



## Faith-Based Organizations Partnerships Report to Congress

### Introduction: Faith-Based Partnerships at USAID

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) submits this report pursuant to Section 7019(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (Div. F, P.L. 118-47) and House Report 118-146, which states:

*“The Committee notes the important role that FBOs play in communities around the world, including in the provision of humanitarian, development, and global health assistance. USAID maintains tools and resources on Strategic Religious Engagement (SRE) which outline the process through which USAID collaborates with religious communities and FBOs. Within 30 days of the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of USAID shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on how SRE and other efforts to engage and partner with FBOs is incorporated into USAID’s localization approach, as well as a performance report of USAID’s support of FBOs between 2019 and 2022. The Committee expects that USAID’s efforts to enable involvement of local organizations extends to those whose organizational missions are tied to faith, religious freedoms, charity, and religious-based humanitarian support, given the extensive presence and experience of FBOs in the developing world.”*

USAID has a long history of partnering with and alongside faith-based and community organizations that work to advance sustainable development and humanitarian outcomes. USAID recognizes that religious actors in many countries where the Agency operates are the backbone of local communities and have a presence that predates USAID and development professionals. This presence yields trust, access, and influence in ways that governments often cannot, making local faith-based organizations critical partners in development. Recognizing the unique contributions of faith-based organizations and religious communities, USAID has housed a dedicated office for faith engagement since 2002 when the George W. Bush Administration first established USAID’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (“Center”). Reestablished by every administration since, USAID’s faith-based Center has an over 22 year bipartisan history working to build bridges between the Agency and faith-based organizations and religious communities.

Today’s Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP) draws its mandate from President Biden’s February 2021 Executive Order establishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. This Executive Order reaffirms the U.S. government’s longstanding and bipartisan commitment to partnering with faith-based and

community organizations to advance shared diplomatic, development, and humanitarian goals worldwide. FBNP is housed within the Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI), in the Local, Faith and Transformative Partnerships (LFT) Hub, which works to strengthen, expand, and diversify USAID’s partner base and drive locally-led development. In September 2023, USAID became the first federal agency to launch a dedicated policy for engagement with religious actors—“Building Bridges In Development: USAID’s Strategic Religious Engagement Policy.”<sup>1</sup> The Policy affirms religious actors’ important role in development and humanitarian assistance. Additionally, it represents USAID’s commitment to working with faith communities to ensure U.S. foreign assistance efforts are more effective, locally responsive, and sustainable. With ever-evolving challenges, from environmental disasters to global pandemics to rising authoritarianism, building bridges with local religious communities is key to achieving USAID’s goal of advancing a free, peaceful, and prosperous world. Coordinated by FBNP, policy implementation efforts are working to institutionalize strategic religious engagement (SRE) across USAID’s operating units and to strengthen the capacity of USAID’s workforce to partner with local faith-based organizations and religious communities.

### **Strategic Religious Engagement Supports USAID’s Localization Efforts**

As USAID works to advance locally led development and humanitarian response, engagement with religious communities and faith-based organizations remains a top priority.

Implementation of *Building Bridges In Development: USAID’s Strategic Religious Engagement Policy* builds upon USAID’s commitment to locally led and inclusive development by affirming religious actors’ essential role in their communities and defining an operational framework for USAID staff to implement strategic religious engagement throughout the program cycle.

In addition to the release and implementation of USAID’s Strategic Religious Engagement Policy areas of ongoing progress include:

- Reducing barriers to entry for local organizations, including faith-based organizations, through increased outreach, expanded use of local languages, more flexible and tailored pre-award assessments for local partners, amplifying resources designed for local organizations, and more. The Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships promotes knowledge and use of USAID’s partnership hub [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.usaid.gov/workwithusaid), now available in French, Spanish, and Arabic.
- Developing new tools and resources to strengthen the capacity of the USAID workforce to engage religious communities and faith-based organizations, including local organizations, in the countries where USAID works. This includes offering the newly-developed training program “Working with Religious Actors in Development and Diplomacy,” co-designed and co-delivered with the Department of State; making investments in research at the intersection of religion and development; and creating a dedicated community of practice to equip the USAID workforce staff with tools to integrate SRE into their daily work and promote ways to advance the Agency’s localization agenda.
- Developing, in collaboration with regional and technical bureaus, sector guidance to support the integration of strategic religious engagement across the Agency as an

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/strategicreligiousengagement>

evidence-based, principled approach to addressing humanitarian and development challenges.

