

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 623

To enhance the transparency and accelerate the impact of assistance provided under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to promote quality basic education in developing countries, to better enable such countries to achieve universal access to quality basic education and improved learning outcomes, to eliminate duplication and waste, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 14, 2017

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To enhance the transparency and accelerate the impact of assistance provided under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to promote quality basic education in developing countries, to better enable such countries to achieve universal access to quality basic education and improved learning outcomes, to eliminate duplication and waste, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development
4 Act” or the “READ Act”.

5 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
6 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.
- Sec. 3. Assistance to promote sustainable, quality basic education.
- Sec. 4. Comprehensive integrated United States strategy to promote basic education.
- Sec. 5. Improving coordination and oversight.
- Sec. 6. Monitoring and evaluation of programs.
- Sec. 7. Transparency and reporting to Congress.

7 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

8 (a) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—
9 In this Act, the term “appropriate congressional commit-
10 tees” means—

- 11 (1) the Committee on Appropriations of the
12 Senate;
- 13 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the
14 Senate;
- 15 (3) the Committee on Appropriations of the
16 House of Representatives; and
- 17 (4) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the
18 House of Representatives.

19 (b) OTHER DEFINITIONS.—In this Act, the terms
20 “basic education”, “marginalized children and vulnerable
21 groups”, “national education plan”, “partner country”,
22 and “relevant Executive branch agencies and officials”

1 have the meanings given such terms in section 105(c) of
 2 the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as added by section
 3 3.

4 **SEC. 3. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE, QUALITY**
 5 **BASIC EDUCATION.**

6 Section 105 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
 7 (22 U.S.C. 2151c) is amended by adding at the end the
 8 following new subsection:

9 “(c) ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE,
 10 QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION.—

11 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

12 “(A) BASIC EDUCATION.—The term ‘basic
 13 education’ includes—

14 “(i) measurable improvements in lit-
 15 eracy, numeracy, and other basic skills de-
 16 velopment that prepare an individual to be
 17 an active, productive member of society
 18 and the workforce;

19 “(ii) workforce development, voca-
 20 tional training, and digital literacy in-
 21 formed by real market needs and opportu-
 22 nities and that results in measurable im-
 23 provements in employment;

24 “(iii) programs and activities designed
 25 to demonstrably improve—

1 “(I) early childhood, preprimary
 2 education, primary education, and
 3 secondary education, which can be de-
 4 livered in formal or nonformal edu-
 5 cation settings; and

6 “(II) learning for out-of-school
 7 youth and adults; and

8 “(iv) capacity building for teachers,
 9 administrators, counselors, and youth
 10 workers that results in measurable im-
 11 provements in student literacy, numeracy,
 12 or employment.

13 “(B) COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING.—The
 14 term ‘communities of learning’ means a holistic
 15 approach to education and community engage-
 16 ment in which schools act as the primary re-
 17 source center for delivery of a service to the
 18 community at large, leveraging and maximizing
 19 the impact of other development efforts and re-
 20 ducing duplication and waste.

21 “(C) GENDER PARITY IN BASIC EDU-
 22 CATION.—The term ‘gender parity in basic edu-
 23 cation’ means that girls and boys have equal ac-
 24 cess to quality basic education.

1 “(D) MARGINALIZED CHILDREN AND VUL-
 2 NERABLE GROUPS.—The term ‘marginalized
 3 children and vulnerable groups’ includes girls,
 4 children affected by or emerging from armed
 5 conflict or humanitarian crises, children with
 6 disabilities, children in remote or rural areas
 7 (including those who lack access to safe water
 8 and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities,
 9 indigenous peoples, orphans and children af-
 10 fected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married
 11 adolescents, and victims of trafficking.

12 “(E) NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN.—The
 13 term ‘national education plan’ means a com-
 14 prehensive national education plan developed by
 15 partner country governments in consultation
 16 with other stakeholders as a means for wide-
 17 scale improvement of the country’s education
 18 system, including explicit, credible strategies in-
 19 formed by effective practices and standards to
 20 achieve quality universal basic education.

21 “(F) NONFORMAL EDUCATION.—The term
 22 ‘nonformal education’ means organized edu-
 23 cational activities outside the established formal
 24 system, whether operating separately or as an
 25 important feature of a broader activity, that are

intended to provide students with measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development that prepare an individual to be an active, productive member of society and the workforce.

