



**Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA)
Public Meeting Notes
Wednesday, May 24, 2023
10:30am - 12:00pm ET
Polaris Room, Ronald Reagan Building
And virtual livestream via Zoom (video recording provided online on
USAID website)**

US Agency for International Development (USAID)
1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC

Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid

May 24, 2023

Virtual via Zoom, and

Polaris Room

Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Meeting Agenda:

10:30am: Opening remarks from Jodi Herman, Assistant Administrator for Legislative and Public Affairs

10:35am: Conversation between USAID Administrator Samantha Power and ACVFA Chair Paul Weisenfeld (Executive Vice President at RTI International)

11:00am: Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A: Global Democratic Strengthening and Anti-Corruption

- Moderator: **Shannon Green**, Senior Advisor to the Administrator and Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Task Force
- ACVFA member panelists:
 - **Sanjay Pradhan**, CEO, Open Government Partnership (OGP)
 - **Derek Mitchell**, President, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
 - **Eka Tkeshelashvili**, Director, Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions (SACCI) in Ukraine

11:30am: Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A: Inclusive and Locally-Led Development

- Moderator: **Liz Schraye**r, President & CEO, USGLC
- ACVFA member panelists:
 - **Hibak Kalfan**, Executive Director, NEAR Network
 - **Johan Swinnen**, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
 - **Katherine Marshall**, Professor of the Practice of Development, Conflict, and Religion in the Walsh School of Foreign Service

12:00pm: ACVFA Paul Weisenfeld closing remarks.

12:05pm: Public Meeting Adjourns

Transcript of ACVFA Public Meeting May 24, 2023

[Assistant Administrator Jodi Herman]

So, I'm gonna make an effort to try to keep us on schedule this morning. I'm Jodi Herman, the Assistant Administrator for Legislative and Public Affairs here at USAID. Welcome, so glad to be here today for ACVFA's spring 2023 public meeting. The last time we gathered was in December for the committee's relaunch, and since that time the committee has been actively engaged with AID on challenges from food security and climate change to democratic backsliding and localization, while also discussing how we collaborate in a multi-stakeholder coalition to tackle these issues. So, thank you for being here today in person and virtually; you represent a diverse cross-section of development partners from NGOs, civil society, private sector, academia, as well as foreign service officers.

I want to give an especially warm welcome to USAID's newest cohort of Payne Fellows who are joining us today. This is a highly competitive fellowship program named for former Congressman Don Payne, from New Jersey, and it provides an educational and career pathway into the USAID foreign service for persons from historically underrepresented groups in the foreign service. We are so excited for you to be here today, you are the future of the work that we are doing. We also look forward to hearing from everybody here- your feedback and your questions during the course of today's conversations. We'll have opportunities to talk about democracy and anti-corruption as well as inclusive and locally-led development.

But before we start, I want to, I need to, formally introduce Paul Weisenfeld as the new chair of ACVFA. Nisha Biswal, the former chair, was extraordinary in helping us to get the committee up and running, and you may be aware that she was recently nominated as the Deputy CEO of the Development Finance Corporation, sister development organization in the development community alongside USAID. She has stepped down from the committee as she pursues that opportunity. We are thrilled, Paul, to have you here with us and honored to have you here with us to lead ACVFA into its next chapter. Paul has had a really remarkable career in public service and specifically in international development. A long time Foreign Service Officer, who goes to the highest rank of Career Minister at USAID, and ultimately received the Administrator's Distinguished Career Service award, our highest report in the agency. During his time at AID, he served as Mission Director in Zimbabwe, in Peru, and was handpicked by the former Administrator, Rajiv Shaw, to lead the Haiti task team, which coordinated relief and reconstruction after the 2010 earthquake. He was then tasked with building and leading the Agency's Bureau for Food Security, which also houses Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative.

He now serves as Executive Vice President for International Development at RTI International, where he leads the organization's development programs across the world. His wisdom and expertise are immense, really immense assets to us, to the international development community, to ACVFA. Thank you for volunteering your time - I know It's not nothing in the scope of all the other work that you're doing, so we truly appreciate it. We look forward to working with you, and with ACVFA, to continue to support AID's work with you and with our partners.

And with that, I'm pleased to welcome USAID Administrator Samantha Power, my boss, and ACVFA Chair Paul Weisenfeld, to the stage to start us off in a fireside chat minus the fireside.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Hello, everybody! Nice to see you all, looking forward to hanging with the Payne Fellows later in the day, so we'll have real time together. I'm thrilled to be here and I'm immensely grateful to the committee members, who bring so much from what we call the real world to our discussions here, and our efforts to make USAID more fit for purpose, and I'm grateful that there's so much interest in ACVFA and in these discussions, as reflected by all of you here, and all the people who are watching online. Paul has been gracious enough to not only agree to be a committee member, but now to step into the role of chair. He brings, as Jodi indicated, a tremendous insight into USAID, having been a mission director out in the field, but also now working at one of USAID's many great partners.

You know, I know, Paul, that you have been co-chairing the inclusive development working group, which has had, I think some really important discussions so far, particularly on an issue that I know is a great interest, which is how we shift more of our resources to local partners, to smaller organizations, to community-based organizations, faith leaders, and the like, and not only sort of continue on the same path.

We also know all of the challenges - which maybe we'll get into in the discussion period - associated with some smaller local organizations being able to keep up with the compliance requirements to work with USAID, because, of course, we have to be, and want to be, very faithful stewards of the resources that we are given to try to make the world better. So we're really grateful. We know you've also been active on DEIA, and our efforts to make USAID an agency that looks like America, but that also thinks about inclusion and equity across programming choices that we make.

Nisha was an amazing chair of our board, she was an amazing USAID stalwart when she worked here, and we couldn't be more excited at the prospect - Senate willing - of her going to the Development Finance Corporation, because we think the USAID-DFC partnership is one that is going to allow development to secure outsized impact even beyond where we are today. And so, I just want everyone to know how much we are looking forward to working with Paul.

Before I turn to Paul for the first question in this non-fireside fireside chat, I also want to introduce a new committee member from when we last gathered here, and that is Nikki Clifton, who is President of the UPS Foundation and has made UPS a global leader in harnessing UPS's logistic chain to help get Covid vaccines to some of the most remote parts of the world. She's been a personal champion and leader of anti-trafficking efforts. She brings an enormous amount to the committee, and we are thrilled to have her.

So Paul, you've looked at USAID from both sides now, and really interested in how you see the agency, you know, what you think the committee's role can be in enhancing our already, I think, significant impact in the world, and why this is worth your time, or why have you taken on this role, and what do you think we can do together in these coming months and years.

[Paul Weisenfeld, ACVFA Chair:]

Well, I like the reference to Joni Mitchell to start with.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Always.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

Thanks for that. I love that song. But to start with, thank you so much. It's a tremendous honor to lead a group of such distinguished people. It's humbling to step in the shoes of Nisha, who's been a friend of mine for a long time and brought great wisdom to the role, and it's a privilege to provide advice to the agency. I think a lot of people in the field aren't familiar with ACVFA, so two words on what ACVFA is - the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Assistance. It has a proud history: ACVFA was the group in the late forties, early fifties that came together to think about how USAID could be more coordinated, and actually recommended to the President the creation of the USAID. So ACVFA kind of has that history of being at the founding of the agency, and today it brings together a diverse set of voices from academia and implementing partners in the private sector and advocacy groups to provide advice to the Administrator, to agency leadership to the agency, about how to confront the challenges of today. So it's a real honor to do that. I'll try to remember what my siblings always tell me that I'm just a kid from Brooklyn, and keep that in mind, I think, where you come from - [cheers from crowd]. So, it's nice to see Brooklyn in the house.

As I think about the role of ACVFA in the complex challenges of today, I'm really guided by - I also serve our US Global Leadership Coalition with Liz Schroyer, who I believe is in the room - and that group is really guided by, I think, what guides ACVFA. We have tremendous challenges in the world today, and the United States has a critical role to play, U.S. global engagement is important and the development voice is important. So I see our advice to USAID is: how do we make sure that the agency remains the preeminent development agency solving the challenges of today. And within the US Government's larger engagement in the world, how do we make sure that USAID is an indispensable voice in the larger foreign policy apparatus as the government grapples with things, making sure that development has a voice at the table.

