



## Basic Education

### **PROBLEM**

Lack of access to a quality, basic education affects 75 million children around the world, 55% of whom are girls. Roughly three-quarters are in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia; some 37 million are in conflict-affected countries or emerging states. This education deficit effectively cripples the ability of these countries to participate in the global economy. Tens of millions more children drop out of school before the 5th grade because schools are overcrowded, unsafe, poorly equipped, poorly managed and have inadequately trained teachers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The United States must develop and fully fund a more robust basic education strategy that will ensure significant progress towards meeting the Education for All (EFA) goals. This strategy should be developed jointly by the Administration and the Congress, with civil society input; reflect clear priorities and effective interventions; be implemented with adequate agency capacity, expertise, and resources, subject to accountability; undertaken with the collaboration of key stakeholders and coordinated operationally. Passing the Education for All Act offers the best prospect for meaningful action on all these fronts.

### **ACTIONS**

- Implement interventions that afford access to education for all children, particularly those who are often left out: girls, children in conflict-affected countries, disabled children, rural, indigenous and other often-marginalized groups;
- Give greater emphasis to improving learning outcomes and a quality basic education--including early childhood education and development, primary education, secondary education, literacy and numeracy training, life skills training, and skills for employment--with government-implemented measures to monitor and evaluate program effectiveness;
  - Allocate an overall level of resources and human capital that can best realize and sustain the principles of EFA, and ensure sufficient, long-term, predictable funding and planning that allows interventions to achieve sustainability;
  - Seek ways to ensure that children in conflict countries and fragile states, as well as children in emergencies and humanitarian crises, can receive a quality basic education;
  - Take steps to make schools safe and secure places where children can learn without fear of violence, harassment or exploitation; and
  - Establish a high-level USAID Office of Global Education with sufficient staff capacity and resources at the regional and country mission levels to ensure coordinated education planning and cooperation with country governments, other donors, civil society, and private sector stakeholders. Recognize the importance of country-driven planning, assessment and engagement.

### **RESULTS**

A vigorous investment in quality basic education is the most effective way to bring about high-impact yields in health, economic growth, democracy and governance, peace and sustainability. It will directly strengthen U.S. security and enhance U.S. global leadership and influence, while continuing our longstanding humanitarian practice.



## **BACKGROUND**

### **Challenges to achieving Education for All (EFA)**

There has been real progress towards the EFA goal of all children completing primary education by 2015. The number of out-of-school children has declined from 96 million in 1999 to 75 million in 2006. Of course, it is unacceptable that 75 million children remain out of school. Roughly 37 million are in conflict-affected countries or emerging states. 55% of out-of-school children are girls. Globally, many millions of school age children who start primary school drop out by the 5th grade because of poor quality and economic need. Hundreds of millions more are denied a secondary school education. Globally, roughly 776 million adults are illiterate.

A severe shortage of adequately trained teachers, textbooks, learning materials and classroom resources, coupled with poor school management, underscore significant quality problems in too many countries. School fees and poor quality are obstacles for many children, particularly girls, HIV/AIDS orphans, and other vulnerable children. In addition, conflict-affected and emerging states have the highest numbers of out-of-school children, yet they receive significantly less basic education assistance than other countries. The availability of pre-primary education in the developing world remains low.

Uneducated children in the developing world are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses, including trafficking, forced or exploitive child labor, early child marriage, and indoctrination into the ranks of child soldiers and militias, and are more likely to fall victim to deadly disease, including AIDS, and other serious health problems.

### **Education and development, security, and human rights**

Education is fundamental to sustainable development. In light of the threat that the current financial crisis poses to countries struggling to rise out of poverty, it is more important than ever that education be prioritized. Successful economies invest in their education systems, building civil society and respect for rule of law. Education allows farmers to be more productive through implementation of effective and environmentally sound agricultural methods. It also saves lives by providing children and youth with the tools to reduce transmission of HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases.

Education leads to economic and political security and builds stronger, healthier families. Education is particularly important for women and girls, boosting their economic productivity, reducing poverty, increasing life expectancy, and improving the health, well-being, and the educational prospects of the next generation. Educated women tend to marry later in life, and their children have higher survival rates and are more likely to succeed and stay in school.

Education is also a human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Schools offer safety and protection to children in emergencies and conflicts. Education is one of the best ways to prevent child labor, trafficking of children, child soldiers and child marriage; in addition, schools are essential in helping to reintegrate children returning home after conflict.



## **U.S. leadership is essential to realizing the promise of basic education**

The current global financial crisis demands innovative and effective U.S. policy measures and practical programs that will bring about sustained economic development, and poverty reduction. The United States also faces complex security challenges around the world that require deploying the full range of U.S. smart power tools. On both of these levels, a robust and effective basic education policy offers the best path towards a more stable, prosperous and peaceful world. It is an investment in human security and economic well-being that is directly in the interests of the United States.

But, this will require significant new U.S. leadership. An estimated global contribution of \$11 billion is needed annually to meet the internationally agreed upon target of education for all by 2015. The U.S. proportionate share, based on an average U.S. contribution to international initiatives of 25%, would bring the U.S. target to roughly \$3 billion.

It will also require that we commit those resources under a clear strategy that employs the best available practices, ensures that children are actually learning, and is effectively managed and coordinated. The United States should commit these resources and undertake the development of this strategy as soon as possible, beginning with enactment of the Education for All Act.