

Laurence Robertson M.P.
Member of Parliament for Tewkesbury



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

CC: Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

14th March 2022

Re: Tackling the Global Learning Crisis

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We would like to thank you for the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's work to improve children's access to education around the world. Although challenges remain, over the past two decades, there have been a range of global education interventions, declarations and initiatives aimed at achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all children. The UK should be proud of the role it has played in driving forward this progress in this regard.

Budgets have grown, more teachers have been recruited and a focus on gender equality has meant that since 1995 the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school has risen by 180 million globally, as well as a sharp rise in attendance for other marginalised groups including children living with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

However, despite these efforts, in many countries learning outcomes remain staggeringly low and the skills children acquire from their education remain limited. This global learning crisis has meant that even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the World Bank estimated that 90% of 10-year-olds in low-income countries could not read and understand a simple story. This "Learning Poverty" is a global crisis for children's learning.

At a global parliamentary exchange some of us recently attended, which was organised by IPNEd, Results UK and Results Canada, we heard about the very real risk that many of the current generation of school children face worse educational prospects than the generation before them. As a result of the pandemic, ‘Learning Poverty’ is expected to rise from 53% to 70% of all children in middle and low income countries. The global community must not sit back and allow this to happen.

Urgent action is required if we are to reverse this trend and allow children to develop the crucial foundational skills they need in literacy and maths in order to prosper. There are several immediate steps that the UK Government can take to better the impact of its education ODA on learning outcomes.

- Commit to making improvement of foundational learning outcomes a central and standalone priority for the FCDO’s education ODA investments.
- Measure impact on learning outcomes at regular intervals through the course of programme cycles and integrate such measurement into the design stage of all UK ODA education programming.
- Use its voice at multilateral fora, such as at the Global Partnership for Education, World Bank and Education Cannot Wait, to promote better accountability on improving learning outcomes, and encourage other governments to do the same.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or a member of your ministerial team at a time of your convenience to discuss this important matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Laurence Robertson MP
Bambos Charalambous MP

Robert Halfon MP
Sarah Champion MP
Lord German OBE
Marion Fellows MP
Chris Law MP
Kate Osamor MP
Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

Anne McLaughlin MP
Bob Blackman MP
Patrick Grady MP
Emma Hardy MP
Virendra Sharma MP
Christian Wakeford MP
Dr Neil Hudson MP