

USAID POLICY FRAMEWORK:

ENDING
the **NEED**
for **FOREIGN**
ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Our assistance should be designed to empower people, communities, and government leaders on their Journey to Self-Reliance and prosperity.

— USAID Administrator Mark Green



PHOTO: USAID

WHAT IS A POLICY FRAMEWORK?

The *Policy Framework* serves as the guiding policy document for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Taking its direction from the United States' *National Security Strategy (NSS)* and the Department of State and USAID *Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)*, the *Policy Framework* translates the goals outlined in the *NSS* and *JSP* specifically for USAID.

This is the third *Policy Framework* USAID has released, following ones in 2006 and 2011. As USAID's operational policy explains, a *Policy Framework* articulates USAID's approach to providing development and humanitarian assistance and the Agency's programmatic and operational priorities that follow from it. These, in turn, inform issue-specific development policies, strategies, and vision papers; budget requests and allocations; country and regional strategic plans; good-practice documents and project designs; evaluations and learning agendas; and overall engagement with partners.

The *Policy Framework* speaks to multiple audiences, including: USAID personnel, implementing and other program partners, partner-country governments and other recipients of USAID assistance, U.S. interagency colleagues, intergovernmental and multilateral counterparts, and stakeholders in the U.S. Congress, the development community, and the public.

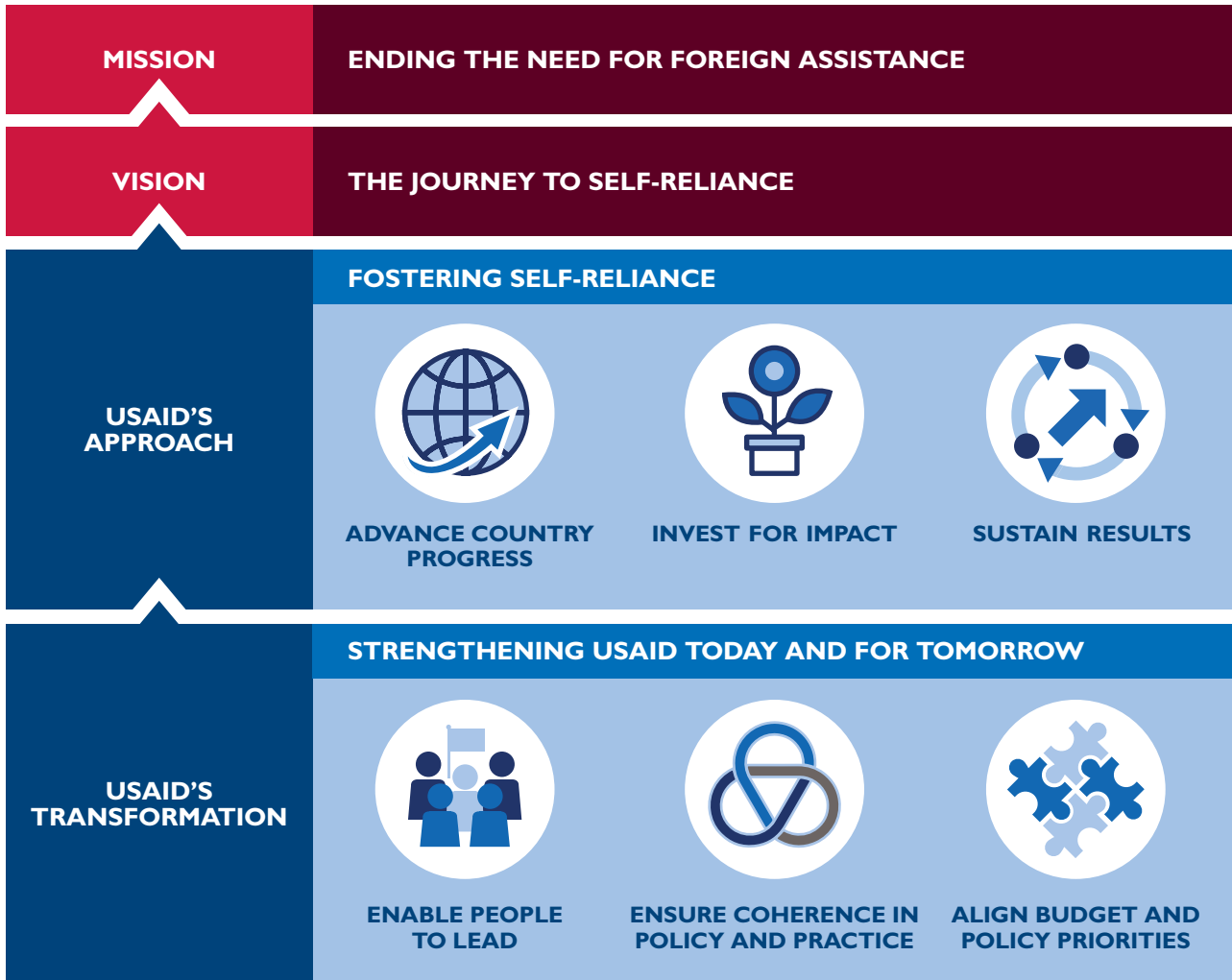
WHY ISSUE A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK?