“(G) PARTNER COUNTRY.—The term ‘partner country’ means a developing country that participates in or benefits from basic education programs under this subsection pursuant to the prioritization criteria described in paragraph (4), including level of need, opportunity for impact, and the availability of resources.

“(H) RELEVANT EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS.—The term ‘relevant Executive branch agencies and officials’ means the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Defense, the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the National Security Advisor, and the Director of the Peace Corps.

“(I) SUSTAINABILITY.—The term ‘sustainability’ means, with respect to any basic education program that receives funding pursuant to this section, the ability of a service delivery system, community, partner, or beneficiary to maintain, over time, such basic education program without the use of foreign assistance.

“(2) POLICY.—In carrying out this section, it shall be the policy of the United States to work with partner countries, as appropriate, other donors, multilateral institutions, the private sector, and non-governmental and civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations and organizations that represent teachers, students, and parents, to promote sustainable, quality basic education through programs and activities that—

“(A) take into consideration and help respond to the needs, capacities, and commitment of developing countries to achieve measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development that prepare an individual to be an active, productive member of society and the workforce;

“(B) strengthen educational systems, promote communities of learning, as appropriate,

1 expand access to safe learning environments, in-
2 cluding by breaking down specific barriers to
3 basic education for women and girls, ensure
4 continuity of education, including in conflict
5 settings, measurably improve teacher skills and
6 learning outcomes, and support the engagement
7 of parents in the education of their children to
8 help partner countries ensure that all children,
9 including marginalized children and other vul-
10 nerable groups, have access to and benefit from
11 quality basic education;

12 “(C) promote education as a foundation
13 for sustained economic growth and development
14 within a comprehensive assistance strategy that
15 places partner countries on a trajectory toward
16 graduation from assistance provided under this
17 section with clearly defined benchmarks of suc-
18 cess that are used as requirements for related
19 procurement vehicles, such as grants, contracts,
20 and cooperative agreements; and

21 “(D) monitor and evaluate the effective-
22 ness and quality of basic education programs in
23 partner countries.

24 “(3) PRINCIPLES.—In carrying out the policy
25 referred to in paragraph (2), the United States shall

1 be guided by the following principles of aid effective-
2 ness:

3 “(A) ALIGNMENT.—Assistance provided
4 under this section to support programs and ac-
5 tivities under this subsection shall be aligned
6 with and advance United States foreign policy
7 and economic interests.

8 “(B) COUNTRY OWNERSHIP.—To the
9 greatest extent practicable, assistance provided
10 under this section to support programs and ac-
11 tivities under this subsection should be aligned
12 with and support the national education plans
13 and country development strategies of partner
14 countries, including activities that are appro-
15 priate for and meet the needs of local and in-
16 digenous cultures.

17 “(C) COORDINATION.—

18 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Assistance pro-
19 vided under this section to support pro-
20 grams and activities under this subsection
21 should be coordinated with and leverage
22 the unique capabilities and resources of
23 local and national governments in partner
24 countries, other donors, multilateral insti-
25 tutions, the private sector, and nongovern-

1 mental and civil society organizations, in-
 2 cluding faith-based organizations and orga-
 3 nizations that represent teachers, students,
 4 and parents.

5 “(ii) MULTILATERAL PROGRAMS AND
 6 INITIATIVES.—Assistance provided under
 7 this section to support programs and ac-
 8 tivities under this subsection should be co-
 9 ordinated with and support proven multi-
 10 lateral education programs and financing
 11 mechanisms, which may include the Global
 12 Partnership for Education, that dem-
 13 onstrate commitment to efficiency, effec-
 14 tiveness, transparency, and accountability.

15 “(D) EFFICIENCY.—The President shall
 16 seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness
 17 of assistance provided under this section to sup-
 18 port programs and activities under this sub-
 19 section by coordinating the related efforts of
 20 relevant Executive branch agencies and offi-
 21 cials.

