

Debate Pack

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CDP-0014 (2025)

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United Nations International Day of Education 2025

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1 Background

On Thursday 23 January 2025 at 1.30pm there will be a debate in Westminster Hall on the UN International Day of Education. It will be led by Bambos Charalambous MP. The topic for debate was selected by the Backbench Business Committee.

1.1 UN International Day of Education

In 2018, the UN General Assembly [proclaimed 24 January as the “International Day of Education”](#). It said education:

plays a key role in building sustainable and resilient societies and contributes to the achievement of all of the other Sustainable Development Goals; it increases the productivity of individuals and strengthens the potential for economic growth, develops the skills needed for decent work, develops the professional skills needed for sustainable development, including in the fields of water and sanitation, green energy and the conservation of natural resources, helps to eradicate poverty and hunger, contributes to improved health, promotes gender equality and can reduce inequality, and promotes peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights.¹

The UN General Assembly resolution called on all states to help meet [sustainable development goal \(SDG\) four](#), to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.²

The [SDGs were adopted in 2015](#) and are intended to be met by 2030. Both [Conservative](#) and [Labour governments](#) have acknowledged global progress on many of the SDGs has stalled and greater global efforts are required to ensure they are met.³

Theme for 2025 international day

For 2025, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has [named the day’s theme](#) as “artificial intelligence (AI) and education: preserving human agency in a world of automation”. It says AI raises “critical questions about how to preserve, redefine, and, ideally, elevate human agency”.⁴

¹ UN General Assembly (UNGA), [A/RES/73/25](#), 6 December 2018

² UN SDGs, [SDG 4](#)

³ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), [International development in a contested world](#), November 2023 and [A reformed multilateral system for peace and prosperity](#), 23 September 2024

⁴ UNESCO, [International Day of Education 2025](#)

1.2

Global progress in education

UN SDG reports

The UN publishes annual reports on [global progress on the sustainable development goals](#). The most recent was published in June 2024. Progress on a selection of indicators on education are summarised below. Note that some of SDG data is incomplete.

Proficiency in reading and mathematics, primary level

While the proportion has risen in Europe and North America, from 2000 to 2019 the proportion of children and young people achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics at primary level fell across the globe:

- Mathematics: 49% in 2000 to 44% in 2019
- Reading: 61% in 2000 to 58% in 2019

In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion achieving a minimum level in mathematics fell from 16% to 11% and in reading from 34% to 30% across the same period.⁵

Proficiency in reading and mathematics, lower secondary level

At lower secondary level, proficiency increased in both mathematics and reading globally (note there is no data for sub-Saharan Africa):

- Mathematics: 47% of children in 2000 to 51% in 2019
- Reading: 62% in 2000 to 64% in 2019

Declines were reported in both Oceania (excluding New Zealand and Australia) and the eastern and south-eastern Asia world regions.⁶

Completion rate of education

Completion rates of education has increased across the globe at all levels:

- Primary level: increased from 77% in 2000 to 88% in 2023 globally. As of 2023, 89% of girls and 87% of boys complete this level of schooling.
- Lower secondary level: increased from 60% in 2000 to 78% in 2023 globally. As of 2023, 78% of girls and 76% of boys complete this level.

⁵ UN Economic and Social Council, [Progress towards the SDGs: UN report of the Secretary General: supplementary information](#) (PDF), June 2024, indicator 4.1.1

⁶ As above, indicator 4.1.1

- Upper secondary level: increased from 38% in 2000 to 59% in 2023. As of 2023, 61% of girls and 58% of boys complete upper secondary.⁷

Variations, however, remain between global regions. The lowest completion rates at primary range from 67% in sub-Saharan Africa and 68% in Oceania to 100% in Europe and North America. At lower secondary level, 45% of girls complete their education in [least developed countries](#) compared to 43% of boys.⁸

School facilities and infrastructure

There is substantial variation in access to infrastructure by schools:

