



# EO 13985 USAID Agency Equity Action Plan

Submitted: 02/09/2022

## **(1) Executive Summary**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the United States government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development and humanitarian assistance. On behalf of the American people, USAID promotes and demonstrates democratic values abroad, and advances a free, peaceful, and prosperous world. USAID programs nearly \$25 billion annually, through efforts in many sectors including economic growth, climate and environment, global health, food security, education, conflict prevention and stabilization, and humanitarian assistance. The Agency operates in more than 100 countries across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Europe and Eurasia, and the Middle East, and implements program activities that address the key drivers of poverty and social disparities.

USAID's equity assessment submitted in August 2021 outlined findings and 61 preliminary recommendations that USAID could use, if approved, to advance a values-based approach, update rules and regulations, expand our partner base, and become more consultative to achieve the President's goals regarding racial and ethnic equity in a foreign assistance context. The USAID Agency Equity Team (AET) prioritized the following recommendations for inclusion in the Action Plan: 1) continued development of the WorkwithUSAID platform, 2) enhanced implementation of USAID's nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, development and implementation of an Independent Accountability Mechanism, and advancement of Title VI protections at USAID, 3) lowered internal and external barriers for USAID awards, to include reduction of acquisition and assistance administrative burdens that negatively affect partner capacity, 4) designation of an Inclusive Development (ID) Advisor at each Mission and procurement of inclusive development support mechanisms managed through the Agency's ID Hub, and 5) implementation of a consistent approach to incorporate racial and ethnic equity and diversity into policy, planning, and learning.

Together, these actions help reframe the ways in which USAID partners democratize the development process by integrating equity into Agency policies, strategies, and practices; enhance the ability of potential non-traditional partners to pursue USAID opportunities; prevent discrimination in Agency programs; and strengthen the Agency's capacity to advance inclusive development in our overseas programming. Further, to ensure the Agency adheres to these plans, the five actions that comprise this Equity Action Plan will also serve as the basis by which USAID measures its success in a new proposed external diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) Agency Priority Goal (APG) that will be included in the FY 2022 - FY 2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP).

## **(2) Summary of Early Accomplishments**

USAID's focus on inclusive development preceded the publication of Executive Order (EO) 13985. However, since January 2021, USAID has made progress towards integrating equity into its policies and practices and facilitating the diversification of its partner base.

### Integrating Equity into Program Policy

USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) developed policy updates in August 2021, including one titled "Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in USAID Programming." This policy update acknowledges the urgency of addressing DEIA through an Agency-wide approach and focuses on USAID's objectives and methods to address marginalization, increase inclusion, and foster diversity through its global programming by utilizing an [inclusive development approach](#). The forthcoming June 2022 USAID Policy Framework will provide new policy guidance, as needed, in addition to existing requirements.

### Expanding and Diversifying the Partner Base

USAID's Administrator released updated guidance in October 2021 for the Agency's New Partnership Initiative (NPI) Action Plans that incorporates guidance from EO 13985. NPI Action Plans are strategic and operational documents within which operating units describe how they plan to expand their use of NPI's three Partnership Approaches during FYs 2022 and 2023. NPI Partnership Approaches are critical to diversifying the Agency's implementing partners, expanding engagement with local partners, and working with traditional partners in new ways to strengthen local capacity. This year, Missions/Operating Units (M/OU) must also specifically outline plans for enhancing equity and inclusion through acquisition and assistance practices and activity implementation abroad.

In addition to integrating equity into Agency procurement practices, the Agency has also reinvigorated efforts to build relationships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) through its MSI Partnership Initiative. This Initiative helps the Agency both build a pipeline of qualified candidates to diversify its workforce and supports capacity-building efforts directed to increase MSIs' participation in federal programs at USAID. Two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed in August 2021 and January 2022 with Delaware State University and Tuskegee University, two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Two additional MOUs will be signed within the coming months with Morehouse College and Alcorn State University.