22 “(E) EFFECTIVENESS.—Programs and ac-
 23 tivities supported under this subsection—

1 “(i) shall be consistent with the poli-
 2 cies and principles set forth in this sub-
 3 section;

4 “(ii) shall be designed to achieve spe-
 5 cific, measurable goals and objectives that
 6 are directly related to the provision of
 7 basic education (as defined in this section);
 8 and

9 “(iii) shall include appropriate tar-
 10 gets, metrics, and indicators that—

11 “(I) move a country along the
 12 path to graduation from assistance
 13 provided under this subsection; and

14 “(II) can be applied with reason-
 15 able consistency across such programs
 16 and activities to measure progress and
 17 outcomes.

18 “(F) TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNT-
 19 ABILITY.—Programs and activities supported
 20 under this subsection shall be subject to rig-
 21 orous monitoring and evaluation, which may in-
 22 clude impact evaluations, the results of which
 23 shall be made publically available in a fully
 24 searchable, electronic format.

1 “(4) PRIORITY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—

2 The President shall ensure that assistance provided
3 under this section to support programs and activities
4 under this subsection is aligned with the foreign pol-
5 icy and economic interests of the United States and,
6 subject to such alignment, priority is given to devel-
7 oping countries in which—

8 “(A) there is the greatest need and oppor-
9 tunity to expand access to basic education and
10 to improve learning outcomes, including for
11 marginalized and vulnerable groups, particu-
12 larly women and girls to ensure gender parity
13 in basic education, or populations affected by
14 conflict or crisis; and

15 “(B) such assistance can produce a sub-
16 stantial, measurable impact on children and
17 educational systems.”.

18 **SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATED UNITED STATES**

19 **STRATEGY TO PROMOTE BASIC EDUCATION.**

20 (a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than October
21 1, 2017, the President shall submit to the appropriate con-
22 gressional committees a comprehensive United States
23 strategy to be carried out during fiscal years 2018 through
24 2022 to promote quality basic education in partner coun-
25 tries by—

1 (1) seeking to equitably expand access to basic
2 education for all children, particularly marginalized
3 children and vulnerable groups; and

4 (2) measurably improving the quality of basic
5 education and learning outcomes.

6 (b) REQUIREMENT TO CONSULT.—In developing the
7 strategy required under subsection (a), the President shall
8 consult with—

9 (1) the appropriate congressional committees;

10 (2) relevant Executive branch agencies and offi-
11 cials;

12 (3) partner country governments; and

13 (4) local and international nongovernmental or-
14 ganizations, including faith-based organizations and
15 organizations representing students, teachers, and
16 parents, and other development partners engaged in
17 basic education assistance programs in developing
18 countries.

19 (c) PUBLIC COMMENT.—The President shall provide
20 an opportunity for public comment on the strategy re-
21 quired under subsection (a).

22 (d) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under sub-
23 section (a)—

24 (1) shall be developed and implemented con-
25 sistent with the principles set forth in section 105(c)

1 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as added by
2 section 3; and

3 (2) shall seek—

4 (A) to prioritize assistance provided under
5 this subsection to countries that are partners of
6 the United States and whose populations are
7 most in need of improved basic education, as
8 determined by indicators such as literacy and
9 numeracy rates;

10 (B) to build the capacity of relevant actors
11 in partner countries, including in government
12 and in civil society, to develop and implement
13 national education plans that measurably im-
14 prove basic education;

15 (C) to identify and replicate successful
16 interventions that improve access to and quality
17 of basic education in conflict settings and in
18 partner countries;

19 (D) to project general levels of resources
20 needed to achieve stated program objectives;

21 (E) to develop means to track implementa-
22 tion in partner countries and ensure that such
23 countries are expending appropriate domestic
24 resources and instituting any relevant legal,

1 regulatory, or institutional reforms needed to
2 achieve stated program objectives;

3 (F) to leverage United States capabilities,
4 including through technical assistance, training,
5 and research; and

6 (G) to improve coordination and reduce
7 duplication among relevant Executive branch
8 agencies and officials, other donors, multilateral
9 institutions, nongovernmental organizations,
10 and governments in partner countries.

