



**Global Campaign for Education, U.S. Response to
CELEBRATE, INNOVATE AND SUSTAIN: Toward 2015 and Beyond
The United States' Strategy for Meeting the Millennium Development Goals
Comments Submitted October 6, 2010**

Introduction

From September 20 – 22, world leaders gathered in New York to provide a progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Five years out from the 2015 target to achieve all eight internationally agreed-upon goals, President Obama presented to the United Nations his MDG strategy. His presentation expanded upon an Administration document entitled, “CELEBRATE, INNOVATE AND SUSTAIN: Toward 2015 and Beyond.” The Global Campaign for Education, U.S. Chapter (GCE-U.S.) welcomes the President’s focus on development and the release of the document as a significant and much-needed show of U.S. leadership.

The principles laid out by the President at the summit and in the paper illustrate the need for a comprehensive and sustainable approach toward eradicating the worst forms of poverty and ensuring responsible and equitable development worldwide. However, the President did not deliver a tangible strategy for supporting the achievement of the MDGs, failing to include concrete objectives and deliverables.

Further, we are concerned that the President’s MDG presentation did not place a commitment to education at the same level as maternal and child health, food security, and climate change. Achieving universal education is essential if we are to achieve all eight Millennium Development Goals. Data show that investing in quality basic education improves outcomes across all development sectors by improving health, reducing poverty, spurring economic growth, and enhancing security and stability.

We are pleased to see the announcement of a global development strategy in conjunction with the MDG Summit. However, we are deeply concerned to see education omitted entirely from the strategy overview. We urge the President to ensure that education is an essential component of the global development strategy. A comprehensive education strategy must work to achieve all six Education for All goals, from early childhood care and education to quality basic education to adult literacy. We call on the Administration to work with civil society in setting clear targets and clarity on a way forward.

As part of a global development strategy that includes education as a fundamental component, we recommend that the United States:

- Engage with the international community through participation in a multilateral education initiative such as a reformed Fast Track Initiative or Global Fund for Education
- Improve U.S. bilateral education programs, particularly through increased integration and coordination across U.S. agencies
- Monitor and evaluate meaningful educational outcomes and the factors that affect outcomes
- Prioritize education for girls and women

Detailed Recommendations

1. **Multilateral Engagement:** We agree that leveraging innovation should be a focus of the MDG and the global development strategies, which is why we are encouraged to see mention of the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in the MDG document.¹ An estimated \$16 billion in aid is needed annually to reach universal basic education in the world's poorest countries, and only a handful of donor countries make up half of all funding commitments.² Channeling U.S. basic education funding through an innovative multilateral education initiative is one of the most effective ways to ensure the success of all eight MDGs, as well as the six EFA goals, and to adhere to the aid effectiveness principles of the Paris Declaration – ownership, alignment, harmonization, management for results, and mutual accountability.

While we are encouraged to see a commitment to increasing funds to FTI, we are very concerned that the MDG document refers to the United States as “an active participant” in FTI’s multi-donor trust fund. The U.S. has not contributed funding to FTI’s trust fund, which is a pre-requisite for “active” participation. In fact, the United States is the only major donor to education that has never supported the pooled fund.³ We seek clarity on the President’s plan for engagement with FTI including a specific funding commitment, a time-frame for the appropriation, and where, within FTI, the new funds from the United States will be allocated. We welcome the acknowledgement in the paper of the importance of multilateral initiatives, including the FTI, in accelerating progress toward achieving the MDGs, and we encourage the President to develop a clear roadmap for U.S. support for achieving MDG 2 that includes a U.S. contribution to the single trust fund of a reformed FTI or a Global Fund for Education.

FTI has improved the delivery of aid to education. Between 2006 and 2007, FTI partner countries accounted for 61 percent of the reduction in the world’s out-of-school population.⁴ More than 300,000 teachers were hired in FTI countries between 2002 and 2008.⁵ The number of primary school teachers increased by 51 percent in FTI countries in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶ By supporting country-driven plans, the FTI promotes ownership, sustainability and accountability of services.

Without a concerted effort by the U.S. and its allies to further reform the FTI and provide robust, coordinated support for education, hard-fought progress in basic education will backslide. U.S. support of a reformed FTI – which would promote improved quality of education at all levels – would be the catalyst to secure the necessary reforms, including:

- Operational independence
- Equity in governance
- Increased and sustained civil society participation
- Stronger, more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy and data collection on education outcomes
- Funds reaching children in conflict-affected and fragile states
- Targeting of marginalized populations

As the Administration’s MDG Plan states, achieving the MDGs by 2015 will indeed take “historic leaps of human development.”⁷ Significant U.S. investment in a reformed FTI single trust fund or Global Fund for Education would be such a leap.

