

## **AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **MISSION**

The U.S. Agency for International Development leads the U.S. government's international development and disaster assistance programs. USAID helps communities to lead their own development journeys by reducing the impact of conflict; preventing hunger and the spread of pandemic disease; and counteracting the drivers of violence, instability, transnational crime, and other threats. In alignment with U.S. national security interests, the agency promotes American prosperity through initiatives that expand markets for U.S. exports; encourage innovation; create a level playing field for U.S. businesses; and support more stable, resilient, and democratic societies that are less likely to act against American interests and more likely to respect family, life, and religious liberty.

### **OVERVIEW**

USAID was established during the presidency of John F. Kennedy pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961<sup>1</sup> to promote the foreign policy, security, and national interests of the United States. At the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, it sought to halt the spread of Communism by assisting peoples in the developing world in their efforts to advance economically, socially, and politically. The agency helped to transition Central and Eastern Europe from socialism to free market-based democracies. Today, USAID leads the U.S. government's global development and humanitarian disaster assistance responses.

Over the years, USAID expanded the number of countries assisted, the scope and size of its activities, and especially its budget. The Trump Administration faced

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an institution marred by bureaucratic inertia; programmatic incoherence; wasteful spending; and dependence on huge awards to a self-serving and politicized aid industrial complex of United Nations agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and for-profit contractors. Once started, programs continue almost indefinitely—in many countries, for decades. USAID’s multibillion-dollar humanitarian programs that were once 80 percent in response to natural disasters are now 80 percent in response to violent, man-made crises and have become a permanent and immiserating feature of the global landscape.

Under the Trump Administration, USAID focused on ending the need for foreign aid by placing countries onto a Journey to Self-Reliance.<sup>2</sup> The Administration restructured the agency to reflect this strategic approach to development, streamlined procurement procedures to diversify its partner base, increased awards to cost-effective local (including faith-based) organizations, and improved internal governance. It instituted pro-life and family-friendly policies. It promoted international religious freedom as a pillar of the agency’s work and built up an unprecedented genocide-response infrastructure.

The Biden Administration has deformed the agency by treating it as a global platform to pursue overseas a divisive political and cultural agenda that promotes abortion, climate extremism, gender radicalism, and interventions against perceived systemic racism. It has dispensed with decades of bipartisan consensus on foreign aid and pursued policies that contravene basic American values and have antagonized our partners in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It has decoupled U.S. assistance from free-market reforms that are the keystone of economic and political stability and has teamed with global institutions to impose central planning diktats on an unprecedented scale. Wasteful budget increases requested by the Administration and appropriated by Congress have outstripped USAID’s capacity to spend funds responsibly, and U.S. foreign aid has been transformed into a massive and open-ended global entitlement program captured by—and enriching—the progressive Left.

The next conservative Administration should scale back USAID’s global footprint by, at a minimum, returning to the agency’s 2019 pre-COVID-19 pandemic budget level. It should deradicalize USAID’s programs and structures and build on the conservative reforms instituted by the Trump Administration. This will require working closely with the U.S. Congress to make deep cuts in the international affairs “150 Account” while granting USAID greater flexibility in spending its appropriated funds to achieve better developmental outcomes.

### KEY ISSUES

**Aligning U.S. Foreign Aid to U.S. Foreign Policy.** U.S. foreign aid is too often disconnected from the strategy and practice of U.S. foreign policy. Its coordination is made difficult as the aid budget is divided among approximately 20 offices, agencies, and departments that provide some form of foreign assistance.

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The USAID Administrator should be authorized to take on the additional role of Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA) with the rank of Deputy Secretary at the Department of State in charge of all U.S. foreign assistance. The DFA role would empower this person to align and coordinate the countless foreign assistance programs across the U.S. government and carry out the agenda of the next conservative President more effectively. A version of this role existed during the last two years of the George W. Bush Administration, but the Obama Administration eliminated it in 2009.

**Countering China's Development Challenge.** Through its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has directed billions of dollars in loans and investments to advance its geostrategic objective of displacing the United States as the premier global power. The PRC leverages its transactions—termed “debt traps” by many critics—to strengthen its global influence, extract natural resources, isolate Taiwan, win political support at international fora, and access ports and bases for its military. In Latin America, 25 of 29 countries participate in the BRI, and the PRC ranks as the region's largest trading partner. Since 2005, Chinese state-owned banks have issued \$138 billion in loans to Latin American countries, and other Chinese entities have invested an additional \$140 billion. In Africa, China has issued \$160 billion in loans and dominates the continent's rare earth mining sector, which is critical to global energy development.

The World Bank estimates that 60 percent of all BRI loans are in financial distress, leading many countries to seek emergency financial help from Western donors. Chinese-funded projects are known for employing substandard labor and environmental practices, fueling corruption, promoting wasteful financial decisions by governments, advancing China's geostrategic interests, and creating an unequal trade relationship in which China secures raw materials from developing countries and sells those countries manufacturing products. For example, Brazil, a world leader in shoe production, saw its industry collapse under a flood of cheap Chinese imports. China's mercantilist penetration of the developing world and the negative consequences for developing countries' healthy economic growth have undercut U.S. strategic relationships in those countries and wasted billions in U.S. foreign aid.

During the Trump Administration, USAID:

- Inaugurated a robust counter-China response called Clear Choice<sup>3</sup> that contrasted America's development approach based on liberty, sovereignty, and free markets with China's mercantilist authoritarianism that pursued predatory financing schemes and economic and political subordination to Beijing.

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- Launched its first *Digital Strategy*<sup>4</sup> to promote safe 5G access in emerging markets and combat Beijing’s efforts to equip regimes with tools to stifle democracy.
- Struck bilateral development relationships with Japan, Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Taiwan to support projects in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.
- Established an office in Greenland to help counter China’s claims of being “a near Arctic state” and reoriented its programming across Asia—including establishing a USAID Mission to Central Asia—in line with America’s Indo-Pacific strategy.<sup>5</sup>
- Joined with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help coastal countries detect and halt illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and confront criminal activities practiced by state-run Chinese fishing fleets that violate international norms, ravage fishing industries in developing countries, worsen food insecurity, rob vulnerable communities of their livelihoods, and deplete maritime resources.

USAID built an organizational infrastructure to carry out its multiple lines of counter-China operations. An agencywide Clear Choice Executive Council and USAID–U.S. International Development Finance Corporation Working Group reviewed all proposed assistance programs and proposals through a counter-China lens. A senior executive-level Clear Choice Coordinator, reporting to the Administrator, advised the agency’s leadership on initiatives to counter China, supported by a fully dedicated six-person Secretariat.

The Biden Administration discontinued these programs and allowed USAID’s counter-China architecture to waste away, subordinating our national security interests to progressive climate politics in which Communist China is viewed as a global partner.

The next conservative Administration should restore and build on the Trump Administration’s counter-China infrastructure at USAID, end the climate policy fanaticism that advantages Beijing, and assess bilateral aid through the lens of U.S. national security interests, rewarding those countries that resist China’s debt diplomacy. It should finance programs designed to counter specific Chinese efforts in strategically important countries and eliminate funding to any partner that engages with Chinese entities directly or indirectly. USAID’s Bangkok-based Regional Development Mission for Asia should focus its strategic attention on supporting cross-border initiatives designed to counter Chinese influence.