### **USAID's Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Communities Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2022**

USAID engages with religious actors around the world in various technical areas, including democracy, climate change, gender, education, health, peace building, economic growth, and more. Faith-based organizations are valued partners and eligible to apply for government awards on an equal footing with secular organizations. USAID does not track awards based on religious affiliation, or lack thereof, in our internal systems. However, some illustrative examples of USAID's faith-based partnerships from FY 2019 through FY 2022 include:

**The Communities Living Peacefully Activity in the Dominican Republic (August 2022 - August 2025):** Through the *Communities Living Peacefully* activity implemented by Christian Aid, USAID is strengthening the capacity of Dominican communities near the border with Haiti, in the provinces of Dajabón, Montecristi, and Santiago Rodríguez, to address socioeconomic and environmental challenges. This activity began in August 2022, and will finish in August 2025. Christian Aid is working with Centro Montalvo – a local faith-based organization operating in the Dominican Republic – to build relationships and foster trust between border communities, with the ultimate goal of making peaceful conflict resolutions possible. As part of the program's effort to promote productive dialogue, Christian Aid and Centro Montalvo host meetings with community members including religious, youth, and business leaders to foster discussions and brainstorming sessions to identify ways to ease tensions in both countries regarding binational issues. By providing a space for open and honest conversation, the program is helping people recognize their shared challenges and work together to implement solutions. Christian Aid also tackles shared environmental challenges on the border by organizing reforestation days. During seven reforestation days in 2023, community participants planted over 4,800 trees, which are monitored and maintained by local environmental organizations and are helping to restore ecosystems and conserve water resources in the region. The reforestation days also provided an opportunity for border communities to work together around a shared goal, promoting understanding for each other's communities and their shared respect for the environment.

**The DAKIRA Program In Morocco (June 2021 - December 2024):** In Morocco, USAID's DAKIRA program supports initiatives that promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue among Morocco's Jewish and Christian communities. The DAKIRA program is implemented by the High Atlas Foundation and uses participatory approaches for the educational preservation of Morocco's multicultural history. The program encourages local communities to capture, preserve, and transmit their collective memories so they are better equipped to take ownership of the revitalization of their own histories. This introspective, experience-sharing approach among local participants maximizes relationship building, leading to collective actions that improve livelihoods and a deepened rediscovery of Morocco's multicultural identity. Through DAKIRA, over 80 tour guides have graduated from Hebrew classes and conducted successful tours of Jewish Heritage sites worldwide. DAKIRA has also worked to digitize and preserve

250,000 documents from the Catholic Diocese of Rabat's archives which date back to Morocco's Catholic Community in the 1890's.

**The Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe (DREAMS) Partnership in Eswatini (October 2022-Ongoing):** As the lead implementer of U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), DREAMS is a public-private partnership. USAID has driven the global focus on addressing the unique HIV-related risks that children, adolescent girls, and young women experience, while recognizing the potential for youth to drive generational social and economic change. In Eswatini, USAID is working with Cabrini Ministries, a local Catholic organization, to empower young women in rural communities by providing the tools and resources they need for financial independence and HIV prevention. With direct PEPFAR funding since October 2022, Cabrini Ministries has utilized a family-centered approach to reach 34,836 orphaned and vulnerable children with comprehensive interventions to address their health, safety, stability, and education needs. During the same period of time, Cabrini Ministries has provided economic strengthening interventions and educational support to 5,685 adolescent girls and young women. This support includes business mentorship opportunities, which provide supplies and equipment needed to start small businesses. By empowering women as financially independent entrepreneurs, Cabrini Ministries is helping to create more prosperous communities and addressing the conditions that fuel the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

**USAID Dawa za Ubora Program Implemented by Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS) in Kenya (June 2021 - Ongoing):** The Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS), a faith-based, not-for-profit organization, is one of Kenya's largest suppliers of medical products. As part of USAID's efforts to support and strengthen supply chains of affordable, quality medicines, USAID awarded a contract to MEDS in June 2021 to provide efficient, reliable, and accountable supply chain management services for the procurement, warehousing, and distribution of health commodities to patients across the country. Since its inception, MEDS has conducted 141,734 deliveries of health commodities (antiretroviral therapy, TB preventive medicines, malaria treatments, rapid test kits, and HIV lab commodities) valued at over \$61 million to 8,828 unique public health facilities, potentially saving thousands of lives. MEDS plays an instrumental role in improving the quality of patient care and ensuring sustainable healthcare interventions and industry-oriented solutions.