As I was reflecting on the challenges, I want to tell a kind of personal story, if I could take a moment. Two quick stories that really defined my thinking about development: I started in development when I was in law school. I got a human rights fellowship to go to South Africa, and I went to South Africa in the mid-eighties, and I traveled around the country working for a law firm, taking testimony of people who were victims of apartheid. And then, ten years later, I got assigned to South Africa as my first overseas post when Mandela was President, and I could never have envisioned in the eighties in South Africa to go through that transformation, and it was eye opening to me that enormous transformation is possible, and we can live through it. And I saw that people who were completely reluctant in the eighties to have a conversation about it, were now living in a society that decided we're going in this direction of building a multi-democracy, and I thought there are moments in time when people kind of realize we need to change, and you have to seize those moments and move forward, and in many ways in the post-pandemic world, I think we're in that kind moment now and it's a vital time for USAID to play that role in riding the waves, seizing the reins, and guiding transformational change.

The other quick story: so when I was in South Africa in the eighties, I got to travel to Zimbabwe. This is kind of a reverse story, because back then, Zimbabwe was doing great. I mean, I saw great results of investments in public health and education that had real improvement on people's lives. And then I was assigned as Mission Director in Zimbabwe, in 2002, and the world was upside down. South Africa was a multi-racial democracy, and Zimbabwe was going the other way. And the lesson I drew from that was these games that take decades of hard work are very fragile, they can be erased quickly with a few bad decisions, and all of us working in this field are really stewards of guarding those games, and we're seeing an erosion of games now with the pandemic. So, I mean those stories are really what kind of defined my thinking about development. I think we provide advice to the agency, I think, remember, seize the moment, but be very careful and understand how fragile games are.

So I'd lay out three things that I think are critical challenges for us as ACVFA. First is given the complexity of the world - and the Administrator and I were talking about this before - we need to provide advice that helps the agency be agile, helps the agency navigate the change in the complex world. We've got emerging technologies and climate change, growing voices of the global South, and I think localization is a really important initiative to deal with that. The second aspect - and Derek and I were talking about this earlier - is helping the agency tell the story in a compelling way. It's ever more complex in today's world with information overload - how do you break through with disinformation, how do you counteract that - but it's because of that it's even more vital to tell the story in a compelling way. I know the agency has restrictions domestically, but they have stakeholders here on the Hill, and the interagency - how do they make sure that everyone understands the indispensable voice of development in USAID.

And the third thing I'd highlight is, we need to provide advice for the agency to be ambitious, to seize the reins and make transformational change, not depend on just programming resources, but always seeking meetings with the highest level, always leveraging our diplomatic heft and leveraging the private sector capabilities and drive for change - progress beyond programs, I think, as you've been saying Administrator is really vital. So you know, the agency has a proud history of achievements to stand on, and I think it's a great platform to continue to drive for transformational change.

The last note I'll say, another little personal story: when I was leading the Bureau for Food Security, this was towards the end of the food crisis, the food security crisis - it started in 2008 and went several years. I was speaking in a public event, and someone said to me, "How do you sound so hopeful? Things are kind of dire," and I thought, I mean, we're in the business of delivering hope. That's what we do for a living, I mean, we can't give into pessimism. We need to drive for change and hope is what we sell. You know we don't sell iphones or ford motorcars, we sell hope. So, I'll leave it there. I am sorry for the long answer.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

I'm reminded of the great line that I probably use too much, which is from Amos Tversky, the great Israeli thinker, "Why be a pessimist? You just suffer twice." As a Celtics fan, that is particularly relevant these days, although less so this morning - still alive, still alive. Okay, well, I think you have a question for me.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

And now I get to ask you questions. Turnabout is fair play. So, USAID recently launched its new policy framework, which is the Agency's highest level policy document. And you're leading an ambitious reform agenda for the agency and international development. Could you please share with us what you see as the top takeaways from this framework, and how ACVFA and all our partners here today, can play a role in moving that agenda forward?

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Great. Well, first let me just encourage everyone to actually read the policy framework, and I say that because there are a lot of government documents, there's a lot of visions for this, and you know strategies for that. I think this is a really crisp rendition of what we are trying to do right now. It is not an evergreen document. It is really meant to meet this moment, both the moment out in the world with some of the most harrowing, really interlocking challenges now taking root, the moment out in the

world with geopolitical competition, a backdrop to the work that we are doing as a development agency. The moment out in the world with the impacts of climate change already being felt like never before, but also knowing that that's only likely to get worse, you know, in the coming days. So these are the sort of negative aspects, but the moment out in the world, as well, where the hunger for the work that this agency does is at center stage.

You know, there's a reason that President Biden took USAID and put it on the National Security Council, and the way that he did, because it's not possible to have a conversation about central foreign policy challenges, issues that are so in our national interests, uh that are unfolding abroad without having USAID's perspective on what we can do about it, and how we solve the world's toughest problems. So I think the policy framework meets this moment, and then describes the toolkit we have and how we modernize it here at USAID, and make it more fit for purpose, but also how we think beyond the traditional set of tools that we have employed over these years.

So, three parts confront the greatest challenges of our time, embrace new partnerships, which I'll come back to in just a second, and then invest in USAID's enduring effectiveness, invest in the agency itself, and it's no secret that people here are tired. They've come through the pandemic like so much of our society. The amount of resources actually, that have been allocated to USAID because of the importance of the work we're doing in the world have gone [hand motion pointing up] and our staff has done [hand motion indicating a flat line], and that just means again that we really need to look into, you know, all the ways in which we can reduce, for example, paperwork burdens and administrative burdens on our teams, give them more training opportunities, growth opportunities, bring in new staff reinforcements so people aren't so overstretched. So that is foundational, the investments within USAID itself, and doing so with an eye not only again to this moment, but to this future that we are grappling with these interlocking challenges, but also the opportunities, for example, to be partnering with DFC, with multilateral development banks, with the private sector.

What does a workforce that is fit for that set of outward-facing engagements in the interest of our same development objectives, how does the workforce need to evolve with that agenda in mind. And so that's the part - maybe I just say a little bit more about, which is the partnership agenda, because our 2024 budget request now is 32 billion dollars and probably our FY23 spend will be about 30 billion dollars. That's a lot of money. And yet, if you're in any of the meetings that we're in with ACVFA, or that we're in internally, what we feel more than anything is, you know, we're so short of resources to do what we need to be doing in the world - whether that's fighting disinformation, so as to tell the story of what America's doing, whether it's providing drought resistant seeds to farmers who need to take advantage of new innovations because the old seeds are not fit for the new climate, whether that's strengthening the Ukrainian tech sector as missiles are falling on the incredible new generation of it professionals. I mean this work is so very important, and we need to be doing more of it. You know the PRC is out there doing its thing using more loans than grants, they're about nine-to-one loan-to-grant. We're about nine-to-one grant- to-loan, so it's a very different model, and our model is aimed at ensuring independence, ultimately, and the national dignity as well as the individual dignity of the countries in which we work.

But partnership is going to be the way of closing that gap, of defining the problem set in the ways that we are right now, but being able to crowd in resources from elsewhere, so as to leverage what we can bring to bear to actually meet development needs, and just to concretize that before I'm sure we are going to open it up. We just yesterday - some of you might have had the chance to see the launch that we did here in Washington of Diia, which is this amazing app that Ukraine began developing in 2019. 80

percent of the development was funded by USAID and UKAID with some private sector support as well, Visa and Google, very much a part of that effort. And you now have an app in the country of Ukraine, that is being pulverized by Putin's forces, that can provide more than 120 services - everything from having your passport online to an even a non-governmental service like opening a bank account to now being repurposed for war, where, if your apartment building is hit, take a photo of the damage and get a cost estimate back through the app. When Zelensky has a new proposal that he wants to put forward, he might do so in the Parliament, but at the same time posted on Diia and basically crowdsource views on how a new piece of legislation might be amended or not. The whole idea of Diia is that government has to be transparent - everything is there online, so you can see payments now to IVPs moving through Diia. And so it's an incredibly important anti-corruption tool in a country that has, over the years, major corruption challenges, but it is also because it's done by the government, it's government delivering for the people. This is the vehicle by which teachers are paid, and firefighters are paid, and it's actually the vehicle when the television towers go down where Ukrainians can still watch Ukrainian TV, they can watch it on the app. It is so multi-functional that Estonia, which is legendary for its e-governance, light years ahead of most of human civilization, actually in January of this year, went to Ukraine and basically procured from Ukraine, or was donated to Estonia by Ukraine, the open source code to Diia. Estonia, looking to Ukraine, a country at war, for the source code, and Ukraine, being willing to now give this source code away as a global public - it's incredibly exciting.