- Electricity access: in 2022 77% of primary schools had access to electricity globally. However, this was the case in only 44% in sub-Saharan Africa and 51% across all least developed countries.⁹
- Internet access: 44% of primary schools and 69% of upper secondary schools had access to the internet in 2022. In southern Asia, only 36% of primary schools had access and 64% at secondary.¹⁰

UNESCO report on global education in 2024/25

UNESCO's [global monitoring report for 2024/25](#) said that globally 251 million children were out of school. This has [fallen from 390 million in 2000](#). Of those in 2024/25, 129 million were boys and 122 million were girls. Factors driving this included poverty, social norms against educational participation and armed conflict:

Globally, 251 million children, adolescents and youth are out of school, with a reduction of just 1% since 2015. The out-of-school rate is 33% in low-income, 19% in lower-middle-income, 8% in upper-middle-income and 3% in high-income countries [...]

conflict also takes a major toll on education development. The primary completion rate has increased four times faster in Togo than in Yemen, two countries that were at the same level in 2006.¹¹

When assessing academic performance, the monitoring report also said that globally “socioeconomic status has a more significant impact on academic disparity than gender” on several measures:

⁷ UN Economic and Social Council, [Progress towards the SDGs: UN report of the Secretary General: supplementary information](#) (PDF), indicator 4.1.2

⁸ As above, indicator 4.1.2

⁹ AS above, indicator 4.a.1

¹⁰ As above, indicator 4.a.1

¹¹ UNESCO, [Global education monitoring report 2024/25](#), 2024, pp 140,150

In reading, only 54 students from the lowest [income] quintile reach the minimum proficiency level for every 100 students from the highest quintile; in mathematics, the ratio is 47 to every 100 students [...]

Disparities by wealth are particularly wide in literacy rates, including in low-income countries. In a sample of 30 low- and middle-income countries, there are 53 adult males from the poorest 20% of households that could read a simple sentence for every 100 males from the richest 20% of households who could do so.¹²

The report also notes that median public expenditure spending on education has fallen from 4.4% of gross domestic product in 2015 to 4% in 2022, representing a total of US\$5.8 trillion. The value of overseas aid for education reached a high of US\$16.6 billion in 2022, representing 7.6% of global aid.¹³ It noted spending levels were insufficient to meet the increase in enrolment rates:

any increases in the prioritization of education in low-income countries are neither uniform nor large enough to compensate for the 24% increase in enrolment levels (from pre-primary to tertiary education) since 2015. In middle-income countries, the deprioritization of education coincides with an 8% increase in enrolment and is only possible to maintain with higher out-of-pocket spending by household¹⁴

UNESCO also reports that globally there has been a shortage of qualified and interested candidates for teaching positions in upper and high-income countries and a shortage of teaching positions in low and lower-middle income countries.¹⁵

Other challenges facing education access

In addition to the above, there are further issues affecting educational participation and attainment, including:

- Covid-19 pandemic legacy: in 2023 the World Bank estimated that school closures made in response to the pandemic [resulted in nearly one billion children missing out](#) of at least one year of in-person schooling.¹⁶ In 2024, analysis of 72 countries for the Bank suggested [widespread losses in attainment](#), especially for those experiencing longer closure periods, for boys, immigrants, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁷
- Participation of women and girls: women and girls are often [unable to participate in education](#). [Reasons including](#) higher rates of poverty, child marriage, gender-based violence, negative gender norms and

¹² UNESCO, [Global education monitoring report 2024/25](#), 2024, pp210-11

¹³ As above, pp274-5

¹⁴ As above, p279

¹⁵ As above, pp269-70

¹⁶ World Bank, [Covid-19's impact on young people \[...\]](#), 16 February 2023

¹⁷ World Bank, [Covid-19 school closures causes a significant drop \[...\]](#), 25 January 2024

behaviours, and lack of legal rights to participate.¹⁸ Analysis for the Center for Global Development argues girls' education should continue to be prioritised in areas where girls' attainment and participation has equalled that of boys, because it compensates for often requiring higher educational outcomes to achieve equal labour market outcomes and because of the [wider significance of education](#), such as improving food security and safety.¹⁹