**Addressing Drug Addiction Problems in Putao Township (ADAPT) in Burma (January 2021 - January 2024):** In Burma, USAID partnered with Myaw Lint Yar (HOPE), a local faith-based organization that has been operating in Kachin State, a region heavily affected by a heroin epidemic, for more than two decades. Recognizing that addiction is a complex but treatable health disorder, HOPE leverages longstanding community relationships and holistic, evidence-based approaches to address drug addiction and promote rehabilitation. As one of the Agency's first direct awards to a local partner in Kachin State, HOPE received a three-year, \$2 million, performance-based fixed amount award from USAID/Burma via USAID's Local Works Program for the 2021-2024 Addressing Drug Addiction Problems in Putao Township (ADAPT) activity. Amid the drug epidemic in the region and exacerbated by additional factors like the

ongoing military conflict and generational poverty, community members went to the HOPE rehabilitation center to change their lives.

**Strategic Multi-faith Engagement to Address Tuberculosis in India (FY 2024-FY 2025):** USAID, through John Snow Incorporation's (JSI) Tuberculosis Implementation Framework Agreement activity, has worked with Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul (SSG), Faith Foundation and Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind. Together these organizations are addressing the high rates of tuberculosis (TB) in Surat, Gujarat, particularly among marginalized communities. Overcrowding, poor ventilation, and limited healthcare access exacerbate TB spread, while stigma discourages timely diagnosis and treatment. To address these challenges, USAID collaborates with the Central TB Division to implement a comprehensive strategy. This includes community education to raise awareness about TB symptoms and the importance of seeking medical help, active case finding to identify potential TB cases, and contact investigation to trace those exposed to TB. Additionally, USAID has worked with SSG to facilitate sputum transportation and referral services to ensure individuals receive proper testing and care. Through its network of *Arogya Shubh Chintaks* (dedicated volunteers committed to TB elimination) SSG helps extend the public health system's reach. These local efforts align with USAID's goals of strengthening TB control in India by engaging faith communities and promoting early diagnosis, thus helping to break the cycle of TB transmission.

**USAID's Momentum Country and Global Leadership Program in India (FY 2022-FY 2024):** USAID's MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership: India-Yash is working to prevent child, early, and forced marriage/union (CEFMU) in two states in India, Jharkhand and Odisha. MOMENTUM engages closely with faith leaders in this work, recognizing their important influence over community norms and practices. Since February 2022, the project has supported 101 faith-based leaders to discuss CEFMU, the legal provisions and support services that help protect girls, and the importance of girls staying in school with their communities. These leaders have organized more than 200 community dialogues, reaching 50,867 parents, 28,430 adolescents, and 800 other faith leaders. MOMENTUM also partnered with the Interfaith Humanitarian Alliance, a national initiative bringing together faith actors and organizations, to host virtual plenary sessions in three states on empowering vulnerable girls. MOMENTUM has bolstered efforts to link vulnerable adolescent girls with essential support services, such as life skills sessions, employment and academic opportunities, and healthcare, to complement this work with faith leaders. To date, more than 33,400 girls have been linked to such services. The project also supports a team of 100 youth champions to advocate with governments and other actors and to raise awareness within their communities on CEFMU.

While these examples illustrate the wide geographic, sectoral, and religious diversity of USAID's partnerships with faith-based organizations and religious communities, they are not a comprehensive list. By sharing and amplifying these stories, FBNP aims to spread awareness about the success and sustainability of faith-based partnerships and drive demand for the Center's technical and capacity-strengthening resources.

