

Building Peace and Security through Education

Today, nearly 70 million children around the world do not have access to basic education. Educated children grow up to earn higher wages, contribute to stronger economies, support healthier and more prosperous families, and create more stable and secure societies. Making sure the millions of out-of-school children have access to an education will require U.S. leadership for a new, multilateral education initiative.

More than half of out-of-school children live in conflict-affected and fragile states. Investing in quality basic education plays an important role in reducing the potential for violence, safe-guarding vulnerable individuals and populations, promoting more stable communities and nations, and providing the skills needed to secure meaningful employment. Half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 18. Their future and the future of that region will be shaped by the success of our investments in basic education.

Fast Facts

- One out of every three children in conflict-affected states is not in school.
- Although more than half of the world's out of school children live in fragile and conflict-affected states, less than half of basic education funding is directed to these states.
- Every additional year of schooling reduces an adolescent boy's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent.

Investing in Education to Prevent Conflict

Research has consistently found that providing good quality primary and secondary education reduces the risk of civil war. Because young men in particular are often recruited as soldiers, male secondary school enrollment significantly reduces the risk of conflict.

- Every additional year of schooling reduces an adolescent boy's risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent.
- According to one study, country that has more than 87 percent of its children in school can decrease the risk of conflict by nearly 75 percent.
- Eight out of the 10 countries with the lowest primary enrollment rates in the world experienced some form of conflict between 1990 and 2005.
- In Sierra Leone's civil war, combatants were largely poor and uneducated. Of those who had attended school, close to 80 percent left school before joining a rebel group. Before joining a rebel group, many were forced to drop out when schools closed before the war.

Spurring Economic Growth to Prevent Conflict

Conflict can be fueled by ethnic, religious, and political grievances, but a growing body of research suggests that per capita income is strongly related to a country's risk of conflict. Investing in education is one of the best ways a country can lift people out of poverty, increase national economic growth, and reduce the risk of conflict.

- One additional year of education increases a person's wages approximately 10 percent. For girls, the rate of return for one additional year of primary education is as high as 15 percent.
- Countries in the bottom 10 percent of GDP per capita (like Ghana or Uganda) have a 15 to 18 percent risk of experiencing civil conflict within five years. That risk drops to 7 to 11 percent countries at the 50th percentile for income (like Brazil).
- In Cote d'Ivoire, civil conflict broke out for the first time – since the country gained independence from France in 1960 – after per capita Gross National Income dropped from \$1,120 to \$650.
- As a country's per capita income drops, the risk of civil war increases. In a study of Sub-Saharan African countries, researchers found that a five percent decline in GDP per capita increased the risk of civil war by nearly 50 percent.

Deterring Sex Trafficking and Recruitment of Child Soldiers

Investing in education for all can prevent the recruitment and re-recruitment of child soldiers, and can prevent girls and women from being victimized by the global sex trafficking network.

- In 2008, the UN estimated that 250,000 child soldiers were actively involved in armed conflicts around the world. Basic literacy and vocational training decreases the risk of children being re-recruited, returning to violence or being unable to support themselves in mainstream society.
- Nearly 40 % of children involved in conflict are girls. A 2005 Save the Children report notes that girls are both forced to become frontline fighters and support armed groups as cooks, cleaners and porters.
- Of the 1.39 million people worldwide involved in forced commercial sexual exploitation in 2005, 40 to 50 percent were children.
- Out-of-school children are often more vulnerable to falling victim to commercial sexual exploitation.

Building Peace and Security

Investing in education is one of the most simple, straightforward ways governments can reduce the risk of conflict through policy. Recent policy reports and peace agreements acknowledge the important role education plays in reducing the potential for violence and conflict.

- Twenty-six of the 37 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2005 include mention of education reforms to ensure quality education for all as a way of building lasting peace.
- The 9/11 Commission report noted that by offering parents and communities a vision of a better future through an education that "teaches tolerance, the dignity and value of each individual and respect for different beliefs," the U.S. and its allies have a crucial advantage over Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations that offer only violence.

- The US State Department's Report on Human Trafficking recommends improving access to education as part of a comprehensive plan to help trafficked persons heal and reintegrate into society, and prevent trafficking or re-trafficking.