¹ Page 24.

² *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized*. UNESCO. Pages 129-131. Available from <http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2010-marginalization/>.

³ Ibid. Page 255.

⁴ Education for All – Fast Track Initiative. *2009 Annual Report*. Available from <http://www.educationfasttrack.org/newsroom/focus-on/fti-annual-report/>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Page 2.

- 2. Integration and Harmonization:** Strong principles and global commitments are vital to achieving the MDGs, but there must also be a continued commitment to strengthening and improving United States bilateral education programs based on internationally agreed-upon principles of aid effectiveness. Past reports, including a 2007 U.S. Government Accountability Office report⁸ and a 2006 OECD peer review study,⁹ have revealed weaknesses in United States bilateral international education programs, particularly in the areas of coordination between U.S. agencies as well as coordination between U.S. programs and host countries. Without strong harmonization between U.S. agencies both in D.C. and in the field, we have little knowledge about what and how much the United States is actually doing on education and risk duplication of programs. We welcome the President's pledge to build USAID into the premier global development agency and believe USAID is well-positioned to be the leading force in strategic and program coordination amongst U.S. agencies.

Additionally, strong U.S. programs will be better placed to work with host country governments and consult in a meaningful way with civil society to strengthen their commitments and capacity, reinforcing the paper's principles of strengthening mutual accountability¹⁰ and nurturing well-governed institutions.¹¹

Finally, we urge the Administration to elevate its support for education and align it with its flagship development programs: Feed the Future, the Global Health Initiative, and the Global Climate Change Initiative. Clearly, as the U.S. continues to develop its strategy to achieve the MDGs, each of these new initiatives will play a considerable role. Education is an essential tool in addressing health, nutrition, agricultural outputs, and climate change and adaptation efforts. In Africa alone, 4.5 million children die each year before reaching their fifth birthday, but children of mothers with a complete primary education are 40 percent more likely to survive to age five.¹² Further, women's education has been a key factor in reducing malnutrition¹³ and has the potential to increase agricultural outputs by 25 percent, thereby reducing food insecurity.¹⁴ Prioritizing education along with health, food security, and climate change would have a powerful impact on progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

- 3. Emphasis on Outcomes:** UNESCO reports that children in many countries, including areas of South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills even after completing a full course of primary school.¹⁵ While we recognize the positive move away from using primary school enrollment and toward primary school completion as indicators, too little attention is paid to the quality of education that children receive in school. The U.S. strategy continues this trend, touting achievements in enrollment¹⁶ but failing to mention the quality in any significant way.

⁸ United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Foreign Assistance: Enhanced Coordination and Better Methods to Assess the Results of U.S. International Basic Education Efforts Are Needed* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2007).

⁹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *The United States: Development Assistance Committee Peer Review* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2006).

¹⁰ Page 15.

¹¹ Page 28.

¹² Barbara Hertz and Gene Sperling, "What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World," Council on Foreign Relations, 2004, p. 29. Available from <http://www.cfr.org/publication.html?id=6947>; accessed 21 May 2010.

¹³ Smith, Lisa C. and Lawrence Haddad. "Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries." International Food Policy Research Institute. 2000.

¹⁴ Women: Still the Key to Food and Nutrition Security," International Food Policy Research Institute, 2005. Available from <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ib33.pdf>; accessed 6 August 2010.

¹⁵ *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized*. UNESCO. Page 104.

¹⁶ Page 9.

We welcome the commitment in the strategy to strengthening monitoring, measurement, and evaluation and agree that there is a need to bolster these practices in order to drive sound development. However, monitoring and evaluation must look beyond primary school enrollment, completion, and classrooms built. It is imperative that we measure learning outcomes to ensure that children are actually receiving the quality education they deserve. In order to foster these outcomes, we must monitor factors that affect learning such as class size, access to books and other learning aids, safe access to schools conditions of schools, and the level of education and training of teachers. The strategy recognizes that “computers cannot replace good teachers.” We agree. Increased resources devoted to recruiting and training quality teachers is necessary. In order to achieve MDG 2 by 2015, 10.3 million additional teachers need to be recruited, trained and employed.¹⁷

The United States should work with host governments to strengthen assessments, curriculum development, and teaching practices to ensure that children are learning, including ensuring sufficient resources are available. It should also work with these governments on the proper allocation and delivery of resources in order to reduce education inequalities within countries and to reach children living in remote areas and areas affected by conflict and fragility. Equally important, outcome indicators should be agreed upon by and developed along with community-based organizations to ensure they respond to local needs.