The world is undergoing an era of remarkable development progress but is also facing emerging and increasingly complex challenges. At this pivotal moment, many providers of foreign assistance are adjusting to shifting circumstances abroad and new demands at home. The *Policy Framework* explains USAID's ongoing Transformation and how it will strengthen our ability to confront future needs for and obstacles to development and humanitarian assistance and to make USAID a more effective provider of foreign assistance on behalf of the American people.

To read the entire *Policy Framework* and learn more about USAID's role in supporting countries along the *Journey to Self-Reliance*, please visit www.usaid.gov/policyframework.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE *POLICY FRAMEWORK*?

The *Policy Framework* presents USAID's mission and our vision for achieving it: ending the need for foreign assistance by partnering with countries along their *Journeys to Self-Reliance*. To realize this vision, the document introduces a new, Agency-wide approach to development and humanitarian assistance: fostering self-reliance. This approach is grounded in three mutually reinforcing principles: USAID must (1) advance country progress, by (2) making investments for impact, through (3) programs that sustain results. To apply these principles, USAID must also transform itself as an institution: enabling our people to lead, ensuring coherence in policy and practice, and aligning budget and policy priorities.



USAID'S MISSION

ENDING THE NEED FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

USAID's vision for a more free, more peaceful, and more prosperous world is built around the compelling yet simple notion that **the purpose of our assistance must ultimately be ending the need for it to exist.** Our assistance model emphasizes programs, initiatives, and investments that support human dignity and build on the innate desire of every community and country to shape their own bright future. USAID will mobilize all of its tools, both development and humanitarian, to protect U.S. security and advance American values and leadership, all while helping our partners on their *Journeys to Self-Reliance*.

We offer a hand up, rather than a hand-out

- » U.S. foreign assistance should never be a hand-out. We should use proven assistance tools to help reform-minded partners reach the point where they can tap into private-enterprise solutions. The growing volume and diversity of development finance is also redefining the role of foreign assistance and development cooperation. In short, to be effective, **foreign assistance must foster self-reliance**, and help countries go from being recipients to partners to, one day, fellow donors.
- » While Americans are generous and always ready to stand with others in their times of need, we believe our **assistance is most effective—and most compassionate—when it strengthens the ability of our country partners to provide for themselves and their citizens.**

Great progress has been made, but we are entering a new era with evolving challenges

- » As we look ahead, we believe that, **in many countries, ending the need for foreign assistance is possible.** Global poverty is falling, health is improving, more children—especially girls—are in school, communities are safer, farm productivity has more than doubled, and more people live in democracies than in the past. Worldwide development gains are a testament to many societies' own efforts and demonstrate that global progress occurs one country at a time. Through on-the-ground partnerships, USAID has made important contributions to these advances.
- » Yet, despite extraordinary progress, **significant barriers to self-reliance remain, and new challenges are emerging.**
 - › While many countries have developed rapidly, others continue to struggle. Some countries even are regressing, in terms of advancing human dignity and citizen-responsive governance. All too often, economic growth is not inclusive and too many are left behind or left out.
 - › Complex crises and natural disasters often derail progress, and underlying fragility is pervasive in many parts of the world. Even in more stable countries, many communities lack resilience to shocks and stresses, particularly in the face of rising environmental pressures. Some 80 percent of the places where USAID has programs are in acute crisis, recovering from crisis, or experiencing smaller-scale upheaval.

