

CLOSING THE 'EDUCATION FOR ALL' GAP

TAKE ACTION

In November 2011, Australia will be co-sponsoring the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) replenishment conference. GPE is seeking to raise \$8 billion: \$2.5 billion for the GPE plus additional bilateral (country to country) contributions to GPE countries. This sum is required to achieve the goal of free, universal, basic education for all and assist in closing the education gap.

This month we will write to our Members of Parliament (asking them to contact Minister Rudd on this issue) or directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Kevin Rudd MP raising the following key points:

1. Acknowledge Australia's strong education focus in its aid program and its commitment towards achieving 'Education for All'
2. Call on the Australian Government to continue its leadership for GPE by increasing its financial contribution at November's replenishment meeting to \$300 million in total in the 2012 to 2014 period.
3. Call on the Australian Government to utilise its position as a co-sponsor of the meeting to encourage increased financial support from other donor countries, towards the GPE's overall funding goal of \$US 2.5 billion in 2012 to 2014.

WHY IS EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

Education is an effective tool for reducing poverty, generating economic growth for the community at large and facilitating economic inclusion for individuals. According to the Global Partnership for Education, approximately 170 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills - equivalent to a 12% cut in global poverty. Education also empowers individuals and communities to take charge of their own destiny and make informed decisions. This can lead to a myriad of benefits including: reducing HIV/AIDS infection through the use of condoms, reducing child mortality and, in some circumstances, mitigating intimate partner and sexual violence.

In particular, education can have an extremely positive impact on the lives of women and their children. Studies have shown that children of women who go to primary school are 40% less likely to die before the age of five; a woman with any education is 50% more likely to have her child immunized; and, in some instances, investment in girls' education has raised the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the entire country by 0.2%.

Despite these proven benefits, 67 million primary school age children are not attending school, including 26 million in the Asia-Pacific region with many others dropping out early or failing to complete their education. While many countries have made progress in increasing primary school enrolments, the Millennium Development Goal of universal completion of basic education will not be achieved based on current trends.

CLOSING THE GAP

The Global Partnership for Education (previously known as Education for All Fast Track Initiative) is a highly effective multilateral education fund supporting education in 44 developing countries. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) forms a partnership between developing and donor countries and civil society that is designed to give developing countries the support they need to achieve 'free, universal, basic education for all'. This includes giving technical support to countries to develop effective education strategies, and also providing top-up funding to pay for those elements of the plan that the country's domestic finances cannot afford.

Since 2002 the GPE has disbursed over \$2 billion in aid to education in low-income countries and provided access to school for 19 million more children in GPE countries around the world. In Sub-Saharan African GPE countries the number of children enrolled in school has risen by 50%, compared with just 27% in non-GPE Sub-Saharan countries.

Global Partnership for Education - Pledging Event

On November 7 and 8 the Global Partnership for Education will be holding a replenishment conference at which they are seeking to raise a total of \$8 billion: \$2.5 billion for the GPE plus additional bilateral contributions to GPE countries. The pledging conference will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark with Australia co-sponsoring the event with Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

The Australian Government is in a strong position to build on the contribution to the Global Partnership for Education. Currently Australia contributes \$25 million per year towards this critical global education fund. Australia should show leadership by increasing its portion of GPE funding, due to:

- ✓ The priority of education in the Australian aid program: the Government has committed \$5 billion for aid to education over the five years to 2014-15. In 2011-12 the Government committed \$842 million (19% of Overseas Development Aid) to education and scholarships programs.
- ✓ Our role as co-sponsor during the November 2011 replenishment meeting offers a vehicle for Australia to receive global recognition for its leadership in the sector
- ✓ Visibility and engagement in the Pacific: Australian expertise is needed in GPE efforts in the Pacific, especially East Timor and Papua New Guinea.
- ✓ The benefit of increasing Australia's role on the GPE Board of Directors: this could be utilised to support continued reform and expansion of the partnership, including its full independence from the World Bank.

RESULTS Request: Australia should commit additional financing to the GPE by increasing funding to at least \$300 million in total in the 2012 to 2014 period.

| 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| \$75 million | \$100 million | \$125 million |

For every additional \$1 million that Australia invests in GPE it will directly finance 10,000 more children entering primary school, hiring 250 teachers and the distribution of 60,000 textbooks. This is a remarkable opportunity to help close the education for all gap and nearly halve the number of children out of school in GPE-endorsed developing countries.

For more details on the GPE and the upcoming replenishment meeting visit:

<http://www.globalpartnership.org/about-us/replenishment/>