



**USAID**  
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## FACT SHEET

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# USAID Education Strategy Provides “Room to Learn”



Photo credit: Jide Adeniyi-Jones

“61 million children still lack access to education—we must give them Room to Learn.” – USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah

Developing countries have succeeded in reducing the number out-of-school primary-aged children by 37 million since 1999. However, progress towards universal access has stagnated, and more than 61 million primary-aged children still remain out of school, with 40 percent in countries affected by conflict. USAID already works in partnership with many of these countries to increase equitable access to education for learners in crisis or conflict-affected environments.

## ROOM TO LEARN

Additional targeted efforts are necessary to accelerate progress toward the Second Millennium Development Goal (MDG2) of universal primary education. As we enter the final 1,000 days of the MDGs, USAID is redoubling its efforts to ensure that children have access to school and acquire essential basic skills. Working closely with UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown and the Global Education First Initiative, USAID is exploring ways to increase equitable access to education in six countries with high out-of-school populations: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, and South Sudan. This effort will include close examination of USAID’s ongoing and planned programs for ways to better partner, innovate, reduce costs, and maximize impact. To kick off this effort, the USG is hosting a high-level policy dialogue at the White House with participation from the governments of DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan. We plan to:

- Work with Ministers of Finance and Education to understand and address critical challenges and bottlenecks facing the education sectors in their countries
- Advance “Room to Learn”, Goal 3 of USAID’s Education Strategy, through new and innovative programming and partnerships to accelerate equitable access to education

## USAID COMMITMENT

Through “Room to Learn”, Goal 3 of our Education Strategy, USAID is committed to:

- **Improving equitable access to education** for 15 million learners by 2015 in crisis and conflict environments, focusing on the most vulnerable such as displaced populations, ethnic minorities and war-affected youth
- **Providing safe access to schools** for students and teachers, especially for girls
- **Rebuilding education systems**, including the teaching corps, and improving the management of school systems
- **Preventing and mitigating conflict and crisis** through the development of specialized education programs and community engagement

- Retain education as a high-level U.S. government development priority and reinforce the idea that every child, everywhere should have “Room to Learn”
- Contribute to the efforts of Education First, the Global Partnership for Education, donors, private sector, civil society, and developing country partners to generate renewed and additional commitment for evidence-based interventions designed to collaborate on country level education assistance strategies to get children into school and learning



Photo credit: Aabira SherAfghan

In the three countries here today, USAID aims to improve equitable access for over 1.5 million students and increase learning for over six million children:

Country	USAID Target: Numbers of children gaining access to school	USAID Target: Numbers of children benefitting from improved education quality
DRC	450,000	1,875,450
Nigeria	500,000	3,000,000
South Sudan	600,000	1,246,178
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,550,000</b>	<b>6,121,628</b>



## BACKGROUND

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# USAID's Education Strategy and the United Nations' Education First Initiative

## WHAT IS THE USAID EDUCATION STRATEGY?

The USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015 is premised on the development hypothesis that education is both foundational to human development and critically linked to broad-based economic growth and democratic governance. Research has demonstrated that education raises individual incomes and can contribute significantly to economic growth. Education helps ensure that this growth is broad-based and reaches the poorest. Through its impact on economic growth, education helps catalyze transitions to democracy and helps preserve robust democratic governance. Education also helps improve health outcomes. Access to education is a crucial precondition to educational impact, but what matters most thereafter is the quality of education. Because of these important links to other powerful drivers of development, educational investments should be understood as dynamic and transformational levers of change.

Through its Education Strategy, USAID is pursuing three global education goals by 2015:

- **Goal 1:** Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades
- **Goal 2:** Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals
- **Goal 3:** Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners

## WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS' GLOBAL EDUCATION FIRST INITIATIVE?

Education First is a global initiative led by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. The Secretary General appointed former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown as the UN Special Envoy for Global Education. The Special Envoy is working closely with all key partners to help galvanize support for Education First. The initiative gathers a broad spectrum of world leaders and advocates who all aspire to use the transformative power of education to build a better future for all. The initiative aims to raise the political profile of education, strengthen the global movement to achieve quality education and generate additional and sufficient funding through sustained advocacy efforts. Achieving gains in education will have an impact on all the Millennium Development Goals, from lower child and maternal mortality, to better health, higher income and more environmentally-friendly societies.

To provide the desperately needed "breakthrough in education," Education First will:

- Rally together a broad spectrum of actors for the final push to 2015 and ensure delivery on the promise of universal access to primary education

- Spur a global movement to put quality, relevant and transformative education right at the heart of the social, political and development agendas
- Generate additional and sufficient funding for education through sustained global advocacy efforts

## WHAT ARE THE LINKAGES BETWEEN EDUCATION FIRST AND USAID'S "ROOM TO LEARN"?

Both are based on the premise that education has the power to transform and improve lives. More concretely, Goal 3, called "Room to Learn", of USAID's Education Strategy seeks to increase equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments. It is directly linked with the first two priority areas of Education First: "put every child in school" and "improve the quality of learning." Both USAID's "Room to Learn" and Education First recognize the connections and dynamics between conflict and education. Over a third of the world's out-of-school children live in conflict-affected poor countries; in many of these same countries USAID programs are working to increase equitable access to education. These programs help to restore—or build for the first time—the system conditions that will make learning successful.