**Climate Change.** Upon taking office, President Biden issued executive orders to “put the climate crisis at the center of U.S. foreign policy and national security” and mitigate “the devastating inequalities that intersect with gender, race, ethnicity, and economic security.”<sup>6</sup> USAID subsequently declared itself “a climate agency” and redirected its private-sector engagement strategy—teaming with America’s corporate sector to wean countries off foreign aid through private investment and trade—to support the Administration’s global policy to “transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.”

The Administration has incorporated its radical climate policy into every USAID initiative. It has joined or funded international partnerships dedicated to advancing the aims of the Paris Climate Agreement and has supported the idea of giving trillions of dollars more in aid transfers for “climate reparations.”

The Biden Administration’s extreme climate policies have worsened global food insecurity and hunger. Its anti-fossil fuel agenda has led to a sharp spike in global energy prices. Inflation has hit the poor the hardest as they expend a higher proportion of income on food purchases. Farmers in poor countries can no longer afford to buy expensive natural gas-based fertilizers that are key to achieving high yields of food production. Under advice from climate radicals, the government of Sri Lanka even banned chemical fertilizers entirely without having any replacements in place. The result has been hunger and violent political instability.

The aid industry claims that climate change causes poverty, which is false. Enduring conflict, government corruption, and bad economic policies are the main drivers of global poverty. USAID’s response to man-made food insecurity is to provide more billions of dollars in aid—a recipe that will keep scores of poor countries underdeveloped and dependent on foreign aid for years to come.

The impact on Africa is especially acute. South Africa, for example, relies on coal-powered plants to generate 80 percent of its power needs. It would need \$26 billion in foreign aid to make the full transition away from coal. Multiplying this amount by dozens of other countries on the continent, the financial resources needed to transition away from fossil fuels are unachievable. In Latin America, countries that are global leaders in oil and gas production have sharply curtailed their energy production in line with climate activists, upending the hemisphere’s major source of export revenues and condemning it to years of economic and political instability.

USAID should cease its war on fossil fuels in the developing world and support the responsible management of oil and gas reserves as the quickest way to end wrenching poverty and the need for open-ended foreign aid. The next conservative Administration should rescind all climate policies from its foreign aid programs (specifically USAID’s *Climate Strategy 2022–2030*); shut down the agency’s offices, programs, and directives designed to advance the Paris Climate Agreement; and narrowly limit funding to traditional climate mitigation efforts. USAID resources

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are best deployed to strengthen the resilience of countries that are most vulnerable to climatic shifts. The agency should cease collaborating with and funding progressive foundations, corporations, international institutions, and NGOs that advocate on behalf of climate fanaticism.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Agenda.** USAID installed advisers on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees “in all its Bureaus, Offices, and [overseas] Missions” and created “an agency-wide dashboard and DEI scorecard for all bureaus, offices, and missions” to track staff compliance with the Administration’s DEI directives. A Chief DEI Officer oversees this DEI infrastructure and sits in the Administrator’s office. DEI directives are now part of all agency policies and are incorporated as standard clauses in all contract and grant awards. Those seeking to do business with the agency must “describe the approaches they will use to diversify their partner base.”<sup>8</sup> USAID often ties DEI to “gender and climate equity,” corrupting every aspect of the agency’s overseas work.

The upshot has been to racialize the agency and create a hostile work environment for anyone who disagrees with the Biden Administration’s identity politics. This pursuit of ideological purity threatens merit-based professional advancement for staff who do not overtly conform, hyperpoliticizes what should be a nonpartisan federal workplace environment, creates an institutionalized cadre of progressive political commissars, corrupts the award process, and discourages potential contractors and grantees that disagree with this radical agenda from applying for USAID funding.

The next conservative Administration should dismantle USAID’s DEI apparatus by eliminating the Chief Diversity Officer position along with the DEI advisers and committees; cancel the DEI scorecard and dashboard; remove DEI requirements from contract and grant tenders and awards; issue a directive to cease promotion of the DEI agenda, including the bullying LGBTQ+ agenda; and provide staff a confidential medium through which to adjudicate cases of political retaliation that agency or implementing staff suffered during the Biden Administration. It should eliminate funding for partners that promote discriminatory DEI practices and consider debarment in egregious cases.

As federal departments and agencies cannot play partisan politics, staff—irrespective of hiring mechanism—as well as implementers and grantees that engage in ideological agitation on behalf of the DEI agenda should be dismissed, and entities should be debarred. The next conservative Administration should return the authority over all civil rights issues at USAID to the agency’s Office of Civil Rights, which is the appropriate locus for ensuring that all Americans have guaranteed equality of career opportunity at USAID.

**Refocusing Gender Equality on Women, Children, and Families.** Instead of protecting women’s and children’s unalienable human rights and propelling their ability to thrive in society, past Democrat Administrations have nearly erased

what females are and what femininity is through “gender” policies and practices. For instance, these Administrations have diluted USAID’s focus on assisting vulnerable women, children, and families around the globe by adding protections for and ideological advocacy on behalf of progressive special-interest groups. USAID now aggressively promotes abortion on demand under the guise of “sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights,” “gender equality,” and “women’s empowerment” and advocates for those who claim minority status or vulnerability.

Families are the basic unit of and foundation for a thriving society. Without women, there are no children, and society cannot continue. As evidenced by the confirmation testimony of now-Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the progressive Left has so misused and altered the definition of what a “woman” is that one of our U.S. Supreme Court Justices was unable to delineate clearly the fundamental biological and sexual traits that define the group of which she is a part. USAID cannot advocate for and protect women when they have been erased globally along with the values and traditional structures that have supported them.

The next conservative Administration should rename the USAID Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) as the USAID Office of Women, Children, and Families; refocus and realign resources that currently support programs in GEWE to the Office of Women, Children, and Families; redesignate the Senior Gender Coordinator as an unapologetically pro-life politically appointed Senior Coordinator of the Office of Women, Children, and Families; and eliminate the “more than 180 gender advisors and points of contact...embedded in Missions and Operating Units throughout the Agency.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the next conservative Administration should rescind President Biden’s 2022 Gender Policy and refocus it on Women, Children, and Families and revise the agency’s regulation on “Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID’s Program Cycle.”<sup>10</sup> It should remove all references, examples, definitions, photos, and language on USAID websites, in agency publications and policies, and in all agency contracts and grants that include the following terms: “gender,” “gender equality,” “gender equity,” “gender diverse individuals,” “gender aware,” “gender sensitive,” etc. It should also remove references to “abortion,” “reproductive health,” and “sexual and reproductive rights” and controversial sexual education materials.

In the past, the word “gender” was a polite alternative to the word “sex” or term “biological sex.” The Left has commandeered the term “gender,” which used to mean either “male” or “female,” to include a spectrum of others who are seeking to alter biological and societal sexual norms. The promotion of gender radicalism is anathema to the traditional norms of many societies where USAID works, causes resentment by tying lifesaving assistance to rejecting the aid recipient’s own firmly held fundamental values regarding sexuality, and produces unnecessary consternation and confusion among and even outright bias against men.



