

# U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO AFRICA: SECURING AMERICA'S INVESTMENT FOR LASTING DEVELOPMENT

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Since 2001, the United States has dramatically increased its commitment to development in Africa and has transformed the way it is implemented. In the last eight years, U.S. foreign assistance to sub-Saharan Africa managed by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has increased by \$5.5 billion, or 340 percent.<sup>1</sup> An additional \$3.8 billion has been provided through Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) compacts, ten of which have been signed with sub-Saharan African countries since 2004.<sup>2</sup> The United States is currently on track to meet its 2005 G-8 commitment to double aid to Africa again by 2010.<sup>3</sup> This commitment of financial resources by the United States represents former President George W. Bush's vision of using America's power to help Africans improve their own lives, build their own nations and transform their own future.

Country ownership, good governance, accountability for results and the importance of economic growth have all been hallmark themes of the Bush era of new approaches to international development, and threads of all can be seen in the United States' foreign assistance to Africa. Indeed, with U.S. assistance, Africa is making progress toward addressing key development challenges, particularly in the health sector where significant gains have been made in combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Additionally, Africa is addressing the incidence of malaria, a significant source of mortality on the continent. Yet if these important successes, along with many others, are to endure and further progress is to be made, then a much more strategic and holistic development approach to Africa is needed. This development approach would build on the commitments and innovations begun during the Bush administration.

U.S. foreign aid to Africa is presently the sum of both legislative and executive imperatives for so-called earmarked programs that, albeit well-intentioned, often fail to address the most critical development challenges in Africa because of their

single-issue focus and constituency-driven mandates. In order for the United States to avoid falling into the foreign aid trap of endless social service delivery, it needs to comprehensively retool its efforts to marshal Africa's own natural and human

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resources to power its way out of poverty and underdevelopment. Official development assistance will never be the answer, but it can help unlock the solutions.

This article will examine how the United States can achieve greater development impact in Africa with its foreign assistance dollars. The Bush administration has elevated the prominence of Africa in foreign policy and national security arenas and dedicated unprecedented levels of aid to meeting the continent's humanitarian and development challenges. The Obama administration has already signaled its intentions to keep aid levels high, yet budgetary pressures in our current economic climate and other pressing foreign policy priorities will push against sustaining the United States' level of commitment, much less to go beyond and do more to meet the serious challenges still impeding developmental progress in Africa.

The Obama administration's ability to rise to this challenge rests on more than additional resources and new initiatives. It will require a new strategic approach that addresses the longer-term challenges confronting Africa, in the context of U.S. interests—a more peaceful, stable and productive Africa. The Bush administration has raised the bar exponentially on the U.S. commitment to Africa. The Obama administration must now not only deliver on these commitments, but go much further to secure a peaceful, stable and productive Africa.

**PROGRESS DURING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION**

Looking back on the Bush administration's record in Africa, one can see that many positive developments have taken place over the past eight years. Beyond more than tripling assistance to Africa, many important programs have been launched and new approaches taken that have transformed U.S. engagement with Africa and produced impressive results.

Africa has been such a priority of the Bush administration that no less than twelve presidential initiatives, in whole or in substantial part, helped to focus

resources and energies on Africa.<sup>4</sup> Bush-era foreign assistance to Africa supported each objective of the U.S. foreign assistance framework. These include working with African governments, institutions and organizations to promote peace and security, just and democratic governance, investment in people, economic growth and humanitarian assistance.

In the area of peace and security, the Bush administration contributed to the ending of seven conflicts in Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, north-south Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Burundi and Kenya) and devoted substantial energies to those still outstanding, admittedly albeit with mixed results and much more work required (Darfur-Chad, Somalia, Ethiopia-Eritrea, northern Uganda and eastern Congo). In addition, some 40,000 African peacekeepers have been trained by the United States since 2005.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps most visibly, in 2007, President Bush announced the creation of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) to reorganize the Department of Defense's disjointed engagement with Africa from three combatant commands with responsibilities on the African continent to one integrated command. Unfortunately, confusion and miscommunication over the role and purpose of this new command undermined the reception it should have received from both African and American stakeholders alike. The reception should have been one that appreciated the inherent good sense and rationale in this restructuring and acknowledged the opportunity for more focused and effective military-to-military support in the critical realm of security sector reform in Africa. This goal is finally being articulated and increasingly perceived in this manner, but time and effort will still be required to allay these early misgivings and prove AFRICOM's positive place in the United States' approach to Africa.

