World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim's Remarks at Global Education First Initiative Event

September 24, 2014

World Bank Group President Jim Yong KimGlobal Education First Initiative Event: Quality Education for the World We WantNew York City, United States
As Prepared for Delivery

Education, as we all know, is the key to success, the social equalizer par excellence. Reducing the number of out-of-school children by half over the space of a decade was a tremendous achievement. Yet we must redouble our efforts to enroll the remaining 58 million out-of-school children who live in disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

Importantly, we also owe children in the developing world a quality education which equips them for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. All children should leave school with the knowledge and skills they need to pursue further education and training, to do productive work, and to support themselves and their families.

To prosper in a rapidly changing world, all children need more than a sound basic education. They also need to be creative, critical thinkers and problem-solvers, who develop a lifelong thirst for knowledge.

The stark reality is that we are nowhere near fulfilling this dream. Our first task is to improve basic learning outcomes across the world, especially among children from poor families. We have to do this not only because it is morally right, but also because there is an indisputable link between learning outcomes and economic growth. One recent study shows that if Mexico had raised its mathematics score in international rankings to reach the high-income country average, its annual per capita growth rate could have doubled between 1990 and 2010.
The good news is that we have solid evidence about how to ensure that children learn.

**First**, it is absolutely critical to level the playing field at a very early stage. Early childhood development programs have great returns on investment because they can both break the cycle of poverty and improve productivity later in life.

- From a 20-year study of a group of children in Jamaica, we know that combining health and education interventions in early childhood increased future earnings by 25 percent.

**Second**, we must address the need for stronger basic education with immediate investment.

- India, for example, is allocating $29 billion dollars to improve education outcomes for 200 million elementary school children. This is a smart investment because the program will enhance access for disadvantaged children while also improving teacher accountability.

- Tanzania, which has dramatically increased primary school enrollments, is also taking action to improve learning outcomes. Its ambitious Big Results Now in Education program seeks systemic changes to deliver rapid improvements that parents expect as well as accelerated national progress towards middle-income status.

- The World Bank Group is proud to support initiatives like these which help ensure that schooling opens the door to a brighter future for every child.

The **third** area we need to focus on is teachers. We can’t raise the quality of education without recognizing the key role that teachers play. They can ensure that children learn foundational skills, to process and use information, and develop the cognitive and socio-emotional competencies that are prized in today’s global economy.

- Recent data shows students with *good* teachers get an average gain of one year of learning, and those with *great* teachers advance one-and-a-half grade levels or more.

- To build a highly effective teaching force, we need to pay more attention to three aspects of teacher management—recruitment, grooming, and motivation.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the enormous education gains in developing countries -- in a relatively short period of time. Now we must sustain this momentum and use all available resources and evidence to make sure that every child is in school—*and* learning. Thank you very much.