

August 31, 2010

RE: Support for Haiti Empowerment, Assistance and Rebuilding (HEAR) Act of 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, are requesting your support and co-sponsorship of H.R. 6021, the Haiti Empowerment, Assistance, and Rebuilding (HEAR) Act of 2010.

More than seven months after Haiti's devastating earthquake, the scope of the devastation and the long-term challenges of reconstruction are apparent. From the beginning, the United States government has taken on a leadership role in relief efforts and the American people have demonstrated an unprecedented level of concern for the well-being of the Haitian people. Passage of supplemental appropriations with approximately one billion dollars in new money for Haiti's reconstruction as well as funds to reimburse agencies for their emergency work and provide debt relief assistance was a positive first step.

Congress has an opportunity to act now to ensure that U.S. reconstruction policy is sound and that our commitment to Haiti matches the long-term nature of what is needed to build back better. The HEAR Act provides a set of policy prescriptions and a multi-year authorization that track closely with the consensus views of "best practices" and "smart development" principles. Furthermore, this legislation can help ensure U.S. efforts are effective, transparent, and efficient.

We would like to highlight the following areas of the HEAR Act that make this bill crucial and worthy of your support:

- **Providing goals and framework for aid:**
Effective reconstruction requires a vision and basic policy framework. The HEAR Act takes a common sense approach to the goals and points of engagement for U.S. efforts. This framework seeks to ensure the U.S. is leveraging its work and helping to build the foundation for an independent, prosperous and democratic Haiti.
- **Providing transparency and oversight:**
The HEAR Act requires a comprehensive Haiti Rebuilding and Development Strategy that include goals, benchmarks, an implementation plan and a plan for monitoring and evaluation. It also ensures regular reporting to Congress and a variety of mechanisms that will help ensure U.S. funds are spent appropriately and will further the stated goals of U.S. assistance. The public is also required access to all non-classified report materials.
- **Understanding the importance of jobs:**
When asked in a recent poll¹, Haitians identified jobs as their number one priority. This issue undergirds many others. Hunger, for example, is largely rooted in the inability of many Haitians to afford food rather than a lack of availability. Accordingly, the HEAR Act rightly contains

¹ Oxfam International <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2010-04-12/survey-haiti-reconstruction-jobs>

explicit language that would prioritize local and regional procurement. This will put Haitians at the center of their country's redevelopment, help ensure long-term sustainability of aid efforts and be cost effective for U.S. taxpayers.

- **Ensuring Haitians are at the center of reconstruction efforts:**

Haitians must be at the center of their country's rebuilding efforts. Haitian resiliency and ingenuity must drive Haiti's rebirth. With so many international organizations and governments working in Haiti, explicit language surrounding Haitian civil society and Haitian leadership is essential in providing a blueprint for other international actors and a clear signal that the United States seeks to assist and listen to a variety of Haitian voices.

Concern in Congress for delivering humanitarian aid and engaging in a strong and sustainable rebuilding process has crossed party, geographic and regional lines. We applaud these efforts and hope that the HEAR Act will be the next step in a positive and commonsense approach to U.S. engagement with Haiti.

Sincerely,

ActionAid USA

American Friends Service Committee

American Jewish World Service

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Gender Action

Groundswell International

Grassroots International

Habitat for Humanity

Haiti Reborn/KONPAY

International Housing Coalition

International Rescue Committee

Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti

Institute for Research in Socioeconomic and Public Policy

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Life for Relief and Development

Lutheran World Relief

Management Sciences for Health

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee US Washington Office

Outreach International

Oxfam America

Partners In Health

Plan USA

Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights

TransAfrica Forum

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Washington Office on Latin America

World Hope International