

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
USAID for Mr. Jay Mahanand
Chief Information Officer, U.S. Agency for International Development
Questions from Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, Subcommittee on Government Operations
April 16, 2021, Hearing: “FITARA 11.0”**

1. Question:

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was able to transition to a fully remote workforce seemingly overnight when COVID-19 hit the United States. What enabled you to make that change so quickly?

Answer:

As an international organization that works in some of the most challenging locations around the world, and given the global business demands of how USAID delivers U.S. foreign assistance on the ground, USAID staff were heavily reliant on modern, mobile IT solutions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, more than 10 years ago, USAID began a significant IT modernization effort that provided staff with real-time access to data; applications that support different endpoints, such as laptop computers and a variety of computer accessories; multiple platforms/devices and network types; and accessibility to social collaboration tools and centralized portals to gather and share information to support informed programmatic and business decisions.

These early modernization efforts enabled USAID to have all Agency staff up and running within the first few days of mandatory telework orders in mid-March 2020. USAID continues to be nimble and responsive, leveraging connectivity options such as a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, a cloud productivity suite of mail and collaboration tools, and mobile and cloud strategies to keep USAID’s work moving forward.

Overall USAID has seen minimal impact on connectivity and access, and the Agency’s IT support infrastructure has performed above expectations even as nearly four times the amount of staff overseas telework on a given day compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. Staff adoption and adaptability have been key, as has been the ability to expand certain components of the infrastructure such as increased licenses or capacity. USAID is well situated to continue to support its global workforce for the near term and will continue to innovate to be ready for what is next.

2. Question:

What kind of cybersecurity risks come with having a fully remote workforce? How did you address these risks?

Answer:

USAID already enabled its workforce to be able to work remotely prior to March 2020 but a number of practical challenges presented themselves from the requirement to have a fully remote workforce. For example, onboarding and offboarding of staff suddenly became more challenging and required flexibility and innovation. USAID adapted through virtual enrollment activities, secure shipping of IT equipment, and increased training on privacy and cybersecurity requirements.

Another major issue that USAID faced has been the need to ensure that end point devices, laptops and phones, are properly managed and supported with software patches, updated operating systems, malware protections, etc. despite the fact that they do not touch the Agency physical network. USAID already had much of this capability to support remote devices, including a robust mobile device management system and cybersecurity tools that connect over the internet. USAID added functionality to keep Agency computers updated and provide additional tracking. As staff return to the office and bring devices back they will be systematically checked and updated as necessary.

3. Question:

Are there any particular changes you would recommend that Congress consider as part of Federal Information Security Management Act reform efforts and for possible inclusion in a future Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act scorecard?

Answer:

USAID appreciates the question and understands the importance of both the Federal Information Security Management Act reform efforts and the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act scorecard for driving important progressive change in the Federal Government. For USAID, it is of critical importance to strike the proper balance between maintaining cybersecurity and information security compliance, and maintaining our collaborative business model with implementing partners and host governments. One of the key elements of this is the growing importance of Supply Chain Risk Management (SCRM) both for hardware and software in a federal context. USAID notes the inclusion of SCRM metrics in both the current Inspector General FISMA audit and in the cybersecurity NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 5 requirements. It may also be worth considering SCRM as its own metric, if there were publicly available data to review.

4. Question:

Has USAID fully implemented the 21st Century IDEA Act (Public Law No: 115-336)? What barriers has USAID faced in implementing this law and modernizing its digital services?

Answer:

USAID has been committed to the goal to “improve the digital experience for government customers and reinforce existing requirements for federal public websites” and implementation of the IDEA Act. Along with streamlining our process for implementing Section 508 requirements, USAID has prioritized the USAID.gov public website as the primary user engagement tool for interacting and disseminating information to the general public, our implementing partners, and other government agencies.

USAID’s primary public website complies with the IDEA Act’s requirements in Section 3(a). USAID is on track to achieve all 5 components in the IDEA Act. As required by the law, USAID submitted a report to Congress for modernizing websites & digital services, made the report publicly available, and ensured our public website complies with the standards of the Technology Transformation of the GSA. With respect to the requirements concerning the Digitization of Services & Forms and Electronic Signatures, USAID has been working to digitize contract, grant and other forms, and automate services with digital signatures. Our goal is to complete this implementation by the end of Fiscal Year 2022. Once completed, our partners can digitally do business with USAID. In our implementation, USAID has also worked to overcome some barriers, including funding requirements and modernizing its digital services.

