



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**2023 Updated Equity Action Plan**

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## EO 14091 USAID Agency Equity Action Plan

### 1) Message from the Agency Head

At USAID, we are guided by the core principle that every human being deserves respect, opportunity, and dignity, regardless of identity or background—and we are committed to making this principle a reality for both our global workforce and in our work with communities around the world. In service of this commitment, we are making important progress on advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) within the field of international development and foreign assistance.

Since the launch of [USAID's first Equity Action Plan in April 2022](#), we have continued to develop our [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) platform, a hub that reduces barriers by providing a user-friendly entry point for pursuing USAID funding, demystifying bureaucratic processes, and empowering new partners with the knowledge and networks they need to work with USAID. The platform has increased our partnership engagement and expanded our outreach, attracting millions of pageviews and bringing in 4,600 profiles in our Partner Directory—80 percent of which are new to USAID.

We have also released a range of new and updated policies that reflect the central role DEIA plays in advancing development objectives, including our Youth Policy, Strategic Religious Engagement Policy, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, and our first-ever LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy. Additionally, we launched USAID's Racial and Ethnic Equity Initiative for advancing equity and inclusion in our development programs. We continue to advance our outreach with [Minority Serving Institutions](#) to cultivate more partnerships and engagement with students and faculty to leverage their expertise in our development programs.

We are eager to build on this progress as we launch our 2023 Update Equity Action Plan, which highlights our commitments to:

- Continue reducing barriers to the USAID partnership process through the WorkwithUSAID platform;
- Enhance nondiscrimination protections for our program participants and partners in foreign assistance programs overseas;
- Grow our partnerships with US based and/or U.S.-owned small and disadvantaged businesses and Minority-Serving Institutions;
- Meaningfully integrate inclusive development principles, with an emphasis on effectively serving [women and girls](#) and other [historically marginalized populations](#), across all our work; and
- Strengthen USAID's support for underserved communities in policy, programming, and learning.

We look forward to collaborating with our partners in the United States and around the world to advance this critical work.



—Administrator Samantha Power

## **2) Advancing Equity Through Agency Mission**

As the world's leading international development agency, USAID is dedicated to saving lives; reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition; strengthening democratic governance; defending human rights; and building resilience. USAID envisions a world where all people are valued, have equitable access to opportunities, and are included, respected, and safe in their societies. Through our commitment to DEIA, we work to address the specific challenges faced by historically marginalized groups, and focus on who benefits from—and who may be left out of or even harmed by—our policies and programs. USAID's efforts to embed and advance equity are essential to fostering more respectful, inclusive, and safe environments across our workplaces and programming.

## **3) Executive Summary of Equity Action Plan**

USAID's Agency Equity Team (AET) is led by senior leaders, managers, and employees from across USAID and has the purpose of facilitating, informing, and advancing Agency progress on equity assessments, action planning, and other Agency DEIA actions. The AET championed the development and implementation of the 2022 EAP and the design of the 2023 Update EAP, and ensured USAID's compliance of EO 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, EO 14901: Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Presidential Memorandum, and other related DEIA policies.

USAID conducted a robust external facing equity assessment, which laid the foundation for the 2022 EAP. Building on progress made on the 2022 EAP, the AET developed 2023 Update EAP that includes five strategies: 1) Reduce barriers to the USAID Partnership process through the WorkwithUSAID platform; 2) Enhance accountability measures and nondiscrimination protections for program participants and employees of contractors and recipients 3) Reduce barriers for USAID awards, including acquisition and assistance burdens that negatively affect partners' ability to work with USAID. 4) Advance effective and equitable U.S. foreign assistance that meaningfully integrates inclusive development and the perspectives and experiences of women and girls in all their diversity, and improve outcomes in gender equality and for marginalized populations; and 5) Strengthen USAID's approaches to policy, programming, and learning to more effectively advance racial and ethnic equity and support for underserved communities in partner countries.

Several barriers stand in the way of advancing on these ambitious priorities. For instance, as an Agency we often lack certain expertise and dedicated resources needed to develop programs that fully incorporate gender equality and inclusive development policies and guidance. Additionally, we are still building our capacity to apply certain local and Indigenous knowledge to a range of USAID programming, particularly from historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities. The limited resources and capacity is linked to not having dedicated advisors with the full inclusive development portfolio, which includes having technical knowledge and expertise related to the challenges and barriers faced by numerous marginalized groups locally.

Partnering with USAID can be challenging for these groups due to the reasons mentioned. U.S. Government rules, regulations, and processes can be difficult to understand and navigate. Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is at the heart of USAID's work, including in how and with whom the Agency partners. Local leadership and ownership are essential for fostering sustainable results across our work. The Agency is working to lower barriers so that all qualified entities can more easily compete for USAID funding.

The five priority action items take these barriers into account and provide a set of steps USAID will take to address them, including developing new guidance to advance equity among racial and ethnic underserved communities and implementing policy requirements to have agency Gender Advisors with the experience and expertise needed to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment across USAID programming. These barriers also highlight the importance of meaningfully engaging the public as part of USAID's commitment to advancing equity. Several offices and teams within USAID prioritize a relationship with the public to decrease these barriers. For example, USAID's Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) undertakes critical Agency outreach and engagement with small, disadvantaged business (SDB) associations and resource partners to educate on how to work with USAID. OSDBU also leads the agency's efforts to integrate the Federal Small Business Program into agency-wide policy and acquisition planning, expand agency and U.S. small business interaction through training and outreach, and partner with other federal agencies to learn and share best practices.

Together, these strategies, priorities, and actions help USAID partners more comprehensively involve local actors in decisions and programs that impact their countries and communities; integrate equity into Agency policies, strategies, and practices; enhance the ability of non-traditional partners to pursue USAID procurement opportunities; prevent discrimination in Agency programs; and strengthen Agency capacity to advance inclusive development in our global programming. Further, to ensure the Agency adheres to these plans, the five priorities that comprise this Equity Action Plan will also serve as the basis by which USAID measures its success in a new Agency Priority Goal for DEIA in Programs that is included in the [FY 2022 - FY 2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan \(JSP\)](#).