- Disability: Unicef estimates there are [240 million children with disabilities worldwide](#). Compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities are 49% more likely to have never attended school.²⁰ Globally, only around half of primary schools [have facilities for students with disabilities](#).²¹
- Armed conflict and displacement: in 2024 the UN Children's Fund, Unicef, [reported that around 473 million children live in areas affected by conflict](#). This represented 19% of children worldwide, up from 10% in the 1990s. Children also represent around 49% of internally displaced people across the globe.²² The NGO, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, [estimates that there were around 6,000 reported attacks](#) on education and military use of schools and universities in 2022 and 2023. This was up 20% compared to the previous two years.²³
- Lack of learning facilities at home: in 2024 the World Bank reported most students in lower income countries and the bottom 50% in middle-income countries (measured by household income) [lack access to the internet](#) which would allow them to learn at home and catch up on education losses due to the pandemic.²⁴

¹⁸ UNESCO, [Her atlas: status report on girls' and women's right to education](#), 2022; S Psaki and others, [Policies and interventions to remove gender-related barriers \[...\]](#), Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2022, vol 18

¹⁹ Center for Global Education, [Girls' education and women's equality](#), May 2022

²⁰ Unicef Data, [Seen, counted, included \[...\]](#), December 2024

²¹ UN, [The SDG report 2024](#), 2024, p17

²² Unicef, [2024 "one of the worst years in Unicef's history" for children in conflict](#), 28 December 2024

²³ Global Coalition, [Education under attack 2024](#), introduction

²⁴ World Bank, [Four of the biggest problems facing education \[...\]](#), 12 September 2023

2 UK aid policy and spending

2.1 UK aid policy on education

Labour Government statements

In 2024 the Labour Government [commissioned three reviews](#) into international development policy.²⁵ These are currently [being considered](#) by the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy.²⁶ The government has said improving the lives of women and girls is [one of its priorities](#) for international aid.²⁷

In December 2024 the International Development Minister Annelise Dodds set out [how the government would prioritise education](#) in its aid spending:

The UK Government prioritises reaching the most marginalised children with basic literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, including through our 18 bilateral education programmes. Our centrally managed Scaling Access and Learning in Education and Data for Foundational Learning programmes will also transform the effectiveness of education spending in low- and lower middle-income countries and improve learning outcomes on literacy and numeracy. Our investment in the International Finance Facility for Education will unlock an additional \$1 billion in education finance for lower middle-income country governments to invest in their reform agendas.

The UK is a top bilateral donor to the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), both global funds delivering education in crisis settings.²⁸

A list of UK aid programmes focused on education can be found on the FCDO's [Development Tracker website](#).

Conservative Government

The Conservative Government launched a [ten-year international development strategy in 2022](#) and [white paper in 2023](#). The white paper said educating girls was a “top and long-standing priority for the UK”. Objectives included:

tackling the global education crisis through two G7- endorsed global objectives by 2026: to get 40 million more girls in school and 20 million more girls reading by 10 years old, or by the end of primary education [...]

²⁵ FCDO, [Foreign Secretary launches expert reviews](#), 9 September 2024

²⁶ FCDO, [Development aid: reviews](#), 13 January 2025

²⁷ FCDO, [UK development minister to push for gender equality \[...\]](#), 23 October 2024

²⁸ PQ 16142 [[Developing countries: education](#)], 4 December 2024

Our vision for 2030 is to see transformed education systems, providing quality teaching and learning outcomes [...] ²⁹

A separate policy document, [Every girl goes to school](#), was published by the government in 2021, to cover the five years to 2026. This set out three pillars on education: advancing a global coalition to advance girls learning, directing UK aid efforts to increase girls' participation and retention in school, and championing and disseminating related research. The government also published an [International women and girls strategy, 2023 to 2030](#), in 2023.

