



Department
for International
Development



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Thank you again for your letter of 27 April on the International Development Committee's inquiry into "DFID's work on education; leaving no one behind?" I understand that you will now seek to finalise the inquiry, and I look forward to receiving the final report. In the meantime, I am pleased to set out an initial response to your questions and recommendations.

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4

I agree we face a huge challenge to get all children into school and learning. Despite these challenges, the UK has taken a leadership role and has a strong reputation in this sector. We have consistently sought to expand basic education while at the same time increasing global attention on the need to improve learning outcomes.

Given the significant challenges ahead of us, we intend to build on our experience and draw on the most up to date evidence to review and refresh our education policy paper. This is an opportunity to look again at how best to meet the needs of the most marginalised children, how we will drive a focus on standards and quality and the role of results based finance in delivering on these.

Meeting the needs of the most marginalised

As you point out, the very poorest, and most marginalised – including girls, refugees and displaced people, and those with disabilities – are often denied the opportunities that education offers. We need a more determined effort globally to reach these groups.

I have been repeatedly struck by the multiple barriers that prevent a poor rural disabled girl attending and learning at school. We must break down these barriers. We now have better evidence – including from DFID's own programmes and research – of what works to help marginalised girls learn. We need to see this knowledge applied throughout the international system. I have also said I will deliver a step change within DFID and across the international system to ensure that those with disabilities are consistently included, which means addressing their education needs.

In addition to this, we must also acknowledge and address the hugely detrimental impact which violence has on children staying in school and learning.

The UK has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response in the worst crises, and you were able to see this for yourselves when you visited Jordan and Lebanon. The UK government was instrumental in setting up Education Cannot Wait (ECW), an innovation in the way it spans the humanitarian and development response, to provide education for children in emergency situations. As a member of ECW's High Level Steering Group, I will shine a spotlight on the education needs of those forgotten children, while working relentlessly to drive up performance across delivery partners.

Improving learning outcomes

Learning must be at the heart of how DFID approaches education. We have consistently supported global efforts to have better data and statistics in order to demonstrate where improvements are taking place. Improving standards and quality is an area where we know the UK has a unique offer. A key priority that we need should be tackled is the acute crisis in the teacher workforce and we are examining the evidence to support this as part of our policy refresh. This must include tackling endemic issues such as violence in the classroom.

Our priority is to ensure that children receive effective education wherever they are. The Government will continue to support provision of non-state education where evidence shows that it is needed and appropriate – for example in the slums of Lagos. We will seek to ensure that such institutions are effectively regulated and incorporated in education sector plans where appropriate.

We will also look at the balance of our support to early learning, basic and secondary education as part of our policy refresh. In doing so, we will consider the support provided by others and where we have comparative advantage. The World Bank, for example, has been leading on early childhood development. As Lord Bates said in his letter to you of 1 February, we will continue to examine the case for support to secondary education, particularly for its importance in reaching adolescent girls – and press others to do so: this is a particularly underfunded area. Secondary education is really important in improving girls' life chances, preventing child marriage, reducing HIV infection, delaying early motherhood, and in time leading to women having healthier children and families.

Financing education

As you rightly say, none of this can be achieved without a significant increase in global finance. The UK will continue to champion education on the global stage, and will encourage others to join us and do more on education financing. We have continued to invest significantly in education and, crucially, to encourage partner governments to boost their own investment in education.

But we also need to ensure the money we are spending, including through multilateral mechanisms is transparent and effective. As you will be aware, we have linked our finance to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to improved results and progress on reform priorities. I propose to take a similar approach to the upcoming GPE replenishment in early 2018. We intend to adopt a similar approach to ECW. We need these global instruments to work harder to drive up the performance of countries' education systems, so that more of the money invested in education leads to real learning outcomes.

We have been following the proposal for an International Finance Facility for Education closely, and will continue to engage with the Education Commission and the international financial institutions as it develops.

I would be happy to discuss these issues further, as you finalise your inquiry.

W/L all good wishes
[Signature]

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
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