Concerns on HR 5300: State Reauthorization

Aid on the Hill has considerable concerns about HR 5300, the draft text for State Reauthorization. Recognizing this bill works in conjunction with the BUILD reauthorization and other texts presented in committee this month to reorganize the Department of State's functionality to program foreign assistance funds in partnership with DFC, we have the following primary concerns:

- **Foreign assistance programs mandated by law are split between E and F, and in some cases regional bureaus, with no connecting line between bureaus, leaving the work of foreign assistance highly fragmented and key sectors without the authority to implement foreign aid programs.**
    - Sectors of specific concern include energy, water, conservation, biodiversity, wildlife trafficking, and non-security assistance: in HR 5300, no foreign assistance authority is given to the Assistant Secretaries responsible for these issues, despite some having clear foreign assistance requirements defined by Congress.
    - The Assistant Secretary for Commercial Diplomacy (under E) is assigned responsibility for development finance, including mobilizing finance for developing countries with a focus on infrastructure projects: this will create a clear conflict with functions under F, which is supposed to provide strategic coordination of all foreign assistance funding.
- **Multiple existing statutes are ignored, jeopardizing decades of steady leadership and progress on clear development priorities.**
    - There are no clear successors or discussion of programming issues related to laws including Feed the Future, Electrify Africa Act, END Wildlife Trafficking Act, Save Our Seas Act, READ Act, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act, the Women, Peace and Security Act, and the Women's Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Act.

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- **There is insufficient attention to fostering and retaining staff expertise needed for foreign assistance.**
  - The bill text highlights staffing crises for very narrow geographic and subject matter areas (Bureau of African Affairs, Uyghur language training), but does not address the significant gaps in relevant staffing and expertise in foreign assistance at the Department of State in the wake of USAID's RIF.
- **Descriptions of key development priorities like global health are overly narrow, prescriptive, and lack the relevant flexibilities US Embassies require to tailor development programming to partner country contexts.**
  - While the global health compact model shows promise for the sustainability of development investments, the timeline for its implementation is overly ambitious, particularly given current staffing shortages in foreign assistance at the Department of State, and the need for countries to prepare for shifts.
  - Collapsing global health reporting into one consolidated mechanism limits the ability to see progress on key disease priorities over time, including malaria, TB, and HIV.
  - Reducing contributions to the Global Fund and Pandemic Fund will slow progress on fighting infectious diseases, reduce America's outbreak response readiness, and potentially hinder these funds' resource mobilization from other donor countries.

While bipartisan members of Congress have offered a range of ideas for improvement to the bill - including the Barr Amendment which reintroduces CPIF, the Kim Amendment no. 61 to H.R. 5248 which re-establishes an Office of the Chief Economist, and Jacobs Amendment to H.R. 5300 on locally-led development - the amendments overall do not address the structural gaps in the original bill to stand up a focused, effective, and dedicated agency, structure, or staffing profile to manage US foreign assistance. **We encourage the committee to start afresh with a more rigorous, transparent, bipartisan effort to rebuild US foreign assistance presence and capacity.** We do not believe amendments to this bill as is are sufficient, but instead encourage further bipartisan engagement with experts on foreign assistance.