

**SEND MY
FRIEND
TO SCHOOL**



Invest in My Friends' Learning

How the UK Government can Reimagine and Recommit to funding global education



Introduction: The State of Education Financing

Education is a cornerstone for building a more peaceful, prosperous, equitable and sustainable world, and is critical to the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, it remains one of the most underfunded sectors in global development. The financing gap for education is estimated to be an immense \$97 billion each year across the world's 79 lowest-income countries. However, with low levels of basic education skills estimated to cost the global economy **\$10 trillion annually**, the price of inaction is far greater than the investment needed. The consequences of underinvestment are profound, with the impact most acutely felt by the most marginalised children.

The UK has dramatically reduced its funding for education over the past decade. **The UK's education spending has fallen from 13.5% of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2013 to just 3.5% in 2023**, with further cuts expected. Though it remains one of the largest donors to education by volume, the UK lags behind many of its peers in the proportion it spends on education, **ranking 25th** among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) countries where 9.7% is spent on average. Since 2016, education spending has fallen by 64%, and experienced disproportionate cuts of 40% compared to overall aid cuts of around 25% in the reduction from 0.7% to 0.5%. The UK's decline in prioritisation has contributed to global stagnation in education funding at a time when accelerated investment is urgently needed. With a new Government, the UK has a chance to reestablish credibility on global education and make it a priority once again.



Send My Friend to School Campaign Champions at Parliament
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The UK also has an immense opportunity to back global measures that could transform education financing to be more locally sourced, owned and led. Domestic public budgets are the most significant source of financing for education, and 87% of funding for education in low-income countries is domestically resourced. Solving the financing gap in an equitable and sustainable way requires growing domestic public budgets to adequately deliver education services to all children. The UK can back growing momentum to reform the international financial architecture on tax and debt to allow for more long-term, reliable public education funding

The Send My Friend to School Coalition calls on the UK Government and Parliamentarians from all political parties in the UK to recommit to the promise of education for all through the following recommendations:

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1. Increase the proportion of ODA to education

Reverse cuts to spending on global education and commit to progressively increasing ODA to education to the global standard of 15%. Restore UK ODA to 0.7% of GNI and cease using the ODA budget for refugee costs in the UK.

2. Prioritise the most marginalised

Ensure that ODA is reaching countries most in need of support to reach their national SDG targets and sustain education services during crises. Allocate at least 10% of humanitarian spending on education and recommit to progressively increase budgetary allocations for disability-inclusive education to at least 5% of education budgets by 2030. Improve the FCDO's reporting on its expenditure and impact in reaching diverse marginalised groups through disaggregated data collection on access and learning so that all children are represented in data.

3. Maximise the impact of UK ODA through effective multilateral investments

Increase the proportion of education funding directed through multilateral funds and work with the international community to ensure that GPE and ECW are fully funded. Support efforts to create a bigger and better IDA through the IDA21 replenishment, including by providing an increased commitment of at least 25% during the pledging session in December.

4. Support countries to progressively grow their education budgets

Support efforts to make the global tax system more transparent, democratic and inclusive by supporting the implementation of a UN Framework Convention on Tax. Become a leader in transparency and reforms on trust law to make it harder for rich and powerful people to shield assets from tax authorities and legitimate creditors. Generously recycle new Special Drawing Rights in line with other G7 countries. Provide technical assistance in building effective, progressive tax systems and advocate that the growth of public budgets overall translates to the growth of resources for free, quality, inclusive and equitable public education.

5. Take action on debt relief

Introduce legislation to support private creditors to participate in debt relief processes on comparable terms to other creditors. Urge the IMF and other international finance institutions to remove loan conditionalities and coercive policy advice around austerity that constrain education budgets and make new lines of long-term credit with concessional and sustainable interest rates available to low- and lower-middle-income countries, without austerity conditions attached. Support the development of a new debt workout mechanism under the umbrella of the United Nations. Advocate that funds freed up through debt relief translate to more funding for free, quality, inclusive and equitable public education.

What can MPs do?

- Write to Ministers encouraging greater prioritisation of global education
- Share this briefing with leadership in your party
- Ask parliamentary questions about financing for global education
- Speak about the transformative power of global education to raise its profile
- Join the APPG on Global Education
- Engage with Send My Friend to School Campaign students in your constituency

About Send My Friend to School

Send My Friend to School is the UK civil society coalition of international development NGOs, teachers unions and charities. It brings together young people, politicians, teachers, civil society and the media in joint campaigning to demand quality education for all children across the globe. Find out more about our “Let My Friends Learn” campaign on education in emergencies in our policy report.

#LetMyFriendsLearn @sendmyfriend