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The next Administration should ensure that USAID's goal in service of its mission is to help protect and propel all members of society—women, children, and men—from conception to natural death. To do so, USAID's Office of Women, Children, and Families should strive to ensure that communities have their basic human needs, without which they will be unable to thrive, met first and foremost. Basic human needs include equal and safe access to potable water, sanitation, food, education, health care, houses of worship, justice, pregnancy and family resource centers, working capital, electricity, technology, and business opportunities. The Office of Women, Children, and Families should implement the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Women's Health and Protection of the Family and prioritize partnerships with local organizations, including faith-based organizations (FBOs).

**Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance.** Protecting life should be among the core objectives of United States foreign assistance. Shortly after taking office, however, President Biden issued a memorandum that reversed a myriad of pro-life policies and revoked the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance (PLGHA) policy, widely known as the Mexico City Policy. Biden also restored funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which supports and implements China's coercive abortion and sterilization regimen.

PLGHA requires foreign NGOs, as a condition of receiving assistance, to agree not to perform or actively promote abortions as a method of family planning in foreign countries. Previous pro-life Presidents beginning with Ronald Reagan applied these conditions to family planning assistance, but President Trump for the first time expanded the Mexico City Policy to protect "global health assistance furnished by all departments or agencies" (estimated to be \$8.8 billion annually).

The Biden Administration restored abortion subsidies to pro-abortion NGOs including Planned Parenthood International and MSI Reproductive Choices. In reversing PLGHA, Biden declared a radical assault on the policy of protecting life, choosing instead to promote abortion on demand around the world under the guise of "sexual and reproductive health and rights." USAID's priority of funding the global abortion industry negates programs that promote life, women's health, and the family.

Even under PLGHA, several loopholes allowed support for the global abortion industry to continue. International NGOs that perform and promote abortions overseas like Population Services International, Pathfinder, PATH, the Population Council, EngenderHealth, and WomanCare Global International continued to receive funding from USAID under PLGHA and now, under Biden, receive tens of millions more in U.S. taxpayer dollars in foreign assistance annually without any oversight. When the United Nations Secretariat promoted abortion and abortion-inducing drugs under the umbrella of "sexual and reproductive health" as an element of its COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan in May 2020, the exemptions in PLGHA for humanitarian aid and multilateral organizations



illuminated another loophole in the policy's effectiveness in safeguarding U.S. taxpayer dollars from being used to promote abortion.

Pro-abortion groups also have received funds under other categories of foreign aid that fall outside the scope of global health assistance, including women-related and economic assistance programs. Members of Congress have advocated closing these loopholes by extending PLGHA to all foreign assistance through the Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance Act, sponsored by Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) and Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC).<sup>11</sup> Current law in the Foreign Assistance Act gives the President broad authority to set "such terms and conditions as he may determine" on foreign assistance, which legally empowers the next conservative President to expand this pro-life policy.

To stop U.S. foreign aid from supporting the global abortion industry, the next conservative Administration should issue an executive order that, at a minimum, reinstates PLGHA and summarily blocks funding to UNFPA but also closes loopholes by applying the policy to all foreign assistance, including humanitarian aid, and improving its enforcement. The executive order to reinstate PLGHA should be drafted broadly to apply to all foreign assistance. It should simultaneously rescind President Biden's memorandum entitled "Protecting Women's Health at Home and Abroad," issued on January 28, 2021.<sup>12</sup> The new pro-life executive order should apply to foreign NGOs, including subgrantees and subcontractors, and remove exemptions for U.S.-based NGOs, public international organizations, and bilateral government-to-government agreements. All entities funded by USAID, both directly and indirectly, should report their compliance with the PLGHA, and USAID should institute penalties, including debarment from future federal funding, for violations of it. The new executive order also should instruct the Administrator of USAID to publish reports on implementation of the PLGHA by both prime and sub-prime recipients.

In addition, the Helms Amendment should continue to be applied, as it has been by both Republican and Democratic Administrations for more than 50 years, as a complete ban on the use of taxpayer dollars to pay for abortions abroad.

**International Religious Freedom.** Conservatives believe international religious freedom is central to USAID's development efforts. President Trump's Executive Order 13926 on "Advancing International Religious Freedom"<sup>13</sup> instructed the Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, to budget at least \$50 million a year for programs that advance international religious freedom and "ensure that faith-based and religious entities, including eligible identity in foreign countries, are not discriminated against on the basis of religious identity or religious belief when competing for Federal funding."

Under the Trump Administration, the agency set up a senior-level Chief Adviser for International Religious Freedom who reported directly to the Administrator with the task of coordinating a "whole-of-USAID" approach to achieving this

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priority. It created a robust genocide-response capability. USAID affirmed the agency's partnerships with faith-based organizations through its rule on "Participation by Religious Organizations in USAID Programs;"<sup>14</sup> "Partnership Guidance and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Faith Based Organizations;" and "Legal Guidance and Answers to FAQs for USAID Staff."

Today, USAID officials and their progressive partners have resisted efforts to promote religious freedom, especially as it relates to abortion and gender ideology, which are anathema to the traditional societies where USAID funds programs (in addition to many U.S. taxpayers). U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken repudiated his predecessor's focus on religious freedom.

The next conservative Administration must champion the core American value of religious freedom, which correlates significantly with poverty reduction, economic growth, and peace. It should train all USAID staff on the connection between religious freedom and development; integrate it into all of the agency's programs, including the five-year Country Development and Coordination Strategies due for updates in 2025; strengthen the missions' relationships with local faith-based leaders; and build on local programs that are serving the poor. Congress should appropriate funding to USAID specifically to support persecuted religious minorities in line with Executive Order 13926.

**Streamlining Procurement and Localizing the Partner Base.** USAID is a grantmaking and contracting agency that disburses billions of dollars of federal funding in developing countries through implementing partners, such as U.N. agencies, international NGOs, for-profit companies, and local nongovernmental entities. In rare instances, such as in Jordan and Ukraine, the agency provides direct budget support to finance the operations of host-country governments. USAID far more often counts on expensive and ineffective large contracts and grants to carry out its programs. It justifies these practices based on speed and a lower administrative burden on its institutional capacity.

Partnering and procurement reform was a pillar of the Trump Administration's effort to secure better development results, cut costs, and advance the Journey to Self-Reliance strategy of exiting countries from aid. In December 2018, USAID launched its first Acquisition and Assistance Strategy to streamline procurement processes; introduce innovation into its programming; and diversify its partner base away from large, expensive, and partisan implementers. The strategy counted on local NGOs, including faith-based entities already on the ground, to provide the agency with less costly and more effective alternatives to the aid giants. The strategy also prioritized global partnerships with the private sector—corporations, investors, diasporas, and private philanthropies—the source of real capital investment, innovation, and efficiencies that can maximize the impact of taxpayer dollars. Under the Biden Administration, despite rhetoric to the contrary, the aid industrial complex has recaptured the agency and stifled further reforms.