In support of just and democratic governance, the United States has encouraged participatory politics and human rights throughout Africa. In the past four years alone, more than fifty democratic elections have been held in Africa, and more than two-thirds of sub-Saharan African nations are now characterized as at least partially free.<sup>6</sup> Even in ongoing, difficult environments like Zimbabwe, successful democracy and governance programming has made a crucial difference to the course of the political crisis there in 2007 through 2008. Parallel vote tabulation conducted by civic groups supported by USAID enabled quick and transparent reporting of voting results in the March 2008 election, showing that the opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai beat incumbent President Robert Mugabe despite manipulation of the official results by the government. While this outcome was ultimately not respected, the rapid and transparent posting of voting results gave the opposition the ability and legitimate standing to contest the official results with the backing of the international community.<sup>7</sup>

The United States has also been instrumental in fighting corruption, for instance through Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) threshold programs designed to help countries close to MCA compact eligibility but falling short on the critical corruption indicator. The United States has also provided targeted support to programs like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberly Process to curtail the sale of conflict diamonds.<sup>8</sup> Anti-corruption training for journalists and non-governmental monitors in Tanzania, funded by USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, helped root out a corruption scheme that resulted in the downfall of one African prime minister in 2008.

The largest proportion of U.S. foreign assistance to Africa during the Bush years was devoted to an area called “investing in people.” This funding supported health and education initiatives. Unquestionably the signature program of the Bush administration, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), in its first five years provided an unprecedented \$18.8 billion of assistance in support of prevention, care and treatment for HIV/AIDS primarily in Africa, and has been reauthorized for a further \$39 billion over the next five years. When it was first announced in 2003, only 50,000 HIV-infected Africans were receiving antiretroviral treatments. By 2008, more than 2 million people were on life-saving drug treatments, most of them in Africa.<sup>9</sup> The President’s Malaria Initiative can claim similarly impressive results. Since its launch in 2006, more than 4 million insecticide-treated bed nets and more than 7.4 million malaria-fighting artemisinin therapies have been distributed. All told, more than 25 million people have been assisted and in some areas, such as Zanzibar, a survey of health centers showed that the transmission of malaria had precipitously declined from 2005 to 2007.<sup>10</sup>

Education has also been a key focus for both the Bush administration and Congress. Several initiatives were launched to expand access to and quality of education in Africa, in addition to ongoing programs in basic education. Through the Africa Education Initiative, more than 375,000 scholarships have been provided to African girls, nearly 730,000 teachers and school administrators have been trained and more than 9 million textbooks and learning materials have been provided since 2002.<sup>11</sup>

While approximately three-quarters of U.S. core development assistance to Africa was dedicated to health programming, promoting economic growth was still a central theme of the Bush administration.<sup>12</sup> Key programs and initiatives focused on:

- Increasing agricultural productivity and growth rates to reduce hunger, alleviate poverty and improve food security;
- Promoting African capacity to trade, intra-regionally and internationally,

through capacity building, regional integration and support for expanding the number of African countries benefiting from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA);

- Addressing climate change and environmental degradation throughout the Congo basin and protecting biodiversity and improving natural resource management in other key landscapes.

Important advances have been achieved in all these areas. For instance, AGOA exports to the United States have increased more than six-fold since its first full year of implementation in 2001, and U.S. exports to sub-Saharan Africa have doubled.<sup>13</sup> Through the Africa Financial Sector Initiative undertaken by the Bush administration, the U.S. government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation is mobilizing more than \$1.6 billion in private investment for the continent.<sup>14</sup> The United States is working to support the development of more small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs, particularly in the agriculture sector, as the critical drivers of economic growth in Africa.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of humanitarian assistance, the United States has also provided unprecedented levels of food and other emergency assistance.<sup>16</sup> From Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia to eastern Congo, northern Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as other drought-exposed and food-insecure areas across the continent, the United States is helping to keep tens of millions of Africans alive each year through timely and appropriate humanitarian response, even in some of the most challenging environments.

The hallmarks of the Bush era of international development stem from the Monterrey Consensus, resulting from the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development. The principal themes of the Monterrey Consensus are: country ownership, good governance, accountability for results and the importance of economic growth. The most striking single manifestation of President Bush's commitment to and Congress' support for these principles was the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. It applies these principles to reward top performers in development and governance indicators with large-scale, multi-year grants to fund country-identified solutions for reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth. Of the eighteen compacts signed thus far by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), ten are with sub-Saharan African countries, providing another \$3.8 billion of assistance. Two more African countries are compact-eligible, and nine others have threshold programs underway or just finishing. The United States provides assistance to these countries to help them meet the criteria for compact eligibility.<sup>17</sup> While the slow disbursement rates of these compacts thus far have garnered criticism, it is perhaps too early to judge, given the start-up chal-

lenges for any new organization. The ability to commit resources for a multi-year program is, in fact, a strength from a developmental perspective, enabling more coherent program design and predictability of funding. Demonstrating results is, of course, important as well, and the MCC still needs to prove itself in this regard. Still, the incentive effect of this challenge account has already been profound on governance in Africa, providing significant motivation and support to reformers across the continent, and demonstrating American appreciation for African-led solutions to their greatest challenges.

