

COUNTRY OWNERSHIP PRIORITIES

COUNTRY OWNERSHIP OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE BEGINS WHEN DEVELOPING COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS SET THEIR OWN PRIORITIES FOR NEEDS THAT MUST BE MET, AND AID SUPPORTS THOSE PRIORITIES.

UPDATE: In 2016, MCC released a 5-year strategic plan that maintains the agency's commitment to country ownership, and pledges to deepen its engagement and investment in local stakeholders throughout its programs – including priority setting, procurement, domestic resource mobilization, and impact evaluation.

- ▶ **High priority:** By July 2016, USAID should complete and release revised internal guidance, through the Automated Directives System, that promotes country ownership in policies and programming. This should include promoting adaptable, flexible programming and encouraging Missions to better incorporate learning and respond to local contexts and stakeholders.
- ▶ **High priority:** Congress and the Administration should increase flexibility for earmarks and initiatives in Fiscal Year 2017. New requirements in the FY 2016 State Department and Foreign Operations Appropriations Act made sector allocations even more binding and reduced the ability of USAID's field missions to respond to local priorities.

IMPLEMENTATION

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – INCLUDING LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR – SHOULD BE THE FIRST AND DEFAULT OPTION FOR DELIVERING AID WHERE APPROPRIATE CAPACITY AND CONDITIONS EXIST.

UPDATE: PEPFAR's Amb. Deborah Bix committed to making the Sustainability Index 2.0 public, which will be integrated into PEPFAR's Country Operational Plans to better ensure that partner countries can maintain epidemic control themselves.

- ▶ **High priority:** By July 2016, USAID releases metrics for sustainability and self-reliance. USAID has missed its own December 2015 deadline to release updated measures of sustainability and the extent to which programs are locally led, owned, and sustained. These measures should be completed and made public by July 2016, so they can be integrated into programs across USAID.
- ▶ **High priority:** PEPFAR should immediately release and implement the final Sustainability Index 2.0 in order to effectively track progress on sustainability efforts, including how to enable local actors to sustain results after PEPFAR transitions out of areas.

RESOURCES

ULTIMATELY, PARTNER COUNTRIES NEED TO RAISE AND INVEST MORE OF THEIR OWN DOMESTIC RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY.

UPDATE: At the Third International Financing for Development Conference in July 2015, developing countries and donors, including the United States, pledged to double assistance for domestic resource mobilization in three years in accordance with guiding principles of accountability, ownership, and transparency.

- ▶ **High priority:** Congress should signal strong support for domestic resource mobilization (DRM) in Fiscal Year 2017. The U.S. should establish a transparent funding baseline and path to fulfill its 2015 commitment to double support for public sector domestic resource mobilization in three years. Investment should be aligned with MFAN's Principles of Public Sector Domestic Resource Mobilization and should not establish additional earmarks or directives.
- ▶ **High priority:** By July 2016, PEPFAR should report on progress made in countries selected for its \$63 million innovative health financing initiative announced in 2014. Congress and the public need an update on the status of this effort to encourage partner countries assume increasing responsibility for health investments.



ACCOUNTdown TO 2017

PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMER 2015 – WINTER 2016

The Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN), in its “ACCOUNTdown to 2017” campaign, called upon Congress and the Administration to enact key reforms in 2016 to strengthen the reach and effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance. Over the past two decades, bipartisan leadership has strengthened the ability of U.S. foreign assistance to confront threats, reduce poverty, and advance American interests. Today, the U.S. faces significant challenges around the world – from extreme poverty and humanitarian crises to environmental degradation and collapsing states – making effective foreign assistance more important than ever.

This brief describes recent progress made to strengthen the accountability and country ownership of U.S. foreign assistance and outlines further steps for the U.S. government to take this year. To hold Congress and the Administration accountable for results, MFAN will update and release periodic assessments of progress until January 2017.

ACCOUNTABILITY TRANSPARENCY

DATA DRIVES ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN IT IS HIGH QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE TO ALL DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS, TIMELY, AND USABLE.

UPDATE: The U.S. government failed to meet its commitment to publish all agencies’ foreign aid data by December 2015. Though overall performance remains mixed, individual agencies have made some progress: In July 2015, USAID published a plan for meeting this transparency commitment; and in December, the State Department published an assessment of how to improve transparency. Further, the 2015 U.S. National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership committed the U.S. to “substantially” improving the quality and comprehensiveness of its foreign assistance data, and to strengthening the capacity of local stakeholders to use data to drive their own development.

- ▶ **High priority: All agencies must meet the U.S. aid transparency commitment.** In April, Publish What You Fund will release its 2016 Aid Transparency Index, ranking the world’s major donors on the aid data transparency. U.S. aid agencies – especially PEPFAR and the Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury – should develop and publish plans for meeting U.S. transparency commitments, and all agencies should continue to improve the quality of their aid data.
- ▶ **High priority: Aid agencies, especially USAID, MCC, and the State Department, should encourage broader data access and use.** Simply publishing data does not ensure that it will be used for decision-making, accountability, and learning. The United States must expand the accessibility and use of aid data by all stakeholders, including by implementing the recommendations in USAID’s 2015 Aid Transparency Country Pilot Assessment and the commitments in the U.S. National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership.
- ▶ **High priority: Congress should ensure consistent funding of ForeignAssistance.gov,** the State Department’s central website for U.S. foreign assistance information. There remains no agreement over where to find the resources to manage and coordinate aid reporting. Congress should ensure a flexible, reliable funding stream for ForeignAssistance.gov to support the transparency and accountability of foreign assistance.

EVALUATION

AID AND DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS SHOULD BE GUIDED BY RIGOROUS EVALUATIONS THAT MEASURE OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES, AND IMPACT, AND THAT INCORPORATE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK FROM BENEFICIARIES.

UPDATE: The Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (H.R. 3766/S. 2184) was reintroduced by Reps. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Sens. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) in October 2015. The bill was unanimously approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in November 2015 and by the House of Representatives in December 2015.

In addition, Reps. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Ted Poe (R-TX) added a provision to the 2016 Defense Authorization bill to encourage the monitoring and evaluation of the Pentagon’s humanitarian, disaster, and civilian programs.

- ▶ **High priority: Congress should pass the “Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act” immediately** to institutionalize monitoring, evaluation, and transparency of U.S. foreign assistance. In 2015, the bill was unanimously approved by both the House and by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
- ▶ **High priority: The Defense Department should strengthen evaluation of its humanitarian programs, and establish a policy for evaluating security cooperation programs by 2017.** The Pentagon spends billions a year on security cooperation programs, which must be evaluated to inform decision-making, improve program performance, and ensure accountability.
- ▶ **High priority: The State Department should review both the quality and use of its evaluations.** Now that the State Department is evaluating programs regularly, the Department should conduct and publish a review of both evaluation quality and how they are used to inform programs and budgets, as USAID has done.

LEARNING

LEARNING TAKES THE BENEFITS OF TRANSPARENCY AND EVALUATION AND APPLIES THEM TO STRATEGY, PROGRAM DESIGN, AND IMPLEMENTATION TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS OVER TIME.

UPDATE: In March 2016, USAID released an important independent review of the use of its evaluations and found that 90 percent of its evaluations reportedly informed program decisions. In February, MCC released a 5-year strategy reviewing lessons learned from previous compacts and explaining how internal processes were then adjusted.

- ▶ **High priority: Aid agencies should establish systems for learning.** In particular, USAID, PEPFAR, and the State Department should develop systems to ensure that new research and findings from evaluations are shared widely and used to inform program design and decision-making.