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The next conservative Administration should immediately implement language on key policy topics as standard provisions in all grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts. These provisions should include language on implementing the Policy on Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance, imposing conditions on funding to multilateral organizations, and increasing accountability and transparency.

To ensure that USAID exercises its existing authorities to streamline procurement processes, the next conservative Administration should name a political appointee as the agency's Senior Procurement Executive and Director of the agency's Office of Assistance and Acquisitions (OAA) in the Bureau of Management (M). The head of M/OAA is one of the most important positions at USAID, as the office is ground zero for controlling the disbursement of U.S. foreign aid. The White House should empower the Administrator and his or her designees to make determinations concerning the scale and scope of awards and increase the transparency and accountability of subawards, which can escape public scrutiny and promote progressive policies during conservative Administrations. USAID should use existing authority to use program funds to expand its roster of contracting and agreement officers to accelerate the delivery of funds for disaster responses to a more diverse collection of implementers.

Accomplishing the next conservative Administration's policy goals at USAID will require that political appointees have knowledge of, responsibility for, and visibility into the design and awarding of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements. The Administration should restore the Senior Official Accountability Review (SOAR) or create a similar process to ensure that proposed programs above a certain dollar threshold in Total Estimated Cost/Total Estimated Amount receive a close review by policymakers in each bureau and office and, for large awards, in the agency's front office.

"Localization" is a buzzword within the aid community but correctly assumes that more funding through local organizations produces better aid outcomes. Shifting from giant U.S.-based implementers has proved difficult to achieve, however, given intense internal bureaucratic resistance; opposition from the aid industrial complex; and foot-dragging from progressives, who view local NGOs—especially faith-based NGOs prominent in Africa and Latin America—as obstacles to promoting abortion, gender radicalism, climate extremism, and other woke ideas.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has shown that localization at scale is possible within a short time span. Over the four years of the Trump Administration, the multibillion-dollar program increased the amount of funding disbursed to local entities from about 25 percent to nearly 70 percent with positive overall results. This model should be replicated across all of USAID.

In addition, the next conservative Administration should expand use of the New Partnership Initiative (NPI) to every bureau and office; reset the requirements for USAID's overseas missions to craft and execute NPI action plans; and assign each

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mission a minimum percentage of its portfolio that must go to new, underutilized, and local partners. Crucial to the strategy will be increasing the use of open competition that lowers barriers to entry and fixed-amount awards that carry less of a compliance burden along with eliminating cost-plus reimbursement contracts that favor large companies. Before advancing a new program, the agency should be required to assess existing local activities to avoid undercutting or duplicating them. At every opportunity, USAID should build on existing local initiatives.

**Global Health.** The United States is the world's largest funder of global health initiatives. For more than 60 years, the American people have offered health assistance to the world and saved millions of lives. The USAID Bureau for Global Health (GH), the second largest within USAID, oversees a multibillion-dollar operation to support maternal and child health; voluntary family planning; PEPFAR and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) (both started under President George W. Bush); and other initiatives against other infectious and neglected tropical diseases. Effective use of funds is essential to maximize care for the world's neediest people.

Countries with strong health institutions and sound public health practices responded quickly to and recovered more rapidly from the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates the importance of "localization," by which USAID helps governments and the private sector in developing countries to strengthen their own ability to address needed training, services, accountability, and organizational capacity.

Unfortunately, many USAID-funded global health activities remain rooted in patterns that began decades ago and measure improvements in terms of inputs—money spent—instead of outcomes achieved. From the 1950s to 1970s, the major recognized threats to human health were infectious diseases such as polio and smallpox, and USAID funded programs "in" a country, not "with" a country. Maternal and child health, food, water, and sanitation programs were often intermittent. USAID consistently financed population control, contraception, and abortion as essential to "development." Most programs focused on one disease or condition but had little integration with other global health activities. Chronic diseases were ignored.

Consequently, the next conservative Administration should focus on updating the Global Health Bureau's portfolio, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to supporting women, children, and families; building host-country institutional capacity; increasing awards to local and faith-based partners (expanding what occurred during the Trump Administration with the NPI); and improving USAID's ability to coordinate with local partners.

**Updating Funding Priorities.** The Bureau should identify and eliminate outdated and ineffective concepts and focus on funding innovation. A rigorous review is necessary to ensure that current programs and funding streams avoid wasting taxpayer dollars and prioritize what is needed now and what works.

**Focusing on Holistic Health Care and Support for Women, Children, and Families.** The continued high rate of maternal and infant mortality is a persistent global tragedy. Contrary to current publicity, this problem is not solved by abortion. Families genuinely cherish children. The next leadership at USAID must focus attention on women and children’s health (including unborn children) as well as health risks across life spans, including childhood infections, cervical cancer, adolescent risks, and family stability, by utilizing a coordinated approach. The Bureau should implement a “Request for Application for Resilient Families” that harvests collaborative funds from siloed programs and makes individuals and the family, not diseases or conditions, the true focus of intervention.

**Increasing USAID Collaboration with Faith-Based Organizations.** FBOs historically have been much more successful in outreach to remote and vulnerable populations, based on trust built through decades of service. The value of collaborating with FBOs was demonstrated in the October 2020 Evidence Summit on Religious Engagement. In sub-Saharan Africa, FBOs often provide more than 80 percent of health care, especially to the extremely poor. In contrast, the Global Health Bureau historically has provided 85 percent of its funding to large U.S. NGOs with significant overhead costs, as a result of which only 20 percent–30 percent of funding reaches people in need.<sup>15</sup>

**Leveraging the Strength and Experience of Presidential Initiatives.** Millions of people are alive today because of the American people’s investment in PEPFAR and PMI. The training, laboratory, clinical intervention, health education, data collection, and organizational platforms of these programs became the bedrock for responding to the COVID pandemic. It is time for these programs to become part of an integrated, strong, and sustainable network of health care and public health in developing countries. A smooth transition to national ownership and funding, however, will require better coordination of USAID’s own stovepiped programs with PEPFAR and PMI.

**Strengthening the Collection and Use of Data.** Good decisions are based on accurate data. For decades, global health programs have relied mostly on statistical modeling (rather than actual data) or survey data (the weakest type of data). Poor data quality undermines both the evaluation and improvement of desired outcomes achieved by our global health programs. The Trump Administration implemented critical updates of PEPFAR’s systems for the collection and reporting of data to increase transparency and hold funded partners and overseas missions accountable. The next conservative Administration should apply these reforms to all of USAID’s global health programs.

**Strengthening Private-Sector Engagement.** The Bureau’s Center for Innovation and Impact (CII) should be empowered to expand networks of private and faith-based health organizations that can develop projects using development-impact bonds, capital funds, and innovative technologies, including with the

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Millennium Challenge Corporation and the new U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. More flexible and agile CII funding will spur innovation within the Bureau and help to enhance countries' self-reliance in the provision of health care.