Finally, the United States has recognized the significance of private sector flows to the developing world as being of even greater importance than official flows of development assistance. Through USAID's Global Development Alliance and the efforts of other U.S. government agencies, the United States is expanding public-private partnerships wherever possible to leverage official assistance with even greater private sector investment. In Africa, USAID alone has built more than 269 public-private alliances with over 800 partners, leveraging \$2.1 billion in private money with \$420 million in development assistance.<sup>18</sup>

#### **CHALLENGES FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

While the Bush administration supported many important programs and principles of foreign assistance, there are still many challenges to address and new issues that arise from these mostly positive developments. In the area of peace and security, untold numbers of Africans still live in conflict or instability. They need viable political solutions backed by solid security guarantees and massive post-conflict and recovery assistance. For as many peacekeepers as the United States has helped to train, Africa is still the largest user of UN and multinational peacekeepers and arguably needs far more to stabilize and consolidate the current fragile peace agreements in Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Paul Collier makes the increasingly resonant argument that the only way to help fragile states escape the conflict trap and likelihood of falling back into civil war is to guarantee security externally for the first ten years or so of post-conflict consolidation.<sup>19</sup> There are not nearly enough competent troop contributors, in Africa or beyond, to meet the current demand, much less to sustain these commitments for a decade or more.

In the realm of democracy and governance, the U.S.-based non-governmental organization Freedom House reports that over the course of 2008, roughly one-quarter of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa experienced setbacks after several years of positive gains in political and civil rights.<sup>20</sup> In health, for all the success of PEPFAR and other international efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa, the epidemic is still spreading. Now that the United States has begun this humani-



tarian program, it must not only continue to provide this life-saving support but also tackle the development challenge of how it will be sustained in the future by African economies and health systems. It will require even greater levels of resources and a more holistic approach to reach the point where African governments can take responsibility for these programs. This will require a level of effort and resources far beyond those projected for the next five years.<sup>21</sup>

On the economic front, food, fuel and other commodity shocks, on top of the global financial crisis, bode ill for Africa. The World Bank's chief economist for Africa, Shanta Devarajan, predicts a deceleration in growth, just when economic reforms were picking up steam—impressive levels of growth had been sustained for the past ten years and accelerating further over the past three. Yet second round impacts of the financial crisis—declining capital flows, slowing remittances, stagnating foreign aid and falling commodity prices and export revenues—will make sustaining these positive economic growth rates for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa very difficult. Economies dependent on commodity exports or closely linked to the international financial system are likely to be hardest hit, including Nigeria, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

This is even more troubling when we consider poverty and population growth rate trends in sub-Saharan Africa. The continent has experienced a rise in absolute poverty, from 200 million people in poverty in 1981 to 380 million in 2005, in spite of impressive overall economic growth rates for the better part of the last decade.<sup>23</sup> Looking ahead, the scenario may only get dimmer. Even though the poverty rate for Africa actually declined between 1996 and 2005, it was not enough to keep pace with overall population growth. At current growth rates of 2.5 percent per annum, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to double as soon as 2036.<sup>24</sup> Over 40 percent of the sub-Saharan Africa population is currently under 15 years old, and by 2050 the number of 15- to 24-year-olds will double.<sup>25</sup> This youth bulge brings with it profoundly deleterious effects for nearly every area of political, social and economic development, let alone security. Africa will need to sustain economic growth rates greater than 6 percent to reduce not only poverty rates, but also the absolute number of people living in poverty. Keeping up with demand for schooling, jobs and social services for this population growth will make achieving benchmarks such as the Millennium Development Goals that much harder. Youth already account for half of all new HIV infections in Africa, and women are almost three times more likely to be infected than men. Perhaps most worrying, countries with very youthful age structures are far more likely to experience armed civil conflict than countries with more mature age structures.<sup>26</sup> While the underlying causes of extremism and terrorism in Africa still require more analysis, conflict and instability combined with unemployed and under-

educated youth can contribute to the conditions that enable violent extremism or terrorist activity.<sup>27</sup>

The ramifications are clear. Foreign aid as social service delivery or even direct budget support, as many of our European and African counterparts advocate, will ultimately have no hope of keeping pace with these ever-expanding needs. In addition, what donor aid there is for Africa will continue to be driven by what donors can justify to their constituents. One need look no further than the United States' development assistance to Africa, which in the grand scheme could be considered modest. Yet, spurring economic growth and dramatically increasing local government capacity to collect domestic revenues and manage and provide services are of utmost importance. At the same time, more concerted efforts to lower population growth rates in Africa to a healthier, more sustainable level are needed. The United States and other donors must continue to respond to humanitarian crises, help mitigate the external shocks of the financial and commodity crises and—most importantly—find more effective ways of working with Africans to unlock the wealth of the continent through private sector-led growth and increased trade. Donors must help recipient countries manage this growth in such a way that benefits the people of Africa. As the largest bilateral donor to Africa, the United States' current approach to allocating its foreign assistance to Africa will not do enough to help the continent get abreast of these trends. The contributions of the American people to address African humanitarian and development challenges over the past eight years, and what we hope will continue under an Obama administration, are in danger of being overwhelmed if we do not account for these larger dynamics.