## 4) Equity Progress Update and Accomplishments:

### a) 2022 Equity Action Plan Update (pursuant to EO 13985)

- Since the launch of [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusa.gov) in November 2021, USAID has approved more than 4,700 partner profiles in the platform's Partner Directory, and of those partners, more than 1,600 have completed the pre-engagement assessment. By registering in the Partner Directory and taking the Pre-Engagement Assessment, potential partners are able to increase the visibility of their work, connect with others in the development community, and assess whether or not they are ready to respond to a USAID solicitation.
- The team has translated the top 20 resources on the platform into French, Spanish, and Arabic for use in host countries where USAID works. These resources are helping to bridge the gap for local entities that are not fluent in English as USAID continues to develop additional documentation in foreign languages.
- USAID's Inclusive Development e-learning module is now mandatory for all of the workforce. As of June 2023, 86 percent (11,200 out of approximately 13,000) of USAID's workforce have received the training on Inclusive Development.
- USAID held three external and three internal consultations with stakeholders, delivered two informational webinars for USAID staff, held consultations with program participants across USAID Missions and briefed all Bureaus and Independent Offices (B/IOs) on the development of the 'Know Your Protections' (KYP) document (formerly known as the 'Beneficiaries Bill of Rights' - BBoR). This document aims to summarize and highlight existing protections for USAID program participants, making them accessible and easily understandable. The document has been revised and is currently undergoing clearance at the agency.
- USAID developed the Social, Economic, and Environmental Accountability Mechanism (SEE-AM), which advances program participant protections. The mechanism provides a channel for program participants and affected communities to inform the Agency of harm experienced in relation to USAID's programs and projects overseas. USAID secured program funds for and onboarded a full-time Accountability Mechanism Official to manage SEE-AM design and implementation, and coordination of complaints processing.
- USAID launched the updated [Acquisition and Assistance](#) (A&A) Strategy and Implementation Plan in FY 2023, incorporating DEIA principles, such as:
  - USAID simplified and reduced its onerous pre-award risk survey for local organizations seeking USAID funding.
  - Agency lowered the barrier to entry by promoting more opportunities where applicants submit an initial concept paper (about five pages) before they are invited to submit a full application (typically 30 pages or more). This makes the initial step less costly for applicants.
  - Issued a Renewal Award Guide and Template to train A&A staff to use a mechanism that leverages practices from collaborating, learning and adapting, and responds to adjustments in dynamic operating environments.
  - The Senior Procurement Executive (SPE) sent a notice to remind prime contractors about the requirement of reporting data against their small business subcontracting plan and to improve the accuracy of data they submit.

- The Agency identified and created a cadre of training, tools, and resources to streamline proposal and evaluation processes. M Bureau provides staff a platform to share innovative practices and systems to streamline procurement processes through the A&A Innovation Community of Practice.
- USAID updated its Youth Policy and released the new Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy in March 2023. USAID released its new LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy in August 2023 and Strategic Religious Engagement Policy in September 2023. These policies reiterate the importance of and clarify approaches to inclusion and equity in USAID’s programs, for USAID staff and stakeholders.
- USAID recently announced the [launch of the Racial and Ethnic Equity Initiative](#), and teams are conducting assessments and collecting data from USAID Missions overseas to build a knowledge base of operational practices and best practices that have successfully advanced social inclusion and racial equity in foreign assistance programming. Exposure to these best practices and technical guidance will encourage the adoption of quality equity programs on a broader scale.
- USAID Missions and Bureaus are now required to report on a new key issue narrative in their annual reports capturing racial and ethnic equity. They also must annually report on the percentage of completed evaluations with at least one local expert on the evaluation team.
- USAID released the Agency’s highest level policy document, the [Policy Framework](#), in March 2023. The Policy Framework emphasizes a commitment to embed DEIA principles across our programs, people, processes, policies, and practices so that development gains are more locally-led and benefit people of all backgrounds and identities.

**b) Environmental Justice Scorecard (pursuant to section 223 of EO 14008)**

USAID is not required to complete the Environmental Justice Scorecard. USAID promotes environmental equity and monitors progress through the [Global Action for Climate Equity](#).

**c) Additional Efforts to Advance Equity**

- Fourteen country-level Inclusive Development Assessments (IDAs), which aim to map the context and needs of marginalized groups through an intersectional lens to improve equity in programming, have been performed across the Agency. The ID Hub’s Inclusive Development Activity for Mission Support (IDAMS) has begun work on three additional IDAs and is poised to scale up these activities in FY 2024.
- The Office of Civil Rights established the External Civil Rights Division covering Title VI and other relevant civil rights authorities to ensure USAID complies with Title VI requirements under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Division receives and addresses complaints of discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. The External Civil Rights Division’s internal website launched in June 2023, which educates USAID staff on the Title VI legal requirements and statutes and how they apply to USAID programs and partners.
- In addition to the significant progress made in awarding more funds directly to local entities—which, in FY2022 reached the highest level (\$1.6 billion) and percent (10.2 percent) in over a decade—USAID has developed a new method to track the extent to which the Agency’s programming is locally led. Through a series of consultations, USAID

identified 14 high priority “good practices” that create space for local actors to exercise leadership over USAID’s programming, including priority setting, activity design, implementation, or defining and measuring results. USAID will track the use of these good practices—first in a pilot phase in FY 2023 and then more fully in FY 2024—to learn more about the variety of ways USAID works to advance local leadership and to elevate and incentivize these practices to underscore our commitment to supporting locally led development.

**d) Advancing Equity Through Key Legislation**

N/A



## 5) Strategies to Advance Equity in FY 2024

### a) Strategy One: Reducing barriers to the USAID partnership process through the WorkwithUSAID platform

#### Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s):

- **Economic Justice:** Ensure equitable procurement practices, including through small disadvantaged businesses contracting.
- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Collaborating Agencies:** N/A

#### Barriers to Equity:

Organizations often struggle to navigate the complex federal financial and administrative requirements for pursuing and managing Agency funding. These challenges have made it more difficult for USAID to partner 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 host countries.

