



Proposed USAID Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI)

By hosting the Democracy, Rights and Governance Initiative, a coalition involved in building democratic institutions abroad, InterAction has seen how USAID centers or hubs can work to consult with members of Congress, USAID, and other U.S. agencies to build good programs and policies which put American values into practice abroad. **As partners, implementers, and advocates for humanitarian and development assistance, InterAction members have seen first-hand the increasing demand from the field for improved coordination and integration of technical support and assistance on programs.** Since NGOs serve as key partners who evolve and continuously learn to do better work, USAID consulted the NGO community at InterAction for support, advice, and critiques in its transformation process. **USAID's intentional merging of numerous assistance sectors and cross-cutting lenses into a single bureau could help modernize its programming and lead to more consistent coordination with field missions but could also lead to thorny management challenges and unintended delays in programming.**

Proposed Bureau Overview:

The proposed Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI) is to be led by a Senate confirmed Assistant Administrator with a heavy emphasis on cross-sectoral programming to better align linked development efforts and improve technical support to the field. The new proposed bureau will incorporate existing offices or centers under one structure in an effort to improve accountability and create more informed and holistic programming. DDI will merge and restructure the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment (E3); the U.S. Global Development Lab (the Lab); the Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG); the Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (CFOI); the Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA); and some technical expertise from the Regional Bureaus.

In DDI, USAID proposes to create four Centers, to be the lead provider of technical support to the field, five Hubs, to provide agency wide support and services on cross-cutting priorities, and three support and administrative offices. The four centers are Economics and Market-Development; Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance; Environment, Energy, and Infrastructure; and Education. The five hubs are Innovation, Technology, and Research; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Youth and Inclusive Development; Private-Sector Engagement; and Local, Faith-based and Synergistic Partnerships. USAID's regional and topical bureaus and country missions will work with the Centers and Hubs to create more effective program design and to programmatically integrate learning, adaptive management, co-design with partners and beneficiaries, and innovative approaches to addressing development challenges.

Areas of Increased Effectiveness and Coordination:

- **Capitalizing on the experience of existing centers and offices.** USAID should incorporate best practices and replicate successful models of existing centers, like the Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Office, and their frameworks as it develops new centers and hubs, especially in sectors addressing vulnerable populations such as gender, youth, LGBTQ populations, indigenous populations, or people with disabilities.

Areas for Further Consultation or Continued Questions:

- **Can the DDI Bureau work to make development programming more effective and efficient?** The structural changes wrapped up in the DDI Bureau – and the intended process changes they represent – are part of a complex realignment of USAID’s sectoral expertise to improve the design and execution of development programming. This reform will result in the consolidation within one bureau of many different sectoral areas and cross-cutting priorities. That alone will prove a daunting management challenge, but notably, other very significant sectors and priorities (eg. health, food security, resilience and conflict prevention) will continue to exist apart from DDI, raising challenges for the model. The aim is to look at programs more holistically but how all the resulting intersectional issues are managed and adjudicated will matter tremendously. Another stated aim has been to remove some burdens from the field, but there is a risk that running many more decisions through a centralized DDI Bureau could have a less-desired effect – costly bottlenecks in the process of program planning.
- **Ensuring access and consistency.** USAID’s use of its current Centers varies between Bureaus and Missions as Centers act at the request of a mission. USAID should provide guidelines that ensure that the benefits offered by the new centers are fully utilized across missions and other bureaus.
- **Expand partnerships.** USAID should continue to practice and expand consultative processes with implementing partners and stakeholders throughout program cycles at both the Mission and Bureau levels. In addition to program development, NGOs with in-country presence can be useful partners in interpreting the self-reliance metrics and offering perspectives on what kinds of interventions are best-placed to help a country advance along the self-reliance pathway.
- **Intentionally integrate centers and sectors and establish clear intra-agency pathways.** USAID programming is often cross sectoral, and Centers help link activities. USAID should take steps to ensure that when such integration occurs that the proper centers are utilized, especially in scenarios where more than one center provides pivotal support to a single program. The formal linkages between Bureaus are unclear. To maximize collective efforts between offices and missions, USAID should formalize the connections between the policy and planning components of the of the various new bureaus, including DDI and its Centers, with the Bureau of Policy, Resources, and Performance.
- **Provision of education:** Decisions regarding the optimal modality for provision of education should be locally contextualized at the Mission level and aligned with national education sector plans, CDCS guidance, and the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education. USAID should not establish a broad policy that would prioritize strengthening non-state educational networks and institutions at the expense of supporting and strengthening public provision of education.
- **Maintain USAID’s gender equality framework.** Preserving the term “gender equality” in titles and mandates for all positions and policies in the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Hub ensures that gender- focused programming will continue to address broader power dynamics and differences in the rights, roles, resources and responsibilities of women and men, girls and boys. Any narrowing of the language would create policy incoherence, jeopardize aid effectiveness, conflict with existing legislation, and signal a retreat from international norms.