## **IMPERATIVES GOING FORWARD**

Smarter foreign assistance to Africa that supports lasting developmental progress will require a better consensus and more clarity on what development is and why development in Africa is important to the United States. As we have seen, there are many competing objectives for foreign assistance in Africa: reducing poverty, addressing transnational challenges such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases, climate change, narcotics trafficking and transnational terrorism. There is democracy and freedom to promote, humanitarian assistance to provide, trade to expand, conflicts to end and economies to grow. There are Millennium Development Goals to meet—global benchmarks in education, health, hunger, poverty reduction, access to clean water and more that are all far off the mark in Africa and serve as a global rallying point for continued efforts.

All too often, however, the purpose of foreign assistance programs is misunderstood. Development is not winning hearts and minds, though our civilian foreign assistance programs are a significant reason for the high regard in which



most of Africa views the United States, and as our American diplomatic corps to Africa will attest, even the smallest programs are an important demonstration that America cares. Nor is the fundamental purpose of U.S. development assistance humanitarian, though the United States is the largest bilateral humanitarian donor to Africa, saving millions of lives each year through food and other emergency assistance, as well as through disease-specific health programming. Nor is it a stand-alone health or education program given in reward for counter-terrorism, military or political cooperation. Some forms of foreign assistance may be suitable for these purposes, but currently many have so blurred the definitions and roles of who does what, when, where, why and for how long that development specialists have nearly lost sight of development in the midst of all these competing priorities and objectives. Policy coherence is nowhere to be found.

Yet the United States knows to do these things because it is in our diplomatic interests to make friends, not enemies. It is in our security interests to deny terrorists safe havens from which to operate and fertile grounds from which to recruit. It is in our economic interests to increase access to trade and markets, and in particular, to diversify our foreign sources of energy. Finally, it is in our moral interests to save lives, to fight tyranny and injustice and to end conflicts that destabilize and destroy chances for human progress and prosperity. For all these reasons, it makes sense that we help “build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”<sup>28</sup>

This is the overarching U.S. foreign assistance goal arrived at during the Bush administration’s effort to reform foreign assistance. It is supported by a framework that delineates most foreign assistance by sector objective and country category so that effort is focused on helping to move a country along its development progression. In theory, this framework supports the logic of transformational development. It is also the outcome of several years of grappling with the changing context for U.S. foreign assistance in a post-September 11 world and the reality of mismatched alignment of resources to objectives. In practice, this framework is merely used to track and aggregate the sum of competing objectives and priorities within and between the executive and legislative branches. Its practical effect often further inhibits responsiveness to changing circumstances or to meeting locally-identified needs. Most importantly, it is a framework without a corresponding theory of prioritization; there is no strategy that identifies criteria for determining priorities within the framework and across regions of the world and, therefore, no clear way of mobilizing resources to achieve longer-term results. The Joint State Department-USAID Strategic Plans of the Bush administration may have been intended to provide these priorities. They are important statements of the syner-

gies between diplomacy and development and the ways the two institutions need to work together, but they do not set specific foreign assistance priorities for the most part. The State Department or USAID can justify anything they do with these plans.

The impact of this is particularly profound for Africa, which has been a region receiving special focus and attention at the multilateral and bilateral level for much of the past eight years. While this extra attention from across the spectrum of the international community, including concerned celebrity advocates and non-governmental organizations, has been impressive in its intensity and sincerity, the sum total of these efforts does not automatically translate to measurable progress for African countries along the development continuum.

During the Bush administration, Africa has been the recipient of more presidential and executive initiatives than any other region of the world. When coupled with proscribed congressional earmarks and directives to meet required levels of spending in certain sectors of aid programming, little is left over for country-identified priorities or adjustments to accommodate changing circumstances throughout the year. In FY2008, for instance, out of a combined State-USAID foreign assistance budget for Africa of \$7.1 billion dollars, \$857 million was available for education, economic growth, democracy promotion and good governance activities; the balance went to health (including PEPFAR), security sector reform and humanitarian assistance.<sup>29</sup> Of the \$857 million, only \$106 million was not spoken for by either executive or congressional mandate before the year began.<sup>30</sup> As a result, program areas without dedicated constituencies on Capitol Hill or initiatives promoted by the administration are frequently curtailed if not outright terminated.

