

Cheryl Perera, Sadia Jama, Jaxson Khan
OneChild, RESULTS Canada, Global Partnership for Education, UN GEFI YAG
Toronto, Canada

June 4, 2014

Honourable Minister of International Development Christian Paradis
Government of Canada
House of Commons, Parliament
Ottawa, Canada

ATTN: Canada's commitment to education, to maternal health, and to replenishing the GPE

CC: Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird; Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development MP Dean Allison; Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development; Clerk of the Standing Committee Miriam Burke; MP Kirsty Duncan, Liberal Critic; MP H  l  ne Laverdi  re, NDP Critic

Dear Minister Paradis,

We write to you today to express our sincere gratitude for your leadership in shaping Canada's role as a global peacekeeper and provider of international aid and development expertise. As students, we have grown up with immense pride for our country, both because of Canada's feats and excellence, and because of our generosity and catalyzing influence in international affairs.

We write to you on behalf of youth leaders from across Canada, as well as young people everywhere. Particularly, sparked by the crisis of the young girls in Nigeria, we want to express to you the dire situation for children and girls around the world, in terms of their education.

As you may know, over 57 million children in this world (the majority of them girls) do not have access to even basic primary education. Furthermore, nearly 250 million children who are receiving education are receiving it at a shockingly mediocre quality – almost not at all. Each of these children who lack quality education are lacking the opportunity to reach any success in life, or the chance to emerge from a cycle of poverty. This is a travesty, and an unacceptable situation in the modern world, particularly with other advancements in technology, food production, resource development, and international trade.

The government of Canada has been admirable in its leadership in securing the future of children and youth, including through its support to maternal, newborn and child health, as well as support to ensuring access to a quality education for all children. We also know that the goals of maternal, newborn, and child health and securing the future of children and youth are intrinsically linked. The health and education sectors are complementary, especially in regards to MNCH. The evidence is clear that investments in education are linked with a high return on investment in child survival, maternal health and improved health overall – and vice-versa.

Young people have been joining us to lead and support organizations such as RESULTS Canada and OneChild that are leading the charge in advocating for the realization of the right of every child to a quality education. Education is the great equalizer, and allows those born both in and outside of Canada to achieve their dreams and reach success – but of course, only if they can access education in the first place.

In particular, we are lending our voices in support of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), The GPE is the best-positioned global initiative to get the world's out-of-school children into the classroom and learning. Through a working partnership of governments, civil society, international organizations, teachers, foundations and the private sector, the GPE helps developing countries access technical and financial resources, as well as global and local expertise, to achieve their education goals. It is the only global initiative focusing exclusively on improving access to and quality of education in low-income countries.

Canada is the most educated country in the world – should we not be just as committed to expanding educational opportunities for all children? We and other youth are proud of our country, yet are worried about the drop in funding to international aid to education. From 2010-2011, Canada's contribution dropped by 34.4% - over 150 million dollars. In fact, it was the most precipitous drop among OECD countries that are providers of international aid to education. Under your government, Canada's middle-class is the world's most prosperous. We have much to be proud of. But we also hope that we can share this wealth with the rest of the world, most particularly through education to young children and to young girls.

We are passionate about the Global Partnership for Education because it is committed to finding ways to maximize investments across sectors, and across our country's priorities. A more in-depth look at the impact of the GPE also shows that (in 2011) 72% of girls in GPE countries finished primary school compared to 55% in 2002. The evidence strongly shows that investing in education saves lives and significantly improves quality of life, for example if all girls complete primary education, maternal deaths would decrease by 66%, saving 189,000 lives annually.


Recently, Prime Minister Harper put forward \$105 million in aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan, earmarked specifically to support access to education. And just last week the government signed an historic agreement with Her Royal Highness Queen Rania Al Abdullah to further support the education sector in Jordan. Building on our past achievements, we hope the government will take the lead as an international donor to education - while striving in the meantime to close the gap. We believe in your leadership to move us forward.

The Millennium Development Goals are soon coming to an end and we believe that a successful Global Partnership for Education replenishment will be a test to the will of nations to fulfill their promise to the world's children. The goals that will replace the MDGs will surely have education at their core, but the global community must commit to financing these goals through mechanisms such as the Global Partnership and Canada's aid. The young people of Canada are eager to work with you, Honourable Minister Paradis, to continue to improve the quality of education available to all children, especially girls and future mothers around the world, and give them the same opportunities that we have been so lucky to have in our great country.

Sincerely,


Cheryl Perera (Jun 4, 2014)

Cheryl Perera


Sadia Jama (Jun 4, 2014)

Sadia Jama



Jaxson Khan

On behalf of the following youth organizations (next page)

Supporting Youth Organizations

Global Partnership for Education, Youth Advocates

OneChild

RESULTS Canada

UN Global Education First Youth Advocacy Group (UN GEFI YAG)

Free The Children

Student Voice Initiative

Young Diplomats of Canada

Concerned Students for Refugee Health Care

Inspire Canada and Africa Foundation (ICAF)

SID Canada

Impact Tomorrow

Somali Youth Canadian Mentorship Program