### Strengthening Accountability Through Performance Management

USAID collaborated with the State Department in June 2021 to add a key issue on racial equity to the FY 2021 Operational Plan (OP) and Performance Plan and Report (PPR). USAID will utilize the data collected from the key issue, along with other key issues on gender, youth, disability, LGBTQI+, and religious minorities, to better establish a baseline for investment in DEIA programming, have a more informed approach when allocating resources to advance racial equity, promote equitable delivery of government benefits, and support local organizations that advocate for equity for historically underserved or marginalized racial and ethnic groups, along with other local initiatives.

### **(3) Equity Action Plan**

Upon delivery of the Initial Findings and Recommendations Report, USAID conducted several prioritization sessions to determine the top five priorities of the initial 61 recommendations using a prioritization matrix<sup>1</sup> which highlighted impact and effort for implementing proposed recommendations. Those prioritized as high impact, regardless of level of effort associated with the task, were shared with key stakeholders and the AET for a voting exercise to rank the available options.

Below are the top five priority recommendations that resulted from the prioritization exercise:

1. Continue development of the WorkwithUSAID platform, a free resource hub built to empower new and existing partners with the knowledge and networks to navigate how to work with USAID;
2. Enhance implementation of USAID's nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, develop and implement an Independent Accountability Mechanism, and advance Title VI protections<sup>2</sup> at USAID;
3. Lower internal and external barriers for USAID awards, to include reduction of acquisition and assistance administrative burdens that negatively affect partner capacity;
4. Designate an Inclusive Development Advisor at each Mission focused on elevating considerations of marginalized groups in all of our programming and procure inclusive development support mechanisms managed through the Agency's Inclusive Development Hub;
5. Implement a consistent approach to incorporate racial and ethnic equity and diversity into policy, planning, and learning.

Each of the prioritized recommendations underwent an assessment of a) barriers to equitable outcomes, b) action and intended impact on barriers, c) tracking progress, and d) accountability to determine how each recommendation will meaningfully address the barriers identified in the USAID equity assessment. The results of this assessment can be found for each prioritized recommendation below.

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<sup>1</sup> [Priority Impact Matrix](#) utilized by USAID to prioritize recommendations

<sup>2</sup> [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 22 - Foreign Relations, PART 209](#) - NON-DISCRIMINATION IN FEDERALLY-ASSISTED PROGRAMS OF USAID —EFFECTUATION OF TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

**Recommendation 1: Continue development of the WorkwithUSAID.gov platform, a free resource hub built to empower new and existing partners with the knowledge and networks to navigate how to work with USAID.**

*A. Barrier to Equitable Outcomes*

While there have been many past efforts to diversify and expand the Agency's partner base, it is still challenging for new and local organizations to partner with USAID. Per data in the Global Acquisition and Assistance System (GLAAS), as recently as 2020, 67 percent of USAID's funding was directly awarded to just 25 partners.

As evidenced by a recent poll conducted via USAID's LinkedIn account, organizations do not know where to start in order to partner with us. Organizations can struggle to navigate the complex requirements for funding eligibility, understand our government terminology, and sort through all of the systems in which they need to register. These bureaucratic hurdles have prevented USAID from partnering with small or local organizations, many of which represent underserved and historically marginalized populations around the world. This also represents a missed opportunity for the Agency to engage with partners that have the local experience, knowledge, and networks to ensure the best and most sustainable development outcomes in our host countries.

*B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier*

To make it easier for small businesses, NGOs, faith-based organizations, minority-serving institutions, diaspora groups, and universities to partner with us, USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance, and the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation worked together to launch WorkwithUSAID.org (soon to be transitioned to WorkwithUSAID.gov). This new platform serves as the first step towards small businesses and local organizations in the US and overseas becoming a partner with USAID.