**Improving Bureau Hiring, Staffing, and Recruitment Practices.** The Global Health Bureau should address its own management challenges by modifying the high ratio of contractors to direct hires, holding career leadership accountable for effective management, and building more flexibility in emergency responses. Bureau personnel suffer from “mission drift,” burnout, and a lack of vision. New directives, social agendas, and extra layers of review have obscured core activities and caused talent to leave the agency. Conservative leadership must return the focus to development and improved workforce morale and focus on global outcomes and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

**Holding the U.N., the World Health Organization (WHO), and Other Multilateral Organizations Accountable.** Leadership should designate a political appointee to help coordinate cross-agency efforts to hold the U.S. government's multilateral partners (U.N. and WHO agencies and other international organizations) to a higher level of financial and programmatic accountability, including assurances that language promoting abortion will be removed from U.N. documents, policy statements, and technical literature. The United States must have more prominent representation in international technical committees and regulation-setting organizations to ensure the proper execution of American resources, the preservation of our values, the protection of innovation, and the vitality of our biomedical sector.

**Global Humanitarian Assistance.** The U.S. government is the world's largest humanitarian actor, annually disbursing billions of dollars in lifesaving assistance—food, water, shelter, emergency health care, and related protection support—to tens of millions of vulnerable people. Funded by the U.S. Congress through the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account, USAID pays for nearly half of the budget of the Nobel Prize-winning U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) as well as dozens of simultaneous operations that range from responses to hurricanes in Central America to tackling outbreaks of Ebola in Central Africa and caring for millions of people displaced by ongoing conflicts.

USAID's emergency responses once were focused primarily on natural cataclysms such as hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes. Today, the agency spends more than 80 percent of its humanitarian budget on chronic man-made crises. Most of these “emergency responses” began years ago and absorb billions of dollars annually with no end in sight. Every year sees financial demands grow in response to new conflicts, most recently Ukraine. The budget of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) has doubled compared to just a few years ago, and BHA can no longer manage its funds responsibly. A politically powerful foreign aid industry that



benefits financially from extending and expanding these large-scale programs for years, even decades, ensures little scrutiny of these ever-increasing appropriations.

The massive growth in “emergency” aid distorts humanitarian responses, worsens corruption in the countries we support, and exacerbates the misery of those we intend to help. The permanence of this assistance, particularly in countries where we have little to no in-country presence and must rely on U.N. agencies to self-monitor, has morphed into a co-governance scheme in which the U.S. government effectively finances the social services obligations of corrupt regimes that threaten the United States. These governments can then redirect scarce budget resources away from costly health and education toward financing their wars, supporting terrorism, repressing their citizens, and enriching themselves. Examples of this abuse are spread throughout the world.

- Over the past decade, the U.S. government has expended \$14 billion in aid to Syria where the bloody regime of Bashar al-Assad—a close ally of Iran and Russia—skims nearly half of foreign aid through inflated official exchange rates, the diversion of food baskets to its military units, and procurement arrangements with compromised local contractors.
- Yemen, once the breadbasket of the Arabian Peninsula, is now dependent on billions of dollars of aid as formerly productive Yemeni farmers cannot compete against “free food” while irrigation systems remain in disrepair, leaving the country to suffer from water shortages during long summer droughts and flooding during its rainy season. Iran-backed Houthi rebels divert substantial amounts of aid to support their war efforts.
- In Afghanistan, the aid infrastructure built over 20 years of American military presence that three Presidents wanted to end collapsed with the failure of U.S.-trained Afghan forces to repel the Taliban’s 2021 advances. Yet the country has received nearly \$1 billion more in U.S. humanitarian aid since the Taliban’s takeover and absent a U.S. embassy to ensure that it is not diverted to the Taliban and other terrorist groups.
- In Burma, U.S. aid finances all of the food and medical care for hundreds of thousands of persecuted Rohingya that the military regime forces to live in open-air concentration camps.
- In northern Iraq, hundreds of thousands of Yazidis—targeted for genocidal extermination by ISIS—remain in miserable camps unable to return home because of the Iraqi government’s refusal to clear out Iran-backed militias occupying their homeland.



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In effect, humanitarian aid is sustaining war economies, creating financial incentives for warring parties to continue fighting, discouraging governments from reforming, and propping up malign regimes.

Nefarious actors reap billions of dollars in profits from diversions of our humanitarian assistance, but so do international organizations. The WFP charges 36 percent in overhead while Oxfam International's overhead has reached 70 percent in Yemen, reflecting the high costs of foreign staff, security, and logistics. With powerful lobbies in Washington, D.C., and in leadership positions throughout USAID and the Department of State, the aid industry adroitly exploits Congress's disposition to increase funding year on year to assist those in dire need but provides no evidence to justify the mounting budget requests.

In 2020, USAID's leadership fused formerly bifurcated food and nonfood emergency relief operations into a single Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance to improve the management of the agency's largest portfolio, but this reform was not sufficient to address the problem. The next Administration should resize and repurpose USAID's humanitarian aid portfolio to restore its original purpose of providing emergency short-term relief, prepare vulnerable communities for transition, and do no harm in the following ways:

- Work with Congress to make deep cuts in the IDA budget by ending programs that do more harm than good in places controlled by malign actors, such as in Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan, where our aid is consumed by fraud, diversion, and partner overhead costs.
- Require USAID and the State Department to devise country-based exit strategies that term-limit the duration of humanitarian responses and transition funding from emergency to development projects. This will require robust diplomacy to press host governments to integrate displaced persons in lieu of keeping them in expensive and dehumanizing camps financed by the international community.
- Transition from large awards to expensive, inefficient, and corrupt U.N. agencies, global NGOs, and contractors to local, especially faith-based, entities that are already operating on the ground. This approach provides a far less expensive and more effective alternative for aid delivery. Local partners more ably navigate corrupt environments and are more likely to steer vulnerable populations away from dependence on aid toward self-sufficiency.
- Require that BHA avail itself of existing IDA authorities that it fails to use, including to dispense with the cost-reimbursement model that disqualifies

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undercapitalized local NGOs; accept other donor vetting of local partners; streamline the award-approval process; and expand the use of fixed-amount awards to rein in cost overruns.

- Direct USAID's Bureau for Management to hire more procurement officers for BHA to strengthen the Bureau's award management capacity and reduce the incentives to issue large awards to aid industry giants.
- Allow BHA to manage the process of hiring Personal Services Contractors.
- Require BHA's partners to adopt stricter vetting procedures to prevent aid from being diverted to terrorists.
- Increase efforts to obtain greater contributions, not just pledges, for humanitarian operations from other donors and make this a condition for receiving additional U.S. aid.

### **Leveraging Foreign Aid to Unleash the Power of America's Private Sector.**

During the 1960s, when USAID was launched, 80 percent of financial flows from the United States to the developing world was in the form of U.S. government assistance. Today, that figure is under 10 percent, overtaken by private investment, remittances, and private charities, all demonstrating the power of America's private sector to promote wealth-generating economic development in poor countries. Leaders in the developing world routinely press U.S. officials about their preference for "trade and investment, not aid."

