

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1500

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 12, 2021

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

AN ACT

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 United States Agency for International Development 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Before the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (com-
7 monly referred to as “COVID–19”) pandemic began,
8 258,000,000 children were out of school globally, in-
9 cluding 130,000,000 girls.

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

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

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

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

23 (6) School closure and remote learning is espe-
24 cially burdensome on girls, who are frequently ex-
25 pected to shoulder more household chores and re-

1 sponsibilities and are more vulnerable to gender-
2 based violence.

3 (7) During the Ebola epidemic, nationwide
4 school closures in Sierra Leone in 2014 led to in-
5 creased instances of sexual- and gender-based vio-
6 lence, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and child
7 labor for girls.

8 (8) More than 60 percent of national distance
9 learning alternatives rely exclusively on online plat-
10 forms but two-thirds of the world's school aged chil-
11 dren, or 1,300,000,000 children aged 3 through 17,
12 do not have internet connection in their homes, and
13 schools and local learning centers also frequently
14 have inadequate internet connectivity. Eighty per-
15 cent of students in sub-Saharan Africa lack such ac-
16 cess, with an even higher rate for girls.

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

24 (10) Before the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee
25 children were twice as likely to be out of school as

1 other youth, and school closures and a lack of access
2 to distance learning tools threaten to make the edu-
3 cation gap among refugee children even more severe.

4 (11) The economic downturn caused by the
5 COVID–19 pandemic could lead to an education fi-
6 nancing gap of \$77,000,000,000 in low- and middle-
7 income countries over the next 2 years.

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

12 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

13 It is the policy of the United States that United
14 States-funded basic education programs operating in low-
15 and middle-income countries should seek to—

16 (1) provide inclusive learning opportunities for
17 students and teachers, especially for the most
18 marginalized, including girls, children with disabil-
19 ities, and previously out of school children;

20 (2) build local capacity and help countries
21 strengthen their education systems, including oppor-
22 tunities for early childhood development;

23 (3) improve the availability, delivery, and qual-
24 ity of education services from early childhood
25 through secondary education;

1 (4) improve equity and safety in education serv-
2 ices; and

3 (5) support the return of children to school who
4 have experienced interruptions in their education
5 due to the COVID–19 pandemic and work to enroll
6 previously out-of-school children and youth, particu-
7 larly the most marginalized.

8 **SEC. 4. REPORT.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
10 date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of
11 the United States Agency for International Development,
12 acting through the Senior Coordinator for International
13 Basic Education Assistance and in consultation with the
14 Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s
15 Empowerment, shall submit to the appropriate congres-
16 sional committees a report on the impact of the COVID–
17 19 pandemic on United States Agency for International
18 Development basic education programs.

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

22 (1) An assessment of the impact of COVID–19
23 on such basic education programs, including the
24 magnitude of learning loss that will result from pro-
25 tracted school closures and the specific effects of

1 school and learning space closures on marginalized
2 children and youth, including girls, minority popu-
3 lations, displaced children, and those with disabil-
4 ities.

5 (2) An assessment comparing academic out-
6 comes of beneficiaries of United States Agency for
7 International Development basic education pro-
8 grams, as practical and appropriate, between those
9 that attend schools that remain closed or continue to
10 operate remotely since the start of the COVID-19
11 pandemic and schools that have resumed in-person
12 instruction.

13 (3) A description of the effectiveness, cost, ac-
14 cessibility, and reach of the most commonly used
15 forms of distance learning in low- and middle-income
16 countries and low-resource contexts.

17 (4) A description of efforts to pivot and adapt
18 such basic education programs during the COVID-
19 19 pandemic, including an overview of existing data
20 on funding and programmatic focus disaggregated
21 by gender, country, education level, and disability.

22 (5) An identification and description of any
23 gaps in, or barriers to, reaching and educating
24 marginalized populations, such as girls, children
25 with disabilities, displaced children, or other children

adversely affected by the COVID–19 pandemic with distance learning interventions.

(6) A description of the United States Agency for International Development’s plan and needed authorities and resources to prevent degradation of such basic education programs and to support, as necessary and appropriate, continued distance learning interventions, safe school reopenings, assessments of student learning levels, remedial and accelerated learning, re-enrollment campaigns for out-of-school children and youth, and education system strengthening and resilience-building efforts.

(7) An analysis of the coordination between the United States Agency for International Development and other actors in global basic education policy and programming to provide education during the COVID–19 pandemic, including partner organizations, faith based-organizations, donors, and multi-lateral organizations.

(8) A description of opportunities to partner and support efforts to expand access to digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and learning resources in areas that lack access to digital and remote learning infrastructure and resources, including rural and remote communities.

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

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

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

9 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
10 the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

Passed the House of Representatives June 29, 2021.

Attest: **CHERYL L. JOHNSON,**
Clerk.