

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION FOR ALL ACT OF 2007

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The Education for All bill announced today by Senators Hillary Clinton (D- NY) and Gordon Smith (R-OR) and by Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Spencer Bachus (R-AL) marks a historic, bipartisan step forward in the United States' effort in helping all children get a free and quality basic education. The bill has many strong features that deserve notice and support:

- **The Legislation Requires the U.S. to Commit Its Fair Share – \$3 billion by 2012 – of the Global Commitment Necessary for Universal Basic Education.** The US has made modest progress on funding for basic education over the last several years. Initially, this took place through increasing funds to fight abusive child labor and through debt relief commitments made by the current and previous Administration. In the last several years, greater progress has come especially through the leadership of Nita Lowey, Chairwoman of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee in the House Appropriations Committee, who has helped increase funding to a total of \$520 million dollars. Nonetheless, the U.S. still falls way short of doing its fair share to fill the \$7 to \$10 billion dollar annual financing gap, which is needed to ensure a universal basic education for all children. There are 72 million children of primary school age estimated to be out of school today and an additional 226 million children of secondary school age estimated to be out of school. The United Kingdom, as a counter-example, has committed \$1.5 billion dollars a year to universal education –three times as much as the U.S., even though our economy is over 5 times larger. Today's bill would double U.S. funding for universal education to \$1 billion in FY08, and would gradually increase this commitment until it reaches \$3 billion by 2012 – an amount that would be seen as a fair U.S. share of the existing financing gap for quality basic education.
- **Focuses on a Basic, Not Just Primary Education.** The Millennium Development Goals and many other multilateral initiatives calling for universal primary education to date have been interpreted by many as providing 5 to 6 years of schooling. Yet, virtually all experts believe that 8 to 10 years of education are necessary for the type of reading, writing, math, and analytical skills necessary to provide a solid, basic education for all children in developing countries. Indeed, much of the strongest evidence on the positive effect of girls' education – in terms of its producing smaller, healthier families and its positive impact in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS – comes from girls acquiring secondary education. This legislation specifically targets basic education with a focus of providing 9 to 10 years of schooling, which marks an important step forward in attaining the goal of universal basic education.
- **Puts a Strong Emphasis on the Education For All/Fast Track Initiative and National Education Plans.** The legislation focuses a substantial amount of educational support for developing countries that have successfully gone through – or are seeking to join - the Education for All/Fast Track Initiative process. Launched in 2002, the EFA/FTI process was a path-breaking achievement in that it established for the first time a mechanism to provide a global compact on education. Under the Education for All/Fast Track Initiative, developing countries devise national education plans, and work with donors who collectively coordinate resources in order to help fill the finance gap of the developing nation's own education for all plan. This is critical because in the past, developing countries have unfortunately been forced to meet multiple tests for multiple donors, and to face unsteady streams of financial support

for their efforts. As of April 2008, 35 countries have had their education plans endorsed by FTI and were receiving support, while another 60 countries were expected to join the FTI partnership over the next two years. This means that a substantial amount of future resources will be needed to continue providing for current FTI countries, and to meet those who join the partnership. Yet, the United States has too often been hesitant to work through the FTI mechanism. Indeed, only a small fraction of existing U.S. assistance for education abroad goes to FTI countries. Today's legislation marks a major step forward in that regard, as it focuses resources towards countries with comprehensive, internationally recognized education plans for their countries, who are established within the Fast Track Initiative partnership.

- **Focus On National Education For All Plans as Opposed to More Project-Oriented Approaches.** While USAID administers many excellent and innovative education programs around the world, the approach tends to focus more on specific projects as opposed to offering broad and substantial support for countries abroad to implement their national education plans. This legislation, however, puts a clear focus on offering substantial resources to make a major impact on developing nations' efforts to achieve free and universal quality education.
- **Does Not Leave Behind Children of Conflict.** This bill thoughtfully channels resources internationally, according to a three-tiered approach. In the first tier are countries which have successfully established an EFA/FTI plan; in the second tier are countries which are *committed* to working towards an EFA/FTI plan. Importantly, this legislation also creates a third tier, thus ensuring that resources are made available for the 25 million children currently uprooted from their homes and for the many million more who are negatively affected by conflict. Accordingly, in cases where there is not trust to work through the official government abroad, today's bill allows for resources to flow through local governments, NGOs, and multilateral institutions, in order to reach children of conflict, deliver some form of continuity of education activities, provide safe learning environments, ensure trained teachers, and also ensure that learning and teaching credentials gained in refugee situations will be recognized by home countries.
- **Calls for U.S. Coordination and a New EFA Administrator.** This bill would require the President to develop a comprehensive strategy that lays out how the United States government will comprehensively work towards the Education for All by 2015 Goal. Specifically, the plan will lay out a strategy to integrate the efforts of key U.S. stakeholders, from the Secretary of State, to the Secretary of Treasury, to the National Economic and National Security Advisors. Today's bill also creates a new Education for All Coordinator. This would be an ambassador-level position, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The EFA Coordinator would have the authority to coordinate U.S. government funding for universal education and thus implement a comprehensive, cross-agency, national strategy.
- **The Bill Recognizes the Importance of Targeted Strategies to Reach the Most Disadvantaged Children.** The bill clearly states that in supporting national education plans abroad, "the President shall give priority to foreign countries in which there is the greatest need." The bill recognizes that it is imperative to focus on strategies for reaching the most disadvantaged children – girls who live in poor, remote areas, child laborers, those with disabilities, victims of sex trafficking, and children who are orphaned or negatively impacted by the HIV/AIDS virus.