Top barriers identified by partners include:

- Knowing where and how to start the USAID partnership process
- Locating USAID-specific funding opportunities
- Responding to solicitations with complex application processes
- Registering in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov)
- Connecting with current USAID prime partners for sub-opportunities
- Navigating USAID's processes in English

Feedback is collected through a variety of channels. Several customer experience and partnership experience surveys have provided insight into these barriers to equity. The first round of surveys were conducted in 2022 with a second survey during August 2023. The team also regularly polls its audiences across its 'Work with USAID' social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook) to gather informal feedback. And finally, staff develop content for the [WorkwithUSAID](#) platform by interviewing partners to learn more about what resources helped them and what barriers they faced during their successful partnership process, to help others learn and succeed.

#### Evidence Base to Support Strategy:

In 2022 USAID conducted its first-ever Partnering Experience survey which provided feedback from various organizations on their partnership experience with USAID as well as their experience using the WorkwithUSAID platform. Almost 1,500 people responded, of which 66% were "new" or prospective partners. Results showed 44% of prospective partners do not understand how to apply for funding, while an additional 24% who have applied unsuccessfully expressed confusion around the Agency's processes. Data from the surveys provided the team with more insight into the barriers and opportunities that potential partners face in pursuing

partnership with USAID. The insights gained into the needs of different types of partners in terms of readiness and capacity to partner with the Agency will help us better target our outreach efforts. The information about which resources partners find most helpful provides actionable insights into how partners digest and make use of information and resources. USAID launched the [2023 Partnering Experience survey](#) in August 2023 and will use the results to further inform its efforts. The team has also developed two “post-transaction surveys” for WorkwithUSAID users: 1) after six months of registering in the Partner Directory, users are asked to fill out a short questionnaire with information about their organization and about the usefulness of the directory; and, 2) after completion of the Pre-Engagement Assessment, users are asked to take a short survey on the tool’s helpfulness, documenting information about their organization and their experience.

Since the launch of WorkwithUSAID.gov in November 2021, USAID has approved more than 5,000 partner profiles in the platform’s [Partner Directory](#), and of those partners, more than 1,700 have completed the pre-engagement assessment. Of the 5,000 organizations in the Partner Directory, approximately 81% are new to USAID and approximately 65% are considered “local partners”. Being part of the Partner Directory allows entities to directly message and network with one another as well as be visible to USAID staff interested in doing market research.

The [Pre-Engagement Assessment](#) is a self-paced questionnaire that allows potential partners to self-evaluate their readiness and eligibility to be able to compete for USAID funding. Upon completion, they receive a customized report that provides tools and resources to address specific needs to boost organizational capacity. From the regular post-transaction survey related to this feature on the website, one user noted “The design of the assessment form is impressive. Since English is my third foreign language, the document contains no complex jargon or overly ambiguous sentences. Overall, it is a well-designed form suitable for the international community.”

Taking these two first steps as a potential partner to USAID allows for entities to increase the visibility of their work, connect with one another, and assess whether or not they are ready to respond to a USAID solicitation.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

#### Ongoing:

- Regular website demonstrations for prospective and current USAID partners, as well as Agency staff, including partnering with USAID staff to present in local languages, to ensure all relevant stakeholders are aware of its resources and features. These webinars have been lauded by the community for helping prospective partners better understand how to navigate the Agency’s complex partnership process.
- Monthly newsletter (current distribution list has more than 129,000 people) highlighting tips for partners as well as new enhancements on the Work with USAID website. This piece of distribution organizes all of the latest website features, upcoming events, and resource blogs for potential partners, into one place to make it more user friendly.

#### Short-Term:

- Launch a live-feed of USAID-specific funding opportunities pulled directly from SAM.gov

and Grants.gov into one place on WorkwithUSAID. With information posted on Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and other locations, identifying appropriate funding opportunities has been noted highly as a barrier for new entrants as the platforms are not user-friendly and difficult to navigate. They have an overwhelming amount of opportunities listed from other USG Agencies for awards, Justifications and Approvals, Personal Services Contractor job postings, and more, mixed in with USAID funding announcements. This feed will make it much easier for prospective partners to find relevant opportunities.

- Translate the top 20 resources on WorkwithUSAID into French, Arabic, and Spanish for users.
- Provide courtesy copies of solicitations in French, Arabic, and Spanish, and support the translation of organizations' final applications into English.
- Transition website from WorkwithUSAID.org to WorkwithUSAID.gov to foster more credibility as well as longevity and sustainability of the platform under direct US government maintenance and control. Working with USAID's CIO for assessment documentation and re-build on USAID's network.

#### Long-Term:

- Develop a Partnerships Pathway Tool to help new and prospective partners better understand which funding path may be most appropriate for their entity. Analyze quiz results to determine if new partners have a full insight on USAID's opportunities.
- Automate and streamline partnering processes such as the unsolicited proposal/application process, making it easier to submit ideas to the Agency. Measure the number of new applications fully submitted. Fully automating USAID's unsolicited proposal/application process will be successful once there is a seamless system in place for prospective partners to submit proposals/applications and USAID staff to manage responses. This will provide greater transparency to our partners with quicker response times as the current process is email-based and not uniform across the Agency.
- Translate the entire WorkwithUSAID platform into French, Spanish, and Arabic – allowing for greater access and understanding of USAID's partnership opportunities and processes by local entities. By reducing the language barrier, USAID will be able to expand its outreach to new, local organizations. Success will be achieved when foreign speakers are able to better prepare to respond to USAID solicitations and opportunities as a result of this improvement.

#### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):**

Near- to Medium-Term (Likely to be mostly outputs):

- At least 40% of new partners registered in the Partner Directory have also taken the Pre-Engagement Assessment on WorkwithUSAID. USAID believes the more prospective partners who take the assessment, the more will understand their eligibility and take time to build their organizational capacity to be able to compete for Agency funding.
- Measure on a quarterly basis based on feedback from post-transactional survey respondents on:
  - The rate of the Pre-Engagement Assessment helping participants better understand their organization's readiness to partner with USAID.
  - The rate of users who have noted that resources on WorkwithUSAID have

increased their organization's readiness to work with USAID.

Longer-Term (Outcomes):

- Utilize the annual Partner Experience Survey for insights from partners who have and have not received an award from USAID to evaluate the following metrics via specific questions asked that directly correlate to each one:
  - The degree to which partners understand how to apply for USAID funding.
  - The degree of satisfaction of an entity's partnering experience with USAID.
  - The degree of satisfaction for USAID's partnering processes being more streamlined (made simpler, more efficient, or more effective).
- Translate WorkwithUSAID.gov into Arabic, Spanish, and French by the end of 2024.
- Launch the pilot of an automated portal for the unsolicited proposal/application process by the end of 2024.
- Overall trend of partnerships with small and local partners.

**Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

USAID will continue to use its various partner feedback mechanisms, including annual and regular post-transaction feedback surveys, to continue to improve the platform to make it as user-friendly and useful as possible. Feedback collected will be used to help shape website enhancements to help lower barriers for entities interested in partnering with USAID.

Through the Agency's Industry Liaison, which manages the WorkwithUSAID platform, USAID regularly engages with organizations around the world to understand their goals and priorities. The Industry Liaison team also runs a number of WorkwithUSAID social media accounts. These channels allow the team to correspond directly with individuals and reach out to new networks. Analysis of platform data indicates approximately 70% of followers are based outside of the U.S.

- [Twitter](#): 14,600+ Followers
- [LinkedIn Group](#): 375,000+ members
- [Facebook Page](#): 4,800+ followers
- [YouTube Channel](#): 3,900+ subscribers

In addition to these efforts, the Industry Liaison will continue hosting monthly global webinars on how to work with USAID as well as one-on-one consultations with partners. In FY 2022, the team engaged with more than 13,000 people through webinars and live events and held more than 50 one-on-one consultations with new partners. These efforts allow us to better understand our customers, especially those who are new to USAID and may represent different perspectives. The team has an extensive [outreach and engagement strategy](#) that helps to ensure that there is wide participation from different stakeholders.

**b) Strategy Two: Enhance accountability measures and nondiscrimination protections for program participants and employees of contractors and recipients.**

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s):**

- **Civil Rights:** Protect the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, including the right to vote, language access, and prohibitions on discrimination on the bases of race, sex, disability, etc. Promote equity in science to root out bias in the design and use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence.
- **Economic Justice:** Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy. Ensure equitable procurement practices, including through small disadvantaged businesses contracting and the Buy Indian Act (25 U.S.C. 47). Build prosperity in rural communities.
- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Collaborating Agencies:** N/A

**Barriers to Equity:**

USAID’s program participants are those who participate in or are recipients of a USAID program. Program participants are located across the world and include people from marginalized populations and underrepresented groups, who in some cases may be adversely affected by our development projects and activities based on (but not limited to) race, color, religion, sex, (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran status.

Current USAID policy regarding nondiscrimination protections for employees of contractors or recipients contains only hortatory (“strongly encourages”) language and does not create any mandatory requirements for our implementing partners. There are multiple civil rights statutes and USAID-specific regulations, however, which do require recipients subject to U.S. law to not discriminate against program participants on the bases of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, and disability status. Approximately 70% of USAID-funded recipients are US-based, and therefore required to comply with federal civil rights statutes and regulations. For the remaining 30% of recipients and partners, however, USAID’s nondiscrimination policies do not create mandatory requirements. USAID’s “Know Your Protections” document, when established, will inform all employees, contractors, grant recipients and program participants of the Agency’s nondiscrimination policies of any foreign aid constituent or program participant.

While the Department of Labor Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs (OFCCP) regulations under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act include an [aspirational utilization goal of 7% of contractor staff being persons with disabilities](#), there is limited implementation, data, and tracking of this effort at USAID.

USAID does not currently have a mandatory social impact assessment tool to facilitate mitigation of potential harms to program participants, nor a centralized, accessible mechanism to receive and investigate grievances or explore providing protection and redress to program participants (or their authorized representatives) who have experienced social, economic or environmental, harm they believe was caused by a USAID project or activity, or who think they could potentially experience such harm.

**Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

USAID is in the process of establishing the ‘Know Your Protections’ document, the Social, Economic and Environmental Accountability Mechanism and a Social Impact Assessment mechanism. Since these programs are still being developed, there is no data or evidence to report at this time beyond the legal mandates to establish these initiatives. Once established and operational, USAID will gather and analyze relevant data to further equity objectives. The legal mandates include Federal civil rights statutes and regulations [specifically, [22 CFR 209](#) (USAID’s nondiscrimination regulation requiring establishment of the External Civil Rights Division and its complaint investigation and reconciliation processes), [EO 13985](#) (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), and [EO 12250](#) (Leadership and Coordination of Nondiscrimination Laws managed by DOJ)].