The curtailment or termination of programs has had the deepest impact in the areas of democracy, governance and economic growth, ironically the sectors that our reform-minded and best African development partners clamor for most. While our African partners care deeply about health, education, clean water and other social services, they know that unless they can grow their economies, increase trading opportunities and attract more foreign capital, they will never be able to generate self-sufficient tax revenues needed to end their reliance on foreign assistance in these areas. In addition, without effective government structures to manage these resources and respond to citizens' needs, these efforts will not meaningfully improve people's lives. These are the areas that need to be most critically addressed in order to confront the continent's most pressing development challenges. Yet there is no consistency of aid levels for these seemingly non-priority programs from year to year, making consultation and collaboration with African partners and other donors exceedingly difficult at the country level.

Ultimately, U.S.-supported development successes are limited to mostly sector-specific achievements that may have important near-term effects, but that will be unlikely to help African economies and societies more profoundly transform in the longer term.

This is not to suggest that the balance of foreign assistance to Africa devoted to health, education and security sector programs has not achieved important results or contributed to improving people's lives; it has in profound ways, as described above. Nor is it the case that the level of resources directed to Africa during the Bush administration would necessarily have been justified and secured had the compassionate impulses supporting these interventions in Africa—such as the scourge of HIV/AIDS or abysmally low literacy rates, especially among girls—not resonated so greatly with the American public or been so supported by presidential and legislative political capital. Funding for priority health interventions or other programs promoted by the administration, then, cannot necessarily be considered fungible for other development needs in Africa. Since the annual budgetary hydraulics of our foreign assistance process do not ultimately support a coherent, longer-term strategy, the United States is unable to consistently support the underlying foundations on which fundamental transformational development occurs, and therefore our successes are bound to be finite at best, no matter how singularly spectacular.

Development that grows economies and transforms societies requires a long-term, sustained investment to support good governance, stable institutions and local capacity. This support allows developing countries to create their own prosperity, deliver their own social services to meet the needs of their citizenry and assume responsibility for their own security. There is no question that the Bush administration elevated the prominence of development as a central tool in securing U.S. national security. Its place in what is now called the “3Ds”—diplomacy, defense and development—may be rhetorically solidified, but practically speaking it is far from properly understood, much less given the bureaucratic space and financial resources needed to support it to the same degree as diplomacy and defense. Numerous reports and commissions have made studies and recommendations to address this issue more thoroughly; what is particularly relevant for Africa is the chorus of calls for a more coherent approach to how development fits into U.S. national security.<sup>31</sup>

A U.S. national strategy on international development, for instance, would help to clarify when, where and why the United States supports development in furtherance of our overall national security and foreign policy objectives. To be useful, it must go beyond giving a general rationale for development that leaves everything on the table in some way. It must indicate what we will not do, where

and why, in addition to giving the criteria for what we will do. It must also distinguish between foreign assistance to achieve transformational development and other types of foreign assistance for other purposes. Not all countries are good development partners in terms of demonstrating the political will and commitment to reform needed to make long-term developmental progress. Some countries are in a so-called “fragile” condition, while others are well-developed and more strategic or “sustaining” partners. The current U.S. foreign assistance framework aptly categorizes countries with this in mind and identifies different programming priorities within the priority objectives to respond to these circumstances. This is helpful, but it still does not address how to prioritize assistance by region of the world, much less by sector priority or by country category. We can now categorize brilliantly, but we strategize barely at all. As a result, our foreign assistance is the sum of often competing sector imperatives or initiatives driven by the need for an “announceable”—a new program or initiative to announce, which marks a significant event, trip or donor meeting. Furthermore, where the executive and legislative branches diverge on budget priorities, the end result is barely coherent. For any national strategy on international development to be successful, it must be designed in concert with Congress in order to gain appropriators and authorizers’ support from the outset.

In an effort to be more strategic and achieve greater impact in the absence of a comprehensive construct, the State Department and USAID bureaus for Africa made a particularly concerted effort during the second term of the Bush administration to reorient the resources directed toward Africa to satisfy the United States’ greatest collective priorities. In a sub-continent of forty-eight countries, this was not always easy to do. Seven priority countries were identified, with two to three more in a close second category. Four anchor states of central importance to the sub-region or the continent as a whole were agreed upon: Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia; and three post-conflict, or rebuilding, states: Sudan, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Two upcoming priorities were also anticipated, subject to changes on the ground: Somalia and Zimbabwe. Uganda, with its own conflict in the north and close connections to southern Sudan and eastern Congo, was more or less an unspoken but much supported tenth priority. Within the constraints of executive branch mandates and other imperatives, more than 50 percent of requested resources (non-PEPFAR, non-humanitarian assistance) between fiscal years 2007 and 2009 were focused on these seven to ten countries. This was not without some pain or controversy, as there are many good development partners in Africa who were not included in this first order of prioritization—none of the MCA compact signatories in Africa, for instance, made the first cut. Many more countries than just Sudan, Liberia and the Democratic

Republic of the Congo deserved some level of sustained investment to get them to compact-eligibility state or to move them out of fragility and instability to a place where development can take hold.