Instead, the Biden Administration is leveraging private-sector financing to promote its climate and other progressive agendas worldwide. The next conservative Administration must return USAID to a foreign aid model that leverages its resources to promote private-sector solutions to the world's true development problems and end the need for future foreign aid. Private capital investment in these markets is the greatest enabler of job creation and sustainable economic growth throughout the developing world.

A key tool of American soft-power leadership is the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC). Launched in December 2019, DFC sought to unleash the power of America's private sector to advance our interests by providing emerging markets with blended financing opportunities to help end wretched poverty, create new markets for U.S.-made products, strengthen bilateral partnerships in strategic parts of the world, and offset China's predatory loans and investments. The Trump Administration launched a USAID–DFC Working Group to maximize development outcomes and review individual investment projects through a counter-China lens and ensure a cohesive interagency development response.

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As development agencies, USAID and DFC must do a better job of aligning their respective activities and closely integrate both structurally and operationally. The easiest way to foster this alignment is to “dual hat” the role of DFC’s chief development officer so that he or she serves simultaneously in both institutions. Like all U.S. federal bodies, DFC should be restored to its original intent of deploying its commercial risk-reducing financial services instead of its current misuse as another global vehicle to promote economy-killing climate programs, meet irrelevant diversity objectives, and overfocus on low-impact or misguided gender-based activities.

**Branding.** A deeply embedded culture within the foreign aid bureaucracy views public recognition of U.S. assistance as secondary to a larger philanthropic mission and is embarrassed by the American flag. Citing vaguely defined security concerns, USAID’s implementers—U.N. agencies, international NGOs, and contractors—often fail to credit the American people for the billions of dollars in assistance they provide the rest of the world even as they engage in self-promoting public relations to raise other donor funds. This approach has negative foreign policy implications as China relentlessly promotes its own self-serving efforts to gain influence and resources. Worst of all, malign actors sometimes appropriate credit for unbranded U.S. assistance: Houthi terrorists, for example, claim to provide for the people under their occupation with anonymous U.S. humanitarian aid.

The United States is in a struggle for influence with China, Russia, and other competitors, and American generosity must not go unacknowledged. The next conservative Administration should build on the Trump Administration’s branding policy, which revamped ADS Chapter 320, to force the aid bureaucracy to fully credit the American people for the aid they are providing. The Senior Advisor for Brand Management in the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) (discussed *infra*) should be a political appointee who is responsible for maximizing the visibility of U.S. assistance by enforcing branding policy on every grant, cooperative agreement, and contract. The LPA should liaise with counterparts at the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to ensure local media pickup of these activities.

### OTHER OFFICES AND BUREAUS

**Office of Administrator.** The next conservative Administration should leave in place the current structure of two presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed Deputy Administrators, one for Policy and one for Management. The Deputy Administrators and the Chief of Staff must be individuals with extensive previous service in the executive branch, ideally at foreign-affairs agencies, and be fluent in the language and practice of federal procurement.

**Bureau for Foreign Assistance.** As noted above, the next conservative Administration should name the USAID Administrator as Director of Foreign Assistance (F) at the Department of State with the rank of Deputy Secretary. It

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should reorient the bulk of F staff from focusing on the formulation of the annual President's budget proposal to the execution of already appropriated resources. This should include eliminating the duplicative Mission and Bureau Resource Requests; speeding up the availability of appropriations by delivering to Congress within 60 days the report required by Section 653(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA); and fast-tracking the approval of Congressional Notifications (CNs) and other pre-obligation requirements.

**Management Bureau.** As indicated previously, the next conservative Administration should name a political appointee as USAID's Senior Procurement Executive and Director of the agency's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA). Political appointees with the appropriate credentials (including warrants) should be placed within M/OAA, and the agency should exercise its authority to engage qualified experts from other federal departments and agencies and outside of government (if they are free of conflicts of interest) on the Technical Committees that review applications for USAID's contract and grant competitions. The Administration should change the designation of USAID's Competition Advocate to an individual favorable to innovative types of contracts that can reduce the aid oligopoly's grip on the agency.

**Office of Human Capital and Talent Management.** As soon as possible after Inauguration Day, the next conservative Administration should name a political appointee as USAID's Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) and Director of the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management. USAID's White House Liaison must be an individual with substantial experience with federal personnel systems. The White House Office of Presidential Personnel should allow the USAID Administrator to explore with counterparts at the Office of Personnel Management whether the agency could hire personnel under both the Administratively Determined authority and Schedule C of the Excepted Service of the Federal Civil Service.

USAID should be one of the agencies to pilot-test a reinstated Executive Order 13957,<sup>16</sup> which created a Schedule F within the Excepted Service, and should aggressively recruit and place candidates into term-limited positions under Schedule A of the Excepted Service (especially veterans). The new CHCO should examine how the existing members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) at USAID should be reworked throughout the agency and should institute an SES Mobility Program to encourage the regular rotation of senior career leaders, including through details to other departments and agencies.

**Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning.** The next conservative Administration should shift the policy functions of the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) to the Office of Budget and Resource Management (BRM), located in the Office of the Administrator. It should rename BRM the Office of Budget, Policy, and Resource Management (BPRM) and staff the policy team with political appointees. The Administration should also move the responsibility for reviewing

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and processing proposed changes in USAID's policy bible, the Automated Directives System (ADS), from the Management Bureau to the new BPRM.

Even before these changes, the Assistant Administrator for PPL should decree an immediate freeze on changes in the ADS and agencywide policy documents to allow for the priority publication of amendments to reflect the new Administration's viewpoint. All major agency policies should be reviewed and amended or withdrawn within the new Administration's first calendar year in office.

**Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs.** The next conservative Administration should invest no more than 10 percent of USAID's allocation of Administratively Determined politically appointed positions in the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs. A priority for these positions (combined with hires under Schedule A) should be the review and editing of the agency's public-facing web pages and social media accounts to eliminate material that does not conform to the new Administration's policies. The agency should accelerate the review of Congressional Notifications within LPA and publish all CNs and congressional reports.

To ensure consistency and clarity of public messaging, LPA should gain direct authority over the communications staff scattered through USAID's various Bureaus and Offices. LPA should expand its public-facing efforts to include conservative allies that are active in global development and humanitarian aid work, including industry groups, nonprofits, trade associations, foundations, and advocacy organizations, and correspondingly reduce the aid industrial complex's grip on USAID's corporate relationships.

**Office of General Counsel.** Along with the Director of M/OAA, the General Counsel is one of the two or three most important positions at USAID and should be a priority for immediate appointments. Because proper legal interpretation of executive orders and internal USAID policy is crucial, the next conservative Administration should recruit and appoint a commanding team of Schedule C attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel (OGC). Within weeks of Inauguration Day, OGC should issue clear guidance on the eligibility of faith-based organizations for USAID funding.

**Office of Budget Resources and Management.** The Director of Budget Resources and Management should be a political appointee empowered as part of the Administrator's senior management team. BRM's highest priorities should be to prepare the report required by Section 653(a) according to the Administrator's guidance, institute a fast-track process for the submission of Congressional Notifications, and identify already appropriated resources to reprogram immediately to fund the new Administration's priorities. The next conservative Administration should consider prioritizing the placing of young political appointees in BRM over LPA.

**Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation.** A key outcome of the transformation of USAID undertaken during the Trump Administration, the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation (DDI) is the home for most

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of the agency's non-health, nonhumanitarian funding as well as almost all of its sectoral appropriations directives, including those that reflect the pet projects of individual Members of Congress. The Bureau is the policy and financial nexus at USAID for most of the Biden Administration's radical priorities in foreign assistance, including gender, climate change, and the promotion of identity-based politics. On the positive side, DDI is also the Bureau in charge of areas that will be crucial to a reorientation of USAID, including trade, economic growth, innovation, partnerships with the private sector, and the agency's relationship with communities of faith.

The next conservative Administration should make the rapid staffing of key DDI positions a high priority. Besides the Senate-confirmed Assistant Administrator, the Directors of each of the Centers and Hubs in the Bureau will need political leadership. Almost every one of the agencywide policies that cover DDI's areas of responsibility will need to be edited or rewritten entirely as soon as possible. The next conservative Administration should harvest DDI's central appropriations to fund new priorities, especially working with ethnic and religious minorities and faith-based organizations and joint ventures with the private sector in education and energy. All DDI programs should issue funding opportunities restricted to new and underutilized partners modeled on the NPI.

### REGIONS

**Asia.** Asia is the most populous continent and ground zero in the battle against Communist China's efforts to exploit the development needs of poor countries for geopolitical gain. America's Indo-Pacific Strategy should guide USAID's approaches to disbursing foreign aid in the region.

USAID should intensify its bilateral relationships with pro-free market Japan, Australia, South Korea, and India so that they can jointly advance private-sector solutions to secure financing for power generation, infrastructure, digital connectivity, investment and trade expansion, and other economic activities. USAID enjoys a strong in-country presence in India, buttressed by recent coordination on the global response to COVID-19 as India is a global leader in vaccine production. Those ties should be expanded. So too should development cooperation with Taiwan, which boasts effective pandemic response capacity that should be shared with developing countries.

China's island-hopping efforts to capture vulnerable Pacific states is a direct strategic threat to U.S. maritime supremacy and homeland security, and USAID and its allied donors should neutralize these efforts through the deployment of targeted assistance such as helping countries combat the effects of China's illegal fishing. While China outpaces the ability of the democratic alliance to deploy state-backed financing to developing countries, it is unable to compete with our collective private-sector capacity to deploy trillions of dollars of capital.

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Pakistan is a prime example of foreign aid policies disconnected from U.S. national interests. The country has been the recipient of more than \$12 billion in U.S. foreign aid since 2010, yet it remains intensely anti-American and corrupt, has backed the Taliban continuously since 2001, jump-started North Korea's nuclear bomb program, brutalizes its religious minorities, and is a willing client of China while taking on unrepayable loans from the U.S. taxpayer-funded International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

**Middle East.** The Middle East is far more vulnerable today than it was in 2020 because the Biden Administration's strategy for the region is adrift. Tunisia has slid into autocracy, Iraq is plummeting further into Iran's orbit, and U.S. soldiers continue to risk their lives for unclear ends amid the ruins of Syria. Meanwhile, billions of dollars in U.S. foreign aid props up regimes allied with Iran.

President Trump's Abraham Accords signaled the end of the centrality of the Arab–Israeli conflict, which paralyzed U.S. approaches to the region, and focused instead on Iran as the principal threat to America from this region. During the Trump Administration, USAID's allocations reflected the new opportunities created by the Accords and sought to strengthen regional alliances against Iran through expanded regional trade and investment and to promote genuine political stability tethered to strong American leadership. USAID formally partnered with the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Morocco, Qatar, and Kuwait to catalyze regional partnerships in Africa. Under the Biden Administration, however, USAID has returned to a model that deepens the region's dependence on aid.

A new conservative President should reset USAID's programming in the Middle East in line with our national security interests and committed to the goal of ending the need for foreign aid through development that is led by the private sector. Specifically:

- Foreign aid must advance the Abraham Accords. Increased trade and investment between Israel and its Arab neighbors represent the most effective path toward reducing poverty, fostering the emergence of a middle class, and solidifying peace. USAID should therefore focus its development assistance on countries such as Morocco and Sudan through joint investment collaboration with the more economically advanced economies such as the UAE and Israel.
- USAID should consider cutting aid to states allied to Iran, limiting assistance in these countries to the advancement of narrow strategic priorities and support for basic American values, such as aid to persecuted religious minorities. USAID continues to expend hundreds of millions of dollars in nonhumanitarian aid to antagonistic regimes in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories. After billions of dollars of aid and many



years of effort, these countries remain hopelessly dysfunctional—a fact that exposes the failure of a foreign aid model that is disconnected to our national security and without exit strategies to promote self-reliance. We must admit that USAID’s investments in the education sector, for example, serve no other purpose than to subsidize corrupt, incompetent, and hostile regimes.

- USAID should undergo operational changes to secure better development outcomes by reducing its missions’ footprints in the Middle East given that most personnel in the region are unable to leave their highly protected and expensive compounds and carry out their oversight functions. It should redirect program funding away from expensive and poorly performing international partners to more cost-effective local entities that require a minimal USAID field presence.

**Africa.** Since its inception, USAID has had a strong presence in Africa, saving millions of lives through its pandemic and infectious disease responses, especially for malaria and HIV-AIDS. It has led global efforts to provide lifesaving emergency assistance to those who are fleeing conflict and suffering from devastating natural disasters. American generosity knows no equal.

Yet the agency’s efforts to reduce poverty and hunger have failed as it spends ever-higher amounts of aid partnering with a costly and ineffective aid industrial complex that has little interest in “working itself out of a job.” Long-term, multibillion-dollar humanitarian responses lack exit strategies, while numerous development projects lead neither to measurable results nor to government reforms. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent, the continent remains poor, unstable, and riven with conflict, corruption, and Islamic terrorism. This situation has also resulted in vast illegal migration from the continent.

Failure to generate wealth has provided opportunities for China to step in and become the continent’s leader in trade, loans, and investment. As a result, Beijing controls most of the continent’s strategic minerals that are critical to advanced technology. Moreover, USAID is criticized by Africans for exporting cultural values that are anathema to their traditional norms, further abetting Chinese continental supremacy.

The Biden Administration’s radical global climate policies have cut off billions in investment to develop clean fossil fuels, denying Africa’s billion-plus people access to cheap energy to further their own development and finance their own social services in health, water, education, and agriculture, while increasing its dependence on China’s renewables industry. It has exacerbated hunger by increasing the costs of fertilizers to levels that many African farmers can no longer afford. Poverty-inducing dependence on aid grows daily.

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USAID efforts in Africa require a rethink. In 2025, USAID will update its five-year Country Development and Cooperation Strategies. This will give the next Administration an opportunity to pursue a new development course for Africa that promotes economic self-reliance, catalyzes private-sector solutions for job creation through increased trade and investment, terminates legacy and nonperforming programs, and supports diversified energy approaches. Critically, it must hold China accountable for its extractive investments that violate international labor, environmental, and anticorruption norms and practices; undercut business opportunities for U.S. companies; and sabotage Africa's development.