11 **SEC. 5. IMPROVING COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT.**

12 (a) SENIOR COORDINATOR OF UNITED STATES
13 INTERNATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION ASSISTANCE.—There
14 is established within the United States Agency for Inter-
15 national Development a Senior Coordinator of United
16 States International Basic Education Assistance (referred
17 to in this section as the “Senior Coordinator”). The Senior
18 Coordinator shall be appointed by the President, shall be
19 a current USAID employee serving in a career or non-
20 career position in the Senior Executive Service or at the
21 level of a Deputy Assistant Administrator or higher, and
22 shall serve concurrently as the Senior Coordinator.

23 (b) DUTIES.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Senior Coordinator
25 shall have primary responsibility for the oversight

1 and coordination of all resources and activities of the
2 United States Government relating to the promotion
3 of international basic education programs and activi-
4 ties.

5 (2) SPECIFIC DUTIES.—The Senior Coordinator
6 shall—

7 (A) facilitate program and policy coordina-
8 tion of international basic education programs
9 and activities among relevant Executive branch
10 agencies and officials, partner governments,
11 multilateral institutions, the private sector, and
12 nongovernmental and civil society organizations;

13 (B) develop and revise the strategy re-
14 quired under section 4;

15 (C) monitor, evaluate, and report on activi-
16 ties undertaken pursuant to the strategy re-
17 quired under section 4; and

18 (D) establish due diligence criteria for all
19 recipients of funds provided by the United
20 States to carry out activities under this Act and
21 the amendments made by this Act.

22 (c) OFFSET.—In order to eliminate duplication of ef-
23 fort and activities and to offset any costs incurred by the
24 United States Agency for International Development in
25 appointing the Senior Coordinator under subsection (a),

1 the President shall, after consulting with appropriate con-
 2 gressional committees, eliminate a position within the
 3 United States Agency for International Development (un-
 4 less otherwise authorized or required by law) that the
 5 President determines to be necessary to fully offset such
 6 costs and eliminate duplication.

7 **SEC. 6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS.**

8 The President shall seek to ensure that programs car-
 9 ried out under the strategy required under section 4
 10 shall—

11 (1) apply rigorous monitoring and evaluation
 12 methodologies to determine if programs and activi-
 13 ties provided under this subsection accomplish meas-
 14 urable improvements in literacy, numeracy, or other
 15 basic skills development that prepare an individual
 16 to be an active, productive member of society and
 17 the workforce;

18 (2) include methodological guidance in the im-
 19 plementation plan and support systemic data collec-
 20 tion using internationally comparable indicators,
 21 norms, and methodologies, to the extent practicable
 22 and appropriate;

23 (3) disaggregate all data collected and reported
 24 by age, gender, marital status, disability, and loca-
 25 tion, to the extent practicable and appropriate;

1 (4) include funding for both short- and long-
 2 term monitoring and evaluation to enable assess-
 3 ment of the sustainability and scalability of assist-
 4 ance programs; and

5 (5) support the increased use and public avail-
 6 ability of education data for improved decision-
 7 making, program effectiveness, and monitoring of
 8 global progress.

9 **SEC. 7. TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING TO CONGRESS.**

10 (a) ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
 11 STRATEGY.—Not later than each March 31 immediately
 12 following a fiscal year during which the strategy developed
 13 pursuant to section 4(a) was carried out, the President
 14 shall—

15 (1) submit a report to the appropriate congres-
 16 sional committees that describes the implementation
 17 of such strategy; and

18 (2) make the report described in paragraph (1)
 19 available to the public.

20 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report re-
 21 quired under subsection (a) shall include—

22 (1) a description of the efforts made by relevant
 23 Executive branch agencies and officials to implement
 24 the strategy developed pursuant to section 4, with a

1 particular focus on the activities carried out under
2 the strategy;

3 (2) a description of the extent to which each
4 partner country selected to receive assistance for
5 basic education meets the priority criteria specified
6 in section 105(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of
7 1961, as added by section 3; and

8 (3) a description of the progress achieved over
9 the reporting period toward meeting the goals, objec-
10 tives, benchmarks, and timeframes specified in the
11 strategy developed pursuant to section 4 at the pro-
12 gram level, as developed pursuant to monitoring and
13 evaluation specified in section 6, with particular em-
14 phasis on whether there are demonstrable student
15 improvements in literacy, numeracy, or other basic
16 skills development that prepare an individual to be
17 an active, productive member of society and the
18 workforce.

○