WorkwithUSAID gives prospective partners a place to start, current partners a place to grow, and the Agency a place to build new partnerships. This free website complements USAID.gov by offering interactive tools and resources to help organizations better understand the Agency and USG regulations as they prepare to pursue funding opportunities. WorkwithUSAID also provides open access to capacity-strengthening tools for organizations that might otherwise be deterred from pursuing a partnership with USAID. This website is unique because it is a one-stop-shop where anyone can access and benefit from our resources, regardless of who they are and where they work.

Currently, there are five key components to the website:

1. [Partner Directory](#) - allows organizations to create a profile and discover others in the development community;
2. [Pre-Engagement Assessment](#) - allows organizations to evaluate their readiness to compete for USAID funding and receive a customized report to understand their capacity gaps;
3. [Library](#) - provides a curated library of free tools and resources for organizational capacity building;
4. [Blog](#) with helpful partner resources curated by M/OAA staff; and

5. Collection of [FAQs](#) about partnering with USAID.

As new knowledge gaps are identified, we will continue to build out the website and add more language options to ensure that a lack of understanding around how the Agency operates will never be a barrier to partnership.

*C. Tracking Progress*

In the near term, USAID will track progress by reviewing the number of current and prospective partners that are registered in the Partner Directory and measuring the number of new potential partners that take the pre-engagement assessment. We will report this information quarterly. We will also track additional metrics, captured outside of WorkwithUSAID, including funding obligated to new local partners on an annual basis.

Ultimately, with a website that is fully translated into multiple languages, new and local prospective partners are more easily able to partner with USAID – leveling the playing field to support diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. As USAID looks to engage more with new U.S. based and local partners, the Agency is able to use the Partner Directory to identify capable organizations to work with. Ultimately, this website will support the Agency’s efforts to create a more diversified partner base.

*D. Accountability*

USAID’s proposed external DEIA Agency Priority Goal (APG) will be reported on a quarterly and annual basis in performance.gov. The Management Bureau’s Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA) will be responsible for reporting on the metrics and the outreach activities related to the website.

**Recommendation 2: Enhance implementation of USAID’s nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, develop and implement an Independent Accountability Mechanism (AM), and advance Title VI protections<sup>3</sup> at USAID.**

*A. Barrier to Equitable Outcomes*

USAID is committed to the protection of human rights and nondiscrimination for recipients of USAID services delivered through its programs in more than 100 countries to include acquisition and assistance. While USAID has had a [nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy](#) since 2016, it is important to enhance implementation of this policy to ensure its effectiveness. Additionally, the Agency does not have a centralized, accessible mechanism to receive grievances or provide redress to beneficiaries who are victims of discrimination, nor one to receive and resolve complaints filed by a beneficiary or groups of beneficiaries (or their authorized representatives) who have experienced environmental, social, or economic harm they believe was caused by a USAID project or activity or who think they could potentially experience such harm. USAID program beneficiaries include people from marginalized or underrepresented groups, who in some cases may be adversely affected by our development projects and activities. These beneficiaries may also be at higher risk of experiencing discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or other identity traits.

*B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier*

USAID will implement a three-pronged approach to address this barrier. First, USAID intends to explore strengthening the implementation and oversight of its existing nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policies in several ways, including expanding training, publishing a beneficiaries bill of rights in multiple languages, increasing funding for community-led monitoring initiatives, and expanding engagement with communities and beneficiaries in the planning and evaluation of activities. Together, these approaches will increase the number of staff and implementing partners who are aware of and sensitized to the nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, promote awareness among beneficiaries of their rights under the policy, and strengthen compliance through improved monitoring.

The Agency also plans to develop a USAID Accountability Mechanism (AM), which will serve as a means to receive and resolve complaints filed by a beneficiary or groups of beneficiaries (or their authorized representatives) who have experienced environmental, social, or economic harm caused by a USAID project or activity or could potentially experience such harm. AMs typically include a compliance review function, a dispute resolution or mediation function, and feedback capability. The AM will be consistent with Principle 31 of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which defines an “effective” accountability mechanism as legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, and a source of continuous learning.