Our assistance can help countries overcome barriers to self-reliance and strengthen their resilience to crises

- » **USAID must adopt a more strategic approach** across our portfolio. We must build on programs that lead to self-reliance, and curtail those with diminished relevance or effectiveness.
 - › Strategic USAID assistance can support country partners more effectively in overcoming barriers to sustainable economic growth, inclusive development, democratic governance, and in building human and institutional capacity across sectors.
 - › Targeted USAID assistance can support country partners more effectively in preventing conflict and other crises, responding to and providing relief during them, and promoting resilience and lasting recovery.

As we help others on their *Journeys to Self-Reliance*, we also advance U.S. national security and prosperity

- » U.S. foreign assistance complements America's defense and diplomacy. **Our work to foster self-reliance is an essential tool to safeguard U.S. national security.** These programs curb threats at their source, bolster our economic opportunities and commercial ties, advance liberty and democracy, extend U.S. influence, and ensure we stand with those in need when disaster strikes.

USAID'S VISION

THE JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE

USAID defines self-reliance as the capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local development challenges, as well as the commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability. This definition grounds an approach to foreign assistance that reflects both the evidence we have gathered and the values that underpin our work. As countries gain greater self-reliance, they are able to chart their own development paths and navigate any obstacles along the way.

Self-reliance grows from within

- » Countries build self-reliance at multiple levels, and in various ways. We measure a country's self-reliance in the capacity and commitment of its national leaders and institutions. But the self-reliance of communities and organizations within a country underpin countrywide self-reliance.

Building self-reliance requires both commitment and capacity

- » To accelerate, spread, and sustain gains, there are some guideposts for each country to follow:
 - › Countries that have increased self-reliance have built human and institutional capacity across the economy, civil society, the government, and the population.
 - › Countries that have increased self-reliance have shown a commitment to effective solutions that lead to sustainable economic growth.
 - › Countries that have increased self-reliance have shown a commitment to inclusive solutions that lead to inclusive development.
 - › Countries that have increased self-reliance have shown a commitment to accountable solutions that lead to democratic governance.

Protecting progress requires preventing, mitigating, and recovering from crises

- » Most countries in which USAID operates are making gains along the *Journey to Self-Reliance*, but many countries are also fragile:
 - › To prevent crises in the first place, countries must reduce their underlying fragility, including by counteracting drivers of conflict, violence, and other instability.
 - › When instability does erupt, providing swift relief and mobilizing effective responses can mitigate the impact of crises, which saves lives and livelihoods, supports stability, and forestalls a deeper spiral.
 - › To ensure rapid and strong recovery from crises, countries must also strengthen resilience to shocks and stresses, including those that result from increasingly strained natural resources and mounting environmental pressures.

How USAID can foster self-reliance

- » Overall, self-reliance is increasing. But building self-reliance takes time, and there is no simple route.
- » USAID can support endogenous change by championing local solutions:
 - › This means supporting local capacities and commitments where we identify them, and in whichever ways we are best-equipped.
 - › Local solutions are not always government solutions. Particularly where commitment is lagging among government partners, we should look to civil society, the private sector, or sub-national authorities.
 - › Local solutions do not imply ignoring transnational challenges. Coordination and burden-sharing are necessary to build self-reliance.

USAID defines self-reliance as:

- » A capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local development challenges and
- » A commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability.

This definition grounds an approach to foreign assistance that reflects both the evidence we have gathered and the values that underpin our work.

USAID'S APPROACH FOSTERING SELF-RELIANCE

USAID will reorient our programmatic approach to foster self-reliance more effectively. This approach marks a new direction for USAID, but draws on our deep experience and the lessons we have learned. The new approach is grounded in three principles that underpin *why* we provide assistance to each country, *what* assistance will be most effective, and *how* we can ensure the sustainability of our results.



To advance country progress, USAID will:

FOCUS ON COUNTRY-WIDE SELF-RELIANCE

- » Support global development through individual country progress;
- » Redefine our relationship with partner-country governments; and
- » Remain committed to providing relief in times of crisis.