## Strategic Religious Engagement Efforts in FY 2024

In FY 2024, USAID began implementation of the Agency's Strategic Religious Engagement (SRE) Policy: "[Building Bridges in Development](#)," released in September 2023. The principles and operational framework outlined in the policy assist USAID staff in more than 100 countries to cultivate partnerships and drive development results that are built to last. Ongoing policy implementation efforts include:

- Streamlined capacity-building services for faith-based and community organizations looking to learn more about partnerships with USAID. In coordination with relevant missions, bureaus, and independent offices, FBNP hosts approximately 100 to 150 partner meetings annually with faith-based organizations, religious leaders, and diaspora groups. During these engagements, prospective partners receive tutorials on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) and, where appropriate, are introduced to relevant USAID Mission, Bureau, and Independent Offices. As of June 2024, FBNP has hosted 50 meetings with faith-based and community organizations and is also working to center local voices during high-level convenings with Agency leadership and technical staff in Washington, D.C.
- Developed and published policy companion pieces and resources, including a publicly available [policy 2-pager](#)<sup>2</sup> and [reference guide on the relationship between Strategic Religious Engagement and International Religious Freedom](#)<sup>3</sup>. FBNP has also created internal resources for the USAID workforce, including Religious Landscape Analysis Guidance to support USAID staff as they identify and incorporate religious actors in their operating context and an internal factsheet demonstrating how to integrate strategic religious engagement into the USAID program cycle.
- Maintained and expanded FBNP's resource library, which serves as a database for USAID-funded research projects on SRE and International Religious Freedom in the field, case studies from around the world, toolkits from various partners, and more. The library includes over 100 top resources from the past two decades of research in the field to support evidence-based activities and programs.
- Hosted two iterations of FBNP's SRE Sector Spotlights series, a virtual convening for USAID colleagues highlighting successful initiatives and examples of faith-based engagement at USAID. In FY 2024, the series reached 390 individuals across the Agency.
- Rolled out a policy roadshow to educate missions, bureaus, and independent offices on the principles and four-step framework outlined in the policy. The FBNP team also conducted implementation consultations with USAID staff and hosted internal webinars to inform further policy implementation efforts and the creation of a forthcoming strategic religious engagement Community of Practice.
- Delivered "Working with Religious Actors in Diplomacy and Development," a four-day training for the USAID and State Department workforces. In 2023, the

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/Bridges%202-Pager%204E\\_508.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/Bridges%202-Pager%204E_508.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/Bridge\\_SRE%20IRF%201%20Pager%203B\\_508%5B87%5D\\_1.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/Bridge_SRE%20IRF%201%20Pager%203B_508%5B87%5D_1.pdf)

Agency piloted the training in Washington, D.C., Honduras, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia. To date, 94 USAID and State Department staff members have participated in the training. USAID is working to bring the training to eight additional missions and embassies over the next two years, with an annual target of 100 staff per year.

### **SRE Policy Implementation Going Forward**

USAID will continue to operationalize the principles and framework of the SRE Policy through a suite of new resources and implementation activities including:

- Continued advancement of the Agency's partner diversification efforts through partner meetings with local faith-based organizations, religious leaders, and diaspora groups.
- Launch of the Bridge Builders Collaborative, a community of practice for USAID staff who are interested in learning about and advancing SRE throughout the Agency. The Collaborative will bring together Mission and Washington, D.C. staff on a bimonthly basis to share knowledge, resources, ideas, and SRE opportunities. It is intended to be a community where the USAID workforce can share experiences, challenges, opportunities, principles, and best practices engaging with religious actors and community organizations at USAID.
- Continuation of the policy roadshow during which FBNP will meet with USAID bureaus, missions, and independent offices to provide an overview of the SRE Policy and its implementation plan, as well as how they connect to the specific activities in each bureau.
- Development of sector guidance, in collaboration with USAID missions and bureaus, to provide evidence-based recommendations and implementation guidelines to help USAID staff effectively engage religious actors when working across various development sectors.
- Advisory support for USAID missions and bureaus, universities, and partner organizations investing in research projects on SRE and the role of religious actors in furthering positive development outcomes to build the evidence base on these subjects.
- Development of a learning agenda to increase the impact and sustainability of development and humanitarian assistance programs through SRE. In line with [USAID's Learning Agenda](#), the FBNP learning agenda will recognize knowledge gaps, formulate relevant questions, and plan learning activities to address them. This will allow the office to create, expand, disseminate, and support the widespread and systematic application of evidence-based knowledge in the field of SRE for USAID and the broader development community.
- Publication of a one-hour, online, internal training course and companion micro-learning sessions that will provide an introductory overview of SRE. This course will be used as a refresher for individuals who take the four-day training and will be available for staff in hardship posts that cannot host an in-person training.