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<sup>3</sup>[Code of Federal Regulations, Title 22 - Foreign Relations, PART 209](#) - NON-DISCRIMINATION IN FEDERALLY-ASSISTED PROGRAMS OF USAID —EFFECTUATION OF TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

In addition, USAID will work with the U.S. Department of Justice - Civil Rights Division (DOJ/CRD) to help determine the best approach to reinvigorate the Agency's Title VI program, which will only apply to a small subset of Agency awards. USAID will also identify the organizations operating in the United States receiving federal financial assistance through contracts with provisions of providing assistance, collaborative agreements, grants, and other funding mechanisms to ensure applicability of the Title VI statute. More actions will be identified once the appropriate assessment is conducted and through our continued engagement with the DOJ/CRD. It is noted that the Agency's enhancement of its Title VI program will entail evaluation of its Title IX and other antidiscrimination programs given that the compliance procedures are tied together by regulation.

### *C. Tracking Progress*

Enhanced Implementation of Nondiscrimination for Beneficiaries Policy: USAID anticipates using USAID University, an online training platform, to track how many staff complete online training covering the nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy. Should USAID pursue publishing a beneficiaries bill of rights and/or increasing funding for community-led monitoring initiatives, it anticipates performing a baseline and post-intervention analysis of the number of beneficiary bills of rights posted in local languages and the amount of funding devoted to community-led monitoring, respectively.

Independent AM: Mission Advisory Teams will conduct baseline and endline impact assessments on each complaint filed. There will also be progress reports and periodic follow-ups from Mission Management Teams to the Agency AM Team (AMT), which includes permanent members from Washington Bureaus. The AMT will write a final report at the resolution of a complaint.

Title VI: In the short-term, USAID will first need to review how much of its financial assistance is subject to Title VI to effectively evaluate whether barriers exist within the Agency's programming.

With enhanced implementation of USAID's nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, there will be substantially increased awareness among staff, implementing partners, and beneficiaries of USAID's zero-tolerance stance on discrimination against beneficiaries. With an effective Independent AM and Title VI program, USAID will be able to conduct inspections and reviews of projects or activities funded by the Agency and respond to any complaints filed.

### *D. Accountability*

This recommendation is included as part of the Agency's proposed external DEIA APG with associated milestones and indicators. As part of the APG reporting process, the Agency will publicly report on the accomplishment of milestones on a quarterly and annual basis on performance.gov.

**Recommendation 3: Lowering internal and external barriers for USAID awards, to include reduction of acquisition and assistance administrative burdens that negatively affect partner capacity.**

*A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)*

USAID's existing acquisition and assistance processes present an administrative burden and can make proposal and application submissions cost-prohibitive for organizations, especially those serving historically marginalized groups. Often staffed by smaller teams and having limited operating budgets, potential partners from underrepresented groups may not be familiar with USAID's acquisition and assistance regulations, policies, or award processes and may not have the operational capacity to hire or designate writing teams to respond to solicitations.

All organizations with limited operating capacity may be impacted by these barriers, such as those representing Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), minority-owned small businesses, and local entities (e.g., faith-based organizations, local private sector partners, local non-governmental organizations, community organizations, and service providers).

In Fiscal Year 2021, local organizations<sup>4</sup> received 6.2 percent of USAID's total obligations (acquisition and assistance) through direct funding, even as awareness of the sustainable benefits of partnering with local organizations is surging.

Through focus group consultations with external stakeholders, many also shared that applying for USAID awards can be cost prohibitive. Some particularly spoke of limited resources to hire contract/grant proposal/application writers and how proposal/application preparation usurps time from other operational and programming priorities. These barriers have stopped some organizations from pursuing acquisition and assistance opportunities with USAID.