2.2 How much does the UK spend on education overseas?

In 2023, the UK provided £336 million in bilateral aid targeted at education. This, along with equivalent figures for the previous few years, breaks down into sub-sectors as follows:

UK bilateral aid spending on education, by sub-sector							
£ millions, not adjusted for inflation							
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary education	318.6	219.2	315.0	134.7	85.3	82.3	70.8
Higher education	93.9	102.4	104.5	76.5	99.0	80.8	98.8
Education policy and administrative management	118.6	130.1	117.1	80.3	103.8	60.9	59.5
Upper secondary education	72.8	66.5	87.1	71.4	43.6	32.1	27.0
Education facilities and training	11.1	8.3	36.9	78.5	56.8	22.1	10.1
Educational research	26.5	34.7	28.0	26.9	23.8	21.9	18.4
Vocational training	35.2	29.7	35.2	24.5	10.3	16.8	9.9
Teacher training	25.4	25.3	21.1	22.0	14.4	15.9	16.8
Advanced technical and managerial training	14.3	16.4	15.5	12.8	7.9	6.0	8.4
Basic life skills for adults	37.6	20.3	6.4	5.1	9.6	11.2	9.3
Early childhood education	3.3	4.8	8.4	4.3	1.4	2.6	6.0
Basic life skills for youth	-	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	1.0
Lower secondary education	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0.0
Total	757.3	657.6	775.4	537.1	456.0	352.5	336.0

Source: FCDO, [Statistics on International Development: final UK aid spend 2023](#), 26 September 2024, and earlier editions

The bilateral aid total has varied over the years. However, the total has fallen in every year since 2019, and the total for 2023 was the lowest in any year since at least 2009.

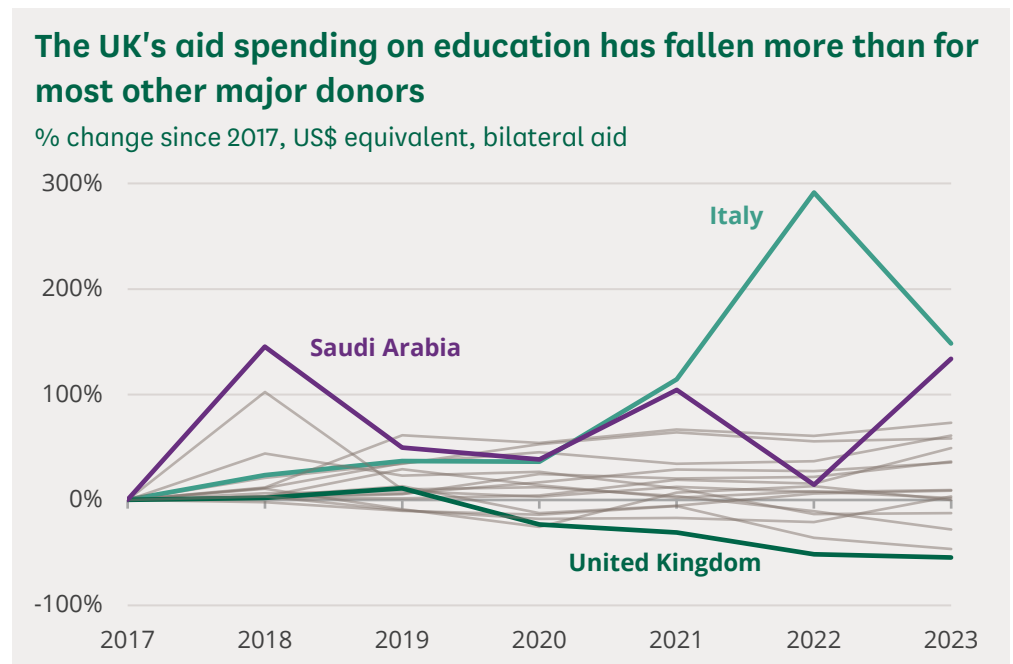
²⁹ FCDO, [International development in a contested world](#), 2023, pp85-6

This includes only bilateral aid – that is, aid provided for a specific programme or purpose. The UK also provides contributions to the core budgets of multilateral institutions such as UN agencies or the World Bank, and some of these may also have provided aid for education – for example, the UK provided £10.5 million in multilateral aid to UNESCO in 2023.

