

December 18, 2015

The Honorable Gayle Smith
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C. 20523
Attn: Ms. Michele Sumilas

Dear Gayle:

On behalf of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN), we wish to congratulate you once again on your confirmation as Administrator of USAID. We stand ready to work with you to confront the numerous development challenges and humanitarian crises around the world, and to ensure the reforms initiated by this Administration are achieved and institutionalized for future leaders.

To solidify the Obama Administration's global development legacy and to achieve its ambitious goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030, we hope you will urgently prioritize the following:

1. Establish Public Metrics of Sustainability and Institutionalize Local Solutions: High-level commitment is needed to deepen the agency's work on sustainability and country ownership. USAID's Local Solutions initiative is an important step to advance inclusive country strategies and programs that work with local partners to build country ownership. Embedding this approach across the agency will require both your political leadership and the establishment of agency-wide metrics of sustainability and country ownership. [MFAN's Metrics for Implementing Country Ownership](#) paper and a recent GAO report on Local Solutions (GAO-15-377) both called for metrics to assess partner-country capacity, ownership, and sustainability. USAID reported that it would complete such indicators by December 31, 2015.

- We urge you to champion Local Solutions and ensure that USAID publicly releases and implements agency-wide indicators of sustainability and country ownership, so that progress in these areas can be evaluated.

2. Catalyze Local Resources and Support Local Priorities

Where countries are willing, United States assistance can be transformational: encouraging them to generate more of their own revenue and spend it on development priorities, paving a path toward long-term poverty reduction and self-reliance. Recognizing the catalytic impact of such investment, at the 2015 Financing for Development Conference the United States committed to doubling support for public sector domestic resource mobilization over the next three years.

- To ensure the success of this effort, President Obama's FY17 budget request should put the U.S. on a transparent path to fulfill its Addis Tax Initiative commitment to double total support for public sector domestic resource mobilization in three years. This should be: a cross-agency effort, with a funding baseline for doubling that includes USAID, Treasury, and PEPFAR; consistent with [MFAN's principles of public sector domestic resource mobilization](#); and accomplished without establishing additional earmarks or directives.
- In keeping with the President's development vision outlined in the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) #6, USAID should work with the aid community and Congress to reduce earmarks and directives and better align investments with country priorities.

3. Fulfill Major Commitments to Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability

USAID has made significant gains in the amount and quality of data published under the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), including developing and approving initial phases of a management plan to achieve full compliance with the international standard. Yet the ultimate value of the data is in its use. USAID should build on its early steps – a three-country pilot study and an expanded foreign aid transparency commitment in the new U.S. National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership – and deepen efforts to understand how foreign aid data is being used and how to increase its utility.

- We encourage you to continue to prioritize improvements in transparency by supporting the bipartisan, bicameral “Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act” (H.R. 3766/S. 2184) that was recently approved unanimously by both the House of Representatives and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.
- We urge you to invest in the capacity of local actors to utilize data and by raising awareness of the importance of local data use among country counterparts and within USAID missions themselves. Making data available in the official language of the partner country is one important step that will enhance the usability of the data.

4. Institutionalize Policy and Budget Functions

Much of USAID’s recent policy dynamism can be attributed to the restoration of its policy and budget functions under this Administration. Institutionalizing these core structures is vital to the President’s goal of reestablishing “the United States as the global leader on international development” and his “long-term commitment to rebuilding USAID as the U.S. Government’s lead development agency and as the world’s premier development agency,” as outlined in PPD-6.

- We encourage you to more deeply embed the policy and budget functions of USAID.

5. Continue to Prioritize Food Aid Reform

Reform of U.S. food assistance that enables greater reach and impact would be a profound addition to the legacy of this Administration.

- We urge you to make U.S. food aid reform one of your top budget and legislative priorities, and strengthen engagement with Capitol Hill. Congressional support is critical to making food assistance more effective at reaching millions of additional vulnerable people worldwide.

You, better than anyone, understand how important these initiatives are to USAID being an effective development agency, an objective we hold in common. Please let us know if and how we can be of assistance.

With warm regards,



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Carolyn Miles
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