*B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier*

USAID will explore the flexibilities possible under the law to limit competition (where feasible), streamline proposal/application requirements (e.g., limiting length of written proposals/applications, using oral presentations in lieu of written content for certain proposal/application requirements, not requiring full work plans, M&E plans, organizational charts/staffing plans with initial proposals/applications, etc.), encourage use of flexible solicitation methods (e.g., phased acquisition/assistance), as appropriate, and minimize the compliance barriers that are preventing local organizations or marginalized groups from being competitive for awards. Examples of decreasing barriers include: selecting the appropriate type of award or subaward/subcontract that allows USAID to award to less experienced local organizations while minimizing financial and programmatic risks to the local organizations as well as to USAID; and sharing capacity strengthening resources that improve local organizations' ability to comply with U.S. laws and regulations and achieve results in their communities with USAID funding (see Rec #1 re: [WorkwithUSAID.org](http://WorkwithUSAID.org)).

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<sup>4</sup> If the SAM vendor country of incorporation, SAM vendor address country, and GLAAS place of performance match, the vendor is identified as local and tagged as 'SAM PoP Local.'

These actions can help external stakeholders better assess their competitiveness for USAID funding and reduce organizational effort and expense associated with proposal/application processes. For example, with either phased acquisition or assistance, initial submissions would be straightforward and less burdensome while allowing offerors/applicants to receive feedback on their likelihood of receiving an award before they decide to invest in subsequent phases. These types of flexible solicitations would enable new entrants to avoid hefty proposal/application preparation costs.

### *C. Tracking Progress*

The Agency Industry Liaison will administer an annual partner survey to garner external stakeholder feedback on working with USAID. The rate of satisfaction with streamlined procurement processes will gauge the extent these actions have reduced barriers to equitable access to USAID funding opportunities.

In the long-term, this recommendation will ultimately result in an increase in the percentage of external stakeholders who believe USAID's streamlined processes have made proposal/application submissions more pragmatic and cost effective for potential partners, and a more diversified partner base, regardless of funding level.

### *D. Accountability*

This action will align with M/OAA's updated A&A Strategy (2022). M/OAA has social media platforms and Agency Industry Liaison outreach that serve as opportunities to dialogue with and receive feedback from partners and other external stakeholders. It also holds open Community of Practice calls regularly to promulgate lessons learned and best practices. In addition, these actions are included in the proposed external DEIA APG. M/OAA will be responsible for reporting progress against established milestones and metrics on a quarterly basis and annual basis in performance.gov.

**Recommendation 4: Designate an Inclusive Development Advisor at each Mission and procure inclusive development support mechanisms managed through the Agency's Inclusive Development Hub.**

*A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)*

USAID promotes a nondiscriminatory, inclusive, and integrated development approach that seeks to ensure that all people, including those who face discrimination and thus may have limited access to a country's benefits, legal protections, or social participation, are fully included and can actively participate in and benefit from development processes. USAID's Missions often have the funding, willingness, interested generalist staff, and political will to design programming that is inclusive of and equitable for marginalized and underrepresented groups.

Unfortunately, Missions often lack the specific expertise and resources required to program on inclusive development. Most Missions do not have dedicated advisors to the full inclusive development portfolio, which entails having technical knowledge and expertise related to the challenges and barriers faced by numerous marginalized groups in the local context. Per ADS 205 requirements, most Missions do have the required Gender Advisors, with some focused solely on gender equality issues and some on gender and inclusive development issues — which they report is too broad a workload that contributes to burnout.

In addition, Missions face multiple challenges when seeking to directly partner with local organizations representing marginalized and underrepresented groups and topics. Challenges faced by such local organizations may include safety and security considerations, time sensitivity, the need for discretion, and complicated relationships with local governments. Combined, these factors often hinder a Mission's ability to develop programming that addresses the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or strengthen the capacity of the organizations that support these groups.

