

NGO COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON USAID'S 2022-2030 DRAFT CLIMATE STRATEGY

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The draft of the U.S. Agency For International Development (USAID)'s Climate Strategy provides a comprehensive and conceptual strategic framework demonstrating the complexity of climate programming, setting high-level targets, and advancing equitable and ambitious actions to confront the climate crisis. The draft strategy seeks to align USAID's programs and investments with significant climate challenges while drawing on the unique strengths of USAID to immediately support global communities as they build climate resilience and adapt to anticipated climate shocks and stresses.

The InterAction community was encouraged by the "all hands on deck" holistic approach of the strategy and the potential for direct action and systems change that are incorporated in the intermediate results, embedded principles, and language changes. While the current draft of the strategy provides a solid overarching base for USAID's climate action, key questions remain about whether the shifts outlined will effectively target current climate challenges at a scale to make impact and whether the strategy will truly set the course for a new and sustainable way of working at USAID. We are particularly interested in how the USAID Climate Strategy will align, engage with, and be mainstreamed through other sectors and issue-specific policies and strategies.

Since the Biden-Harris Administration's transition period, InterAction has encouraged USAID to update its Climate Strategy. To support this effort, InterAction developed [transition recommendations](#) specific to the climate crisis and followed in April 2021 with [Strategy Considerations and Recommendations for USAID on Climate Adaptation and Integration](#). In June 2021, InterAction hosted five consultative events with USAID staff to better incorporate NGO best practices and programmatic learning from InterAction Members and partners around the globe. This initial feedback was submitted to USAID prior to the start of the drafting process.

InterAction developed the below response based on consultations with over 24 Member organizations actively implementing or advocating for development and/or humanitarian programming that incorporates climate change mitigation and adaptation practices. Feedback was gathered through the course of two consultative discussions that convened more than 100 people and direct feedback submissions from Members. Through the discussions and submissions, we identified key areas for improvement and strengthening of the current draft strategy, as well as key considerations as Agency efforts turn to implementation. We are actively looking forward to comprehensive and inclusive consultations on the implementation guidance of the strategy to discuss these areas further.



OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE CLIMATE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

ENSURE CLIMATE ACTION IS INCLUSIVE AND LOCALLY LED

Inclusive Climate Action ensures that traditionally excluded communities, which are at the highest risk of suffering the most from the effects of climate change and human-induced extreme weather events, are actively involved in decision and policy-making processes. Two of the Strategy's key principles are locally led development and equity and inclusion, which will be critical in this effort. Our community would like to see both principles reflected throughout the whole climate action process—from design to implementation to project evaluation. Considerations for local communities and traditionally excluded populations must be embedded throughout all phases of climate action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Strengthen equity and inclusion language to ensure that affected populations and frontline communities' needs and expertise are incorporated in designing, implementing, and evaluating climate solutions.
- Empower civil society to implement locally led and child-sensitive actions on climate change to ensure that the voices of children, youth, and young adults are heard, both directly and indirectly, through their parents, caregivers, and communities.
- Translate science-based scenarios and relevant climate information into practical terms to help women, children, farmers and fisherfolks, persons with disabilities, the elderly, Indigenous Peoples, and other vulnerable sectors to strategize climate adaptation measures. Directly engage in the oversight of programs.
- Mainstream marginalized groups—including persons with disabilities—throughout the strategy (not just in a handful of sections), and explicitly list them.
- Include language around ensuring that vulnerable groups (i.e., smallholder farmers, Indigenous Peoples, etc.) will be supported to tap into new and emerging opportunities (like carbon markets) which reward environmental stewardship.
- Incorporate mechanisms to achieve a just transition to eradicate poverty, inequality, and unemployment—including meaningful tripartite or social dialogue bodies—to ensure that the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) simultaneously address the climate crisis, promote rights, and share prosperity.
- Communicate the importance of pursuing nature-based solutions in an equitable way.

FURTHER STRENGTHEN MULTI-SECTORAL INTEGRATION IN STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMING

The strategy takes a comprehensive approach to climate integration in other sectors and areas of work. The focus on improved coordination across the development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding sectors is a critical area for improvement across U.S. Government (USG) foreign assistance programs and will be well-supported by effective climate integration. The infusion of climate adaptation programming in other sectors is a critical part of USAID climate action. For example, the strong focus on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), both in relation to food and water insecurity and the importance of WASH services in contributing to people's and communities' resilience to climate change, is also well incorporated.

However, multi-sectoral integration can be difficult to effectively execute and often complicates implementation and tracking of programmatic impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Integrate USAID's Climate Strategy with other USAID and USG strategies and policies (e.g., human rights protection and defense, gender equality, and women empowerment, etc.).
- Recognize adaptation as a priority in the climate action agenda of developing countries and increase learning and collaboration at headquarters and in missions on what effective climate adaptation programming looks like within different sectors.
- Emphasize in greater detail the impacts of climate change and the multiple benefits of climate adaptation and mitigation, including on water resources, human health, in fragile and crisis contexts, and within rapidly urbanizing areas.
- Increase investment in local, sustainable food production by organizing and building the capacity of smallholder farmers in the poorest and most climate-affected communities.
- Mobilize educational systems to help create a generation of climate-aware citizens.