Pursuant to the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying Division K of Public Law 116-260, and the 2021 Department of State Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, USAID is required to establish a Social, Economic, and Environmental Accountability Mechanism (SEE-AM) which advances program participant protections.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, USAID will:

- Conduct a soft launch of a SEE-AM insert timing that allows program participants to notify USAID of adverse social, economic, or environmental impacts caused by USAID-funded activities. USAID will select at least two Missions from two Regions and finish the draft standard operating procedures based on internal and external consultations. USAID will use the soft launch period to test the efficacy of the draft standard operating procedures and a draft operational policy before finalizing them in advance of a formal launch scheduled for summer 2024.
- Advance efforts to implement new award terms through the rulemaking process requiring implementing partners to prevent, report on, and address harms against program participants to USAID (e.g., sexual exploitation and abuse, child abuse and neglect; trafficking in persons; social harms, including discrimination, economic, and environmental harms).
- Continue to train staff and implementing partners in the United States and across all Missions on USAID nondiscrimination provisions.
- Develop and disseminate the “Know Your Protections” document to strategically communicate existing protections to program participants.
- Revise USAID’s operational policy to include a new Social Impact Risk Initial Screening which will assist in identifying where new activity designs could benefit from additional assessments to better understand their social impact and mitigate risks. Strengthen award requirements on nondiscrimination protections for employees of implementing partners (subject to applicable U.S. law) through the rulemaking process.
- Strengthen technical coordination across relevant portfolios to enable USAID to put in place risk mitigation measures and improve collection of grievances across all complaint types filed by program participants.
- Sufficiently staff and fund the Agency’s External Civil Rights Program to ensure full compliance with requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):**

Near- to Medium-Term (Likely to be mostly outputs):

- The workforce and implementing partners at all Missions are trained on USAID’s “Nondiscrimination for Beneficiaries<sup>1</sup> Policy” (Target: 100% of agency workforce have received training)
- The release and widespread dissemination of the “Know Your Protections” document (Target: 100% of USAID Missions and Bureaus have received the document).

#### Longer-Term (Outcomes)

- Increase in early risk identification and mitigation in new activities.
- Increase in the number of cases received that are successfully resolved through the SEE-AM and USAID uses its learnings from the SEE-AM to improve programs and inform our approach to ‘do no harm.’
- Increased awareness of the ‘Know Your Protections document’ through robust communication strategies and rollout, as well as translating the document into 20 languages to reach all USAID Missions, partners, and program participants.
- Establish new award requirements on nondiscrimination protections for employees of implementing partners established (subject to applicable U.S. law).
- Percentage of discrimination complaints processed and resolved efficiently by the External Civil Rights Program in accordance with federal regulations and Department of Justice guidelines.

#### **Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

- The External Civil Rights Program’s public-facing website will launch in FY 2024 with information on USAID’s nondiscrimination policies and contact information for program participants to file complaints or receive additional information on their rights.
- The External Civil Rights Program and [The Bureau for Inclusive Growth](#) will offer and provide training on Nondiscrimination to Implementing Partners.
- The SEE-AM will launch a public-facing website with information on how to submit a complaint and how the complaint management process works.

### **c) Strategy Three: Reduce barriers for USAID awards including barriers in USAID’s acquisition and assistance processes that negatively affect partners’ ability to work with USAID.**

#### **Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s):**

- Economic Justice: Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy. Ensure equitable procurement practices, including through small disadvantaged businesses contracting and the Buy Indian Act (25 U.S.C. 47). Build prosperity in rural communities.

**Collaborating Agencies:** N/A

#### **Barriers to Equity:**

While WorkWithUSAID, described in Strategy One, lowers certain barriers to the USAID partnership process by providing a user-friendly entry point for pursuing USAID funding,

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<sup>1</sup> USAID is transitioning from using the term “Beneficiaries” to using the term “Program Participants”

multiple approaches are necessary to tackle a wider range of burdens that constrain the ability of many partners to work with USAID. Some of USAID's acquisition and assistance processes are cost-prohibitive and onerous, especially for organizations with limited operational capacity. These include small, new, and local non-profit and commercial organizations/firms. In the course of conducting focus group consultations with external stakeholders, a crucial insight emerged: numerous organizations including many servicing historically marginalized communities are grappling with constrained operating budgets. This financial limitation significantly hampers their ability to effectively engage with arduous and prolonged solicitations and funding opportunities. Many of these organizations are staffed by smaller teams, which poses a challenge when responding to these opportunities. This predicament persists even once they secure an award, as the ensuing administrative and reporting requirements can prove overwhelming for some contending with limited operational capacity.

These formidable barriers have dissuaded several small, local and/or historically underrepresented organizations, two key categories of which are discussed below, from actively pursuing acquisition and assistance opportunities with USAID. Addressing these barriers is crucial to foster inclusivity and to ensure equitable access to these opportunities for all eligible entities. It will also allow the Agency to make way for a more diverse partner landscape, further enriching the impact of USAID's initiatives.

*US Small Businesses:* To enhance the consideration given to small business concerns within the Agency's policy framework, it is crucial to also recognize the distinct challenges Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs) face in the federal contracting process. Navigating the proposal process can be time-consuming and may deter SDBs from pursuing contract opportunities when the opportunities seem to be targeted to larger organizations. Additionally, some SDBs might face challenges in accessing networks and expertise needed to comprehensively navigate federal regulations, policies, and compliance standards. As such, SDBs have been historically underrepresented in USAID contracting.

*Local organizations:* Local organizations, based in the countries and regions where USAID works, share many of the same barriers SDBs encounter and face additional barriers, as well, including a lack of familiarity with U.S. regulations and accounting standards, including challenges navigating English language systems and guidance along with requirements for documents to be submitted in English. USAID has made progress expanding direct funding to local partners; in FY 2022, over 10 percent of the Agency's acquisitions and assistance funding was channeled directly through local partners, the highest percentage in at least a decade, up from 7 percent in FY 2021 and an average of 5 percent between FY 2012 through FY 2020. But with an Agency wide target of 25 percent direct local funding, expanded efforts to tackle barriers to partnership are required. To underpin future progress toward the Agency's local partnership goals, USAID is taking a number of actions to achieve greater equity which are detailed below. The Agency is also integrating localization into its guidance, training, and resources to ensure staff have the information and skills necessary to operationalize locally led development throughout all stages of the Agency's acquisition and assistance processes and the Program Cycle. To motivate the adoption of approaches that reduce barriers to local organizations, USAID adopted an Agency-wide target to channel 25 percent of USAID funding to local organizations. Centroamerica Local, which comes with a congressional directive to allocate



\$100 million (in FY 2022) to local organizations and governments provides an additional, regional impetus for reducing barriers.

### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

As part of the agency's equity 2021 assessment in response to Executive Order 13985, qualitative and quantitative data was collected from internal and external stakeholders, agency policies, and Agency reports. Further, the first annual USAID Partnering Experience Survey was released in 2022 with the aim to better understand the challenges encountered by partners seeking to work with the agency. Insights from the agency's 2021 assessment, combined with feedback from the 2022 partner survey, highlighted how some of the USG's excessively burdensome procurement processes create barriers for small and historically underrepresented organizations, impeding their competitive pursuit of award opportunities.

In addition, evidence from various small business forums, trainings, and focus sessions yields that the overall SDB community lacks access, information, and opportunities to work with USAID. There is a perception that localization takes priority over SDBs. The Agency's customer service survey revealed a lack of internal training, guidance, and information on the Agency's small business program and its purpose.

For local partners, the Partner Experience Survey, first conducted in FY 2022 with a second iteration in FY 2023 uncovered many of the barriers local partners face in working with USAID. Multiple opportunities for engagement with local organizations, including reverse industry days, sector based meetings with local partners, and consultations on good practices for advancing locally led development also highlighted the barriers local organizations face and surfaced changes that these organizations would like to see USAID pursue.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, USAID will:

- Adapt [A&A](#) training, tools, and resources and enhance messaging that reminds staff to refrain from adding burdensome requirements that exceed the minimum required by regulation. For example, USAID recently issued reminders to staff to limit requests for partner reporting under assistance to what is strictly required under 2 CFR.
- Strengthen and encourage A&A workforce communication with prospective partners by providing updated guidance on the type of communication that is possible with all firms and organizations.
- Reduce barriers that discourage local partners from working with USAID. For example, (1) expand USAID Mission efforts to translate assistance solicitations into local languages (as a courtesy, with English versions controlling) and accepting local language concept notes and translating final applications; and (2) increase co-design implementing mechanisms that strengthen organizational capacity for new and local organizations;
- Explore reducing regulatory barriers to improve access to procurement opportunities and create a broader pool of potential partners.
- Continue progress to integrate small businesses, including SDBs, more widely into agency policies for planning and programming (ADS 200 series). Offer established training for Agency planners on how to conduct meaningful market research to identify qualified SDBs on a recurring basis. Continue Agency outreach and engagement with

SDB associations and resource partners to educate on how to work with USAID. Create a community of practice with similarly situated Agencies to help identify SDB sources and continuously detect, assess, and address barriers and challenges.

- Provide greater consideration for SDBs in the procurement planning process to include greater consideration for setting aside opportunities specifically for this socio-economic group as is authorized by existing federal policy.
- Implement the Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) Partnership Initiative: The aim of the MSI Partnership Initiative is to match interested institutions with USAID Bureaus, Missions, and Independent Offices to increase MSI community members' access to programs and initiatives in that particular Bureau or Office. Through this initiative USAID seeks to increase MSI engagement in the following ways: 1) Demonstrate commitment to inclusivity and affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity; 2) Increase MSI knowledge of, and access to, USAID programs and initiatives; 3) Identify opportunities for students and faculty to engage in U.S. Foreign Assistance; 4) Share career and internship opportunities; 5) Increase student engagement with USAID; and 6) Support increased participation of MSIs in USAID's research initiatives. This initiative diversifies the partnership base, expanding partnerships beyond traditional actors.

**Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):**

Near- to Medium-Term (Likely to be mostly outputs):

- Overall trend of percentage of direct funding to local prime partners.
- Increase in the percentage of prime and subcontract awards made to SDBs, targets are negotiated annually with the Small Business Administration.
- Overall trend of percentage of obligations to new and underutilized partners via direct awards.

Longer-Term (Outcomes):

- Increased satisfaction scores in the annual Partner Experience Survey from partners who have and have not received an award from USAID on the Agency's streamlined procurement processes.
- Improved scoring on the USAID Small Business Procurement Scorecard on overall small business inclusion and participation in contracting.

**Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

To advance these priorities, USAID's Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) plans to increase Agency outreach and engagement with SDB associations and resource partners to educate on how to work with USAID. OSDBU will also work with Agency planners to increase industry days targeted at specific procurement opportunities that will inform SDBs of actual business opportunities. The Agency will also co-design implementing mechanisms that provide organizational capacity strengthening for new and local organizations to enhance their readiness to work with USAID.

**d) Strategy Four: Advance effective and equitable U.S. foreign assistance that meaningfully integrates inclusive development and the perspectives and experiences of women and girls in all their diversity, and improve outcomes in gender equality and for marginalized populations.**

**Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s):**

- **Economic Justice:** Build a strong, fair, and inclusive workforce and economy. Ensure equitable procurement practices, including through small disadvantaged businesses contracting and the Buy Indian Act (25 U.S.C. 47). Build prosperity in rural communities.
- **Civil Rights:** Protect the civil and constitutional rights of all persons, including the right to vote, language access, and prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, etc. Promote equity in science to root out bias in the design and use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence.
- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Collaborating Agencies:** Department of State (DoS)

**Barriers to Equity:**

Currently, only 14 countries in the world offer full equal legal rights for women.<sup>2</sup> At the current rate of change, it will take 131 years to reach gender parity globally,<sup>3</sup> and only 4% of global bilateral aid is dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective.<sup>4</sup> USAID and the State Department are working to scale up aid for gender equality, by committing to double the amount of gender equality aid from the previous fiscal year, with plans to continue to scale up funding in future years.

Gender inequality exists in the countries where USAID works, as evidenced by the fact that women and girls are more likely to be marginalized from political processes<sup>5</sup> and market systems, bear the burden of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity<sup>6</sup> and climate change and experience discrimination, sexual harassment and GBV.<sup>7</sup> Young women make up three out of four youth around the world that are not in school, in training, or in employment. Throughout the world, women are disproportionately burdened by unpaid care work, doing two and a half times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. The global gender wage gap is 23 percent.<sup>8</sup> Men and boys are also impacted by gender inequality. Gendered norms of ‘manhood’ play a role in young men’s engagement in armed conflict and violence. In some contexts, factors affecting notions of masculinity and femininity and the way gender roles are defined in societies have a massive effect on men’s risk-taking and health-seeking behaviors. Gender inequality denies the whole of

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank Women, Business, and the Law 2023 Report.