*B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier*

To improve technical leadership at all USAID Missions, the Agency will begin ensuring that each Mission appoints an Inclusive Development Advisor, a Foreign Service (FS) or Foreign Service National (FSN) staff member who specializes on issues of inclusive development. This will be in addition to the current structure of Gender Advisors. In doing so, USAID would parallel how all Missions and many DC-based Operating Units already staff a Gender Advisor who specializes on issues of gender equality. The presence of a Gender Advisor has been cited as one of the most important factors in ensuring the integration of gender into USAID programming. The proposed Inclusive Development Advisors will coordinate closely with the Gender Advisors to advance the Mission's work across the full inclusive development agenda.

Inclusive Development Advisors serve as subject-matter experts on USAID's [inclusive development framework](#), convene the Mission's Inclusive Development Working Group, launch Inclusive Development Analyses and other relevant approaches to gathering data and understanding local contexts, guide Mission staff in developing programming designed to integrate the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups, spearhead the integration of inclusive development considerations in relevant policies, and establish guidance to advance the Mission's inclusive development approach. A small number of Missions have already

designated an Inclusive Development Advisor — these Missions lead the Agency in integrating the needs and priorities of marginalized and underrepresented groups into their programming and partnerships. To ensure staff can perform this function, the Agency's Inclusive Development Hub will continue to develop and facilitate instructor-led and asynchronous virtual training sessions on inclusive development topics.

An Inclusive Development Advisor at each Mission is necessary to advance the Agency's vision for an inclusive and equitable approach to global development, but Missions must be provided with additional resources. These will be delivered in the form of two new inclusive development support programs to be procured by the Agency's Inclusive Development Hub. These mechanisms will increase the ability of missions to effectively support inclusive development objectives through informed, evidence-based programming by: 1) Increasing Mission capacity to pursue an inclusive development approach through expanding knowledge of the needs of marginalized and underrepresented groups in the country; 2) Increasing the capacity of local organizations serving marginalized and underrepresented groups to support their needs; and 3) Reducing the barriers to developing and managing inclusive development projects by providing access to mechanisms to support integration activities, small grants, capacity building, and rapid response. Additional activities will be implemented through these support programs as further gaps in USAID's ability to resource an inclusive development approach are identified.

### *C. Tracking Progress*

USAID will use a variety of indicators to understand the reduction in barriers for organizations to engage with the Agency. These metrics will be measured on a quarterly basis. They include the percentage of Missions that have designated an Inclusive Development Advisor; the percentage of Missions that have further operationalized inclusive development by convening an Inclusive Development Working Group; the number of Missions that have bought-in to the central inclusive development programs to engage in inclusive development learning and adaptation activities; and the number of local organizations serving and managed by marginalized and underrepresented groups (including organizations led by youth, women, LGBTQI+ people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples) that are supported with USAID resources.

The longer term desired outcomes are integration of the needs and priorities of marginalized and underrepresented groups and individuals in vulnerable situations across all Agency efforts, increased opportunities for training and the dissemination of information to promote inclusion, and utilization of new funding opportunities to build the capacity and increase the number of local organizations that serve marginalized groups partnered with USAID.

### *D. Accountability*

As noted above, USAID has a proposed external DEIA APG that will be reported on both quarterly and annually in performance.gov. Data will be collected by the Inclusive Development Hub, together with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub, from Missions and program managers to inform these reports.

## **Recommendation 5: Implement a consistent approach to incorporate racial and ethnic equity and diversity into policy, planning, and learning.**

### *A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)*

Evidence from data collected as part of the USAID Equity Assessment suggests that there are broad variations and inconsistencies in how USAID policies, planning process, and learning/evaluations incorporate DEIA. At present, neither USAID's strategic planning nor project/activity design guidance specifically requires Missions to address equity issues. Finally, there is currently limited local stakeholder participation in activities throughout the program cycle, including evaluation planning, design, implementation, and dissemination. The populations most impacted by this barrier are local partners and stakeholders, including host governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, and private sector players including those from underrepresented groups in the countries where USAID works.