So, I give that as one example of progress beyond programs, and now it's a program that helped give rise to Diia. But now the ability to go to the private sector to go to Silicon Valley, take that app, and with much lower cost investments elsewhere potentially bring this menu of digital services to other countries. That's just a wonderful thing for USAID to be doing. The second example, I would give, you've maybe heard us talk about before, which is m-mama, which is recognizing in the country of Tanzania, about a decade ago, that maternal mortality rates were catastrophic, but digging into empirically, why was it, was it lack of health care when they got to the hospital? Was it insufficient knowledge or education for pregnant mothers? What was it? Well, it turns out a major factor was that women were having a hard time getting to the hospital, or getting to a clinic, or getting to care when they were delivering their children, and so USAID partnered with Vodafone, the Vodafone foundation, to create a dispatch system whereby, in a sense, pregnant mothers, while getting care, would be informed. This is the number that you call and when you call this number, even if an ambulance is not available, we will make sure that a taxi, or in some cases a boat, is actually going to be made available to you to transport you to the local clinic. So you're seeing maternal mortality rates plummeted in the two provinces that we piloted this. Without Vodafone we'd be nowhere. They invested the resources, but also the tech know how, in order to build a dispatch system of this nature, where drivers are just volunteering and getting paid, you know, for the services they provide when it's needed.

The President of Tanzania is now scaling this to all of Tanzania, and we are thrilled potentially soon to be able to launch something very similar in Kenya with the Vodafone foundation, with a number of other foundations, and private sector actors. So again, that's if you start with the problem, which is pregnant mothers are dying or suffering, you know severe health jeopardy as they give birth, and then say, "well dang, you know we don't actually have an appropriation for maternal health programming that is sufficient to really address this problem wholesale, but we have a little bit of resources. I wonder who we could go to with our modest infusion of resources and help us solve this problem." And that's what I think and m-mama, a kind of uber for pregnant mothers, represents, and it's something, frankly, that will end up maybe even in the long term, being more cost-effective in a world of scarce resources than building out full ambulance flights, because coverage for m-mama over many, many provinces is costing less than bringing a single ambulance online if you can believe it. So this isn't just stop gap, this is like

potentially actually doing what we would, what is happening in so many parts of the world, which is technology leapfrogging other stages of development that as long as you have the health infrastructure in place you can employ.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

That's a wonderful story. So I know we have time for at least one question. Hopefully we could squeeze in two. The first question I know is coming from one of our Payne Fellows - so thanks for being here - from Xavier Ibrahim, and we have microphones passed along.

[Xavier Ibrahim]

Thank you very much, Administrator Power and Chair Weisenfeld. My name is Xavier Ibrahim. Originally from the Bronx, New York, and Connecticut, and now P.G. County. I graduated from American University last week, and also I'll be attending Columbia University in the fall. I'll be pursuing the executive officer backstop. I'm extremely honored and excited to represent this 2023 Payne Fellowship cohort and ask both of you a question. And my question is, how is USAID ensuring that assistance programs, private sector engagement, sustainable development initiatives and practices centers the communities at need and what mechanisms are put in place to maintain transparency, respect and collaboration with community engagement.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Thank you. I'll maybe take a quick crack, but I know we want to have time for questions. I want to leave Paul time to respond as well since he's thought about this for a long period of time. Very quickly, I think we start with targets, that's one aspect of it. That's certainly what's gotten the most attention is a desire to have 25% of U.S. foreign assistance flowing directly to local organizations by 2025. But the other target, which gets less attention, I think more captures the spirit of your question, and that is a target that would have us basically co-creating, co-evaluating, co-developing everything we do in 50% of everything we do in the countries in which we work by 2030. Now that one is harder to measure, but we are going to be coming out very soon with kind of good practices as to what this sort of spirit of local partnership really can look like, because I think people are hungering for that guidance.

On the actual flow of direct assistance, we've gone from seven to ten percent of our assistance flowing directly to local partners. For those who are new to this question and this conundrum, you might say "Gosh! ten percent seems like very little," well, compared to seven percent it's a material increase. But our challenge has been that it's actually kind of hard to comply with a lot of the requirements USAID imposes on our partners, because we, of course, then have compliance requirements upon Capitol Hill, or with our Inspector General, and just to the good stewards of the resources that we are given. So we are trying to find ways to streamline processes to translate, you know, our request for proposals into more local languages, to seek out partners rather than be in a kind of passive posture that much larger organizations will more readily be able to, you know, kind of leap in to see a funding proposal. It's how we hire, too, is going to affect who in the communities we even know, and what they know about us. So bringing a DEIA perspective as well to our staffing in the countries in which we work, making sure that our teams, just as here we want our agency to look like America, if we're working in Kenya, we want it to look like Kenya. You know, we want people who come not just from universities in the majors, in the capital, or in the major cities, but also to come from a country, from Turkana, and from, you know, parts of the country where they would bring that perspective to the agency and to how we prioritize, but also into who we work with. So those are just a few examples.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

Well, I think the Administrator covered the waterfront. I'll just highlight some of what she said, that I think, in addition to targets, standardizing processes, standardize what co-creation is, and make sure that as we do it, as AID does it, as implementing partners do it, we're following a do-no-harm approach. I think your comments about Turkana, because communities have their own inequities within them, and there are - you mentioned the elites, they're elites in the capital city who are more capable to comply with AID regulations, and we want to make sure that we're not just empowering one group over another. So are we really understanding the community dynamics and making sure that we're bringing in, in a fair way marginalized populations.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Great, do we have time for one more?

[Paul Wisenfeld]

I think so. You're asking me, but I'm being told by the timekeepers.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

Anybody else have a question?

[Paul Wisenfeld]

Please raise your hands. I see one back there.

[Connor Steele McCutcheon]

Thank you so much. My name is Connor Steele McCutcheon and I'm with Self Help Africa. Thank you both. It's been a real pleasure to listen to you today. You know, a common sentiment in the INGO space is that instead of capacity building local partners through localization policy, we need to be capacity building USAID to reach these local partners with the funds that need to be dispersed. What, if any, are the pathways that you see for INGOs to be advocates and allies for local partners in that process and pivot away from some of the service delivery niche that we've been in in previous years. Thanks.

[USAID Administrator Samantha Power]

I guess maybe a couple of associations. First, I think that the pooled funding in humanitarian space, which is one of the hardest nuts to crack, I think, in terms of empowering local partners. We are working more and more on the Türkiye and Syria earthquake, have been doing in Ukraine, and now we're looking to do so in Sudan as quickly as we can given the needs there, to work through pooled funds, which, where in the UN, in turn goes and finds those local partners, I think that's a mad method. But we're also actually looking in advance of full-on crises to do the due diligence with local partners so that they are in a position to receive funds. That process of due diligence to get into the SAM network takes a long time and a lot of back and forth, and so, you know, when the earthquake hits it's not the best time to be doing that, and by the time that happens sometimes the immediate disaster phase has passed. So doing that more proactively, et cetera.

I think your question is kind of getting more at, or at least the first part of it was more about USAID and are we fit for purpose, as well, to work with these organizations, so that we are helping put them in a position to be able to apply. I think the staffing increases that we have requested and advocated fiercely for on the Hill, and secured by and large, are part of the answer there, but more flexibility as well

in the way money is appropriated where we have the ability to use program funds to help support the staff that are themselves working with the local organization to put the local organization not only in a position to apply for any particular grant, but, as you say, to have the capacity and the compliance muscle that would enable them to, you know, be a player and a competitor across the board.