<sup>3</sup> [World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#)

<sup>4</sup> OECD Development Finance for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.

<sup>5</sup> Women make up fewer than 25% of the world’s parliamentarians and 18.3 % of government ministers.

<sup>6</sup> In nearly two thirds of countries, women are more likely than men to report food insecurity.

<sup>7</sup> UN-Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: UN-Women.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

society the benefits of a more gender equal world and must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable development.

In alignment with US government policy priorities, 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. While USAID Missions continue to identify opportunities to integrate gender equality and inclusive development in policy and programming, attention to these priorities are not yet fully integrated in U.S. foreign policy and development assistance—despite gender-related legislative<sup>9</sup> and policy mandates.<sup>10</sup>

USAID Missions and Bureaus often lack the specific expertise and resources required to ensure programming fully incorporates gender equality and inclusive development policies and guidance. Most Missions do not have dedicated advisors for 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. In addition, a recent staffing survey identified gaps in the number of Gender Advisors at Missions and their level of effort dedicated to this role. Many Missions do not yet meet the new Gender Advisor level of effort requirement included in the 2023 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy; they have three years to address this gap. Some Mission Gender Advisors are focused solely on gender equality issues, some on gender equality and inclusive development issues, and some gender advisors also cover other areas such as Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) or serve as technical office's AOR/CORs. When additional functions like MEL are added to the Gender Advisors role, they report too broad a workload, which may limit their ability to effectively incorporate gender equality and inclusive development in programming.

USAID Missions and Bureaus are also not systematically adhering to the requirement to conduct activity-level gender analyses to inform new activity design. This would ensure that gender equality is integrated across all the components of a solicitation, including scope of work, proposed objectives, staffing, and MEL. When gender equality is not adequately integrated into programs, including design and implementation, USAID risks exacerbating inequalities which impedes the achievement of objectives across sectors, and which goes contrary to the principle of do no harm.

#### **Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

USAID conducted a survey to identify the current status of Mission staffing. The survey showed that only about 33% of Missions have an Inclusive Development Advisor with any level of effort devoted to the role, and that they were often informal designations not documented in the staff member's official duties. According to the survey results, 23% of Missions did not have a Gender Advisor, even though it is a requirement, and many of the Missions with a Gender

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<sup>9</sup> Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018; Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017; Evidence-based Foreign Policy Act of 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Executive Order 14020 (Mar 2021); U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality (Oct 2021); USAID Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy; ADS 205; U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security (Jan 2023); U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally (Dec 2022); U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (Jun 2019).

Advisor did not have adequate level of effort to meet the updated requirements in [USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy](#). An evaluation of USAID's Gender Equality policy found that, "Mission staff have limited capacity to integrate gender and tailored training and tools are desired, particularly related to monitoring and evaluation to measure progress toward gender equality... the mandate for and demands on Regional Bureau and Mission Gender Advisors and POCs are high, yet their capacity to respond to these demands varies."<sup>11</sup> Based on these findings, building staff capacity is needed to ensure that activities integrate gender and have improved gender equality outcomes.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, USAID will:

- Hire additional staff and manage, fund, and expand at least two new support mechanisms to assist Missions and OUs to effectively advance gender equality and inclusive development objectives through informed, evidence-based programming.
- Increase Gender Advisor LOE, inline with [ADS 205](#) requirements and encourage use of Standard Position Descriptions.
- Launch a new flagship mechanism including the Gender Leadership, Equity, and Advancement for Development (LEAD), to provide support to Missions and Bureaus on gender integration across the program cycle including gender analysis technical assistance and sector-specific technical assistance.
- Expand USAID's ability to use internal resources to support direct technical assistance to missions.
- Roll out new tools to support OUs in integrating gender equality into programming including USAID's first-ever gender equality marker and activity-level gender analysis toolkit.

### **Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):**

Near- to Medium-Term (Likely to be mostly outputs):

- Increase the number of new permanent staff hired and onboarded in USAID/Washington to advance inclusive development and gender equality.
- Increase the number of positions identified/created/filled at USAID Missions devoted to advancing inclusive development and gender equality, including both FSOs and FSNs.
- Increase the number of Inclusive Development Advisors at USAID Missions.
- Implement at least two new program support mechanisms operating to advance gender equality and inclusion of marginalized groups in USAID programming.
- All USAID staff have completed the mandatory Gender 101 online course within one year of the release of USAID's 2023 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, and new hires within a year of their start date. All gender advisors have completed two additional gender equality trainings beyond Gender 101.

Longer-Term (Outcomes):

- The majority of sectors have dedicated sector specific gender training modules that all relevant sector staff have completed.

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<sup>11</sup> [THE USAID GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT POLICY](#): A REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

**Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

Public input was obtained while designing and procuring new awards for gender equity and inclusive development. USAID sought feedback and insight for the update to its Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, including consultations and a public comment period.

**e) Strategy Five: Strengthen USAID's approaches to policy, programming, and learning to more effectively advance racial and ethnic equity and support for underserved communities in partner countries.****Whole-of-Government Equity Objective(s):**

- **Global Equality:** Promote equity and human rights around the world through our foreign policy and foreign assistance.

**Collaborating Agencies:** Currently collaborating with DoS with potential opportunity to collaborate with agencies such as Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and others.