### *B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier*

USAID will work on integrating DEIA into USAID policy formulation by:

- Incorporating DEIA as a major pillar of USAID's Policy Framework;
- Revising internal guidance on sectoral and thematic development policies and strategies (ADS Chapter 200) to ensure that both process and content embrace DEIA, including by creating expectations that policy drafters will seek out a diversity of voices both from the USAID workforce and from stakeholders in the countries where we work. ADS 200 will suggest that policy writers assess the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups in that sector/issue area and then articulate practices/principles to address their needs in future programming, recognizing the intersecting barriers that women and girls face;
- Releasing new/updated Agency policies that directly address DEIA, including Youth, Disability, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Strategic Religious Engagement, LGBTQI+, and Local Capacity Development; and
- Articulating a Localization Reform Agenda that identifies actions the Agency will take to improve its ability to engage with local actors and local systems.

USAID will ensure that planning and design processes integrate inclusive development and gender equality in programs and Mission operations by:

- Advising Missions on the application of DEIA principles and use of analytic findings throughout the course of Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) development and as part of activity design, including through assessments;
- Translating DEIA concerns identified in planning and design processes into monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans;
- Developing guidance for assessing progress during Midcourse Stocktaking and Portfolio Reviews; and
- Identifying milestones and measures to track progress toward Agency goals/objectives.

USAID will work towards increased participation of local stakeholders in the evaluation/learning process by:

- Recommending, where possible and appropriate, USAID evaluation contractors to use local experts, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented communities, as external evaluation team leaders for designing and conducting evaluations;
- Investing time/resources in building evaluation capacity of local experts where we work;
- Continuing to track the number of local experts engaged in USAID evaluations and learning from USAID Missions that are increasing the number; and
- Encouraging participatory evaluation and learning approaches that engage local stakeholders in evaluation design, interpretation, and use of evaluation findings.

USAID is prioritizing these actions because they are focused on consistently building DEIA into formal processes, contribute to mutual learning between USAID and the local communities regarding program implementation, and will enhance USAID's contribution to equity in programmatic learning and sustainable outcomes.

### *C. Tracking Progress*

USAID will use a number of factors to determine whether actions have eliminated or substantially reduced the barriers to effective integration of DEIA into policies, planning process, and learning/evaluation. Those include policy implementation assessments (PIAs), country development cooperation strategies (CDCS), mid-course stocktaking reviews, solicitations (Requests for Applications, Requests for Proposals, Notices of Funding Opportunities) issued at Mission and Bureau/Independent Office levels, number of USAID evaluations with one or more local experts included as a member of the team, and inclusion of DEIA as an Agency Priority Goal in the Joint Strategic Plan.

If USAID is successful in implementation of these actions, one-hundred (100) percent of CDCSs and Performance Management Plan (PMP) articulate actions and programs to implement country-level DEIA objectives and track progress through data, and DEIA principles are incorporated into policies, sector strategies, initiatives, implementation guidance and tools to inform strategic planning, project and activity design and implementation across all sectors. The use of local expertise will be institutionalized into the process of analyzing, assessing and evaluating, to the extent that 70 percent of evaluation teams include local experts. USAID's cadre of development professionals among all hiring categories will be well-versed in DEIA policy and practice, and have increased capacity and resources (training, staffing and budget), to make significant progress on advancing the DEIA agenda. Finally, data from across the Agency is compiled and shared to accurately and consistently represent Agency progress toward DEIA goals via regular reporting mechanisms.

### *Accountability*

There are a number of ways the Agency can hold itself to account for these actions including requiring PPL/Policy Office POCs for each policy workstream, including both new and revised policy documents, using inclusive development indicators to demonstrate attainment of sector-specific results that concurrently advance DEIA principles, requiring operating units to report in the evaluation registry on the participation of local experts in external evaluation teams for each complete external evaluation, and reporting progress in the proposed external DEIA APG both quarterly and annually on performance.gov.