With regard to INGOs, I think just to not see it as zero sum. I think that's really the most human reaction to a localization agenda as well. What about us? But to view this as part of this shared objective that we all have, which is development that is not only impactful, but that can be sustained after our programs end. And so that's easier said than done. But I do think, you know, our 25% target is a little bit imperfect because it is of course measuring direct assistance to local organizations, and what we hear back a lot is we're using more and more subs that are local. And in using those subs that are local, we're building out that capacity, we're doing the thing that this whole localization push is about securing in the long term, and so I do think the 50% target is going to be a better proxy, I hope, for the work that INGOs can be doing in the here and now, not to work themselves out of jobs, but to actually be part of much greater empowerment of local actors, and that means not only subcontracting, it means empowering those who are closest to the communities, back to Xavier's question, you know, really shifting the power where the ideas and the evaluation and the feedback, and the iteration is actually coming from as close to the community as possible.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

So the only thing I'd add is, I think it's a challenge to international NGOs to think about what is the added value that we provide. Power should be at the local level. What is our value? What are we providing, is it a cross-pollination of ideas? Is it specific scientific expertise in an area that's not available locally? And I think that kind of really understanding our value and where we fit is important. But I feel I'm being given the hook.

And I have the pleasure to introduce two - we're going to have two panels. I'll introduce the first one, and the second panel is going to get more into the details of this conversation about inclusive development. So our first panel is on democratic strengthening, and we have several ACVFA members who will be panelists, it will be chaired by a USAID colleague. So Sanjay Pradhan, the CEO of the Open Government Partnerships, Derek Mitchell, President of the National Democratic Institute, and Eka Tkeshelashvili, Director of Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions in Ukraine, and our moderator from USAID is Shannon Green, the Senior Adviser to the Administrator and Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Task Force. So please welcome our panel.

[Shannon Green]

Okay, great. Thank you, Paul, for introducing this panel. We often hear about democracy being in decline, which, of course in many ways it is, however, for today's panel we collectively decided that we want to take a glass half full perspective to democracy. While there is certainly continued cause for grave concern about the state of democracy worldwide, there are also emerging signs that democratic backsliding is slowing, and that we could be reaching a turning point. In its most recent freedom in the world report, Freedom House noted that the gap between the number of countries registering overall declines nearly matched those registering overall improvements, so that gap between those getting worse and those getting better, was the narrowest it's been since the 17-year Democratic backsliding trend began. This sense of optimism is also animating USAID's approach to democracy and anti-corruption. While of course we are not ignoring the hard cases, through initiatives such as democracy delivers, we are making sure that we and our partners are showing up with the right kinds of assistance at the right time to help the

democratic reformers consolidate the gains that they're making. So really continuing this trend of optimism and hope that we've been discussing this morning.

So, Derek, I'm going to turn to you first, and the rest of the panel, we're really going to try to be action oriented and solution focused, and we really do have a wonderful group of people to do that with us. Derek, turning to you first, when you look at the evidence these days, what gives you hope that democracy still retains that vitality, or that autocracy is fragile, and in that context, what do you think are the most important things that we need to be focused on to tip the scales in favor of democracy.

[Derek Mitchell]

Well, Shannon, thank you very much. Thank you, Administrative Power and Paul, and our Payne fellows here, and everybody online and in person. It's great to see you all. Look, there is no doubt that autocrats are on the march. I mean, we see it in the headlines, we see what they're doing. They're aggressively pursuing their interests, and they are on the march, and we see in our headlines. But I do bristle at that notion that democracy is in decline. To me, democracy is under attack, and there's a lot at stake in democracy success. I mean what is at stake - well, just human dignity, I mean individual human dignity, the ability for people to have a voice, and we look around the world, and there is a lot of energy out there as autocrats take the fight to democracies.

Number one, you all know what's happening in Ukraine. People are fighting not just for their sovereign independence, they're fighting tooth and nail every day with everything they've got for their democracy, their dignity. I was Ambassador in Myanmar in Burma, and I consider that the forgotten conflict people there. I did like a domestic version of Ukraine, but it was a domestic military that decided to destroy the democracy that was nascent, that I saw being built, that people were energized for. But people are fighting with everything they've got, everything every day to defend their gains over the past ten years. They gain a measure of freedom, a measure of democracy, and they are fighting with everything they got. Thailand, they just had an election, there was a junta there. The junta had rigged the political system, people came out in droves, and there's a landslide saying, "We don't want this." Look at Belarus. Even Sudan, look at the women of Sudan, go around - Nicaragua, Cuba, even China. Last December, when given a chance, they had a moment where they were frustrated, and they had a white paper movement, and they said, "We don't like the way things are here." Of course the people of Hong Kong had struggled for that.

We see democratic energy everywhere. Now, where is the most of this energy coming from? Where is the hope in this? A lot of it is young people and a lot of it is women. I mean, not to say guys don't have a play in this, but a lot of the attack is guys with guns, and you know whether they're attacking across borders or they're attacking within countries, but the energy in Sudan, the energy in Burma, the energy in Thailand, it's young people and women, or energy in Hong Kong Energy and China, It's young people and women everywhere. So this is where we need to be putting extra effort. We need to recognize that the autocrats are using the online space to try to poison the well. The information space is absolutely critical. We've got to get out in front of that, but I think the biggest thing I'll and I'll leave it at this - we can talk for hours - is that we can't, first of all, we can't be complacent. History is never over. Those who want to control will always find a way to try to take it to those who want their freedom, who want their rights, who want their dignity, so we can never ever be complacent, but we also have to just say, "don't get too down."

I think what the autocrats want is for us to be discouraged to say history is on their side, and just sort of nash our hands. Optimism, yes, but you know the line of the best way to predict the future is to create it, and we're out there. That's what we're doing. We're shaping USAID, all of us working on this every day, we are shaping, so that we have a voice in our futures, and we are tied in a single garment of destiny. As Dr. King said, what happens abroad affects us here, what happens here affects abroad, and we have to be engaged in that fight together because that attack will never end.

And I'm very optimistic. As I say, the energy is out there. This is going to be a hard fight, or in the fight every generation has it. I think we haven't had to fight it the way we have today, but I am very optimistic. There is much more energy. The final thing is, autocrats do not deliver, ultimately. In a snapshot, they look like they may deliver, but over time every study suggests that democracies truly deliver, and autocrats falter. People don't want what they are peddling, and that also gives me optimism.

[Shannon Green]

Thank you, Derek. Always have Derek on a panel, that's my takeaway. So Eka, Derek talked about the inspiration that Ukraine has really provided to us into the world. At the same time that we're seeing the shining example of the fight for democracy and sovereignty and freedom, there are persistent concerns about corruption. So I wanted to ask you, how do you view that fight against corruption against this broader existential war in general, and what are the things that we need to be focused on - the critical reforms, the institutions, the actors - to make sure that the democracy that is preserved is worth the fight.

[Eka Tkeshelashvili]

Thank you, Shannon. Just to echo a little bit, maybe on the energy of the democracy and itself, Ukraine has been building democracy, and it has been in the process of transformation from 2014. We need to remember that Ukraine is waging the war for its own future in democracy, not just from last year but from 2014, and it's not for nothing that the revolution that opened the pathway for Ukraine's transformation was called the Revolution of Dignity, and at that time there were no Russian tanks rolling around most of the territory of Ukraine, or there were no bombs shelled at the Ukrainian capital, but people came out to the streets, people have been killed for the idea and for the future of democracy.

And then it has been going on for as many years that it has been going on up until now, when the total full-scale Russian invasion is ongoing in the country, and I have to say I've been living in Ukraine myself in 2017, I went myself through a number of revolutions in my own country, have never been exhausted myself fighting for democracy, but I have to say that the inspiration that comes from the Ukrainian people being granted to fight for that particular future, not just the future for existence, but for values and principles that [inaudible] understanding, underpinnings of who they are, and that is truly inspirational. There's no sense of exhaustion, there is no sense of abandoning that future.

And to think of that from the perspective of what has been achieved after the revolution, because we take it now as a sign of courage and resolve and resilience that it is when we speak about the war now in Ukraine. But Ukraine was ready, if one can ever be ready for that kind of the war, only because of the results that they have been able to secure through those years of transformation. And then all of us and USAID, has been at the front line of helping Ukraine right from the start of aftermath of the revolution, to help them, to lay down the foundation, to build the institutions to fight corruption, and we all would have wished for more to have been accomplished, and Ukrainians primarily as fast as possible, but the result of Ukraine being able to survive and to be successful in fighting back, what used to be the number

two, or the second most powerful army in the world, is the testament that democracy delivers. The transformation is something not to inspire only about, but then to deliver if you make it right.

