

**Written Testimony**  
**House Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs**  
**Luther Luedtke, Vice-chair, Basic Education Coalition**

**April 14, 2011**

My name is Luther Luedtke. I am the President and CEO of Education Development Center, and I am honored to appear before you today in my role as a Vice-chair of the Basic Education Coalition, a group of 19 humanitarian and development institutions dedicated to ensuring that the world's children receive a quality basic education. The members of the Basic Education Coalition are deeply appreciative of the \$925 million Congress appropriated for international basic education programs in fiscal year 2010, and we sincerely thank Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey for your strong and consistent leadership in providing hope and opportunity to the world's children. For fiscal year 2012, the Coalition has recommended a U.S. investment of \$1.25 billion in international basic education programs, with at least \$750 million of that amount coming from the Development Assistance account. However, we appreciate that Congress is now grappling with hard spending choices and tough political realities. Our view is that cuts below the FY2010 enacted level of \$925 million would significantly and adversely impact our considerable progress to date.

I would like to focus my remarks on three issues: (1) education as a long-term solution to our security and economic challenges; (2) the real cost efficiencies of basic education programs, particularly for women and girls; and (3) how and why we must improve education quality.

Recent headlines are crowded with news of global unrest and rebellion. These conflicts are at least partly rooted in the millions of children and youth across the globe who are not receiving a quality, relevant education, and are without hope for gainful employment. I just returned from a visit to Pakistan, where almost half of children aged 7 to 16 from the poorest households are out of school, and many of those attending school are not learning. EDC and several other BEC members are

working to address these problems. EDC itself is working with the Government of Pakistan to improve teacher training and performance nationwide.

The problem includes not only the Mideast, where instability is pervasive, but sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and many other regions. Of the 67 million children of primary school age who are out-of-school, 28 million, or 42%, are in conflict-affected poor countries. There are an additional 74 million adolescents also out of school. Each year, millions of students who have attended some school are dropping out before the fifth grade, in great measure because of the poor quality of their education, and overcrowded and under-resourced classrooms. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, about 10 million children drop out of primary school every year. For those children who do complete the primary cycle, millions are emerging with reading, writing and numeracy skills far below appropriate levels.

While the goal of access to education is very important, it is clearly not enough. If we are to meet the real promise of education for all, students need to stay in school and they need to learn while they are there.

Without a strong global commitment on education, both formal and non-formal, the problem of restive, poorly educated youth is expected to grow exponentially. By 2050, there will be 1.2 billion youth around the world. Nine out of ten of those young people will be living in developing countries. Population growth is exploding in those countries where we see the highest illiteracy rates, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

According to UNESCO's most recent Global Monitoring Report, over 60% of the population in many conflict-affected countries is under age 25. Good quality education, including secondary education, is critical to overcoming the economic despair that often contributes to violent conflict.

Education is a tool of stability. It also helps expand our overseas markets and promote U.S. employment. Today, the fastest-growing markets for America's goods are in developing countries, representing 40% of U.S. exports and one out of every five American jobs. For every 10% increase in U.S. exports, there is a 7% boost in U.S. employment. Educating the world's poor is essential to building the stable trading partners that growing U.S. export markets require.

Ensuring that children and a burgeoning youth population are in school --and learning -- is also important for political reform. A population that is able to read, write and think critically is far more able to hold its leaders accountable. By equipping populations vulnerable to civil war and regional conflict with the skills and capacities to shape their own future, the U.S. also can better promote lasting peace. Research indicates that each additional year of formal schooling for males reduces their risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20%.

Your Subcommittee faces many hard choices in prioritizing the use of increasingly scarce resources. There is no better way to stretch our development dollar than to invest in education. Take global health. Young people who have completed primary education are roughly half as likely to contract HIV and AIDS as those with little or no education. Women with secondary education are far more likely to be aware of measures for preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which currently infects 370,000 children a year. A recent study found that half of the reduction of child mortality over the past 40 years was due to better education of women.

Consider also food security. One study of 63 countries demonstrated that educating women was by far the most important factor in reducing malnutrition - more important even than improvements to the food supply. And, educated farmers are considerably more productive, more likely to understand the causes and treatment of crop diseases, and better able to introduce new farming techniques. In many countries, the school functions as the center of community life and a

focal point for other development efforts, such as deworming and ensuring access to clean water, as envisioned in Mrs. Lowey's "Communities of Learning" approach.

With relatively modest investments and innovative, low-cost measures, we can greatly expand our reach. For example, \$10 million in spending means that an estimated 100,000 more children annually can receive a good quality primary school education. Through innovative low-cost technologies, such as interactive and long-distance radio instruction, and through cell phones, computers and the internet, we can now reach many more children who would otherwise remain marginalized and vulnerable.

Cost effectiveness associated with quality basic education is even greater when we educate girls. Educating girls and women creates a ripple effect throughout society, boosting economic productivity and reducing poverty, enhancing social status, increasing gender equality, delaying sexual activity, curbing child marriage, increasing per capita income, and enhancing the chances that each successive generation of girls will receive an education. For every year beyond fourth grade that girls go to school, wages rise 20%. When an educated woman's income increases, she will reinvest 90 percent of that money in her family, compared to 30-40 percent for a man. Education also saves women's lives. If all women in sub-Saharan Africa had a secondary education, an estimated 1.8 million lives could be saved each year.

Since the beginning of the Education for All movement, we have made considerable progress on improving access. It is now crucial that we focus on improving the quality of education.

To improve quality, we will need to help governments train significant numbers of new, qualified teachers, and support existing ones. We need to help them ensure that teachers employ effective, relevant curricula, have adequate time with students, and promote methods of active student learning. They need appropriate textbooks, blackboards and other modern learning

materials. Pre-school age children must reach school ready and able to learn. We also have a particular responsibility to measure rigorously our impact, make sure that our projects and programs are achieving results, and share our results widely.

All of these efforts require resources. They also require strong U.S. leadership. The U.S. has a long track record in basic education, which reflects a distinct comparative advantage, particularly for capacity building, active partnerships with governments and civil society, technology and innovation, and learning outcomes. With your support, USAID has been building back its own education capacity, and has now introduced a new education strategy that focuses on literacy, workforce development, and educational access for children in conflict zones. The strategy includes laudable time-bound objectives. We also are now much better able to track our results, such as with assessment tools in early grade reading. USAID is now utilizing a set of new learning outcomes indicators that will give us a much clearer picture of our progress. And, when the U.S. does lead, other donors follow, allowing us to leverage our dollars.

With the benefit of strong Congressional engagement, long-term predictable funding, innovative solutions, and strategies that directly address country needs, we can have a deeper, more sustainable impact on the lives and hopes of the world's poor children. The Basic Education Coalition looks forward to working with your Subcommittee, Mrs. Granger, with you, Ranking Member Mrs. Lowey, and with the rest of the Congress, to ensure that quality basic education remains a pillar of our foreign assistance. By so doing, and by ensuring program accountability and impact, we can help alleviate poverty, strengthen societies, foster stability and security, and spur economic growth, abroad and here at home. Thank you for your support and for your consideration of our request.