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EDUCATION

Rich nations flunk in educating poor

U.S., Greece and New Zealand languish at bottom of class

Tuesday, November 18, 2003 Posted: 10:55 AM EST (1555 GMT)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- The Netherlands is top of the class and the United States third from last among rich nations that help educate the world's poor, a report by an alliance of development agencies found.

The report, released on Tuesday by the Global Campaign for Education, an international coalition of development agencies, teachers' unions and community groups, looked at 22 rich countries and how much of their aid budgets go toward boosting education in developing countries.

It said the report was a first look at how rich countries have performed on promises made during a conference in Dakar in 2000 to supply funds needed to give the world's children a basic education by the year 2015, under an "Education for All" initiative.

More than 100 million children around the world are not now attending school and another 150 million will not complete their basic education this year, the Global Campaign for Education estimated.

"The contrast between rhetoric and reality is staggering," the report said.

It gave the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden top marks in their support for education of the poor, followed by Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada and Denmark.

Japan, Spain, Italy, Austria, the United States, Greece and New Zealand were the least supportive, it said.

It gave U.S. President George W. Bush 12 marks out of 100, just above the leaders of Greece and New Zealand, saying the United States was the least generous aid giver as a share of national income.

Development groups and the United Nations estimated that \$5.6 billion in additional aid is needed to ensure that children in poor countries get a basic education,



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equating it with just three days of global military spending.

Rich countries now provide \$1.4 billion annually toward aid for basic education in poor countries, the report said.

"The \$5.6 billion extra needed to education all children is one-fifth the amount Americans spend on pizza each year, and half of what Europeans spend on ice cream," said Oliver Buston, senior policy advisor for the development group Oxfam.

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