

January 26, 2021

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to congratulate you on your inauguration as the 46th President of the United States and thank you for your commitment to addressing COVID-19 domestically and abroad. We are particularly pleased to see international funding included in the American Rescue Plan. In addition to the harmful impacts on global health, food security, and gender-based violence, international education has been profoundly affected by COVID-19 and we must act immediately to stave off the worst impacts of the virus on a generation of learners. **At least \$20 billion is needed for the international response to COVID-19, and we request that at least \$300 million be provided for international Basic Education in the next COVID-19 relief package.** This education-focused funding will enhance support for bilateral international education programs as well as multilateral organizations, including at least \$50 million for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and \$15 million for Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

The need for international education assistance has increased exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic with school closures in nearly every country, disrupting the lives and education of more than 91 percent of the world's student population. Education is an essential lifeline in times of crisis, and investments in international education are needed immediately to mitigate the harmful secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of children and youth.

Disruptions due to COVID-19 are likely to widen existing gaps in educational and economic attainment for children and youth in low- and middle-income countries. Past experience has demonstrated that the longer vulnerable children stay away from school, the less likely they are to return. Girls in particular are more likely to face barriers to continuing their education, including high risks of child marriage, gender-based violence, and early pregnancy. UNESCO estimates that nearly 24 million children and adolescents, including 11 million girls and young women, may drop out of school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact alone.

Emergency funding will help expand access to quality distance learning opportunities while schools are closed, including remote learning platforms that are safe and accessible to children in crisis and conflict settings, children with disabilities, and children living in poverty and in rural communities. These programs can simultaneously serve as a distribution channel for critical COVID-19 information on prevention, vaccination, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), public health, psychosocial support, and protection services. As schools safely reopen for in-person learning, international education programs will play a vital role in assisting countries with re-enrollment campaigns, assessing learning loss, and developing remedial and accelerated learning programs to get students back on track.

U.S. support for international organizations, including UNICEF, GPE, and ECW, complements our bilateral programs and leverages additional resources for this important work. During this pandemic, multilateral organizations have been quick to respond to the dire education needs of children. GPE has mobilized \$500 million to help developing countries mitigate both the

immediate and long-term disruptions to education being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. ECW has activated its First Emergency Response funding window to re-program current grants and deliver nearly \$100 million in new funding to 26 countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF has also mobilized resources to help governments and local education partners reduce the impact of COVID-19 on children's education, including supporting nearly 275 million children with distance or home-based learning. Despite these immediate investments, the growing need continues to exceed currently available funds.

During this global crisis, we are heartened by your plan to address the immediate health and secondary impacts facing Americans and affected communities around the world. In any future emergency relief package, we urge you to include funding to support the education of children and youth who otherwise stand to become the hidden victims of the pandemic. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Basic Education Coalition

Chemonics International

ChildFund

Education Cannot Wait

Education Development Center

Food for the Hungry

Global Campaign for Education - US

Global Citizen

Global Partnership for Education

IREX

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

RESULTS

RTI International

School-to-School International

Unbounded Associates

UNICEF USA

World Education

World Learning

World Vision US

Worldreader