This more geopolitical approach to assistance priorities, however well-informed by USAID's developmental perspective, does not constitute a comprehensive, strategic approach to development or even foreign assistance in Africa. What is needed is an interagency strategic framework for Africa that clarifies to what extent U.S. foreign assistance is to be prioritized to achieve development, political and security objectives, tying into the U.S. national security strategy and a U.S. national strategy for international development. Such a strategic framework needs to be developed in concert with key Congressional committees, and it must be supported by bureaucratic processes and systems that enable and reinforce its implementation.

## **BACK TO THE FUTURE**

In 2006, before foreign assistance reform was formally launched, USAID produced an agency framework to interpret its multiple goals in development, relief, recovery and advancing U.S. national security in Africa. It attempted to apply the new paradigm for foreign aid laid out in what was then the Agency Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign Aid, which distinguished between transformational development and fragile state goals and objectives, and endeavored to align programmatic time frames and resources needed to produce results appropriate for the country context. The "Strategic Framework for Africa" recognized Africa as the region with both the highest number of top development performers and at the same time the greatest number of fragile states as compared with any other region. Accordingly, it prioritized rewarding low-income countries that showed good commitment and performance to development results. At the same time, the framework recognized the need to help some countries overcome their instability and weak governance in order to be able to grow and prosper.

The framework provided a medium-term goal, supporting operational goals for transformational development states as well as fragile states. For transformational development states, USAID assistance would strive over a 10- to 15-year period to increase the number of African countries moving toward middle-income status, with improved standards of living, quality of life and participatory governance. Missions would design programs to achieve the two operational goals of fostering a healthier, better educated and more productive population and increasing the effectiveness of African institutions in promoting a vibrant private sector and democratic governance. These goals would be achieved through a variety of sectoral and cross-sectoral programs over a three- to five-year period.

For fragile states in Africa, USAID's medium-term goal was to increase secu-

ity and political, economic and social stability in countries vulnerable to, in or emerging from crisis through the promotion of democratic practice, non-violent resolution of conflict and equitable economic recovery. Specifically, missions would design programs that would measurably avert and resolve conflict, manage crises and promote stability, recovery and democratic reform over 1- to 3-year periods.


Cross-cutting issues that all bilateral and regional programs had to address were identified (governance, HIV/AIDS, gender, urbanization and youth) as well as critical issues such as counter-terrorism and the implications of extractive industries. Finally, it elucidated the principles on which funding allocations would be made and in what order of priority (e.g., humanitarian need, foreign policy interests of the United States, commitment to reform, contribution to medium-term goals). Each USAID bilateral program in Africa was then required to write a strategy statement for its proposed multi-year programming that responded to the country context and that supported the Agency's medium-term goals for transformational development and fragile states in Africa as laid out in the strategic framework. These are the last strategic planning documents that endeavored to comprehensively guide USAID programming in Africa to achieve medium- to long-term development results.

When foreign assistance reform and the creation of the Office of the Director for U.S. Foreign Assistance took over later in 2006, regional strategic frameworks and country strategy statements were largely set aside by Washington to make funding decisions or measure results against broader objectives. Initial efforts were focused on writing operational plans and allocating resources against the new foreign assistance framework; strategies would come later. Only now are country assistance strategies encompassing all U.S. government foreign assistance for certain pilot countries in each region under the foreign assistance framework being written. While this is an important step in the direction of strategic planning, the lack of an overarching document to guide these strategies in each region, much less worldwide, so far is yielding a less than satisfactory product. They are mostly the sum of selected activities from within each sectoral objective of the framework, with minimal perspective on how they work together and fit with other donor efforts to achieve a broader transformational development or fragility goal for that country or sub-region.

The United States needs to return to the path that U.S. foreign assistance reform first started down, one that strategically aligns assistance funds and accountability with the various and distinct objectives of foreign aid, particularly in this evolving post-September 11 world.<sup>32</sup> To this end, a national strategy on international development is necessary to appropriately direct development resources as an element of foreign assistance and a tool of U.S. foreign policy. This



should be followed by regional strategies that then enable each part of the core 3Ds—defense, diplomacy and development—to define its role and contribution to achieving the greater objective, whether for a country or a region. Without such a construct, U.S. foreign assistance in Africa will continue to twist at the mercy of geopolitical priorities and well-intentioned but narrowly defined sector-specific priorities. This will in no way be sufficient to meet the fundamental development challenges confronting Africa in the coming decades, much less throughout the rest of the developing world.