ENHANCE PROTECTIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY THAT EMPHASIZE HUMAN RIGHTS IN CLIMATE ACTION

Rights at work, social dialogue, and social protection are fundamental elements of sustainable development and climate action. Therefore, they must be at the center of expanding responsible supply chains for renewable energy and green technologies. Enhanced focus on protection of and specific threats to civil society actors in the climate and environment space, and supporting human rights through climate action, are critical.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Strengthen safeguards for civil society actors active through ongoing climate movements, peaceful protest, and organizing, which are major drivers of climate action.

Ensure that current and new supply chains create decent work for all, especially for the most marginalized groups, to enhance respect for human rights.

LOOKING AHEAD TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLIMATE STRATEGY

INCORPORATE LOCALLY LED SOLUTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM THE START

As mentioned earlier, our community was encouraged to see so much of the strategy centered around locally led action. When looking ahead to the implementation phase of the strategy, we would like to see local communities integrated and prioritized in climate action from the beginning of the processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Enlist local communities to help develop sets of indicators and metrics that prioritize participatory impact monitoring and evaluation.
- Feature locally led development as a guiding principle of the Climate Strategy.
- Design procurement with a strong role for local organizations by including community-led monitoring into climate procurement processes.
- Address how USAID will implement localization, especially with regards to adaptation efforts.
- Ensure local organizations participate in all stages of the project cycle.

IDENTIFY HOW USAID WILL MOBILIZE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SUPPORT CLIMATE FINANCING THAT INVESTS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INCLUDES STRONG ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

The strategy emphasizes the need for USAID to partner and engages with the private sector to address climate change and its impacts. Our community agrees with and supports the ambition of mobilizing significant sums of climate finance, especially for climate change adaptation and resiliency efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Clearly define how USAID will mobilize private finance and ensure that private sector investments support real climate action that incorporates strong environmental and social safeguards.
- Provide a clear roadmap of how USAID will engage with the private sector to mobilize private finance and clearly identify how USAID will ensure a more equal distribution of climate financing for mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Strengthen climate financing principles by making clear the private sector engagement is to help people/communities, not just greening a value chain.
- Ensure financial and technical support for implementing partners to reduce their own carbon footprints, especially in procurement.
- Address how USAID will identify target countries for the prioritization of climate finance.

INCLUDE LOCAL PRIORITIES AND PERSPECTIVES IN CONSULTATIONS ON USAID'S CLIMATE STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMATIC IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recognize the importance of country-driven decision-making processes and align implementation programs, policies, and plans with local entities for long-term success and country ownership on climate action.
- Prioritize local staff at the USAID mission level to support country-specific USG climate initiatives to ensure integration of climate action across missions. Clearly define how and when there will be opportunities to drive the effort and ensure capacity for fulsome engagement.

- Explicitly recognize our national responsibility in the climate crisis within all related efforts going forward to keep policymakers honest about equitable climate change solutions.
- Ensure inclusive distribution of knowledge and innovation.
- Include Indigenous knowledge and expertise on natural resource management to promote Indigenous ownership of climate agendas, especially related to climate change adaptation.
- Acknowledge the extent to which consensus-building and cohesion approaches will be needed for some of the anticipated behavior, livelihood, and resource-use shifts to be successful.
- Provide financial support for operations to reduce the Agency's carbon footprint as many measures will involve additional costs, especially in procurement.


ENSURE MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL) EFFECTIVELY TRACKS THE IMPACT OF PROGRAMS

To effectively cater to the diversity of adaptation action and local leadership, MEL must include and prioritize Participatory Impact Monitoring and Evaluation so that objectives, indicators of success, and means of their assessment are set by local actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prioritize participatory impact monitoring and evaluation in MEL practices so that local actors set objectives, indicators of success, and the means of their assessment.
- Enlist local communities to help develop these sets of indicators and metrics by prioritizing Participatory Impact Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation strategies track the impacts of programs and the influence of related integrated sectors.
- Emphasize disaggregated data, including by gender, age, and disability status in monitoring climate actions.
- Support research that reflects accountability to climate-impacted communities and locally led adaptation principles. Include high-level targets, for measurement, tracking, and accountability. These will help to make the strategy data-driven and ambitious.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON NGO RECOMMENDATIONS, SEE THE [DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS ANNEX FOR THE USAID CLIMATE STRATEGY](#).



INTERACTION is the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs and partners. We mobilize our Members to think and act collectively to serve the world's poor and vulnerable, with a shared belief that we can make the world a more peaceful, just and prosperous place—together.

INTERACTION'S CLIMATE ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP generates a greater understanding of how climate change impacts development and humanitarian goals and urges the U.S. government, the U.S. Congress, United Nations, and international financial institutions to take aggressive steps to mitigate climate change and support vulnerable communities to adapt to its effects. The Climate Advocacy Working Group will continue to track and engage USAID's Climate Strategy and implementation.

