

G7/G20 ADVOCACY ALLIANCE (U.S.)

G7 EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

2021 G7 Summit: Carbis Bay, Cornwall, United Kingdom

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The United States has consistently championed education for all and must redouble progress on Sustainable Development Goal #4 to tackle quality of and access to learning from early childhood through adolescence. While bolstering existing investments, the U.S. must address exacerbating education inequities as a result of crises—including COVID-19—to build back better, funding and scaling effective interventions in foreign assistance.

1. **Commit robust financing to strengthen inclusive education systems, recognizing the importance of safe, equitable, quality education for all children and youth.**
 - a. Dedicate flexible, multi-year financing for education as a lifesaving intervention throughout any humanitarian response, including increased contributions to Education Cannot Wait.
 - b. Pledge \$1 billion over five-years toward the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) replenishment and increase U.S. bilateral funding providing more children in low-income countries, especially girls, access to education.
 - c. Define and measure progress towards attendance, safety and learning outcomes, including disaggregation by gender, type of disability, refugee status, ethnicity, and race through inclusive education sector plans.
 - d. Endorse global targets on girls' education and fulfill the Charlevoix commitment to tackle barriers that prevent girls from reaching their full educational and economic potential.

2. **Within the communique, commit to investing in holistic, resilient, and innovative systems that mitigate learning loss and improve access to quality education for children and youth, especially the most vulnerable.**
 - a. Develop and finance remedial, accelerated and distance learning programs, including for refugee and internally-displaced children, to get students safely back to learning and to school.

- b. Prioritize climate financing and invest in high-, low-, and no-tech solutions to support education systems respond to shocks, bridge the digital divide, and reimagine education delivery mechanisms.
- c. Strengthen cross-sectoral child development—particularly health and protection—within education investments including adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities; gender-responsive learning environments; and social protection programs.

BACKGROUND

Access to safe, inclusive, equitable, quality education from early childhood through adolescence is critical for building stable nations and growing economies. Yet, children face a learning crisis. Prior to the pandemic, more than half of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) could not read and comprehend a basic text.¹ COVID-19 has further disrupted education globally, affecting 90% of the world's students through school closures, widening learning gaps.² One-third of children globally could not access remote learning during school closures³ and two-thirds of LMICs have cut their public education budgets since the pandemic's onset.⁴ 818 million children also risk returning to schools without basic handwashing services, exposing children and school communities to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.⁵

Girls face particular barriers to continuing their education, including high risks of child marriage, gender-based violence, and early pregnancy. Educating girls pays dividends for families, communities, and countries; education is linked to lowering maternal and child mortality.⁶ Significant commitments must be made to ensure that, by 2025, 40 million more primary and secondary school girls in LMICs are in school and learning, and one-third more girls are reading by age 10.

In crisis and conflict settings, education is a life-saving response, and requires immediate investments to mitigate the harmful impacts of emergencies on children and youth. At least 127 million crisis-affected children are out of school, comprising 50% of all out of school children globally. However, the education sector consistently receives less than 3% of humanitarian aid.⁷ Lack of access to digital tools and technology compounded learning challenges for refugee and internally displaced children during school closures.

Education can be a driver for recovery and resilience across the life-cycle. Early Childhood Development prioritizes screening children for developmental delays or disabilities, while holistic programming ensuring adolescent girls complete their secondary education could lift the GDP of developing economies by around 10%.⁸ The safe reopening of schools can simultaneously serve as an access point and distribution channel for other basic services critical to child development notably, water, sanitation, and hygiene; health and nutrition; psychosocial support; and protection.

ABOUT INTERACTION

InterAction is a convener, thought leader, and voice for NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people.

¹ World Bank. (17 October 2019). “New Target: Cut “Learning Poverty” by At Least Half by 2030.” Press Release.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/10/17/new-target-cut-learning-poverty-by-at-least-half-by-2030>.

² Psacharopoulos, G., Patrinos, H., Collis, V., and Vegas, E. (29 April 2020). “The COVID-19 cost of school closures.” Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/04/29/the-covid-19-cost-of-school-closures/>.

³ UNICEF. (28 October 2020). “Children in the poorest countries have lost nearly four months of schooling since start of pandemic – UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank report finds.” Press Release. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-poorest-countries-have-lost-nearly-four-months-schooling-start-pandemic>.

⁴ Al-Samarrai, S., Cerdan-Infantes, P., Bigarinova, A., Bodmer, J., Vital, M., Anacleto, J., Antoninis, M., Barakat, B., and Murakami, Y. (February 2021). “Education Finance Watch 2021.” World Bank. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/507681613998942297/EFW-Report-2021-2-19.pdf>.

⁵ UNICEF and WHO. (August 2020). “Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools.” WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/progress-on-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools-focus-on-covid-19>.

⁶ Andriano, L. and Monden, C. (October 2019). “The Causal Effect of Maternal Education on Child Mortality: Evidence From a Quasi-Experiment in Malawi and Uganda.” *Demography* 56, 1765–1790. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-019-00812-3>.

⁷ UNICEF. “Education in emergencies.” <https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies>.

⁸ Qin, Y., Curmi, L., Gauer, M., and Gallinetti, J. (October 2020). “The Case for Holistic Investment in Girls.” Citi GPS: Global Perspectives & Solutions. <https://ir.citi.com/1IC5yCxLduM4bYUIBpFC79dMTp0GjGGFL7Dh1ZVt72YDIT4sT29hPBSCP3jggXWiHMSTIz3gSlc%3D>.