The Obama administration must not only meet the bar set by the Bush administration for assistance to Africa, but also raise and implement it more intelligently and more strategically. While U.S. foreign assistance does not need to attempt to solve every problem on the African continent, it does need to see the bigger picture. The United States needs to take a longer-term, more strategic approach to securing the foundations for lasting development, particularly economic growth, multi-party democracy and good governance, in addition to meeting other humanitarian, political and security objectives, if engaging with Africa is truly in the national interest of the United States. 

## NOTES

\* The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Agency for International Development. The author wishes to note that, in accordance with the U.S. government's allocation of geographic responsibilities among federal agencies and departments, the term "Africa" is used in this piece to refer only to sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>1</sup> In fiscal year 2000, the State Department and USAID provided a total of \$1.6 billion of assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. In fiscal year 2008, they provided \$7.1 billion in assistance.

<sup>2</sup> MCC Fact Sheet, "MCC and Africa: A Growing Partnership for Success," The Millennium Challenge Corporation, <http://www.mcc.gov/documents/factsheet-090308-africa.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> White House Press Release, "U.S. Africa Policy: An Unparalleled Partnership Strengthening Democracy, Overcoming Poverty, And Saving Lives" (14 February 2008).

<sup>4</sup> These include: Africa Education Initiative (AEI), Congo Basin Forest Partnership/Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CBFP/CARPE), Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA), President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), African Global Competitiveness Initiative (AGCI), Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative (WJEI), President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), President's International Education Initiative (PIEI) also known as President's Expanded Education for the World's Poorest Children Initiative, Africa Financial Sector Initiative, Neglected Tropical Diseases Initiative, Global Food Security Initiative, as well as the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and other G-8 commitments.

<sup>5</sup> White House Press Release, "Setting the Record Straight: President Bush Remains Committed to Strengthening Democracy Throughout Africa" (22 February 2008).

<sup>6</sup> "Freedom in the World 2009 Survey Release" (Freedom House report, Washington, DC: 12 January 2009).

<sup>7</sup> "Zimbabwe Opposition Says It Has Beaten Mugabe," *New York Times*, 31 March 2008; "Zimbabwe Opposition Insists Mugabe Lost," *New York Times*, 1 April 2008; Senate Committee on Foreign

Relations, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *The Crisis in Zimbabwe and Prospects for Resolution*, testimony by Katherine J. Almquist, 15 July 2008, 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a multi-stakeholder effort to increase transparency in transactions between governments and companies within extractive industries. USAID manages the USG contribution to the EITI Multi-Donor Trust Fund and bilateral assistance to support EITI implementation in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Kimberly Process Certification Scheme monitors and tracks the world's trade in rough diamonds. USAID, for instance, works on policy issues related to conflict diamonds and builds capacity of local governments and communities to establish clear resource rights and resolve conflicting claims to land.

<sup>9</sup> PEPFAR Fact Sheet, "Celebrating Life: Latest PEPFAR Results," U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, <http://www.pepfar.gov/documents/organization/115411.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> PMI Fact Sheet, "Fast Facts: The President's Malaria Initiative," Project Management Institute, [http://fightingmalaria.gov/resources/reports/pmi\\_fastfacts.pdf](http://fightingmalaria.gov/resources/reports/pmi_fastfacts.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> White House Press Release, "Remarks at the White House Summit on International Development" (21 October 2008).

<sup>12</sup> In fiscal year 2007, health programs constituted 70 percent of USAID-managed development accounts, including USAID-managed PEPFAR funding, in Africa; in FY2008, 77 percent; and in the Bush administration's request for FY2009, 69 percent (appropriated-levels are typically higher in health funding than requested-levels).

<sup>13</sup> White House Press Release, "U.S. Africa Policy" (14 February 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Overseas Private Investment Corporation Press Release, "President Bush Announces Five OPIC Funds for Africa Totaling \$875 Million in New Investment Support" (14 February 2008).

<sup>15</sup> A variety of efforts are underway through the African Global Competitiveness Initiative, the African Financial Sector Initiative and USAID's African Entrepreneur Facility. See for instance Henrietta H. Fore, "Partnership to Support African Entrepreneurs" (remarks, USAID signing ceremony with the African Development Bank, Washington, DC: 15 April 2008), <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2008/sp080415.html>.