- USAID, in collaboration with the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of the Treasury, and U.S. Department of Commerce's Foreign Commercial Service, should use its convening power, diplomatic heft, and risk-reducing instruments to facilitate U.S.–African business relationships and expand Prosper Africa, launched by the Trump Administration to “bring[] together services from across the U.S. Government to help companies and investors do business in U.S. and African markets.”<sup>17</sup>
- The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)<sup>18</sup> provides Africa duty-free access to U.S. markets. The next Administration should extend AGOA beyond its 2025 term but within a strategic framework that rewards good governance and pro-free market economic policies. There is no point in wasting massive sums of aid to countries whose governments fail to keep their promises to reform.
- USAID should build on, not compete with, private-sector initiatives launched by global churches, corporate philanthropists, and diaspora groups that have already invested billions of dollars in self-reliance-based projects.

Japan has committed \$30 billion in aid to Africa over three years to stem China's economic and political grip on the continent. Gulf-based sovereign funds also are investing billions in African energy, infrastructure, mining, water, food production, information and communications technology, and other strategic industries. Other allied donors are promoting investment-based aid. There is no lack of funding to support Africa's economic rise. What is lacking is strategic direction among U.S. government foreign aid agencies.

PEPFAR has saved countless lives over the years and constitutes America's most successful aid program. During the Trump Administration, PEPFAR increased the share of funding to local entities from about 20 percent to nearly 70 percent with

commensurate improvements that have had lasting impact. The next Administration should extend that localization model to all global health and humanitarian assistance in view of how local African entities have strengthened their capacity for direct management of U.S. programs. Correspondingly, USAID should aggressively ramp down its partnerships with wasteful, costly, and politicized U.N. agencies, international NGOs, and Beltway contractors. All new programs in Africa should build on existing local initiatives that enjoy the support of the African people.

**Latin America.** U.S. foreign assistance throughout the Western Hemisphere is designed to respond to national security threats that emanate from the region, such as illicit drug and arms trafficking; illegal immigration flows; terrorism; pandemics; and strategic threats from China, Russia, and Iran. Over the past decade, the United States has provided billions of dollars in security, humanitarian, and development assistance in Central America and the Andes, including \$1 billion in food and non-food emergency aid to millions of Venezuelan refugees who have fled the Maduro dictatorship. USAID is always first to respond to natural disasters in Central America and the Caribbean and employs a network of dedicated experts in the region to deliver this assistance. During the COVID pandemic, the United States provided millions of doses of vaccines and other emergency health support.

Yet years of foreign aid have failed to bring peace, prosperity, and stability to the hemisphere. Poverty, joblessness, and social unrest have led to leftist electoral victories from Mexico to Chile. These regimes are hostile to American interests and private enterprise, breed corruption, implement radical policies that will further impoverish their people and threaten their democracies, and are more open to striking partnerships with Communist China. Left-wing authoritarian kleptocracies in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela deny their people basic freedoms, violently and ruthlessly suppress any dissent, repress communities of faith, and generate such misery that hundreds of thousands of their citizens have attempted to cross our southern border over the past two years. No recent Administration has made any progress in reducing the chaos and desperation in Haiti.

Conversely, Latin America is a major global source of energy and food, which generates substantial income that can finance internal social and economic development. The nations of the hemisphere share a natural and massive geographic trade and investment advantage through their proximity to the United States, supplemented by free-trade agreements. The United States remains the favored destination for higher education and business opportunities for Latin Americans. Successful diasporas in the United States serve as powerful economic, cultural, and political bridges to every country in the region.

The Trump Administration focused on promoting trade and investment, especially in infrastructure, through an interagency effort called *América Crece* (America Grows), by which USAID played a key role in providing technical

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assistance to create a more enabling environment to attract private investment. The Biden Administration canceled the program.

The next conservative Administration should reassess all programs of U.S. foreign aid to Latin America and terminate those that have failed to achieve results after years of effort. Instead, USAID should:

- Focus its resources on strengthening the fundamentals of free markets, such as clear property rights and a functioning judiciary, and on promoting labor and pension reforms, lower taxes, and deregulation in order to increase trade and investment within the region and with the United States as the genuine path to economic and political stability.
- Challenge the socialist ideas that have captured too many of the region's governments and their nations' youth.
- Fund partnerships with the private sector and support civil-society groups, including university centers and think tanks that advocate for pro-free market and democratic ideas.

Finally, Latin America is the perfect proving ground for reducing USAID's reliance on large U.S.-based implementers, and the agency should commit to shifting all of its portfolio in the region to local organizations by 2030.

### **PERSONNEL**

The Trump Administration agenda for USAID was undercut from the outset both by recalcitrant career personnel and by inexperienced political personnel. The next conservative Administration should implement personnel policies from the beginning so that the agency can be effectively managed according to high standards. The rapid deployment of reforms will require key experienced personnel installed quickly at USAID's headquarters and missions. Delay will only impede progress. In general, areas of focus should be appointing effective lawyers in key positions, reforming career hiring/firing mechanisms, and getting a grip on the grantmaking process.

The Administration should staff the Office of the General Counsel with at least four politically appointed attorneys (besides the General Counsel). The General Counsel should have two political deputies, one of whom should cover Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) and the other the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA).

The Administration should name a political appointee with long experience in federal personnel systems as USAID's Chief Human Capital Officer and Director of HCTM. This appointee would help to scope and shepherd position descriptions,

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clearances, and other components of the hiring process that are necessary for immediate onboarding while coordinating with the White House to bring in new appointees and make internal career employee changes. On Day One, USAID should halt all agencywide training and replace it with training modules to advance the President's agenda.

The Administration should appoint a Senior Accountable Official (SAO) to report on the agency's adherence to Administration policy priorities, including on Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance, critical race theory, climate change, gender, and diversity and inclusion. It should also create a program to staff hard-to-fill positions overseas.

Finally, the Administration should create a recruiting program for veterans and other groups to participate in career job opportunities at USAID. Former missionaries, veterans, members of diasporas, and faith community stakeholders with overseas experience should be recruited to work at USAID on Schedule A appointments, as Institutional Services Contractors, as Personal Services Contractors, and as Foreign Service Officers.

## CONCLUSION

The next conservative Administration will have a unique opportunity to realign U.S. foreign assistance with American national interests and the principles of good governance and more accurately reflect the U.S. taxpayer's unmatched charitable desire to help those in need. It can build on a strong baseline of conservative reforms undertaken by the Trump Administration to counter Communist China's strategy of world domination. However, this will require that bold steps are taken on Day One to undo the gross misuse of foreign aid by the current Administration to promote a radical ideology that is politically divisive at home and harms our global standing.

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** The preparation of this chapter was a collective enterprise of individuals involved in the 2025 Presidential Transition Project. All contributors to this chapter are listed at the front of this volume, but Dr. William Steiger, Bethany Kozma, and Dr. Alma Golden deserve special mention. The author assumes full responsibility for the content of this chapter, and no views expressed therein should be attributed to any other individual.

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