HELP MAP COUNTRIES' PROGRESS TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE

- » Chart a Roadmap for each country's *Journey to Self-Reliance*, and use it as a basis for dialogue and strategic planning;
- » Supplement Roadmaps with additional data and deeper analysis; and
- » Identify points of strategic convergence among country needs, USAID's capabilities and comparative advantages, and U.S. policy imperatives.

TRANSITION AS COUNTRIES GAIN SELF-RELIANCE

- » Adapt our approach as country partners build their self-reliance; and
- » Where capacity and commitment have advanced significantly, undertake strategic transitions.



To invest for impact, USAID will:

MAKE STRATEGIC CHOICES

- » Build on local capacities and commitments we are equipped to support;
- » Understand programmatic tradeoffs, and make hard choices; and
- » Use regional and transnational programs to support countries' self-reliance.

HARMONIZE INVESTMENTS IN SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, INCLUSION, AND DEMOCRACY

- » Leverage enterprise-driven development;
- » Support countries' financial self-reliance and fiscal sustainability; and
- » Promote cross-sectoral integration.

ENHANCE CAPABILITIES TO HELP PREVENT, MITIGATE, AND RECOVER FROM CRISES

- » Examine strategic approaches in fragile countries, and prioritize conflict and violence prevention, stabilization, and resilience; and
- » Improve coordination in the transition from relief to development, and in programming at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



To sustain results, USAID will:

REIMAGINE OUR PARTNERSHIPS

- » Diversify our partners;
- » Actively engage the private sector;
- » Diversify our partnership models and expand the nature of partnership;
- » Focus partnerships on measurable outcomes; and
- » Be more creative and flexible in our procurement processes.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROMOTE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- » Use assistance to catalyze wider change; and
- » Prioritize sustainable and resilient outcomes.

TAKE BALANCED RISKS

- » Embrace a manageable level of programmatic risk;
- » Manage risks systematically; and
- » Strive to do no harm.

USAID'S TRANSFORMATION

STRENGTHENING USAID TODAY AND FOR TOMORROW

USAID has three core resources: our people, the institutional experience and expertise they have built, and the budget we implement on behalf of the American taxpayers. To realize the vision laid out in this *Policy Framework*, we must harness all three of these resources, and optimize their use.



To enable our people to lead, USAID will:

- » Embrace a culture of leadership;
- » Provide staff the incentives and support to be leaders;
- » Empower our Foreign Service Nationals;
- » Invest in a nimbler workforce and conduct strategic workforce planning;
- » Provide support to staff in fluid and non-permissive environments;
- » Reorganize ourselves to drive decision-making to Missions;
- » Enhance critical technical capabilities by improving our organizational structure; and
- » Promote an environment that reflects our values and upholds human dignity.



To ensure coherence in policy and practice, USAID will:

- » Strengthen policy coherence;
- » Ensure country strategic plans and project designs focus on fostering self-reliance;
- » Build a robust practice to foster self-reliance; and
- » Hold ourselves and our partners to account.



To align budget and policy priorities, USAID will:

- » Strengthen connections among policy, budget, strategy, and performance functions within USAID; and
- » Work with stakeholders to encourage consensus on policy coherence and alignment between foreign assistance appropriations and the vision of the *Journey to Self-Reliance*.

LOOKING AHEAD

IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND LEARNING AS WE DO

This *Policy Framework* articulates USAID's overarching approach as the lead programmer of U.S. development and humanitarian assistance. USAID has begun translating its principles into practice, and will evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts. Learning is inherently iterative, and it can be challenging. But **we must be open to the evidence and adjust as needed**. Through collaboration and collective learning, we will achieve more sustainable results with greater impact. While our approach will evolve as we continue to learn, this document provides a framework around which we will build a better USAID.

**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

1300 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20523
WWW.USAID.GOV

APRIL 2019



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Cover page: USAID and the Global Shea Alliance help 16 million women from 21 African countries collect, harvest, and sell shea products around the world. By fostering links between these communities and the global market, USAID helps families engage in international trade and earn a reliable source of income — supporting them and their countries on the Journey to Self-Reliance.
Photo: Douglas Gritzmacher for USAID

