



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Baroness Sugg CBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Special Envoy for Girls' Education

Aashti Zaidi Hai
Director
Global Schools Forum
By email to:
aashti.zaidi@globalschoolsforum.org

Our ref 202686

28 May 2020

Dear Aashti,

Thank you for your letter of 24 April addressed to the Secretary of State and myself regarding COVID-19 and non-state education. We are grateful for the important work of Global Schools Forum, in particular the variety and scale that your members operate at. I am replying as Minister responsible for education at the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, and the UK's Special Envoy for Girls' Education.

I agree that this is a critical time for the education prospects of millions of children around the world; we must not let the gains of the last two decades in global education slip back. Our immediate priority must be to mitigate the key, short-term risks that COVID-19 poses to children's safety, nutrition and wellbeing whilst schools are closed, and to reduce lost learning hours.

Current DFID support includes adapting our bilateral education programmes in 18 countries to raise community awareness of the epidemic, protect the most vulnerable children and provide some continuity of learning through TV and radio programmes, plus online and telephone support to parents about home schooling. We have also donated a total of £25 million to UNICEF and Education Cannot Wait to support school and community education responses in lower income countries, including for children in 26 conflict-affected countries. The UK is also the leading donor to the Global Partnership for Education, who are repurposing over £200m of funding to help support education systems through the COVID-19 crisis.

I was pleased to read about the ways in which your members are already engaging with governments and communities to support national education and health responses. In the medium term, DFID's priority will be to protect and maintain education budgets, get girls and the most marginalised back to school and help build back stronger, more resilient education systems. DFID support for education has always been underpinned by a pragmatic commitment to help more children get the education they deserve, including where the state is either unwilling or unable to provide this. As your letter notes, in several countries where the UK provides aid, low-fee private schools play an important – and growing – role in delivering education to children from low-income families. Your letter highlights the risks to financial sustainability that non state providers are likely face, especially low-fee private schools serving poorer children.

I appreciate these risks and can assure you that DFID's country programmes will continue to support their existing partners who are enabling children to learn outside the state system. In addition, please also encourage your members to explore the UK aid funding finder for more information on funding opportunities that might be available to them, and to register with DFID's supplier portal to be notified about opportunities to bid for contracts. This is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/international-development-funding>.

You highlight the importance of DFID's stance on non-state education internationally. Getting education systems back onto a stable footing after COVID-19 is likely to require more rather than less co-operation between state and non-state providers, formal and informal schools, and an enhanced regulatory framework. We shall also continue to use our seat on the World Bank, UNICEF and GPE Board to highlight this.

With respect to CDC capital support to your members, DFID has been working with CDC to develop their Sector Strategy in Education over the past couple of years. For further information on CDC's education investments and to find out more about possible opportunities to engage please contact Andrew Palmer, Head of CDC Global Affairs, at apalmer@cdcgroup.com.

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I am grateful for the work that you and your colleagues at Global Schools Forum are doing to protect children's rights to education and I hope that you find this information helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sugg', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

BARONESS SUGG