Additionally, the United States should invest strongly in early childhood development programs for children under age eight. These programs help prepare children for primary school and beyond and have an especially high impact on children from poor families in terms of decreasing both dropout rates and repetition of grades and increasing exam marks.¹⁸ With increased attention to quality education along with sustained efforts to bring the most marginalized children into school, the U.S. can help countries create sustainable education systems that actually teach children the skills they need to succeed.

4. **Focus on Girls and Women:** We strongly agree that “providing opportunities...to access education” is essential to empowering women.¹⁹ While we are encouraged to see a focus on women and girls articulated in the MDG strategy document and in the President’s remarks at the United Nations, we are deeply concerned that education is not a core component of the plan to empower women. Overwhelming data show that investing in women and girls – specifically through education – is essential to empowering women and strengthening communities. Each additional year of primary education for a girl can increase her wage potential by up to 15 percent.²⁰ Gains are even higher at the secondary level. Girls’ enrollment in secondary schooling positively correlates with more women engaging in democratic processes and in being elected to seats in national parliaments.²¹

¹⁷ UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Projecting the Global Demand for Teachers: Meeting the Goal of Universal Education by 2015* (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009). Page 14.

¹⁸ *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007: Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education*. UNESCO. Page 111.

¹⁹ Page 13.

²⁰ Barbara Hertz and Gene Sperling, "What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World," Council on Foreign Relations, 2004. available from http://www.cfr.org/publication/6974/what_works_in_girls_education.html; accessed 25 May 2010.

²¹ Grown, Caren, Geeta Rao Gupta, and Zahia Khan, "Promises to Keep: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A Background Paper for the Task Force on Gender Equality and the Millennium Project," 2003, p 27. Available from <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/tf03genapr18.pdf>.

Children of mothers with a primary education are 50 percent more likely to be immunized.²² Estimates show that 65 low-and-middle-income countries that fail to offer boys and girls the same secondary education opportunities together miss out on \$92 billion per year in economic growth.²³ Educating women and girls is one of the best ways to ensure adaptability for a community in the face of extreme weather events and climate change.²⁴

The MDG strategy fails to elaborate on how to ensure that millions of girls successfully complete quality basic education to reap these benefits, and it does not provide clarity on the way forward to ensure secondary education for all. There is no discussion of the next steps necessary to close the gender gap in schools across the globe, or the way forward to eradicate illiteracy for women.

Promoting entrepreneurship for women, expanding trade policies, and strengthening the Global Health Initiative, Feed the Future, and the Global Climate Change Initiative are all laudable goals. However, without prioritizing education and investing in the achievement of all six EFA goals, the Administration's own development goals cannot be fully realized. We call on the President to clearly articulate in his global development strategy a plan for utilizing U.S. financing to achieve the six EFA goals, including universal access to early childhood development programs, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the provision of lifelong learning skills and literacy. In particular, we urge the President to lead the international community by investing in the multilateral trust fund of a reformed Fast Track Initiative, or Global Fund for Education to provide coordinated, effective, and innovative support for quality education for children and communities around the world.

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The Global Campaign for Education, U.S. Chapter (GCE-U.S.) is a broad-based coalition of U.S. organizations including faith-based groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), teachers unions, foundations, and think tanks dedicated to ensuring access to quality basic education in developing nations.

GCE-US promotes access to education as a basic human right and mobilizes the public to create political will in the U.S. and internationally to improve education for the world's poorest children. As a coalition, we also work to promote the importance of pre-school education, prevent abusive child labor, increase adult literacy rates, and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

²² Hertz and Sperling, page 29.

²³ "Paying the Price: The Economic Cost of Failing to Educate Girls," Surrey, UK: Plan International, 2008. Available from <http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/publications/education/cover-of-school-improvement-program-paying-the-price-the-economic-cost-of-failing-to-educate-girls>; accessed 21 May 2010.

²⁴ Allison Anderson, Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institute, "Combating Climate Change Through Quality Education, 2010. Page 6. Available from http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/09_climate_education_anderson.aspx.