So, coming back to the anti-corruption field. In that case, in Ukraine there is a very clear understanding that it's part of security for the country as much as it is part of how economy could thrive. In other words, when Ukrainians are now waging the war, there is a whole spectrum of civil servants, civil society organizations, international assistance that is coming to Ukraine that is already laying foundation for future reconstruction, rebuilding, and transformation of Ukraine.

But we started to work on that through the angle of ensuring integrity, transparency, and accountability of that process, somewhere at USAID. How can you talk about reconstruction and rebuilding of a country that is waging the war with Russia, being a victim of Russian aggression. But Ukrainians were the driving force to push all of us to be mobilized and consolidated and delivering in that direction, because they do understand that, not that they only already now are engaged in fast recovery processes, but then they need to be ready for that next chapter leapfrogging of their development. And it's not going to be just physical reconstruction of Ukraine, getting all of the refugees and IDPs to their homes, and then have for them the chance of rebuilding their lives, but for Ukraine to emerge even better than it ever was when it comes to what Ukraine can be, including an anti-corruption field in this case.

So when we work on that, we are anchored, obviously by the accession process within the EU, because what Ukraine has clearly in mind is that Ukraine belongs in Europe, in the European Union, so that everything that they are doing now in terms of reforms, they already have that anchoring pathway in front of them to see what they can do now to ensure the accession process is successful. And I guess in that sense we're really fortunate that from the political point of view, EU opened up the door. So the candidate status is there. There is a firm commitment from the EU side to make its promise valid when it comes to Ukraine's membership and that makes our work not easy, I would say, when it comes to what you can do in terms of the reforms, but it's very tangible when it comes to how you need to fight the direction of the reforms in this case.

First, and then I know that we are mindful of the time, but what we had to do right after the war started was to achieve functionality of the state primarily at the time, functionality of the local organization, so that they could be resilient, so that a lot of pivoting has happened in that direction. Anti-corruption organizations became either physically fighters in the front line, or they became part of the overall resistance, and then slowly, they had a chance to come back. So now we see under corruption framework all of the specialized organizations doing their job, revealing still all the corruption related cases that need to be revealed, ensuring that accountability is still not only demanded by the people, but will be delivered in Ukraine itself.

But more than that, what is the next chapter I would say when it comes to the anti-corruption field is de-oligarchization, as we call it. Oligarchs have been heavily hit by the war. It's a result by products of, to say, the war in Ukraine. But what we need to ensure is that they never come back, but the new ones are not emerging. So that's the guiding principle when we're thinking about and the trust reforms in this case, accountability system in terms of finance, including from from the state point of view, and then creating a level playing field for the private businesses as well to come in Ukraine, so that they can invest and then be part of the next chapter of Ukraine's development, continuation of reforms in rule of law and in the governance sector, and then in the centralization of Ukraine, as it used to be.

Now, we see during the war, centralization of efforts, which is natural during the war time, but then there needs to be a comeback and localization, obviously, of action, both from the public and private, will be the key in this direction, so that we see the diversity of Ukraine flourishing and thriving us again.

[Shannon Green]

Thank you, Eka. So, Sanjay Derek has talked about youth and women, Eka talked about frontline anti-corruption warriors. I think it's fair to say that at the roots of every vibrant democracy are leaders who are willing to undertake difficult reforms and to really buck prevailing trends. President Biden and Summit for Democracy sought to bring such reformers together and to create momentum around democratic renewal. And OGP has been such a critical partner throughout this entire process.

So, the question to you is really, how is the open government movement tackling threats to democracy, and how do you see the role of OGP going forward and helping sustain the momentum that's been created by the Summit for Democracy and all the other energy that Derek alluded to.

[Sanjay Pradhan]

Thank you, Shannon. Hi, everybody! So, amidst the understandable gloom and doom of attacks on democracy, which Derek rightly referred to, I find it inspiring and important to focus on those who are fighting back on reforms that collectively show a compelling alternative and our collective imperative to scale these up.

So, specifically in the Open Government Partnership, or OGP for short, which I lead, this has 76 member countries and thousands of civil society organizations, and across the OGP, we are seeing courageous reformers and activists advance reforms that make democracy more resilient to internal and external threats.

And let me give you concrete examples to liven this up. So first, we have government reformers and civil society activists in thirty OGP countries such as Nigeria, Slovakia and the UK, advance beneficial ownership transparency that can end anonymous shell companies, shell companies that prop up autocrats that are undermining democracy clandestinely across borders, shell companies that hide corrupt and illicit funds that undermines citizens trust in democracy. Domestically, we have 70 OGP governments and activists working to open up procurement contracts to fight corruption and build back citizen trust in their governance.

I want to build on Eka's response and give you an example from Ukraine, precisely right after the revolution of dignity in 2014. Their young reformers from government, business, and civil society, joined forces to openly disclose previously opaque procurement contracts that were captured by powerful oligarchs leveraging the OGP contact through the ProZorro and DoZorro platforms as it is known, and concretely what it delivered in terms of democracy delivering is in two years, there was a fiscal savings of one billion dollars, 80% of businesses surveyed by USAID after two years found a reduced corruption, and there was a 50% increase in new businesses, including SMEs bidding for contracts.

And, in fact, in the present OGP action plan building on what Eka was saying, there is a new commitment that civil society coalition called Rise, along with government reformers, is putting in place. It's called the Dream platform - it's an acronym, no point spelling it out to you - which integrates open contracting and beneficial ownership transparency into the future reconstruction effort. So that's really inspirational and galvanized by this 70 OGP. Governments are following through on Ukraine, which can

be a leader and open government, which was a leader in some of these open government reforms. Our goal is to spread these norms across countries, so the exceptions have nowhere to hide.

We are also seeing reformers and activists empower citizens at the local level to shape and oversee public policies and services that impact their lives, such as participatory budgeting in Côte D'Ivoire, or in Kaduna, Nigeria, a fascinating app. Administrator Power talked about the Diia app - Kaduna, Nigeria has a fascinating app called Citizen Eyes and Ears where citizens can download the location of public projects, health clinics and roads located within a two kilometer radius, and they can give feedback whether the road exists or the health clinic exists, what's the condition. The feedback goes directly to the Governor's Office and the State Legislature, mandating a response resulting in a record completion of health clinics and roads in two years. So these are just inspirational examples, but they are not enough.

We need to scale these up to match the scale of the challenge, and in that context, Shannon, to your second part of the question, the Summit for Democracy, hosted by President Biden, indeed, generated the political momentum and visibility for a democracy renewal agenda. But we must take care to ensure that high-level S for D commitments made by heads of states and government do not remain lofty rhetoric, but translate into concrete country actions and new global norms.

And to your question, then, Shannon, three ways, three levels of action with which OGP can help these reformers: the first is at the country level. At the country level, we need to ensure that these Summit for Democracy commitments translate into, we can help translate them into, country actions through OGP action plans. All the member countries have to develop action plans for civil society. Nine out of the 15 OGP members that have co-created their OGP action plans, since the Summit for Democracy, have integrated at least one S for D commitment in their action plans. This is good news, but not nearly enough. This is much easier to do when you have civil society co-creating the commitment for monitoring and accountability. Unfortunately, only three percent of the 650 S for D commitments were co-created with civil society. This must change in the third summit, hosted by South Korea.

The second level where we are helping is advancing thematic norms. We are advancing collective action by countries in key policy areas like open contracting and beneficial ownership transparency, so they become the new global norms, and we are doing this through the financial transparency and integrity cohort of the S for D.

And last point, at the global level, we have had the S for D, Summit for Democracy's two meetings. On September 6th and 7th, we have the OGP Global Summit, which will be hosted by the Estonian Prime Minister Kallas in Tallinn. You're all most warmly invited to register and join us. In this summit, we see this as a great opportunity to call on our 76 member countries to report on progress in integrating S for D commitments and OGP action plans, and we plan to showcase the bright spots that are advancing democratic renewal agenda. So that would be my way to help.

[Shannon Green]

Thank you, Sanjay. So I think what Sanjay is saying is so important because working on democracy and human rights and anti-corruption issues can be a lonely and very unsafe business, and having that international solidarity is so important, it can really be the difference between success or failure, or somebody living or dying. So those networks that everybody is talking about are so important. I have a colleague who likes to say locally led does not mean locally isolated. So we really need to think about the localization agenda, and at the same time, how do we connect those local actors into these broader

regional global networks. With that, I believe we have an audience question from one of our illustrious Payne fellows, Imani Murdock Murdock from Howard University.