<sup>16</sup> White House Press Release, "U.S. Africa Policy" (14 February 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See MCC Fact Sheet.

<sup>18</sup> See [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_partnerships/gda/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_partnerships/gda/).

<sup>19</sup> Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 177.

<sup>20</sup> Freedom House Press Release, "Freedom in the World 2009: Freedom Retreats for Third Year; Sub-Saharan Africa Leads Downturn, but South Asia Shows Progress" (12 January 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Mead Over, "Prevention Failure: The Ballooning Entitlement Burden of U.S. Global AIDS Treatment Spending and What to Do About It" (Working Paper 144, Center for Global Development, Washington, DC: April 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Shanta Devarajan, "Responsible aid in a time of crisis" (29 January 2009), "Commodity price shocks" (20 January 2009), "The human crisis" (20 January 2009), "Financial Market Turmoil and Africa" (29 September 2008), Shanta's blog, <http://african.worldbank.org/>.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank Press Release, "New Data Show 1.4 Billion Live on Less Than US\$1.25 A Day, But Progress Against Poverty Remains Strong" (26 August 2008).

<sup>24</sup> World Bank Press Release, "Africa's Population Set to Double by 2036" (1 April 2008).

<sup>25</sup> UN Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision, Population Database" (20 September 2007), <http://esa.un.org/unpp/>.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Leahy et al., "The Shape of Things to Come – Why Age Structure Matters To A Safer, More Equitable World," (Population Action International, Washington, DC: April 2007), 10.

<sup>27</sup> USAID's Bureau for Africa commissioned Management Sciences International to examine drivers, or causal factors, that can lead to recruitment into or community support for terrorism. The review is intended to inform the empirical foundation upon which development interventions addressing terrorism are being designed given the limited evidence that exists thus far on the relationship between

development and counter-terrorism efforts. The study, which is currently undergoing peer review, asserts that root cause explanations for violent, Islamist extremism tend to overemphasize socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, social service delivery and economic opportunity as explicit drivers of extremism. Rather, it finds that these conditions may indirectly contribute to drivers of violent extremism and usually only in combination with other factors. Still, the authors do find that civil conflict can create chaos, incapacitate government institutions, or create a power vacuum that violent extremists can exploit. Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism and Terrorism" (unpublished paper prepared for USAID, Management Sciences International, Washington, DC: 2008).

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/115470.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Calculation based on final obligations for foreign assistance program accounts managed by USAID and State Department in fiscal year 2008. These are: development assistance; child survival and health; international disaster and famine assistance (actual); transition initiatives; P.L. 480 food assistance (actual); Millennium Challenge Account threshold program (actual); economic support funds; global HIV/AIDS initiative; peacekeeping operations; foreign military finance; international military education and training; non-proliferation, anti-terrorism, demining; international narcotics control and law enforcement. USAID administered approximately 78 percent, or \$5.5 billion, of the total \$7.1 billion. State Department and USAID accounts together comprise approximately 82 percent of the U.S. government's foreign assistance 150 account; MCC (not including threshold programs) comprises 8 percent; other U.S. government agencies comprise the remaining 10 percent.

<sup>30</sup> In fiscal year 2008, \$857 million was available in the development assistance and economic support fund accounts, used for all non-health, non-emergency and non-security sector assistance. Of this amount, \$751 million, or 88 percent of the total, was required to fund congressional earmarks and directives or presidential initiatives. This includes double-counting of sector and country earmarks (a country such as Sudan with an earmarked overall level may absorb some portion of a particular sector earmark, such as the dairy earmark to promote openings of new dairy farms in the developing world), and may also overlap with presidential priorities. Without double-counting, earmarks and initiatives would have required 117 percent of the development assistance and economic support fund accounts in fiscal year 2008, or \$1 billion.

<sup>31</sup> United States Commission on Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People Around the Globe (HELP), *Beyond Assistance: The HELP Commission Report on Foreign Assistance Reform* (Washington, DC: 2007); CSIS Commission on Smart Power, *A smarter, more secure America* (Washington, DC: 2007); Gayle E. Smith, "In Search of Sustainable Security: Linking National Security, Human Security, and Collective Security to Protect America and Our World" (Center for American Progress, Washington, DC: June 2008); Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, *America's Role in the World: Foreign Policy Choices for the Next President* (working group report, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC: 2008); Nancy Birdsall, ed., *The White House and the World: A Global Development Agenda for the Next U.S. President* (Center for Global Development, Washington, DC: 2008); J. Brian Atwood, M. Peter McPherson and Andrew Natsios, "Arrested Development: Making Foreign Aid a More Effective Tool," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (November/December 2008), 123.

<sup>32</sup> USAID Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, "U.S. Foreign Aid: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century" (White Paper, USAID, Washington, DC: January 2004).