening schools: When, where, and how?](#)
- <sup>7</sup> USAID, [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education – 2019 Report to Congress](#)
- <sup>8</sup> Malala Fund, [Report on Girls' Education and COVID-19](#)
- <sup>9</sup> UNICEF, [Early Childhood Development and COVID-19](#)
- <sup>10</sup> UNICEF, [COVID-19 May Push Millions More Children into Child Labor – ILO and UNICEF](#)
- <sup>12</sup> UNICEF, [Education and COVID-19](#)
- <sup>13</sup> Global Partnership for Education, [An Inclusive Response to COVID-19: Education for Children with Disabilities](#)
- <sup>14</sup> UNICEF, [Children in the Poorest Countries Have Lost Nearly Four Months of Schooling Since the Start of the Pandemic](#)







Inclusive Education Consulting









Africa Schoolhouse  
Amal Alliance  
Anera  
Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA)  
Bank Information Center  
Beyond Borders  
Building Tomorrow  
Child Labor Coalition  
ChildFund  
Childhood Education International  
Coalition Education  
Colectivo de Educacion para todas y todos  
Guatemala  
EdIntersect, LLC  
Educate the Children Inc.  
Education Cannot Wait  
European and North American Campaign for  
Education  
Fairtrade America  
Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project  
-FLAP-  
Finn Church Aid  
First Focus on Children  
Food for the Hungry  
Georgian Coalition for Education for All  
Girls Education Collaborative  
Global Campaign for Education-Netherlands  
Global Campaign for Education-US  
Global Coalition to Protect Education from  
Attack  
Global Citizen  
Global Partnership for Education  
GlobalPartnersUnited  
Humanity & Inclusion  
iACT  
Impact Network International, Inc.

inABLE  
Inclusive Education Consulting  
InterAction  
International Initiative to End Child Labor  
Irish Forum for Global Campaign for Education  
Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE)  
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA  
Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation US  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Light for the World  
Lilian Dibo Foundation  
Lubuto Library Partners  
Malala Fund  
National Campaign for Education Nepal  
ONE Campaign  
PDRC International  
RISE  
Rukmini Foundation  
Salzburg Global Seminar  
Save the Children  
Send My Friend to School  
SIL LEAD, Inc.  
Special Olympics International  
St. Cloud State University  
Tangata Group  
The Hunger Project  
The Nobility Project  
Together for Girls  
UNICEF USA  
Whole Child International  
Youth Service America



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