In 2022, the UK Government [announced £430 million for the Global Partnership for Education](#) (GPE) for 2021 to 2025. The GPE [works in 90 countries and territories](#), which have 80% of the world’s out of school children.

The UK’s levels of aid for education rank highly in international terms – based on [data from the OECD](#) (which is not directly comparable to the FCDO’s figures), the UK provided the equivalent of US\$416 million in 2023 in aid for education, which is the fifth-highest among countries for which the OECD has data. (The top three were Germany, at \$3,268 million, France, at \$1,703 million, and the United States at \$1,607 million.)

However, the UK’s reduction in aid funding for education in recent years has been sharper than for most donors. As the chart below shows, the UK’s aid spending on education has more than halved since 2017, which is a larger decrease than for any other major donor (defined here as countries with average education aid spending of over \$100 million per year between 2017 and 2023).



Note: Grey lines indicate all donors with average education spending of over \$100 million per year between 2017 and 2023.

Source: OECD Data Explorer, [Creditor Reporting System data](#), retrieved 17 January 2025

2.3

How effective is UK spending on education?

In 2022, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) published [Assessing UK aid's results in education](#), with a particular focus on girl's education. The Commission rated the UK's efforts as Green/Amber, the second highest rating.

The report referenced estimates by the Department for International Development (DFID) that from 2015 to 2020 UK aid supported 15.6 million children gain a “decent education,” exceeding a commitment of 11 million. However, the ICAI noted a lack of clear measurement to ensure “decent” schooling in all circumstances. The ICAI concluded that increased global and national efforts are needed [to meet the challenges of improving the quantity and quality of learning globally](#):

Globally, more investment is needed to address the scale of the challenge, and DFID/FCDO could have done more to leverage additional education funding from other sources, but funding will not be enough. FCDO needs to build on its strengths in supporting the capacity of national education systems to ensure that all of the spending on education in partner countries, not just its own, translates into improved learning.³⁰

The Government [accepted all five of the ICAI's recommendations in its response](#), published in July 2022.³¹

³⁰ ICAI, [Assessing UK aid's results in education](#), 2022, section 6

³¹ FCDO, [FCDO response to ICAI recommendations on assessing UK aid's results](#), June 2022

3

Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[How can poverty affect education](#)

University Magazine

Anwar Abdi

14 January 2025

[Q&A: What you need to know about 'the price of inaction' in education](#)

UNESCO

20 December 2024

[Top 10 African countries with the highest out-of-school rate](#)

Business Outsider

Adekunle Agbetiloye

11 November 2024

[251 million children still out of school worldwide, UNESCO reports](#)

UN News

31 October 2024

['Dear teacher, I cannot come to school': the girls forced out of education](#)

Plan International

Joanna Biernat

7 October 2024

[Prioritise teachers to transform education](#)

National Education Union

4 October 2024

[Unlocking opportunity for the world's underprivileged children and youth: International Finance Facility for Education \(IFFEd\) commits to \\$1.5 billion for global education and skills in LMICs](#)

International Finance Facility for Education

26 Sep 2024

[10 of the biggest problems facing education](#)

Concern Worldwide

12 August 2024

Education in crisis: how crises around the world are impacting children's learning

UNICEF (blog)
Robert Jenkins
8 August 2024

Long delayed: Education for every child in Africa

Yasmine Sherif
16 June 2024

Over 18 million girls missing school in Africa as continent loses USD29 billion in education funding through flawed taxation

Action Aid
13 February 2024

4 Press releases

[Summit concludes with strong commitments to child nutrition & education](#) Southeast Asia School Meals Coalition

20 Nov 2024

The Southeast Asia School Meals Coalition Summit concluded today, marking a significant milestone in the region's efforts to enhance child nutrition and education. This first summit of its kind in the region, co-hosted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia, with the governments of the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, under the umbrella of the [School Meals Coalition](#), brought together 130 delegates from seven countries in the region and 39 partner organizations.