5. Question:

Now that the Software Licensing metric has been retired, what are the next steps the Subcommittee should consider to ensure agencies are effectively using software license inventories to make cost-effective decisions?

Answer:

While the Software Licensing metric has been sunsetted, given the mature implementation of OMB Memorandum M-16-12, OMB still collects cost savings on a quarterly basis through the Independent Data Collection (IDC). The continuation of this practice is encouraged; however, those savings will be embedded in the cumulative savings collected, which are reflected in the PortfolioStat (Portfolio Review) metric. USAID is unaware of additional publicly available data that can be used to measure software license cost-effectiveness decisions.

6. Question:

USAID is one of the only agencies that revised its policies to fully address the responsibilities of its chief information officer to be consistent with federal laws and guidance. How has this helped you effectively manage information technology at your agency?

Answer:

I appreciate the Chairman and Subcommittee's continued efforts and engagement on elevating the role of the CIO in Federal Agencies, and agree with the importance of the CIO having direct access to Agency leadership. I've been encouraged by the progress USAID has made on this front, and expect to continue to see more progress with this new Administration.

Since USAID last testified in 2017 before the Subcommittee, we've solidified the CIO reporting relationship to the USAID Administrator and our organizational chart demonstrates my direct reporting relationship. For the last few years I have had bi-weekly meetings with the Administrator or Deputy Administrator to discuss the state of Agency IT. These regular meetings as well as the updated reporting relationship have elevated the awareness of cybersecurity and other information technology to Agency leadership. These issues are now accounted for and discussed regularly in Agency leadership meetings and included in important funding decisions. For example, while the CIO manages and approves the entire central IT budget for the Agency, the CIO also now has an oversight role in our Senior Obligation Alignment Review, which requires that any Agency procurements greater than \$100 million undergo increased Agency scrutiny. If an award includes IT resources for use by agency staff, the Operating Unit is required to get CIO review and approval.

7. Question:

How is USAID using the transition to the Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions program to modernize its communications infrastructure?

Answer:

USAID is focused both on the transition to the Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) program and to leveraging it for modernization. When the metric was first previewed in July 2020, USAID was still working on awarding a contract and moving forward on the first stages of transition.

We have since completed the award, by working closely with GSA and our vendor. We are pleased to report that we have just surpassed the milestone that mandated 50% of our services be disconnected by March, 30 2021; this effort should be reflected on the next scorecard. We are looking forward to fully leveraging EIS for a variety of services, including potentially expanded software-defined networking in a wide area network (SD-WAN) capabilities, additional support for our overseas operations, and expanded inherent cybersecurity functionality in our backend infrastructure.

8. Question:

What is the status of adoption and implementation of the Technology Business Management framework at USAID? What challenges, if any, has USAID faced throughout this implementation?

Answer:

Over the last few years Technology Business Management (TBM) has become a mainstay in how USAID collects, rolls-up and reports our IT costs for the Agency. By coupling our FITARA authority to oversee IT acquisitions and working collaboratively with our Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Senior Procurement Executive, and our General Counsel, USAID has been able to put in place a process where we capture dramatically more IT spend and report it via TBM than was possible previously. The biggest challenge we still face in this area is the investments that are needed to increase automation across the enterprise systems in order to manage and improve the process; today, the TBM process is still rather labor intensive. For example, most Agencies still need to prioritize the modification of their financial systems to make the collection, analysis and usability of TBM data more efficient.

9. Question:

How has USAID used the General Services Administration's Application Rationalization Playbook when developing strategies to modernize high-value assets or core mission applications?

Answer:

USAID believes GSA's Application Rationalization Playbook is a good resource for modernization recommendations and best practices, but has not yet specifically leveraged it as part of our modernization efforts. USAID adopted a "Cloud First" methodology many years ago and has migrated almost every enterprise application, as well as our data center capability, to the cloud. The continuous improvement processes that are in use at USAID aligns with the Playbook. USAID continues to maintain an inventory of its systems, functionalities, and alignments against Agency requirements. As new demands come in through business requests, the Agency uses this inventory and our rationalization processes for assessing new applications versus the applicability of existing systems.