



Chairwoman Barbara Lee
Subcommittee on Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Hearing: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) FY22 Budget Request
May 27, 2021

As Prepared

Welcome Administrator Samantha Power back to the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. You are certainly no stranger to the Members of our Subcommittee - from your years serving as U.N. Ambassador to your various other roles championing human rights, atrocity prevention, democracy promotion, and multilateralism – it’s wonderful to have you here today.

This is, of course, our first opportunity to welcome you as Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development – a role to which you bring a depth of knowledge and exceptional qualifications. We are grateful to have you at the helm of America’s foremost international development agency and for being with us today.

Tomorrow, the Administration will release the detailed fiscal year 2022 budget request for programs and activities under the jurisdiction of this subcommittee. USAID’s portion of the request is expected to increase at least 10 percent above the current level.

I want to start with this fundamental question: will the Administration’s budget request place development on an equal footing with diplomacy and defense?

One of the many painful lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is that we can no longer afford to underprioritize USAID’s mission of saving lives, reducing poverty, strengthening democratic governance, and helping people emerge from humanitarian crises. These objectives are just as important to our security as our alliances around the world and our military operations.

Of course, poverty and poor governance are not problems the United States can fix with a magic wand. USAID does its best work when we work alongside local people and communities to help them develop themselves, their countries, and their own communities. To be enduring, our development efforts must support local actors and make sure their priorities are reflected in our programs. Your predecessors, such as Raj Shah, Gayle Smith, and Mark Green, prioritized this. I am interested to hear your plans to work directly with more local partners, as well as how our appropriations legislation can help these efforts.



The core strength of USAID is, and always has been, its devoted and passionate public servants from the top down. Yet, I remain very concerned about long-standing, institutional barriers to diversity that exist in many of our foreign policy agencies. Administrator Power, I know you are working on a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy for USAID. Please let us know how we can partner with you in ensuring that the Agency draws strength from the diversity of America.

The Administration's request is expected to propose necessary investments to respond to, and recover from, the coronavirus pandemic as well as ensure that we are much better prepared for future global health threats. For both moral and scientific reasons, America must act with greater urgency to help other countries contain the virus.

The scope of the problem is enormous. COVID threatens to erase decades of anti-poverty gains. This means we must make investments at the scale of the challenges in front of us. But beyond recovery, we need to catch up to ensure that we are able to help our partners achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on schedule by 2030. I look forward to hearing your detailed strategy for achieving the SDGs.

Democratic backsliding is a related challenge. Even before the pandemic, there was enormous cause for concern, and yet we've seen authoritarian tendencies grow even stronger over the last year. Freedom House reports that nearly 75 percent of the world's population lived in a country that faced deterioration last year in democratic freedoms.

I would appreciate hearing your views how the United States can advance democracy abroad – even as we acknowledge and commit to fixing our democratic weaknesses at home. Does USAID have the resources it needs to work in new and creative arenas – not just on political parties and elections - but also on cultural norms and institutional changes needed to truly advance democratic values?

Lastly, I am hopeful that your leadership will bring a renewed commitment to prioritizing women at the center of development. This should include making up for lost time in the area of family planning, which has not received an increase in funding in over a decade. We cannot make long-term gains toward any of our other development goals while leaving out the reproductive health care needs of women, particularly after a global pandemic which we know disproportionately affected them.

When women - especially those living in underserved remote areas – have access to family planning information, contraceptives, and services, they have healthier pregnancies and babies, they contribute productively to their families and communities, and their children are much more



likely to go to school. Women, and their health, should be integrated into all of our development efforts – and be central to all of our other goals.

Administrator Power, I want to thank you again for being here today and for your tireless work to promote human rights and dignity around the world. I look forward to your testimony.