[251M children and youth still out of school, despite decades of progress \(UNESCO report\)](#)

UNESCO

31 October 2024 (updated 8 November 2024)

The global out-of-school population has reduced by only 1% in nearly ten years, according to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2024 unveiled today. Chronic under-investment in education, particularly in low-income countries, is one of the main causes. In synergy with the G20, chaired this year by Brazil, UNESCO calls on its Member States to leverage innovative financing mechanisms such as debt-for-education swaps.

[45,000 first graders unable to start the new school year in the Gaza Strip](#)

UNICEF

9 September 2024

Lack of access to education is impacting children's mental health, safety and development and risking their future prospects

[Statement by Laura Frigenti, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, on attacks against education](#)

Global Partnership for Education

9 September 2024

On the international day to protect education from attack, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) condemns rising numbers of attacks against educational personnel, facilities and students, and calls on all parties to uphold children's right to learn in safety.

[More than 400 million students affected by climate-related school closures since 2022](#)

World Bank Group
4 September 2024

A staggering 400 million students globally experienced school closures from extreme weather since 2022, according to a new World Bank report released today. The report examines the detrimental impacts of climate change on education in low- and middle-income countries and offers solutions to harness education to spur climate action. It also estimates that a one-time investment of \$18.51 per child can mitigate the impact from climate shocks.

[Women and girls across Africa, Asia and the Middle East to benefit from a new UK higher education programme](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
20 May 2024

At the Education World Forum, Deputy Foreign Secretary Andrew Mitchell announced a £45 million higher education programme to support women and girls.

[Supporting girls' education worldwide: results](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Updated 19 February 2024

The UK is recognised as leading worldwide on girls' education. Since 2015 we have supported at least 19.8 million children to gain a decent education, including over 10 million girls.

[New UK support will help provide emergency education to 20 million children in crisis](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
16 February 2023

New UK funding for Education Cannot Wait (ECW) will provide safe learning spaces, teaching materials and support for world's most vulnerable children. From:

[UK and US sign agreement to secure 12 years of quality education for marginalised children](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
3 February 2023

UK Minister for Development Andrew Mitchell signed an agreement with the US to help children around the world secure 12 years of quality education.

5

Parliamentary questions

Developing Countries: Education

4 Dec 2024 | 16142

Asked by: Helen Grant

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps are being taken to prioritise Official Development Assistance aid for education in (a) countries where (i) literacy and (ii) numeracy rates are lowest and (b) protracted crisis settings.

Answering Member: Anneliese Dodds | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government prioritises reaching the most marginalised children with basic literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, including through our 18 bilateral education programmes. Our centrally managed Scaling Access and Learning in Education and Data for Foundational Learning programmes will also transform the effectiveness of education spending in low- and lower middle-income countries and improve learning outcomes on literacy and numeracy. Our investment in the International Finance Facility for Education will unlock an additional \$1 billion in education finance for lower middle-income country governments to invest in their reform agendas.

The UK is a top bilateral donor to the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), both global funds delivering education in crisis settings. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary announced a doubling of UK aid for Sudan and neighbouring countries, including support for ECW to provide safe learning spaces and psychosocial support for 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities.

Developing Countries: Education

17 Sep 2024 | HL723

Asked by: Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to convene with civil society organisations and education ministers from other governments on developing an international strategy for global learning.

Answering Member: Lord Collins of Highbury

Foundational learning for all (numeracy, literacy and socio-emotional learning) is crucial to make progress in school, attain higher order skills, and reap education's full rewards. The UK works with civil society and education ministers from other governments to address the global learning crisis through The Global Coalition for Foundational Learning. The Global Coalition is working together to ensure that we meet undertakings set out in the 2022 Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning. This includes national

governments committing to reducing by half, by 2030, the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, and to take urgent and decisive action to do so. 32 countries and 34 organisations, including civil society, have signed the commitment to action to date.

