

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Green,

The Members of the Congressional International Basic Education Caucus encourage you to include education, with a focus on expanding distance learning opportunities for children and youth in need, in USAID's multi-sector strategy for the COVID-19 response in order to address the critical needs of the 1.5 billion children and youth whose education has been interrupted by this crisis.

More than 188 countries have implemented nationwide school closures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. These closures, while necessary, have disrupted the education of nearly 90 percent of the world's student population. While our foreign assistance efforts must seek to contain the spread of the virus, we must also acknowledge that a child's need to continue their education is essential during times of crisis.

High- and low-tech education programs that offer distance learning opportunities through self-directed study materials, SMS engagement, community radio, tv, and online instruction can help children and youth continue their education, connect with their peers, and retain a sense of normalcy. We have a responsibility to equitably administer these programs and resources to ensure that all children, including girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups will benefit from distance learning while their schools are closed.

The consequences of protracted school closures around the world are undeniable. In addition to the loss of instructional time for children, school closures can negatively affect children's mental and physical health, nutrition, and well-being. In low-income, fragile, and conflict-affected areas, school closures may significantly increase the risk of child labor, early marriage, sexual exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups. Where gaps persist between girls' and boys' access to education, girls who stay home from school are at particularly high risk of not returning. Timely U.S. foreign assistance efforts can mitigate these risks by providing innovative solutions to support the continued development and education of children and youth around the world.

We encourage USAID to take the necessary and reasonable steps to ensure that education is not neglected in this crisis. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

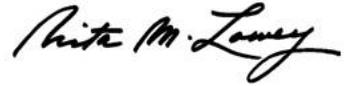
Sincerely,



MIKE QUIGLEY
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



BRIAN FITZPATRICK
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



NITA M. LOWEY
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

SIGNERS:

Raúl M. Grijalva
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Jimmy Panetta
Ilhan Omar
Ted Deutch
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David Trone
Juan Vargas
Bill Foster
Bobby L. Rush
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
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Colin Z. Allred
Lois Frankel
Eleanor Holmes Norton

cc: Mr. John Barsa, Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean
Ms. Julie Cram, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator and Senior Coordinator for Basic Education