

**U.S. Position on World Bank's Investment in the Secondary Education Quality Improvement
Project (SEQUIP) for Tanzania
March 31 2020**

The United States is a forceful advocate for supporting unfettered access to education for all children, particularly those most likely to be left behind, such as girls. The World Bank has made notable efforts to improve the prospects for enabling pregnant girls to continue with their education in Tanzania through their modifications to the project's targets. However, the United States remains extremely concerned about the success of this project absent a strong commitment from the government to end the practices of involuntary pregnancy testing at school and expelling pregnant girls from school. These practices continue, rendering Tanzania's education system incapable of serving all students in an equitable or decent manner

The United States appreciates Management taking additional steps to tighten the disbursement-linked indicators (DLI), and the commitment to put in place a strong, credible independent verification agent. However, the DLIs should have gone further to commit the government to agree to "free choice" as that would have given pregnant girls full rights to decide the best option for them. The United States further emphasizes the need to ensure the highest degree of real monitoring to ensure that the funds are disbursed only against tangible progress.

To reinforce the monitoring necessary to determine whether all children will have access to public schools, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and other community-based groups must play a critical role. Management's proposed CSO Forum for SEQUIP and the proposed World Bank-Government-CSO monitoring mechanism for the Bank's entire portfolio in Tanzania are two concrete measures that add additional layers of important monitoring. The keys, however, will remain in how well the external input is factored into project implementation, the degree to which there is *broad and robust* stakeholder consultation, and how swiftly the broader coordination process will be launched. The United States is disappointed that the efforts to achieve the World Bank-Government-CSO monitoring are not already in place at the time Management is seeking Board approval on this project. The United States urges the World Bank to come back to the Board with semi-annual updates on SEQUIP implementation, given the high-risk environment in which the project will be implemented.

Given the World Bank's suspension of support to Tanzania in 2018, it is also critically important that the Bank communicate clearly to all stakeholders why it is now re-engaging, given the significant risks in this sector.

The United States wishes to be recorded as voting no on this operation, as vulnerable communities still face significant risks in not being able to access quality education, and there remains great concern that the project will continue to stigmatize girls. While the Bank has taken steps to engage with the Government on many of these issues, the United States is not convinced that this investment is appropriate at this time, nor that it will succeed in achieving its goals, and are concerned that Board approval may be interpreted as support for some of the ongoing unfair practices.