Developing Countries: Education

2 Aug 2024 | 1817

Asked by: Claire Hanna

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing a national strategy for global education.

Answering Member: Anneliese Dodds | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Access to education for all is a priority for the FCDO. Education supports a country's economic growth and enables children to live lives where they have a wider range of choices. Since 2015, the UK has ensured 19.8 million children have received a decent education (a quality education that improves what children currently receive, including in emergency contexts). We have prioritised improving learning outcomes through securing foundational learning skills for all. It is not within FCDO's remit to develop a national strategy for global education, although we recognise the benefits that this kind of educational activity can bring.

Developing Countries: Education

2 Aug 2024 | 1816

Asked by: Claire Hanna

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating funding to the Global Education Project.

Answering Member: Anneliese Dodds | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Access to education for all is a priority for the FCDO. Education supports a country's economic growth and enables children to live lives where they have a wider range of choices. Since 2015, the UK has ensured 19.8 million children have received a decent education (a quality education that improves what children currently receive, including in emergency contexts). We have prioritised improving learning outcomes through securing foundational learning skills for all. It is not within FCDO's remit to develop a national strategy for global education, although we recognise the benefits that this kind of educational activity can bring.

Developing Countries: Education

23 Apr 2024 | 21271

Asked by: Ellie Reeves

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support the (i) recruitment, (ii) retention and (iii) professional development of (A) teachers and (B) educational staff in crisis-affected countries and (b) invest in their (1) safety and (2) working conditions.

Answered by: Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO supports the education workforce in crises-affected countries through our support to multilateral partners; our bilateral programmes; and our wider policy work on strengthening education systems and foundational learning. The UK is the second largest donor to Education Cannot Wait, which has funded the recruitment and/or financial support for nearly 170,000 teachers between 2016 and 2022. The UK is also the second largest donor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which spends over 60 percent of its funds in fragile and conflict affected states and directly supports teacher recruitment, training and safer school environments.

Developing Countries: Education

23 Apr 2024 | 21202

Asked by: Ellie Reeves

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help international education systems prepare for natural disasters.

Answered by: Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

In 2023, we pledged £80 million to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a global fund for education in emergencies, central to supporting education resilience in the face of increasing natural and man-made disasters. The FCDO's position paper, 'Addressing the Climate, Environment, and Biodiversity Crises in and through Girls' Education' (2022), provides a framework of priority actions to build resilient and climate smart school systems. Increasingly, our bilateral education programmes are building climate resilience, and we are working, as leading donors, through global education funds - Global Partnership for Education and ECW - to protect education in the face of disasters.

Development Aid

9 Feb 2024 | 12727

Asked by: Fleur Anderson

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve the effectiveness of UK aid programmes in (a) reducing poverty, (b) increasing literacy rates and (c) increasing life expectancies.

Answered by: Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The International Development White Paper sets out the UK's agenda to re-energise progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including the central aim of eliminating extreme poverty. To this end, the UK aims to spend at least 50 per cent of our bilateral ODA in the Least Developed Countries.

The FCDO has developed two new programmes that will measure and assess literacy rates, among other objectives. The Scaling Access and Learning in Education programme will help transform the effectiveness of education spending in low- and lower middle-income countries and improve learning outcomes, including on literacy. The Data for Foundational Learning Programme will help track children's learning outcomes globally; generate more learning data nationally; and ensure these data are used.

We are making good progress against the Global Health Framework, which outlines the UK's work on Global Health to support a positive impact on health and wellbeing and thus life expectancy. For example, we announced £5 million of additional funding to TB Alliance to support more effective drug resistant treatment with fewer side effects and £370 million to strengthen global health security at United Nations General Assembly September 2023.