[Imani Murdock]

Hello, everyone. I am Imani Murdock. I am originally from Brooklyn, New York, and I will be attending Columbia University this fall, and after graduation I hope to pursue the crisis stabilization and governance backstop here with USAID.

I would like to thank the panel for all the information that you've given us today, and I am honored to represent all of my fellows with the Payne cohort. So the question that I have today is on the topic of digital democracy and emerging technologies. What is the technological infrastructure needed to implement equitable digital organizing, advocacy, and educational tools to strengthen the democratic process in developing countries while simultaneously protecting at-risk communities. Thank you.

[Eka Tkeshelashvili]

I can begin, perhaps, on the example of Ukraine in this case. When we look at the digital transformation, it looks very easy and fancy when you have a final product right to use. And then those of you who have attended and had a chance to see that presentation yesterday that Administrator mentioned as well, is fascinating and really and it looks like with the click of a button you can do that, but it takes a change of mentality, way of operation, and then governance when it comes to the public institutions, so that the digital and technology is not becoming just the tool, but it becomes an integral component of the changed way of operation.

So before Diia became Diia, as an example, there was time when very painstaking work had to be done with so many public institutions to create safe public registries where the data is securely stored, so that when the app is importing and exporting data in terms of connectivity, you have that safe, so that cyber security is ensured, so that app becomes a talk or a cherry on the cake, so to say, when you start to use it, but the whole infrastructure is changed when the whole civil servants and in central the local governments they don't use paperwork anymore when it comes to how they move the business processes within their own institutions, and then how the mentality of people, and especially in disadvantaged areas when you would think of people that wouldn't have time or resources to get the lawyers, consultative centers to get an understanding how you need to apply for a given service, how you need to advance your cause or community call for that matter as well. You can do it very easily when it comes to the accessible technology in this case.

So it's a combination of the vision, resolve, and dedication to change the whole way of operation. It's communication not just at the end of the process, when you explain what you achieve, but prior to that, so that you have fine understanding of your own communities, and what is it that they need for them to be the end users of the system, so that they understand what is coming. And then, when you actually launch the new system, and with the new technologies you have the users that not only vouch for them, they start to use it so that you have a critical mass that starts to accumulate the new way of operation, and in that regard it's a combination of factors, as I mentioned, and then heavy engagement, proactive engagement of civil society. They are the best advocates to go around the country to help to bring the message, knowledge, and capacity for the end users, and at the end of the day, one need not to be shy when you have a good result for that good results to be known as well. Democracies are not that good, at many times, to have that way of communication, in short, because if you don't feel the information space with what is it that you actually experience it, somebody else does.

And usually these are the ones that you would want to feel it with this information and attacks on anything that goes right, basically maintaining the fear factor or despair with the people that nothing good ever comes to their communities. And in that sense it's a collaborative effort of public and private actors, but it's a lot of work. It comes at the expense of that, so resolve to get into it and then change the whole process is key for that commitment, I would say.

[Shannon Green]

We have about two minutes, so if we could get one more quick question, then that would be ideal. And then Sanjay and Derek, you can leave us with any final thoughts.

Any questions? No, okay. Go ahead. Ah, yeah.

[Poojitha Tanjore]

Hi! It's nice to meet you. I'm Poojitha Tanjore. I just graduated from William and Mary and I'm Payne fellow. Sorry I'm kind of losing my voice this week. I wanted to ask about democratic backsliding. So often we see authoritarian legacies during democratic transitions and on the eve of democratic transition, it's really easy for democracies to then backslide when there is a lack of resiliency in local institutions. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit to your work in seeing democratic backsliding, and how to directly target organizations to ensure that they still prefer democracy, even when ASPs might seem preferable.

[Derek Mitchell]

I'll take that. I went to the University of Virginia. That's okay. I went to William and Mary last year and had a wonderful time. They've been doing great work with USAID, as a matter of fact.

You get to a really key issue, and we only have a couple of minutes, so again could speak to extensively on this. But democracy is not just a process, and it's not just an institution. You can have an election tomorrow - that's not democracy. And it does take generations. What happens oftentimes in these transitions is, you have maybe a movement, or you have a moment, you may even have an election. People get into power as well as energy, but the people that are there have the old mindsets. They grew up in a certain environment, and that entire culture is still mired in that old mindset, that old culture of old ways that takes much more time.

Democracy really takes time to embed, people up to understand their new rights, their new responsibilities, their new way of engaging with one another. I remember, and again, when I was Ambassador, I'd have young people all telling me what they thought. You know, just all speaking at me, and I realized, you know, for however many years they couldn't speak, right, so they all wanted now to tell me what they thought, and I finally had to stop them. I said, "look, democracy is not just the right to speak. It's a responsibility to listen, and you have to commit to communicate with each other, you have to compromise." You have to understand the other side, because it's not a matter of, in that case, 54 million dictators I'm going to dictate to you, but that's what they saw, that's what they experienced.

And I think we're losing that in the United States, is lord everyone knows I mean about, you know, compromising and coming together, and I guess I'd bring in just very quickly, because I know there's no time, a little bit of that question that came before, which I can talk about the digital, but there is no substitute in democracy for the analog, for this - the face-to-face in-person interaction. Digital exists. Digital can be a tool for equitable access to information, to just equable all kinds of things. Just people get more information than they ever could before. But we all know the downsides of it, that it atomizes,

it alienates, it depresses, it does all these things. And there's, you know, there's a lot of bad stuff on the Internet - misinformation, hate, disinformation and all the rest. We've got to find a way to connect and remember that this takes time, and it takes constant effort.

So yes, there is going to be backsliding. We have to be patient. Our expectations need to be managed, and we need to manage the expectations of others that not tomorrow they could be somehow a developed democracy with the kind of economy that we have and all that. But you know we're dealing with this at NDI all the time is figuring out how to ensure expectations are managed, but we keep with them over the long run, we never give up on them, we show solidarity, we show we're with them when we continue to share lessons, because we've all gone through the ups and downs of democracy.

[Shannon Green]

Okay, Sanjay, last word.

[Sanjay Pradhan]

Okay, very quickly, and later - this time is really short - I can point to a very fascinating piece of work on how we can address three stages of what is being called an autocratization sequence, which begins with first, the disenchantment that the general public feels, which fuels the second step, which is a narrative that the autocrats create of that disenchantment to amass more power, and once they mass more power, they undermine democratic checks and balances. Attacking each of those three phases is how we are practically approaching this problem.

I can point to you - just one quick word on the digital stuff. We have seen digital technology as a big enabler of opening up government because it lowers the barriers for citizens to directly engage with government and for governments to engage with broader stakeholders and the examples I gave Karuna, Nigeria, or Ukraine. Those, or where citizens can monitor corruption online are concrete examples. The goal, as Eka was saying, is to make it more inclusive, transparent, accountable, and so on.

But I do want to say that while technology has that enabling positive aspect, we also now see the pernicious impact of technology in fake news and disinformation, in attacks on individual privacy. That's a key area we are also addressing. Now, Indonesia, for instance, has a commitment they've made on monitoring, on combating electoral disinformation through OGP with a monitoring system and supervision system in civil society and government on the electoral side. Mexico had a legal digital surveillance of civil society and journalists. Through OGP they committed to democratic supervision of this process, which again they backtracked on. So this is back and forth. But anyway.

[Shannon Green]

Thank you so much. We'll have to leave it there. Please join me in thanking our inspiring action - oriented and solutions-focused panelists.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

Thanks so much to our panel. Our next panel will dive into inclusive and locally led development. The panelists, please join us on stage. Hibak Kalfan, the Executive Director of the Near Network, Johann Swinnen, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute. Katherine Marshall, Professor of the Practice of Development, Conflict, and Religion in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, and our moderate Liz Schrayner, President and CEO of the US Global Leadership Coalition. Thank you.

[Liz Schroyer]

Thank you, Paul. Hi, all. We'll go fast, and we'll talk fast. Well, this is wonderful to be here. Thank you, Paul. Thank you, Administrative Power. I just got back from Kenya and Malawi, and I have to tell you that the topic we're going to cover, I saw it on the ground. There's localization- inclusive development is not new to USAID, but it's happening, and hats off to the team, and I'm excited to talk with this esteemed panel about it.

