



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# LGBT VISION FOR ACTION

Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals



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THE INCLUSION OF LESBIAN,  
GAY, BISEXUAL, AND  
TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

# MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

In a changing world, the principles that guide our work matter more than ever. That's why, over the last four years, we have begun a critical shift in the way we administer our assistance. We're pioneering a new model of development that places a greater emphasis on diversity to empower the world's most vulnerable people. Instead of focusing solely on delivering assistance, we're engaging widely to ensure development is inclusive of the partners we work with and the local communities we reach. Key to that effort is protecting—and advancing—LGBT human rights around the world.

Today, there are 77 countries that criminalize homosexuality—and in seven of them, it is punishable by death. Across the globe, LGBT people are barred from getting an education, seeking jobs, running for office, raising families and starting businesses.

In a groundbreaking Presidential Memorandum, President Barack Obama directed USAID and all federal agencies engaged abroad to ensure that the United States promotes and protects the rights of LGBT people. Already, our Agency has pioneered innovative ways to integrate LGBT considerations into our work such as conducting first-of-its-kind workplace training and strongly encouraging our partners to abide by principles of non-discrimination in their employment practices. This Vision represents the next step in our ongoing response to the President's call to action—underscoring our enduring commitment to advancing the health, safety and prosperity of the world's most vulnerable people. What's more, equality is not only a matter of human rights, but is also critical to sustainable development. A recent World Bank study estimates that the economic cost of LGBT discrimination is as high as 1.7 percent of global GDP. Simply put, LGBT discrimination stifles innovation, curbs economic growth and locks people into the devastating cycle of extreme poverty.

This Vision outlines our Agency's commitment—both in Washington and abroad—to include LGBT considerations in every area of our work, and in every place we work. It provides a set of core principles that will guide our efforts to advance the freedoms and security of LGBT people throughout the world, from expanding life-saving health care to financing small businesses. And it will ensure that our Agency is not only helping more people with our programs, but that the progress we make is sustainable.

Ultimately, our Agency is committed to ensuring that all citizens—no matter who they are or who they love—are equally empowered to secure better lives for themselves and their families. This Vision for Action will help our Agency and its partners continue to come together to make a difference for LGBT people everywhere.



**Rajiv Shah**  
Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID's vision is a world in which the human rights of LGBT persons are respected and they are able to live with dignity, free from discrimination, persecution, and violence. In this world, the human rights of LGBT persons are upheld; they are able to participate fully in democratic decision-making in their households, communities and countries; they have equal access to sustainable livelihoods, economic assets and resources; and they are not barred from accessing the basic education, health and other services that are enjoyed by their fellow citizens and that are essential for personal well-being and growth. LGBT persons and their allies can come together to advocate for the equal treatment for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

There are numerous urgent challenges facing LGBT persons worldwide and attempts to address these challenges often confront deep-seated resistance and other barriers. At the same time, however, there are many windows of opportunity to ensure that USAID's development work is truly inclusive, capitalizing on the forward momentum and increased visibility of work in this sector that has built up over the past few years, especially since the release of the 2011 Presidential Memorandum that required all U.S. agencies engaged abroad to "ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons."

The process for developing this Vision for Action was itself a reflection of USAID's commitment to inclusive development. Countless LGBT, other civil society and faith-based organizations from around the world were involved in reviewing a draft of this Vision, ensuring a truly global perspective.

To move this agenda forward, USAID will adopt the following principles: (1) account for country and cultural context, (2) ensure openness and safe space for dialogue, (3) integrate LGBT issues into USAID's work, (4) support and mobilize LGBT communities, and (5) build partnerships and create allies and champions. From this set of five core principles for action and based on promising approaches for work on these issues, USAID will prioritize the following "next steps" to ensure that our development work and our workplace elevate LGBT equality:

- Increase capacity for inclusive development within USAID
- Apply selectivity and focus to integration efforts
- Build capacity of local LGBT organizations in developing countries
- Hold ourselves accountable for upholding non-discrimination requirements
- Expand a learning agenda

This Vision outlines the principles and steps that USAID will follow, in partnership with a wide array of allies and champions, to protect human rights and empower LGBT persons, increase the capacity of LGBT civil society organizations (CSOs), and integrate and elevate attention to LGBT issues in our work, resulting in more transformative development results.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

USAID recognizes that LGBT<sup>1</sup> persons are an integral part of every society and are our colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family members. Through this Vision, USAID intends to re-affirm to staff, our partners, the international community, and beneficiaries that the LGBT community is a vital force in the work that we do and an integral part of our success.

Respect for human rights has long been a fundamental principle underlying international agreements such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which opens with the unequivocal statement that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” USAID’s Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (June 2013) states that integrating democracy, rights and governance (DRG) principles into USAID’s programming is fundamental

to sustainable growth and progress. In so doing, the DRG Strategy elevates and underscores the Agency’s commitments to protecting and promoting the human rights of all persons. LGBT persons should be free from physical assaults, should enjoy political rights and civil liberties, and have equal opportunities and non-discriminatory access to public goods and services. Non-discrimination is the basic foundation of USAID’s inclusive development approach of empowering women and girls, marginalized ethnic populations, indigenous peoples, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, youth, and LGBT individuals. This Vision for Action reiterates USAID’s commitment to championing the human rights of LGBT persons and promoting their inclusion in development efforts as part of a coordinated, whole of government effort.

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<sup>1</sup>USAID recognizes that words, and the understanding behind them, to describe sexual orientation and gender identity may change in different contexts and cultures. It is our intention to use LGBT as an inclusive term for all sexual minorities. For a full list of the terms used in this document, see the Glossary on page 16.

## 2 USAID'S VISION

USAID's vision is a world in which the human rights of LGBT persons are respected and they are able to live with dignity, free from discrimination, persecution, and violence. In this world, the legal rights of LGBT persons are upheld; they are able to participate fully in democratic decision-making in their households, communities and countries; they have equal access to sustainable livelihoods, economic assets and resources; and they are not barred from accessing the basic education, health and other services that are enjoyed by their fellow citizens and that are essential for personal well-being and growth. In this world, LGBT persons and their allies can come together to advocate for the equal treatment for all persons, regardless of

sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

USAID seeks to improve the lives of LGBT citizens around the world by becoming more inclusive in our development efforts and by ensuring that LGBT persons have access to and reap the benefits of our programming, and in so doing, are instrumental in the transformation of their own societies, with the end result that each and every citizen is recognized and equally valued. The inclusion, protection, and empowerment of LGBT persons is critical because drawing on the full contributions of the entire population leads to more effective, comprehensive, and sustainable development results.

## 3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

### Violence and Hate Speech Against LGBT Individuals

According to the UN's first report on LGBT persons in 2011, homophobic and transphobic violence has been recorded in every region of the world.<sup>1</sup> Violence against this group tends to be especially vicious compared to other bias-motivated crimes: "incidents often show a high degree of cruelty and brutality and include beatings, torture, mutilation, castration and sexual assault."<sup>1</sup> Consistent with this overall trend, surveys in the Europe and Eurasia region detail the numerous types of offenses that are inflicted upon LGBT persons because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI); in one survey in the Republic of Georgia, 32 percent of LGBT individuals reported having experienced physical violence.<sup>4</sup> It is often driven by a desire to punish those who violate traditional norms around gender and sexuality. In some countries, (e.g., El

Salvador; Kyrgyzstan, South Africa) it has been documented that lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women are at risk of being raped or forcibly impregnated, in some cases due to widely held beliefs that women who are raped by a man will change their sexual orientation to conform to societal expectations. There are numerous reports detailing the targeted killings of LGBT people, including 31 in Honduras over an 18-month period, 44 bias-motivated killings in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) region in 2009, and targeted killings of lesbians in South Africa, among others.<sup>1</sup> In addition, LGBT persons may be particularly susceptible to being pulled into larger conflicts by virtue of their marginalized status, with fewer resources to defend themselves.

LGBT persons have also suffered violent attacks in response to peaceful advocacy campaigns and demonstrations. Events that have content related to sexual orientation and/or gender iden-



tity often appear to ignite organized resistance, led in some cases by certain faith-inspired groups, Neo-nazis, paramilitary groups, or those using strong nationalist rhetoric to ignite anti-LGBT sentiments.<sup>1</sup> LGBT leaders and civil society activists have been targeted by the most extreme forms of violence. Specific examples include the murder of transgender teen Dwayne Jones in Jamaica, LGBT activist David Kato in Uganda, and the torture and murder of Eric Ohena Lembembe, the director of the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS in Cameroon.

Violent incidents or acts of discrimination frequently go unreported because victims do not trust police, are afraid of reprisals, are unwilling to identify themselves as LGBT<sup>1</sup>, or fear that the police may “out” them to their families and communities. Consistent with these fears, across the world, there are widespread reports of police inaction or brutality in response to sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) related violence. For example, in 2007, the director of the Kosovo LGBT organization QESh received repeated death threats; after the police offered no protection, he was forced to flee the country.<sup>5</sup> Worldwide, hate speech and death threats posted on the Internet are increasingly being reported, but often receive little attention by authorities. In general, because most countries do not have systems in place for reporting or monitoring cases of violence or human rights violations directed at LGBT persons, the prevalence of these phenomena are very difficult to accurately ascertain.

### **Lack of Participation in Civil Society and Democratic Processes**

LGBT participation in democratic processes and government is limited. Of the countries in which USAID operates, only a handful have public officials in office that openly self-identify as LGBT. At the beginning of 2013, there were three Central/Eastern European LGBT members of parliament, two African, two Latin American, one Middle Eastern, and one Asian.<sup>6</sup> While the number of openly LGBT representatives in government continues to grow, significant obstacles remain for successful representation and public-sector support for LGBT equality. Addressing these obstacles is critical, because the presence of even a small number of openly gay legislators has been associated with the development of more “just” policy prescriptions for society at large, and their presence may have a transformative effect on the views and voting behavior of their non-LGBT colleagues.<sup>6</sup>

## **BOX 1: LEGAL BARRIERS**

LGBT individuals and groups face a multitude of legal barriers, including criminalization of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Examples of legal barriers include:

- Seventy-six countries and territories currently criminalize same-sex sexual relations. In many of these countries, individuals can be imprisoned and in at least 5 countries they may be sentenced to death on the basis of consensual sexual activities.<sup>1</sup>
- In the majority of countries in which USAID operates, there is no non-discrimination statute regarding employment, access to housing, and government services that is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>27</sup>
- The lack of legal recognition for transgender persons has placed them outside laws that protect citizens from abuse and discrimination, and hinders their access to health, education, and other social services.
- Laws banning “homosexual propaganda to minors” in some Eurasian countries have raised fears that any show of public support for LGBT people could result in fines or arrest.

Globally, the number of CSOs working on the human rights and well-being of LGBT persons remains relatively small and many of these struggle financially. In many countries, only a very small number of LGBT-focused CSOs exist that have the capacity to conduct effective representation and advocacy activities. Many LGBT-focused CSOs have difficulty locating a safe space in which to meet and operate or engage publicly on issues related to their cause.<sup>7</sup> CSOs that are working on LGBT non-discrimination efforts are sometimes subject to state repression, censorship and violence. Individual human rights defenders who openly advocate for the LGBT community often face hostility and violence, including from police and security forces, as well as secondary victimization from authorities when they attempt to report crimes perpetrated against them

or their community. In many countries, LGBT CSOs have been left out of the development dialogue and process, and other more “mainstream” CSOs and CSO networks that work on related topics (e.g., gender equality, broad human rights issues) do not reach out to support, or seek common cause with LGBT CSOs. Those that do may open themselves up to possible retribution or violence by groups opposed to advocacy for LGBT persons’ rights.

### Obstacles to Accessing Health Care

Discrimination against LGBT persons at the personal, familial, and societal levels has been correlated with long-lasting physical and mental health problems, including high rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and suicide.<sup>8-11</sup> Because of these links, LGBT persons, whether “out” or not, and often from an early age, have significant needs for psychosocial support and health care.<sup>12</sup> However, accessing health care services is among the most daunting challenges the LGBT community confronts. In many developing countries LGBT persons who seek health care services of any kind encounter rejection, humiliation, derision, or, at best, sub-standard services, leading in some cases to pronounced health deficits among LGBT populations. Even where health care providers, clinicians, and government health agencies are accepting of LGBT clients, the service providers often lack basic information or training about the distinct health concerns and appropriate medical and counseling practices for LGBT persons, and for accepted “third” gender persons in countries such as Nepal.

HIV/AIDS health care trends distinctively illustrate the pervasive impacts of stigma and discrimination against the LGBT community. Globally, the burden of HIV infection among gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender persons is disproportionately high. MSM are 19 times more likely to have HIV when compared to men in the general population, and transgender individuals show an alarmingly high HIV prevalence rate, ranging from 8 percent to 68 percent.<sup>13-15</sup> While HIV rates among the general population are falling in many countries, the rates of new infection among MSM have been consistently high or are increasing, particularly among youth.<sup>16</sup> This epidemic continued to expand in most low, middle and upper income countries in 2013. Even though these individuals contribute significantly to national epidemics in both concentrated and generalized settings, they are often marginalized and neglected. Evidence shows that stigma, discrimination,

## BOX 2: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, CRISIS AND CONFLICT

During crises caused by natural disasters or conflicts, marginalization and vulnerability often increase as social networks are disrupted, basic service provision breaks down, and police and justice systems are strained. As an “invisible population” LGBT persons often face challenges in accessing humanitarian assistance due to discrimination or lack of awareness about their unique needs. Additionally, they may face increased risks for violence, exploitation, and abuse.

- An Oxfam International study of the responses to the 2004 Indian tsunami showed that many Aravani (physiological males who have feminine gender identity) were almost completely excluded from relief package distribution, were not given temporary shelters, and were not covered by any social security scheme.<sup>2</sup> The Aravani population was also not provided with official records of deaths and losses.
- IGLHRC’s study of the responses to the 2010 Haiti earthquake showed that because aid ration schemes targeted females as household representatives, gay men and transgender persons did not receive aid.<sup>3</sup> In camps for internally displaced persons, LGBT individuals faced increased risk of gender-based violence as well as secondary victimization by the police. Further risks for LGBT persons developed as sermons on the radio and in churches blamed the earthquake itself on LGBT “sinners” for incurring God’s wrath.
- Gay Syrians have been targeted by both pro- and anti-regime actors, the latter seeking to purify society and the former criminalizing homosexuality and condoning killing gay men. Some have fled to Lebanon where they experience more violence; many resort to sex work for survival.<sup>28</sup>

and social and legal obstacles block LGBT community mobilization around HIV. Gay men, other MSM and transgender persons who are living with HIV often lack access to HIV education or fear entering the health care system for services, such as antiretroviral therapy, thereby impeding or delaying access to life-saving prevention, care and treatment services.<sup>17</sup>

### Impact of Discrimination on Livelihoods

Discrimination, stigmatization, and exclusionary laws can contribute to poverty, and, in some cases, may result in extreme poverty. These same factors also create hurdles for reducing poverty, thus negatively impacting the livelihoods of LGBT persons and their families around the world in multiple ways. However, there are serious gaps in available data on the income levels and economic status of LGBT persons in most developing countries, requiring extrapolation from data that are available elsewhere.

First, LGBT youth are at increased risk for being abandoned by their families and rejected, barred, or deterred from accessing schools, all of which undermine their ability to learn and develop the skills that are necessary for a productive life as an adult. Even though comparable data for the LGBT community is lacking in most developing countries, research in the United States shows that 26 percent of LGBT youth who come out to their families are met with the demand that they leave home. Forty percent of homeless youth are LGBT even though only approximately 5 percent of the population identifies as LGBT.<sup>18</sup> Homeless youth often do not attend school, and worldwide, LGBT youth that are in the school system often report being harassed or bullied by their peers.<sup>19</sup> Homophobic bullying in schools has been found to cause absenteeism in a significant number of students; in one of the largest studies of safe schools to date, students who were bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation had a 27 percent higher absenteeism rate than those who were not.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, an online survey sponsored by Vietnam's Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population showed that 77 percent of LGBT youth experienced verbal abuse and 44 percent experienced physical assault in school; 42 percent of these youth lost interest in school, 33 percent skipped school, and 6 percent abandoned school.<sup>21</sup>

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***“Discrimination, stigmatization, and exclusionary laws can contribute to poverty, and in some cases, may result in extreme poverty.”***

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The livelihoods of LGBT persons are further impacted by discriminatory employment practices, which render them vulnerable to poverty and predispose them to risky and illegal occupations. The vast majority of developing and many developed countries do not have employment protections for LGBT persons. As a result, LGBT persons are frequently not hired explicitly because they are LGBT. Similarly, a lack of employment protections makes LGBT persons particularly vulnerable to being fired without cause. This negatively impacts their earning potential and ability to contribute to the positive economic development of their home countries. Left without access to secure employment, some LGBT persons resort to sex work or other illegal activities to earn income. Data from the United States show that transgender adults are four times more likely than the general population to have household incomes of less than \$10,000 a year, and 16 percent reported sex work or other underground activities as a means for earning income.<sup>19</sup> Transgender persons in Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru and Chile are also disproportionately represented among sex workers.<sup>22-25</sup> A comparative study of African countries showed strong relationships between intolerance and stigma and the social risks faced by LGBT persons, including being evicted from their homes, loss of livelihood, and increased risk of becoming a sex worker.<sup>26</sup> Working in the sex industry, in turn, may increase the risk that diseases that disproportionately affect some LGBT sub-populations may be transmitted to previously uninfected people.

<sup>17</sup>Data collected from transgender adults in the US shows that 77 percent reported harassment and assault during their K-12 education.

# 4 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRAMMING

Numerous urgent challenges face LGBT persons worldwide, and attempts to address these challenges often confront deep-seated resistance and other barriers. At the same time, however, there are many windows of opportunity to ensure that USAID's development work is truly inclusive, capitalizing on the forward momentum and increased visibility of work in this sector that has built up over the past few years, especially since the release of the 2011 Presidential Memorandum that required all U.S. agencies engaged abroad to "ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons." In moving this agenda forward, USAID will rely on the following core principles:

## **Account for Country and Cultural Context**

The conditions faced by LGBT persons vary considerably from country to country, with levels of violence, discrimination, and stigma reflecting prevailing local contexts. At the same time, individual communities may have values, norms, customs, language, perceptions and approaches to development challenges that can be useful in understanding how best to approach LGBT issues. Furthermore, the cultural context in which LGBT persons reside may also create parameters for them to self-identify not as LGBT first, but rather a member of an ethnic, religious, or other group. It is critical to conduct an analysis of this complex array of traditions, customs, and cultural realities prior to developing strategies or programming so that these will be relevant and grounded in specific contexts. In addition, a clear understanding of existing local laws (including levels of government enforcement), policies, and regulations is fundamental to effectively working with LGBT organizations and achieving results-oriented programming. USAID will engage a wide array of stakeholders to map and analyze country conditions and cultural context and will seek windows of opportunity to support local leaders and organizations that can be agents for cultural and legal progress. Tailored, targeted solutions that are appropriate to individual country contexts preserve the "do no harm" principle that is a key underpinning of work with vulnerable groups in development and humanitarian assistance programming. Respecting and understanding country and cultural

parameters in our work will also ensure that USAID's programming resonates with local stakeholders, reducing the likelihood that activities are seen as donor driven, "Western imports" with no intrinsic value to the surrounding context or as incompatible with indigenous mores.

## **Ensure Openness and Safe Space for Dialogue**

As we move forward, it will be critical to be inclusive of diversity of opinion and understanding of LGBT issues, both within USAID and with external actors and partners. USAID will support an Agency culture that creates a safe space for difficult conversations about beliefs, values, and personal biases. A concerted effort will be made to include individuals who may not previously have been engaged on this issue in regular consultations and outreach events. Consistent and intentional inclusion of external stakeholders with different opinions and beliefs will ensure that our work leads to more sustainable programming that benefits LGBT communities and that all voices are heard and are able to contribute fully.

## **Integrate LGBT Issues into USAID's work**

Achieving inclusive development programming will require increasing the integration of LGBT issues into USAID's organizational processes, policies, and programming where windows of opportunity arise and capitalizing on lessons learned from prior work in this area, beginning with health and DRG portfolios. For example, USAID will build on lessons learned from implementing other related policies and strategies to address the specific challenges faced by LGBT sub-populations in situations of crisis and conflict, including in efforts to prevent, recover from, and rebuild after conflict. Across all programming, a deeper understanding of local concepts of identity, influential actors, laws, customs, as well as the geo-political, religious and historical facets of targeted communities will underpin our efforts. Better integration of LGBT issues within USAID field missions' portfolios will result in comprehensive and sustainable development outcomes and the full participation of LGBT persons in development programming. More inclusive development will be fostered best by integrated programming

### BOX 3: LGBT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Recognizing that a partnership approach can be the most effective and sustainable way to build global solutions to complex development problems, USAID came together with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, the Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute, the Williams Institute, and Olivia Companies to create the LGBT Global Development Partnership. The partnership operates in multiple regions of the world and includes:

- **Needs assessments** - to bridge the gap in knowledge about the political and socio-economic realities of local LGBT communities, landscape analyses have been conducted to assess societal attitudes, anti-discrimination protections, incidents of violence, access to health care and education, and the unemployment status of LGBT people in all countries involved in the program.
- **Leadership development** - to promote LGBT civil society participation in politics and advocacy at the local, regional, and international levels, political leadership training is being provided to local leaders and CSOs and capacity is being built around communication strategies, including media production and media campaigns.
- **Coordination and integration** - starting with the landscape analysis, the partnership team works closely with USAID field officers within each country to coordinate efforts and resources. USAID programs and Partnership activities leverage each other to increase the project's reach and impact for local LGBT communities.

that reaches people from all marginalized groups (e.g., women and girls, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBT persons) and that recognizes that individuals may experience multiple intersecting vulnerabilities. Additionally, analyses may reveal critical gaps that

are best addressed by stand-alone programming designed to target particular unmet needs of the LGBT community.

### Support and Mobilize LGBT Communities

Under this Vision and consistent with USAID Forward<sup>iii</sup>, the Agency will support and empower local LGBT CSOs. Open and meaningful participation of LGBT individuals and communities is essential to more equitable and effective development in all sectors, including health, education, economic growth, democracy, human rights, and governance. Inclusion of LGBT persons in the development process ensures that the voices of marginalized citizens are heard, and promotes transparency in decision making that will substantially impact their well-being. It also ensures that governments and donors are accountable to the needs of the LGBT community, including sub-sectors of this community that may face unique challenges (e.g., transgender and intersex persons). USAID will leverage the skills, passion and knowledge of CSOs who have a deep understanding of local context, political will, and feasible entry points for action. Actively promoting the involvement in and ownership of development activities by an array of local stakeholders, including LGBT individuals and LGBT CSOs, will underscore USAID's determination to do "nothing about them without them."

### Build Partnerships and Create Allies and Champions

Advancing the human rights and well-being of LGBT persons requires engaging a wide spectrum of partners. USAID will build partnerships with entities such as host governments, human rights defenders, philanthropic foundations, bilateral and multi-lateral donor agencies, private sector companies, and influential community and religious leaders. Working together allows energies and resources to be harnessed and results in scale and transformation that is not achievable individually. Crafting cohesive and complementary projects ensures that efforts are mutually reinforcing and non-duplicative. Strengthening engagement with private sector partners will ensure that technologically innovative solutions are brought to the table and leveraged. Across all of these efforts, USAID will not only seek out existing allies and champions of the human rights of LGBT persons, both domestic and international, but will also support the widening and deepening of these networks.

<sup>iii</sup>USAID Forward is an ambitious reform agenda implemented in response to the President's call to elevate development as a key part of America's national security and foreign policy. The reform focuses on three main areas to (1) deliver results on a meaningful scale through a strengthened USAID, (2) promote sustainable development through high-impact partnerships and local solutions, and (2) identify and scale up innovative, breakthrough solutions to intractable development challenges.

# 5 PROMISING APPROACHES TO MORE LGBT-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT WORK

**B**ased on work to date, USAID's experience demonstrates that the following approaches hold promise for increasing the extent to which LGBT issues are integrated across Agency programs and operations, and for ensuring equal access to and benefit from development programming.

## Building Attention to LGBT Issues into Operational Policies and Procedures

- USAID policies, guidance, and strategies are inclusive of LGBT concerns. Key examples include the USAID Policy Framework; USAID's Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS) Guidance; USAID's Project Design Guidance; USAID Automated Directives System (ADS); the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy; USAID's Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG); the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; USAID's Global Health Strategic Framework; USAID's Policy on Youth in Development and others. Even in the most restrictive country environments, USAID has successfully incorporated LGBT stakeholders and concerns into the analyses that feed into inclusive development objectives and intermediate results in USAID field missions' CDCSs, Regional Development Cooperation Strategies, Project Appraisal Documents, budget requests, Operational Plans and Program Performance Reports.
- An innovative approach to operationalizing LGBT integration has been taken by USAID field missions that develop LGBT inclusive Mission Orders (MOs) that establish responsibilities and outline the processes and procedures for protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBT persons in mission operations and through programming. In some cases, these MOs are standalone documents that focus exclusively on LGBT issues whereas in others, they are addressed along with gender, diversity, and/or disability in a single inclusive development Mission Order. Some

missions have also established Inclusive Development Advisors or Working Groups that monitor and advise the mission how to better integrate LGBT issues (as well as those impacting other vulnerable groups) across the missions' policies, programs, and practices.

### BOX 4 INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AT USAID MISSIONS

**USAID/Nicaragua** issued a Mission Order promoting LGBT inclusion that elevates awareness, provides training and outreach to LGBT program beneficiaries, and promotes non-discrimination.

**USAID/Malawi** issued an inclusive development annex to its CDCS, which served three purposes. First, it served as a brief about the state of LGBT inclusion in Malawi. Second, it provided ideas about how to advance disability and LGBT issues in mission operations and programming. And lastly, it included a Mission Order to guide the mission as it brings inclusive development to life in its operations.

**USAID/Colombia** piloted the new position of Inclusive Development Advisor to assist it in developing, integrating, and implementing programs, practices, and policies with a gender focus that is inclusive of males, females, and gender non-conforming (LGBT) persons, as well as persons with disabilities. The Inclusive Development Advisor will implement USAID's development policies across sectors and offices.

## Building on Ground-breaking Sectoral Programming Examples

Although projects designed to address LGBT issues have been developed in conjunction with work in a variety of sectors at USAID missions, the majority of this programming has been in health, particularly HIV/AIDS, and DRG. Programming in these sectors has yielded valuable insights and lessons learned that can be applied to similar work in other sectors as well. Examples of these approaches include:

- **HIV/AIDS programming:** USAID-supported HIV research on the burden of the disease, needs assessments, evaluations, and operations research used to design effective program models of targeted prevention, care and treatment services for populations at highest risk have included gay men and other MSM and transgender persons for over 20 years. These efforts have expanded with increased funding over the last decade as part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The earliest efforts by USAID supported development of routine surveillance through behavioral and epidemiologic surveys that provided evidence of the disproportionate burden of HIV risk among these populations; this data sparked international advocacy efforts that resulted in the inclusion of MSM as a priority population in National AIDS Strategies and national planning bodies even where local leaders initially did not acknowledge the existence of men who have sex with men in their countries. USAID develops tailored, comprehensive approaches for HIV-related services supported through peer-led outreach and community-based mobilization, while simultaneously working towards an enabling policy environment, addressing stigma and discrimination. Early interventions were developed first in Asia and Latin America, and more recently were integrated into programming in Africa. The work with transgender persons, even more visible and stigmatized, has been accomplished largely through programs for men who have sex with men, although approaches tailored specifically to this sub-population have expanded significantly in some countries in recent years. USAID's comprehensive model has been replicated by other donors and influenced the development of normative international guidance promoted by PEPFAR, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Joint Program on AIDS (UNAIDS) as international best practice.<sup>iv</sup>

- **Democracy, Rights and Governance sector:**

USAID's efforts to support democratic consolidation have taken two approaches; integration of DRG principles into other technical sectors in order to improve development outcomes in those sectors, or through stand-alone DRG programs. USAID/Colombia has taken the latter approach by supporting local government institutions and civil society organizations to achieve multiple milestones on the road to inclusive rights in Colombia. For example, with USAID support: (a) the Colombian National Police barred discrimination including on the basis of sexual diversity and gender identity and subsequent dialogues in eight cities aimed to prevent human rights violations by the police, (b) in a major step forward, the Colombian Constitutional Court extended partnership benefits on inheritance and property rights to same-sex couples and recognized de facto civil unions, (c) the Government of Colombia's implementation of the Victims and Land Restitution Law ensured that the Victims Unit provides support to LGBT armed conflict victims as well as access to historical memory initiatives to ensure reparation to the LGBT community and (d) other work has focused on self-protection and legal remedies for transsexual women in the region, who are often exposed to severe human rights violations. In Nicaragua, where LGBT persons are highly vulnerable to gender-based violence, USAID/Nicaragua has historically integrated DRG across its PEPFAR-funded HIV/AIDS activities not only to address the health-related needs of MSM and transgender communities and organizations, but also to provide them with training in legal advocacy and financial and institutional strengthening. USAID/Nicaragua is also supporting the nascent LGBT rights movement through an integrated program supported jointly by the offices of Democracy and Governance, Health, and Education, which provides LGBT CSOs with institutional strengthening and technical training and the opportunity to develop and implement short-term, high impact advocacy projects through a sub-grants mechanism.

<sup>iv</sup>This guidance ensures complementary approaches among national governments and other donors including the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which dramatically leverages and scales up PEPFAR's investments. USAID's Vision for Action builds upon a long history of support and global leadership in the fight against AIDS.

## Support for Research and Learning

USAID is committed to utilizing a variety of tools and methods to better understand the lives and needs of LGBT persons across the globe, using this information to design more inclusive programming, and developing a learning agenda around LGBT issues that institutionalizes the lessons learned from our work in this sector, including the numerous lessons that have been documented in project reports and other program documents. USAID's field missions and Washington bureaus have already taken initial steps to move this agenda forward, for example:

- The “Being LGBT in Asia”<sup>v</sup> activity will result in a first-of-its-kind joint analysis undertaken by USAID and UNDP together with grassroots LGBT organizations and community leaders to understand the challenges faced by LGBT persons in seven countries in Asia. The project is based on a multi-sectoral analysis that integrated attention to health, DRG and other sectors, while drawing on donor collaboration, innovative and participatory methodologies, and multimedia and social media technologies to support the empowerment and education of both stakeholders and development partners. The results of the analysis will inform development experts as they craft policy and programming, and provide them with appropriate tools for successful engagement with LGBT persons.
- The Europe and Eurasia Bureau in Washington has produced *Testing the Waters: LGBT People in the Europe and Eurasia Region*, a comprehensive overview of the situation that LGBT people face with a focus on quality of life issues, violence and discrimination, challenges in accessing health-care and other social services, discrimination in employment, and an over-arching description of the institutional capacity of regional LGBT NGOs. The document includes specific sectoral recommendations as to key entry points for programming designed to meet the needs and be inclusive of LGBT people and CSOs, and is expected to result in better-targeted, culturally-sensitive development programming in the region.
- USAID's Middle East Bureau supports an ongoing learning agenda which includes tapping into organizations, individuals and regional efforts to better inform missions' strategies and potential programming. For example, to understand the landscape of the LGBT community in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the bureau supported a “Roundtable on Understanding Marginalized Populations in MENA” in Nicosia, Cyprus in 2014.

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<sup>v</sup>The full title of this activity is “Being LGBT in Asia: A Participatory Review and analysis of the Legal and Social Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Persons and Civil Society”.



# 6 USAID PRIORITIES AS WE MOVE FORWARD

USAID will prioritize the following “next steps” to ensure that our development work and our workplace become more inclusive of LGBT persons and issues. The Agency currently has in place an Agency Coordinating Committee (ACC), led by the Agency’s Senior LGBT Coordinator. The ACC is comprised of members from bureaus and operating units across the Agency, as well as a network of over 300 LGBT points of contact (PoCs), a majority of whom are located in USAID missions abroad. This organizational structure will serve as the foundation for realizing the Vision and coordinating follow-on activities across the Agency and with other USG entities.

## **Increasing Capacity for Inclusive Development at USAID by Developing Training and Other Tools and Resources**

USAID’s work addressing the rights and needs of LGBT persons is relatively new, with the exception of programming designed to protect and assist those who are most adversely affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The experience of other bilateral donors in this field suggests that building staff capacity through training is critical to achieving results. USAID is committed to the development of a suite of new and innovative training opportunities, building on the successful launch of the Agency’s (and U.S. government’s) first online course on LGBT inclusion (*Introductory Training on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Inclusion in USAID’s Workplace and Programming*) as well as other successful trainings at USAID field missions, and including new efforts to integrate attention to LGBT issues into trainings primarily designed to address other topics. Additional tools may include “How-To Notes”, sector specific materials, resources that provide concrete recommendations on how to integrate LGBT issues across USAID programming, and other materials. This suite of resources will be useful not only for LGBT PoCs but for all USAID staff who are involved in the design, management and monitoring of Agency programming. Building the capacity of USAID staff to do gender and other social analyses themselves will not only build their awareness of the critical role that cultural norms play but will also be a major step forward for inclusive development efforts. The

end goal of the suite of capacity development efforts is an expanded network of LGBT champions, allies and PoCs in all USAID field missions, and an increase in the number of USAID leaders who are energized and engaged by this issue.

## **Selectivity and Focus in Integration Efforts**

USAID’s focus on the integration of LGBT issues into programming will initially prioritize key entry points in sectors where action is urgently needed and where the Agency has the deepest level of prior experience, in particular, the health and DRG sectors. Integration in these sectors has been successful – safe and effective – even in challenging environments. Being selective acknowledges the resource constraints the Agency faces and is consistent with the principles of selectivity and focus. Building on country assessments and other available diagnostics, LGBT-inclusive approaches and activities should be integrated into other sectors as well, including humanitarian assistance, climate change, gender-based violence and anti-trafficking activities, education, clean energy, economic development, agriculture and food security programs. Relatively simple, inexpensive entry points for LGBT inclusion in new sectors include the collection of quantitative and qualitative data that address the experiences of LGBT persons, research that fills gaps in knowledge about LGBT issues in particular contexts, and focus groups and other methods of consulting with LGBT stakeholders.

## **Building Capacity of Local Organizations and Leaders**

USAID’s support for CSOs should be strategic and focused on providing accessible, practical tools and resources that can be easily used and maintained, given country conditions. This support will ensure that LGBT persons have capable organizations that can advocate and provide for their needs. Resources will be focused on strengthening CSOs’ strategic planning, financial management, internal governance processes, human resources, and capacity to network with other local and regional like-minded organizations, including those that work on related gender and

human rights issues. This organizational development strengthening will be paired with cultivating the use of innovations in communication and networking, including the use of social media platforms and Internet communication technologies, which allow for greater and more efficient interaction between USAID's partner CSOs and their LGBT beneficiaries, as well as for more effective outreach and awareness raising. Some of these methods and technologies are being explored and advanced in the context of HIV and AIDS programs, but they could also be leveraged to support an "early warning system" at the country level to monitor and document human rights abuses, threats and violence. USAID's approach will also include reaching out to sub-groups of LGBT persons who may have been overlooked in prior conversations about LGBT issues.

## Accountability for Non-Discrimination

Non-discrimination is a critical foundation for protecting and promoting LGBT persons, both in their communities and in their workplaces, and also for ensuring equitable access to USAID programs and services. USAID already has in place a series of requirements that are designed to reinforce this foundation by protecting individuals against discrimination based on socio-demographic characteristics including race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability status, among others, in our own workplace. USAID strongly encourages its implementing partners and their sub-awardees at all tiers to also develop and enforce comprehensive non-discrimination policies for their workplaces that address protection for all employees, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, subject to applicable law.<sup>vi</sup> In addition, an inherent principle of USAID assistance is that all beneficiaries may participate in USAID programs without discrimination. For our development assistance to truly become inclusive and to ensure that LGBT persons have full access to USAID programs, all operating units are accountable for ensuring that USAID staff and implementers uphold these existing provisions addressing non-discrimination in the context of USAID-funded programming.

## Learning Agenda

Moving this Vision forward will require gathering and sharing knowledge and formulating a learning agenda centered on LGBT inclusion. Progress in addressing the key needs of the LGBT community will be accelerated by closing information gaps; by tapping into existing data and gathering more robust baseline data; by supporting research, testing new, and innovative ideas; and by subjecting our programming to rigorous evaluation. When the results of these efforts are shared in an open and transparent manner, the growing community of practice engaged in this work will be able to build on successes to date and avoid repeating mistakes or missteps.

<sup>vi</sup>USAID continues to encourage full participation of and partnership with nongovernmental organizations, including faith-based organizations, and its hortatory policy shall not be construed to affect the mission, character or identity of these organizations. See USAID's June 19, 2012 policy "Award Provisions Encouraging More Comprehensive Non-discrimination Policies by USAID Contractors and Recipients;" a Mandatory Reference to Chapter 302 of USAID's Automated Directives System. Through this policy, USAID's efforts to protect and promote the human rights of LGBT persons will also be significantly strengthened as USAID contractors and grantees review their own non-discrimination policies. Full text is available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/302mbf.pdf>. A religious organization's exemption from the Federal prohibition on employment discrimination on the basis of religion, set forth in Sec. 702(a) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-1 is not forfeited when the organization receives financial assistance from USAID.

# 7 CONCLUSION

Stigmatization and discrimination can deprive LGBT persons of human rights, render them vulnerable to high levels of abuse and violence, and bar them from taking advantage of many of the opportunities and resources available to their fellow citizens. These patterns profoundly disadvantage not only individual LGBT persons, but also the many communities and countries that suffer the loss of their social, civic, and economic

contributions. This Vision outlines the principles and steps that USAID will follow, in partnership with a wide array of champions and allies, to protect human rights and empower LGBT persons, increase the capacity of LGBT CSOs, and integrate attention to LGBT issues into our work, resulting in more effective and inclusive development results.

## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Ally** – Someone who is not part of the LGBT community and supports the LGBT community

**Asexual** – Having no sexual desire for persons of the same sex or opposite sex

**Bisexual** – Emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to men and women

**Gay** – Emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same gender

**Gender expression** – Manifestation of one's gender identity; how a person behaves, appears or presents with regard to societal expectations of gender. One's gender expression may not necessarily match one's gender identity

**Gender identity** – Personal sense of one's gender — which may or may not align with norms attached to birth-assigned gender

**Gender non-conforming** – People who do not conform to social norms about how they should look or act based on their birth-assigned gender. Gender queer is sometimes used interchangeably with this term

**Intersex** – Physical range of conditions including congenital discrepancy or incongruity between genetic (or chromosomal) and phenotypic (or physical appearance) sex or in secondary sexual characteristics

**Lesbian** – A woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to other women

**LGBT** – An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. There are many other variations on this acronym that are used in different contexts, including, for example LGBTI, which adds a reference to intersex people; LBGTIQ which adds reference to queer and questioning; and, LGB-TIQA which adds reference to asexuals and allies.

**Sexual orientation** – An emotional, romantic, sexual and relational attraction to another person; may be a same-sex orientation, opposite-sex orientation, bisexual orientation, or asexual

**SOGI** – sexual orientation and gender identity

**Straight** – A person whose emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction is to people of the opposite gender

**Transgender** – People who experience and/or express their gender differently from the social norms attached to their birth-assigned gender; it is an umbrella term that includes people who are transsexual, cross-dressers or otherwise gender non-conforming

**Transsexual** – A medical term describing people whose gender identity and birth-assigned gender do not line up, and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment

**Other terms** – Every country and society has its own terms and expressions for sexuality and gender, such as kuchu in Uganda and hijra in South Asia

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