

*U.S. Statement on Human Resources
for the Ghana Annual Partnership Meeting
June 18 - 19, 2007*

We commend the Government of Ghana on its initiative and high level of cooperation with development partners in organizing today's Annual Partnership Meeting. We look forward to constructive discussions among participants and helpful input from civil society representatives in discussing areas of past collaboration and future engagement.

We welcome the focus of today's policy dialogue on the development of human resources, which is critical to Ghana's future. As the background paper notes, Ghana is in the midst of a rural exodus which is resulting in increased urbanization, higher rates of unemployment in urban areas, and greater stress of social service delivery -- both in urban communities which must absorb more clients and rural communities where educated teachers and health care professionals are unwilling to go. The United States very much supports the Ghana Government's intention to improve equity in the delivery of basic services and development of human resource capital. In addition, we support the paper's emphasis on the need to decentralize institutional delivery mechanisms and promote stronger ownership at the district and community levels.

Ghana's growth performance and the inroads made into meeting a number of Millennium development goals, such as halving hunger and poverty, are admirable. Ensuring that these gains are broad-based and translate into improved quality of life for all Ghanaians, including more and better education and health, is fundamental to Ghana's development.

Education:

Improving the quality of the education system is a core policy objective of the Government of Ghana in its new education reforms. The U.S. endorses this objective and believes that improving the quality of education is absolutely essential if our collective efforts to move Ghana into middle income status by 2015 are to succeed.

Quality isn't an add-on to education; it's the essence of education. It does little good to spend the effort and resources to enroll all children in basic education if most of them do not learn enough to be functionally literate by the time they complete the cycle. If only half of all children who complete the basic education cycle are functionally literate upon completion, then the cost is far higher but the result is the same as it would be if only 50% of all children enter and complete a high-quality basic education program.

The education system in Ghana is still struggling to attain quality in its primary schools. These days most, but not all, children in Ghana enter school. However, some 40% of those who enter 1st Grade drop out before graduating from 6th Grade, and many of those who graduate at this level do not attain proficiency. Results from Ghana's National Education Assessment indicate that less than 15% of Ghana's youth attain proficiency in Grade 6 English, and only 5% attain proficiency in Grade 6 mathematics. These findings suggest, as a priority policy matter, that strategies and resources for improving the quality of basic education, and particularly literacy, continue to be central not only to the achievement of Ghana's goals for investing in people, but more importantly, for its overall goal of achieving middle income status by 2015.

The U.S. Government is helping improve the quality of education by investing in literacy and instructional support, community advocacy for quality education, improved management and

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accountability of schools and scholarships for girls in underserved areas. In addition, we will be constructing model schools in 23 districts selected under the MCC Compact. These model schools, which will conform with Ghana Education Service parameters, will complement Compact investments in the agriculture sector.

Health:

The United States supports the important initiative to decentralize planning of health services now underway in the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Services. Through USAID partners we are giving our full support to their joint initiative to hold regional workshops with all district health teams, at which practical, locally appropriate planning is done to increase the use of High Impact Rapid Deployment interventions to reduce maternal and child mortality. The United States believes that this planning process, if accompanied by real commitment at the national level to provide each district with the resources it needs, should result in significant improvements in health services and in health outcomes.

The United States is pleased with the effectiveness of our partnership in responding promptly and appropriately to the outbreak of Avian Influenza among poultry in Ghana. We were able to mobilize emergency assistance to the Government of Ghana to help in this effort, and stand ready to provide further assistance in the future to contain this outbreak and closely monitor its potential impact on human health. Another key aspect of the strong partnership between the people of the United States and the people of Ghana is the inclusion of Ghana under President Bush's Malaria Initiative. This demonstrates our commitment to help the Government of Ghana achieve its Millennium Development Goals, since malaria is such an important factor in maternal and child mortality.

The United States is also working to help the Government of Ghana confront the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in collaboration with other donors and with the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria to which the United States is a major contributor. Given the highly concentrated nature of the HIV epidemic in Ghana, we urge the Government to more tightly focus its HIV/AIDS investments on proven interventions among high risk groups and in high risk areas, rather than having the majority of resources used in a more generalized prevention effort focused on youth.

Water and Sanitation:

Overall the percentage of Ghana's population with access to clean drinking water is quite high, but there is considerable disparity between urban and rural communities. In an attempt to further reduce the incidence of water-borne and environmental-related diseases, the U.S. Government under the MCC Compact will be investing in potable water systems and community sanitation facilities. It is our intention that these small scale investments help to improve the delivery of rural services, in order to foster private sector led growth and development. In addition, the project will enhance the capacity of local government units by allowing beneficiaries to provide meaningful input on investment decisions in community infrastructure.

We very much agree that health, education, water and sanitation, training programs and job creation are linked and are critical to increasing productivity, increasing incomes and improving living conditions. We urge the Ghana Government to urgently address key issues such as quality of basic education and health interventions that will reduce child and maternal mortality rates, both of which are hampering development of GPRS II programs in the medium-term.