You know, in the past, Administrator Power talked about this, local awards were largely the primary tool to advance localization, and that's still a part of the toolkit, but the emphasis is on decision-making, power is at the heart of this. What really has to happen in terms of localized-led development, and there's lots of ways to do it, and it means really building these relationships with USAID local actors, and that's from direct recipients of funding sub-partners of USAID the awards, participants in USAID programs, communities, and it's not one size fits all. Obviously, it needs to be across the work, and the goal is to - obviously to ingrain, locally led development and cross cutting lens through DEI at the local level.

We're going to talk about it. And again I saw this in a way I hadn't seen in other trips, so something is changing, congratulations. There's a lot of new frameworks out. I hope everybody's had a chance to read the new policy framework, the new acquisitions and assistance strategy, the new risk appetite statement, the new local capacity strengthening policy. Lots to read. But they're real, and something is happening is that when you put out new principles, actually work changes. I loved that Administrator Power when you said, "ten percent you're at locally, it's not enough, but it is movement in the right direction," and that's what we're talking about going.

So let's begin. Hibak - you have such an interesting platform. For those that don't know you, you've got this wildly successful network of local and national NGOs from the global south that has really got a on the ground view of bringing in local stakeholders to make sure that they've got a seat at the table. So my question to you is, is it working? Are we getting to where we need to get to on localization? And particularly i'm going to ask you to give it the lens of conflict zones, which you're particularly working in. Welcome.

[Hibak Kalfan]

Thank you, and thanks everybody. So NEAR, the network that you just mentioned, we are a network of global South organizations. We have over 300 members, direct members, but we work with tens of thousands of local NGOs, from CBOs to national NGOs across 30 countries. And we were established around the world's Humanitarian Summit in 2016 from the fact that local actors didn't have a seat at the table and that they weren't a part of decision making, and that resources weren't getting to them directly, they were going through intermediation, and so to hear Administrator Power speech in 2021 was really exciting for our members and our constituency, and from there NEAR and civicists, other global south organizations, decided to write a letter in response, and we asked very specific things from USAID that we had hoped would begin our relationship with USAID, not only at the national level, but also at the at the DC. level.

And those few things were: speak to us directly, ensure quality funding reaches local actors, invest more in local approaches and coordination mechanisms, and build practical and sustainable solutions to meet your commitments. And then at the end of 2022, through the thought leadership of USAID, 14 other donors signed on to three commitments that we thought were extremely important to move this forward, and that is shifting and sharing power, working towards channeling quality funding, and

publicly advocating for locally led development. My team and I and our members really banged our heads against the wall for the first four or five years of our existence, because we never saw the number jumping of resources going to local actors, we didn't see more local actors at decision making tables at the national level, at the local level, and even the global level. And so by having that speech and then having that commitment to that document where there are 14 donors, initially, and now I believe almost 20, there's something that we can work with in considering systems change.

And to follow, I think the first group from a positive perspective, I wanted to bring about some examples that exist. The idea of the ten percent is, or the fact that you've reached ten percent is amazing, because I just had a meeting with development initiatives, and they said collectively, in 2022 the development sector only had one 1.8% that went to local actors, so way ahead of all the other donors. But specifically, I think around do no harm, and nothing for us without us. I wanted to say that our first ask around speak to us directly, I think there are a lot of diverse opportunities specifically at the country level.

I think that there's an opportunity to engage local actors around country strategies. We believe that, you know, from an INGO perspective or a donor perspective, there are many times where there's planning, there are strategy sessions, it's important to invite local actors into that. They're the ones that are able to actually tell you what makes sense, what doesn't make sense, what works, and what doesn't work.

Secondly, you know, this idea of improving quality funding, we see that the world is continuously changing. We saw that with Covid, we see that with the unfortunate conflict in Ukraine, and what has happened with food insecurity, and so we continuously are trying to think through what are some solutions to be able to get local actors resources - flexible resources, because I think that's extremely important - and to think through some of those solutions. Unfortunately, in places like Pakistan, Syria, and Turkey, the Horn of Africa, and now Sudan, we haven't seen resources immediately starting to go to local actors. We still see this knee-jerk reaction of giving to already existing partners, but with a couple of catalytic donors like Hilton Foundation and DANIDA, we've been able to start to develop solutions.

So, NEAR has a global change fund where we've been able to give funding in ten countries that, I think, are very, very difficult to get resources to. Within 72 hours of an acute emergency in Syria and Türkiye, the local organizations have been able to build what they call the "solidarity fund," which has allowed for nearly half a million dollars to go to CBOs that are working. And then in Somalia, specifically one thing that we've been able to do with the government, as well as with civil society, has been to create a fund that goes directly to the communities, it's responding to what the communities need, and if intermediation needs to happen through local organizations, that happens. But the first is how do we get uh results to the community.

And then for me, lastly, it's important to invest in localized approaches and mechanisms. And that goes back to I think this idea of trust. When I talk about localized mechanisms, it's national networks. Thinking about a diversity of partners, that's where they exist, whether they're formal or informal. The organizations exist from CBOs to national NGOs, and thinking about that diversity, I think that's an important group to invest in. There are hundreds of examples that exist.

[Liz Schroyer]

We'll see if we have time to get to them. But those were fabulous, a view into what's really happening. I just kind of smiled when you talk about flexible spending as fun, but he spends a little bit of time on Capitol Hill. We need to bring you there to actually explain why that's so important, so we'll talk about that.

Johan, I'm so anxious to hear what you have to say, since you work and partner with USAID on climate and food systems and support gender equity and women's empowerment, because how can you get to inclusive localization without empowering and bringing to the table female smallholder farmers. It just will not work.

So tell us, and give us a sense of what you do each and every day in your work is whether or not we're doing, and what we need to be doing in terms of localization around equitable food systems, gender equality, bringing women smallholder farmers to the table and making sure they have a voice. Welcome.

[Johan Swinnen]

Thank you very much. I'll probably take up not just the rest of the time, but the whole day.

[Liz Schroyer]

All right. Well, I'll jump up and down when you need to stop, not because you aren't brilliant, but because I'll get cut off.

[Johan Swinnen]

Very good. Let me just make a few, give a few examples. So maybe linking it up, also up what happened last week. Here there was the AIM for Climate Summit here, which I think was an amazing success, and so, during the AIM for Climate Summit we had a joint panel on the role of gender, climate change, and food systems, and during that we get with USAID.

And so there we launched both the call for action, and I'll go in a bit of detail - the type of actions that we think about, and also an innovation sprint. And this innovation sprint really means in this framework, you need to go faster, and you need to do more. More means more investments, raise more funds, but also more energy, more attention. I think it's not just dollars, and at the same time we need to do it fast. We know that there is an extreme urgency in dealing anything with climate change, but particularly also the issues related to the transformation of 250 of our food systems around the world.

For this we want to, So my organization is the CGIAR, It's a research organization, and IFPRI is a policy research organization, this is part of CGIAR. And so we are, but we also focus both the combination of research and impact, and for that I mean small. All the farmers around the world are crucial component of what we work on, and particularly, I mean, which is very clear if you do not address the gender inequality, there's no way you can solve the food and security in the world of the transformation of the food systems.

We know that gender inequality is a pervasive problem in food systems. I mean it's a basic problem in many parts of our societies, and that so it relates to access to land, access to inputs, productivity, wage gaps, et cetera. And we know that over the past six, seven years, really this inequality rather than having improved, has actually worsened. We know that poverty in general and food insecurity in general over this period, and so it's a combination of structural changes, which already began before Covid-19 were exacerbated with Covid-19, and with the food prices we've seen around the world, and women have disproportionately basically been hurt by it.

We had predicted it in our models before, in our conceptual thinking about it, and unfortunately, all the new research shows that that's actually what has happened as well. We've seen food security worsen much more for women than for men, job losses were stronger, access to a number of things went down.

And so that means if we don't address these things there's no way we can solve the food security problems.

Can I briefly go through a couple of points that we concretely do.

[Liz Schroyer]

Maybe, maybe take one that you can suggest.

[Johan Swinnen]

Okay, so essentially, okay, there's a lot of innovations in the world, which we can use to improve these things. So the problem with innovations is they're typically not - basically we try to think about innovation, which are disproportionately benefiting women. The second thing, then, we work on things like access to finance, access to information, and access to and basically the right policy environment to make sure that we anticipate the inequality in gender access. And by that time, basically, reduce the inequality gap in terms of the impact that we will have with these innovations. Let me leave it at that.