Furthermore, the FCDO is committed to improving the effectiveness of all UK aid. FCDO's Programme Operating Framework maximises the impact of aid through consideration of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity. Programmes undergo an annual review of effectiveness, using a results framework. These are published to the Development Tracker website (<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk>), which further supports aid effectiveness by providing information to inform other donors spending decisions.

6 Other Parliamentary material

6.1 Debates

[Impact of conflict on women and girls](#)

9 Jan 2025 | House of Commons | 759 cc403-36WH

That this House has considered the impact of conflict on women and girls.

[International Human Rights Day](#)

10 Dec 2024 | House of Commons | 758 cc863-76

Motion that this House has considered International Human Rights Day 2024.

[Debt Relief \(Developing Countries\)](#)

13 Nov | House of Commons | 756 cc824-6

Ten minute rule motion for leave to bring in a Bill. Agreed to on question.

[UN sustainable development goals](#)

17 Oct 2024 | House of Lords | 840 cc258-93

That this House takes note of the impact of conflict, extreme poverty and climate-related emergencies globally; and of the progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

[Children: impact of international conflict](#)

12 Sep 2024 | House of Lords | 839 cc172-88GC

Lords question for short debate on what assessment they have made of (1) the impact of international conflict on children, and (2) the recommendations proposed by Save the Children in its report Stop the War on Children: Let Children Live in Peace, published in December 2023.

[International Day of Education](#)

26 Jan 2023 | House of Commons | 726 cc393-373WH

Motion that this House has considered the **International Day of Education**. Agreed to on question.

[UN International Day of Education](#)

28 Jan 2021 | 688 cc635-656

Motion that this House has considered the UN **International Day of Education**. Agreed to on question.

6.2 Statement

[New International Financing Facility for Education \(IFFEd\)](#)

8 Nov 2023 | HCWS11

Written statement on a Departmental Minute which describes a new liability the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is undertaking to support education in Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).

6.3 Early Day Motions

[Afghan women and girls](#)

EDM 610 (session 2024-25)

Wendy Chamberlain

8 Jan 2025

That this House deplores the systemic and violent subjugation of women and girls in Afghanistan by the Taliban, including extensive restrictions on speech, education, working, and unaccompanied travel or movement in the public sphere; notes that this is described by the United Nations special rapporteur as amounting to a gender apartheid; acknowledges the Tirana Declaration agreed by Afghan female leaders in September 2024; further acknowledges the critical need to hold Taliban leaders accountable for human rights violations; and calls on the Government to reaffirm its commitment to Afghan women and girls throughout its diplomatic, international development and defence policies.

[UK support for the global effort to feed children at school](#)

EDM 541 (session 2024-25)

Ellie Chowns

11 Dec 2024

That this House welcomes the growing international commitment to providing children with a healthy meal every day at school; notes that 418 million children benefited from school meals in 2022, an increase from 388 million in 2020; congratulates the School Meals Coalition, a partnership of over 105 countries and 135 organisations spanning diverse geographies and income levels, for driving this progress; recognises the transformative impact of well-designed school meal programmes on child development, education, social protection, agriculture, climate resilience, and gender equality; further welcomes the UK Government's plans to expand free breakfast provision to every primary school in England; and calls on the Government to join the School Meals Coalition and commit to supporting its goal of ensuring every child worldwide has access to a free nutritious meal in school by 2030.

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Further reading

[FCDO and disability-inclusive development: government response](#), First Special Report of Session 2024–25, HC 568, 13 January 2025

[United Nations Secretary-General’s high-level panel on the teaching profession: recommendations and summary of deliberations](#) (PDF)
International Labour Organization
23 Feb 2024

[Education finance watch 2024](#) (PDF)
UNESCO and World Bank
2024

[FCDO and disability-inclusive development](#), Third Report of Session 2023–24, International Development Committee, HC 107, 4 April 2024

[UK government support for girls’ education worldwide](#) (Policy paper)
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
27 July 2023 (19 February 2024)

[International Day of Education 2023](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP-0019, 24 January 2023

[UN International Day of Education](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP-0011, 25 January 2021

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