**Barriers to Equity:**

Over the past several years, USAID has championed equity across policy, programming, and learning through an inclusive development approach that incorporates considerations relevant to gender equality, social inclusion (e.g. inclusion of underserved populations such as LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples), and strategic religious engagement throughout policy and the program cycle. Despite these robust efforts, USAID must update policy, guidance, training, and the way evidence is collected to ensure USAID staff possess the tools and skills needed to effectively address inequities faced by historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities impacted by USAID programming. Intersecting identities of underserved groups (i.e. LGBTQI+ person of color, or, individual with disabilities who also belongs to a religious minority) makes the importance of understanding these dynamics and social structures all the more crucial.

One particular barrier is that local knowledge is not sufficiently included in the evidence base that informs USAID strategic planning and programming. This could mean that our programs are not designed to be flexible enough to fully meet the specific needs of marginalized groups and communities, which could limit their participation and our impact. USAID must therefore expand its capacity to better use local and Indigenous knowledge, particularly from historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities, in informing and evaluating programming. Populations most impacted by this barrier include underrepresented racial and ethnic local partners and stakeholders.

**Evidence Base to Support Strategy:**

Internal Program Assessments and an agency policy review identified gaps in USAID's ability to address racial and ethnic inequity due to a lack of institutionalized policies, guidance, and tools. Findings from the report indicated that local knowledge does not adequately inform USAID planning, programming, and learning. This not only reduces the participation of marginalized groups in programming opportunities, but also means that program investments may not be

well aligned with the groups and communities most affected by USAID programs. Data collected through Key Issues Narratives (a required part of the agency's Performance Plan and Reporting process) on Disability, Racial and Ethnic Equity, LGBTQI+, and Indigenous Peoples corroborate this finding, and reveal the need for approaches that account for and address the intersection of inequities among different underrepresented groups. And while in recent years the Agency has implemented an inclusive development approach to guide programming toward more inclusive and equitable outcomes, there remains a lack of comprehensive guidance on programming to support racial and ethnic equity specifically, which may be necessary given the complex systems that have been built over centuries to marginalize racial and ethnic communities.

### **Actions to Achieve Equity:**

To address these barriers, USAID will:

- Develop new technical guidance on how to advance racial and ethnic equity among underserved communities in the policy and the program cycle.
- Scale up implementation of Inclusive Development Assessments (IDAs). An IDA is an assessment tool that guides in-country interviews and research to help identify in a particular country those populations that are marginalized and excluded from access to public services such as health, education, transportation, and or economic opportunities. Through the IDA we are able to analyze the country's social, economic, political, and cultural factors that lead to marginalization, determine access to assets, resources, opportunities, and services. IDA concludes with a summary of the context and provides specific recommendations for USAID to increase inclusion of marginalized groups in their development programmes and policies.
- Analyze up to 10 Performance Plan and Report (PPR) Key Issue Narratives and identify new opportunities for advancing racial and ethnic equity and support for underserved communities in programming.
- Establish targets for increased budgetary attributions during the Operational Plan process against all of the following Key Issues: Racial and Ethnic Equity, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQI+, and Disability.
- Develop and expand training and technical assistance to build staff capacity to advance racial and ethnic equity and other knowledge gaps.
- In collaboration with FSC Indigenous Foundation (FSCIF), Alianza Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques (AMPB) and Asociación de Mujeres Artesanas de Ipeti Embera (AMARIE) USAID will complete a pilot intervention that promotes cultural rights, preservation of Indigenous language, and the development of ancestral knowledge as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Indigenous Peoples.
- Strengthen USAID's ability to incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge, particularly from racial and ethnic underserved communities, into evidence collection and use. A new four-year, \$5.1 million Local Evaluation and Evidence Support mechanism will provide technical and advisory services to strengthen the organizational and evaluation capacity of local evaluation and research organizations, starting with selected countries in Africa. Through this process, local and indigenous knowledge will be incorporated into evaluations.
- Provide technical assistance and co-funding to establish seven Indigenous Peoples Advisors at Missions.

- Enhance existing inclusive development infrastructure to include supporting the creation of Inclusive Development Advisor positions in the field and providing training and technical assistance to increase expertise for supporting racial and ethnic equity in programming.

**Proposed Metrics (Outputs and Outcomes):**

Near- to Medium-Term (Likely to be mostly outputs):

- Develop Technical Guide to support the Agency to more effectively target racial and ethnic equity in policy, programming and learning released
- Conduct Inclusive development assessments (IDAs) to inform strategy and activity design in 20 Missions and OUs
- Disseminate FY2022 and FY2023 PPR Key Issue on Racial Equity findings within USAID and State Department.
- Launch Three new online training modules to increase the knowledge and skills of USAID staff in conducting social inclusion assessments, designing development efforts, and incorporating best practices into internal operations.
- Promote Cultural rights and application of ancestral knowledge through a pilot intervention in Panama with FSC Indigenous Foundation.
- Establish Seven Indigenous Peoples Advisors at USAID/Missions.
- Launch Local evaluation and evidence support project. This project will strengthen the capacity of local evidence institutions globally, beginning in the Africa region, increasing their ability to perform rigorous evaluations and other evidence activities. In addition to increasing the use of local knowledge in evaluation and research, this project will further USAID’s goal of reducing barriers for new, nontraditional and local partners.
- Develop guidance for strengthening local evaluation capacity to ensure inclusive representation, including marginalized and underrepresented groups, on evaluation teams.

Longer-Term (Outcomes)

- 50 percent increase in Operational Plan attributions (via development programs) from Missions against identified Key Issues on Racial and Ethnic Equity, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQI+, and Disability by end of FY 2028.
- Pending availability of funds, within five years, at least 10% of USAID Missions will conduct a baseline data assessment to measure a set of racial and ethnic equity indicators in their countries. These assessments will inform Mission programming, and the impact on advancing equity will be measured at the end of each Mission’s five year strategy implementation cycle.

**Public Participation and Community Engagement:**

To develop this strategy, USAID engaged civil society and government partners at the country level and within the U.S. Additional focus group discussions within our network of international development and humanitarian assistance organizations helped increase our knowledge of programmatic gaps and opportunities. USAID will continue to engage with ethnic communities in research efforts and in the co-design of programs and activities.