[Liz Schroyer]

That's wonderful. Thank you, thank you. Katherine, you've been involved in the G20 process over the last decade through the G20 Interfaith Forum, the last one in New Delhi. And so I think it would be really helpful for us to learn the role of faith-based actors, the religious communities and how it's - we're shaping development, particularly in the context that we're talking about - locally led and inclusive development. Katherine.

[Katherine Marshall]

Well, the meeting that took place earlier this month in New Delhi, the G20 Interfaith Forum, was actually the tenth year that there has been an effort to engage -

[Liz Schroyer]

Mic just a little closer. Can everybody hear, Katherine?

[Katherine Marshall]

An effort to engage? Can you hear me?

[Liz Schroyer]

Great.

[Katherine Marshall]

An effort to engage the world of religion in one of the more important governance processes in the world. But stepping back - so why the G2, and why faith. So let me start with a second. Basically, my history is that I was working in the World Bank, drafted by Jim Wolfensohn as the President, to work on an effort to take away a major blind spot in the development world, which is basically the world of religion, the ecosystems of religion.

There's a number that we use all the time, too often, perhaps, which is that an estimated 84% of the world's population has some religious affiliation. So obviously, what does affiliation mean? And where does the number come from, et cetera. But the basic point is, we're talking about huge systems that go all the way from the Vatican, which is an enormous structure and organization, all the way down to extremely local down to the family level, where you have very complex roles that religious voices play.

And so the development community has been pretty pretty skittish, shall we say, about engaging with this world, even though there are major service deliverers during the Covid pandemic.

It's really very striking how many dimensions there have been to the religious engagement, all the way from vaccine delivery, dealing with anti-vaccination messages, positive messages, but also social protection and social safety nets. So essentially the development world has come, I think, slowly and in a bumpy way, to a much more explicit, much more constructive approach to this very complex world of religion.

So why the G20? Well, the G20 clearly is a major part of global governance created in 1999 to manage crises, but increasingly is taking on the interconnected areas of the sustainable development goals. You couldn't take one of 169, and not find some kind of a faith dimension, and one in which the G2 involved. And so in this process, as the G20 morphed and changed over the years to be - shall we say, less exclusive than the G7/G8 by including a larger number, but still trying to be flexible and trying to be of size and scope that's manageable. So the effort, therefore, has been to try to bring these very complex voices of the religious ecosystems, the religious worlds, into that. So what has that meant? Clearly, right now, it has meant a lot of areas focusing on post covid recovery, pandemic preparedness, health systems, equity. It has meant dealing with humanitarian issues, refugees, dealing with governance issues, and so forth.

But what has been the bottom line, and I think this is something that speaks to all of the work that all of us are doing coming from different sectors, which is in today's world, we we must not forget the most vulnerable, and that means children, sadly, means women, it means those who are at the margins - refugees - and the best of religious teachings, the best of religious organizations have that as their central message: don't forget the people who are most vulnerable, and keep them at the center of the focus.

[Liz Schroyer]

I love - thank you. I love that our panelists both gave the hope as well as some of the challenges that are out there. So we have time for a couple of questions, and maybe I invite our Payne fellows to get the first opportunity to ask.

Yeah, please.

[Lindsey O'Neal]

Thank you. My name is Lindsay O'Neal. I am a Payne fellow. I am going to American University this fall, studying global environmental policy. Planning on going into the environment backstop is my goal. And my question is to Johan. I'm really interested, with regrets I didn't go to the climate summit I would have loved to, but I'm interested in, you know, your thoughts on where we can better integrate, you know, the changing global systems to address climate change and what more USAID could do to address such an intersectional issue, and particularly with the lens of localization, what we can do to work with individuals in small groups.

[Liz Schroyer]

Because of time, why don't I take one more question. So, Johann, you'll get that one. And is there one more question that somebody wants to ask? Don't be shy.

You get the last question. There you go.

[Catherine Stallsmith]

Hello. My name is Catherine Stallsmith. I'll be attending Johns Hopkins SAIS in the fall, and pursuing the crisis stabilization and governance backstop, and I actually grew up in a missionary family. And so I have a question about religion. And my question is, has it ever posed a barrier that someone is in a particular faith community, in particular Christianity. You know the history of colonization, what does that look like today in reaching interfaith communities. Thank you.

[Liz Schroyer]

So why don't Katherine and Johan answer that, and I'll have one wrap up question for the three of you. If we have time, if not you get the last one. Johan.

[Johan Swinnen]

It's a - thanks very much for the question. It's obviously a very broad question. Okay, there's so much that can be done. I mean USAID does a ton of things already on it, and I think a lot of the - so we had a breakfast before, it was not a meeting - and so we discussed about - I mean, if you look right now.

Okay, for example, one of the things which I think is really scary is that the most acute food security in the world is among refugees, and that's people who may have to leave their house, their village, they're town, whatever has to cross borders or not, and that number has tripled over the last decade. It's hard as a scientist - I'm a scientist too - to show causality that one causes the other. But you know the correlation is clear and it's so much related. There's all kinds of direct and indirect effects. So that means, if you want to address this, okay, it's a very complicated issue. It has to do with politics, It has to do with migration, It has to do with the production and consumption and nutrition of things, of diets, of helping them in the short run, of basically building up resilience in the medium in the long run.

So, in a sense you have to do all of that. Okay. And an organization can, even a large organization, IUSAID is still has to prioritize in terms of what we can do. We just identify. These are the things that we need to do, but it's the idea that you can solve it by just focusing, for example, on breeding better crops or giving subsidies to consumption, is not going to work in itself. We really need to see this as a system, and the system needs - you need to calculate that at many different levels and different areas.

[Liz Schroyer]

Thank you. Okay, Catherine.

[Katherine Marshall]

I think the answer to most questions about religion and perhaps development more broadly, is it's complicated. And one of the issues on religion, there are good reasons why people have been skittish, why USAID, the World Bank, and others have been hesitant to have a forthright approach. Clearly the extremist tendencies is one, but it's been interesting in every meeting that we've had, the issue of proselytization comes up, and what is interesting there does come to the localization agendas in many ways, which is when there are imbalances of power, and the perception of imbalances of power, as well as as true imbalances, where one side has the money, and the other side doesn't, which comes to the heart of it.

So I think, in thinking about this huge world of religious engagement, we do need to start with faith literacy as well as development literacy, that we need to increase the understanding that people have of the complexities involved. And we always need to see the negative side, which can include, for example, long standing patriarchal traditions, which have disfavored women in many ways, but at the same time,

the extraordinary positive aspects that include hope and vision, and the basic understanding of what life is about, as well as the extraordinary range of social safety net and social protection. Dealing with tensions, dealing with social cohesion and diversity, which are the challenges that face us.

[Liz Schroyer]

So let me ask one final question. Guess who gets it. So if USAID is nice enough to invite the four of us back here two to three years from now, what would be success at that point from an inclusive localization from your point of view, and include some of the comments you heard from Catherine and Johann. And you get less than one minute.

[Hibak Kalfan]

I'll try.

[Liz Schroyer]

So just give us, you know, a quick, a quick we got - we have about thirty seconds.

[Hibak Kalfan]

No, what I'll do is actually I'll respond to even what Xavier asked. I think, to simplify localization, it's about communities having dignity and agency to be able to say what they need and what they want. They know the answers. And it's about the entire sector shifting to what Paul said, which is what's our added value as implementers, as donors, as think tanks. What's our added value, what can we bring to the table to be able to help these affected communities? To me, that's success.

[Liz Schroyer]

That is a beautiful way to wrap up. Please thank all the rest of the panel.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

Thank you so much to our panel, thanks to everyone attending for sitting through, for being actively engaged. Special thanks to Sophia Lajaunie, who I don't see, who -

[Liz Schroyer]

She's in the back.

[Paul Weisenfeld]

Who makes all of this possible. She's the key support for ACVFA, and she drives us and helps us set the agenda, and helps organize everything. We encourage everyone to stay and mingle with the Payne fellows. We'll all be around for a little bit, and please stay, and we look forward to seeing you in the fall for our next meeting. Thank you.