

MEMORANDUM

TO: USAID Transformation Task Team

FROM: Nora O’Connell (Save the Children) and Justin Fugle (Plan International-USA), Co-Chairs of the Big Ideas for Women and Girls Coalition

DATE: January 4, 2019

RE: Feedback on USAID’s Draft Policy Framework

Thank you for sharing the “Draft USAID Policy Framework” and for extending to us the invitation to contribute to its development. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met, particularly those of girls and women, and that all of our coordinated efforts contribute to sustainable development, stability, and resilience. We strongly believe that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is at the very heart of such efforts and an absolute prerequisite to the self-reliance of communities and countries.

We appreciate the many positive references to sustainability and accountability throughout the text of the draft policy framework. Additionally, we believe that there should be more specific reference to the importance of gender analysis and the links between gender equality and sustainable development, conflict prevention, peace, and security. Research by the International Monetary Fund has found that gender inequality is simply bad for economic growth.ⁱ A 2015 McKinsey Global Institute study found that under a “‘full potential’ scenario in which women play an identical role in labor markets to that of men, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26%, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.”ⁱⁱ

We have attached the draft policy framework with our comments and suggestions as to where the inclusion of nuanced gender equality analysis, concrete language, and strategic references would strengthen the framework. Many of our language suggestions are drawn from existing US policy frameworks, such as the ADS 205, the National Security Strategy, and the Joint Strategic Plan.

We offer the following overarching comments and recommendations for your consideration:

- 1) **Country Led Development:** We believe a stronger emphasis should be placed in the draft policy framework on countries driving their own development. Progress will require a multi-sectoral approach with gender as a cross-cutting issue. In referencing partnership with local actors, more emphasis should be placed on the active participation of women and girls in order to achieve sustainable outcomes, including women’s ministries, women’s and girls’ civil society groups, and women private sector leaders. At the same time, there should be efforts to ensure that both local and national government officials are invested in an approach which takes gender equality into account. Thus, gender integration is not just seen as something done by experts at USAID, but rather by local women’s organizations and female stakeholders, as well as the government, all of whom are part of the partnership at the national and sub-national level.
- 2) **Inclusion of Gender Equality:** The draft policy framework should reflect USAID’s strong commitment to gender equality as a critical factor driving the self-reliance of communities and countries, and a prerequisite to sustainability, reflecting years of research, data, and learning on

the centrality of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment to sustainable development outcomes and sustainable peace. Additionally, staff capacity and expertise on gender at USAID is particularly critical and should be highlighted in Section 4 of the draft policy framework on "Strengthening USAID Today and for Tomorrow." If development is not inclusive in addressing the needs of different groups, it will not be as effective. The mainstreaming of gender throughout would better align this draft policy framework with stated aims and long-held values of the US government.

- 3) **Gender and Self-Reliance:** It is not apparent from the document that gender equality is an evidence-based approach that can lead to countries meeting their own development needs and becoming strong partners to the US over the long term. This should be more explicit in the document to reinforce the gender policy at USAID and efforts to mainstream gender throughout the agency. As USAID thinks about strategic transitions and legacies, the promotion of gender equality and more women in political positions are important progress indicators. Improving gender equality, and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence in particular, helps countries to reduce poverty, drive progress on economic development and trade, address national and international security issues, and tackle corruption and poor governance.
- 4) **Gender Data:** In the draft policy framework there is scant reference to the importance of collecting and using data to achieve USAID's vision for the Journey to Self-Reliance. High quality and timely aid data is critical to addressing country needs. Particularly, disaggregated data by sex and age will help strengthen a country's capacity and commitment on gender equity. The use of F gender indicators and Gender Equality policy markers should be strongly encouraged. Marking projects with a policy marker at the design stage will promote and increase gender integration and provide more robust information on USAID's gender work.ⁱⁱⁱ

We hope our comments are helpful in the development of the draft policy framework and contribute to the strengthening of US assistance globally. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continued conversations on how to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remain central in our efforts toward a more prosperous and peaceful world.

ⁱ <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp16111.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

ⁱⁱⁱ Siobhán Foran, Aisling Swaine & Kate Burns (2012) Improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action: progress in implementing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker, *Gender & Development*, 20:2, 233-247, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2012.687221