

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 552

To direct the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to submit to Congress a report on the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on global basic education programs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 2 (legislative day, MARCH 1), 2021

Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. BOOZMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To direct the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to submit to Congress a report on the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on global basic education programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Global Learning Loss
5 Assessment Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Before the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (com-
2 monly referred to as “COVID–19”) pandemic began,
3 258,000,000 children were out of school, including
4 130,000,000 girls.

5 (2) Students already at a disadvantage before
6 COVID–19 will experience greater learning loss,
7 thereby worsening inequity and inequality.

8 (3) Approximately 90 percent of the world’s
9 student population—over 1,600,000,000 children
10 and youth—have had their education disrupted by
11 school closure due to COVID–19.

12 (4) School closures lead to interrupted learning,
13 poor nutrition, gaps in childcare, increased dropout
14 rates, exposure to violence, and social isolation.

15 (5) Up to 24,000,000 children are at risk of
16 dropping out of school permanently due to rising lev-
17 els of child poverty associated with the pandemic.

18 (6) School closure and remote learning is espe-
19 cially burdensome on girls, who are frequently ex-
20 pected to shoulder more household chores and re-
21 sponsibilities and are more vulnerable to gender-
22 based violence.

23 (7) During the Ebola epidemic, nationwide
24 school closures in Sierra Leone in 2014 led to in-
25 creased instances of sexual- and gender-based vio-

1 lence, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and child
2 labor for girls.

3 (8) More than 60 percent of national distance
4 learning alternatives rely exclusively on online plat-
5 forms but two-thirds of the world's school aged chil-
6 dren, or 1,300,000,000 children aged 3 to 17, do not
7 have internet connection in their homes, and schools
8 and local learning centers also frequently have inad-
9 equate internet connectivity. Eighty percent of stu-
10 dents in sub-Saharan Africa lack such access, with
11 an even higher rate for girls.

12 (9) Children and youth with disabilities are par-
13 ticularly vulnerable to the health, education, and so-
14 cioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. As a fur-
15 ther challenge, distance learning tools are not always
16 accessible to learners with disabilities or those with
17 complex learning needs, especially in poorer and
18 rural households.

19 (10) Before the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee
20 children were twice as likely to be out of school as
21 other youth, and school closures and a lack of access
22 to distance learning tools threaten to make the edu-
23 cation gap among refugee children even more severe.

24 (11) The economic downturn caused by the
25 COVID-19 pandemic could lead to an education fi-

1 financing gap of \$77,000,000,000 in low- and middle-
2 income countries over the next two years.

3 (12) The economic cost of school closures could
4 be up to \$1,337 per student, which on a global scale
5 equates to approximately \$10,000,000,000,000 in
6 lost economic output over the coming generation.

7 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

8 It is the policy of the United States that United
9 States-funded basic education programs operating in for-
10 eign countries should—

11 (1) provide inclusive learning opportunities for
12 students and teachers, especially for the most mar-
13 ginalized, including girls and children with disabil-
14 ities, and previously out of school children;

15 (2) build local capacity and help countries
16 strengthen their education systems, including oppor-
17 tunities for early childhood development;

18 (3) improve the availability, delivery, and qual-
19 ity of education services from early childhood
20 through secondary education;

21 (4) improve equity and safety in education serv-
22 ices; and

23 (5) support the return of children to school who
24 have experienced interruptions in their education
25 due to the COVID–19 pandemic and work to enroll

1 previously out-of-school children and youth, particu-
2 larly the most marginalized.

3 **SEC. 4. REPORT.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
5 date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of
6 the United States Agency for International Development,
7 acting through the Senior Coordinator for International
8 Basic Education Assistance and in consultation with the
9 Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s
10 Empowerment, shall submit to the appropriate congress-
11 sional committees a report on the impact of the COVID–
12 19 pandemic on USAID’s basic education programs.

13 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report re-
14 quired under subsection (a) shall include, at a minimum,
15 the following elements:

16 (1) An assessment of the magnitude of global
17 learning loss that will result from protracted school
18 closures, including the specific effects of school clo-
19 sures on marginalized children and youth, including
20 girls, minority populations, and those with disabil-
21 ities.

22 (2) Descriptions of the effectiveness, cost, ac-
23 cessibility, and reach of the most commonly used
24 forms of distance learning in low resource contexts.

1 (3) An overview of Agency programs being car-
2 ried out to continue learning during the COVID–19
3 pandemic, including existing data on funding and
4 programmatic focus disaggregated by gender, coun-
5 try, education level, and disability.

6 (4) Identification and description of any gaps
7 in, or barriers to, reaching and educating marginal-
8 ized populations, such as girls, children with disabil-
9 ities, displaced children, or other children adversely
10 affected by the COVID–19 pandemic with distance
11 learning interventions.

12 (5) A description of the Agency’s plan and
13 needed tools and resources to support continued dis-
14 tance learning interventions, safe school reopening,
15 assessments of student learning levels, remedial and
16 accelerated learning, reenrollment campaigns for
17 out-of-school children and youth, and education sys-
18 tem strengthening and resilience building efforts.

19 (6) An analysis of the efforts of other actors in
20 global basic education policy and programming to
21 provide education during COVID–19, including part-
22 ner organizations, donors, and bilateral and multilat-
23 eral organizations, and the role of USAID in those
24 efforts.

1 (7) Opportunities to partner and support ef-
2 forts to expand access to digital infrastructure,
3 internet connectivity, and learning resources in areas
4 that lack access to digital and remote learning infra-
5 structure and resources, including rural and remote
6 communities.

7 (c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The report required by
8 subsection (a) shall be made available to the public.

9 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES
10 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
11 gressional committees” means—

12 (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
13 the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

14 (2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
15 Committee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
16 resentatives.

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