

United States International Council on Disabilities

The United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD) is a non-profit stakeholder-led organization working to promote the rights and full participation of persons with disabilities through global engagement and United States foreign affairs.

The membership of USICD believes American disability rights principles should apply to our nation's foreign assistance. All U.S. Government departments with overseas programs, including the Department of Defense, should adhere to the standards of accessibility found in the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and other provisions of U.S. law, and adopt broad disability inclusion policies and practices.

A comprehensive approach to inclusive foreign operations by the United States must include permanent disability leadership focal point positions within the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Agency on International Development (USAID), and other departments and agencies with significant international portfolios. The Office of the International Disability Rights Advisor should enhance disability rights across the entire U.S. foreign policy community, and serve as a resource for other executive departments and agencies that engage in international work.

Specifically, USICD would like to see the following actions:

- the Office of the International Disability Rights Advisor in the Department of State and the USAID Disability Advisor should be permanent roles with an authorization of sufficient standing (e.g. ambassador-at-large status),
- the respective offices should be supplied with adequately trained, long-term staff to support the Disability Advisors, and the resources adequate for influencing the two Departments' practices on disability rights and inclusion.

Between 2012 to 2015, USICD in collaboration with the InterAction Disability Working Group and led by Perkins School for the Blind, conducted a comprehensive study on disability language in USAID solicitations for funding and its impact on the inclusiveness of the resulting awards. This study was requested by and implemented in collaboration with the USAID Disability Team. In short, programs are only inclusive of individuals with disabilities when there is language in the solicitation requiring inclusion. Conversely, the standard, boiler-plate language that is currently required by USAID policy and typically placed within a list of general requirements does not result in inclusive programming. USICD recommends that USAID adopt stronger internal policies that mandate the inclusion of persons with disabilities as part of scopes of work within USAID's solicitations. In addition, the Agency should develop internal tools and supports to promote inclusive programs and continue to train staff on best practices for inclusion across the project cycle.

The membership of USICD believe that no government funds should be spent overseas to pay for institutions that segregate people with disabilities from society. Ending the use of foreign assistance programs to segregate people with disabilities from society is a key area for the permanent disability rights and inclusion leadership personnel.

All foreign assistance and international development efforts funded by the American people must be accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities.