

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Gayle Smith  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, DC 20523  
Attn: Ms. Michele Sumilas

Dear Administrator Smith:

As you know, the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) stands ready to work with you to ensure the reforms initiated by this Administration are achieved and institutionalized for future leaders. MFAN sees the revisions to USAID's internal Automated Directives System (ADS) guidance as a critical opportunity to shape the future of the Agency and turn policy into practice. Given the influence of this guidance on the Bureaus, Missions, and implementing partners, the ADS is a critical instrument to further operationalize and strengthen the pillars of aid effectiveness.

There are some key policy decisions facing USAID as it considers this rewrite. This is the moment when policy principles – such as supporting local ownership – either will or will not be translated into the following: how the agency operates; what programs look like; how the agency is organized and resourced; how it defines success for its staff; and where and how decisions are made.

We hope that the answers to these fundamental questions will reflect this Administration's as well as your personal commitment to increasing accountability for local ownership and empowering Mission staff in the field. The ADS revisions offer the opportunity to operationalize the policy decisions you will make in response to those questions.

Consistent with administration policy, we ask that the revised guidelines be framed around the goal of enhancing local ownership, including delegating more decision-making authority to the country level, expanding relations with local partners (including reducing the compliance burden), and prioritizing long-term results.

In our view, country ownership and sustainability cannot be fully realized without clear accountability. As the adage says, "what gets measured, gets done." We encourage you to consider MFAN's [Metrics for Implementing Country Ownership](#) as you finalize the Agency's indicators on sustainability and look for opportunities to incorporate ownership into the ADS guidelines.

Mandating and publicizing ownership and sustainability indicators for Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) and procurement instruments is one important element of helping USAID to institutionalize these pillars of aid effectiveness. As the ADS stands now, ownership and sustainability have no associated performance indicators. While the ADS mandates a Sustainability Analysis as part of the CDCS process, follow-through on sustainability itself is not required. This is in marked contrast to the mandatory Gender Analysis, put into practice through ADS 203.3.8, "Reflecting Gender Analysis in Performance Indicators." This excellent example of linking policy to practice should be followed for local ownership and sustainability as well.

Year after year, the urgent has crowded out the important. We applaud your call for "strategic patience" during your recent remarks on Capitol Hill, and believe that putting the full weight of the ADS behind

ownership and sustainability would enable Mission Directors, Program Managers, and implementing partners to prioritize long-term systemic change along with short-term response.

As ever, we look forward to working with you to advance the ability of partner countries to lead in their own development.

Sincerely,



George Ingram  
MFAN Co-Chair  
Senior Fellow, Brookings



Connie Veillette  
MFAN Co-Chair  
Senior Fellow, The Lugar Center



Carolyn Miles  
MFAN Co-Chair  
President & CEO, Save the Children