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Faith-Based Organizations and U.S. Programming in Africa

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you as the Director of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to update you on our work at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with faith-based organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. In today's testimony, I'd like to address our experience working in partnership with faith-based organizations to achieve our foreign assistance objectives and describe the results we are seeing.

As you are aware, sub-Saharan Africa is the world's poorest region: over half of its 700 million people live on less than \$1 per day. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has completely overwhelmed many health systems and impoverished families. The aftermath of lingering conflict and armed strife have exacted a huge toll on the people of this region, severely limiting economic growth and challenging the delivery of much-needed social services. As a United States Government Agency (USG), we engage with a wide variety of partners to advance our work and we find faith-based organizations to be critical to this effort.

USAID's Rationale for working with Faith Based Organizations

The Agency's underlying rationale for working with faith based organizations (FBOs) is simple: in many of the difficult contexts in which we work, FBOs have proven to be effective. The following quote provided by Samaritan's Purse points to several comparative advantages of FBOs:

"The Church (or other FBOs including traditional healers) can be viewed as the largest, most stable and most extensively dispersed non-governmental organization in any country. Churches are respected within communities and most have existing resources, structures and systems upon which to build. They possess the human, physical, technical and financial resources needed to support and implement small and large-scale initiatives. They can undertake these actions in a very cost-effective manner, due to their ability to leverage volunteer and other resources with minimal effort."

USAID learned early in its history that faith-based and community-based organizations are on the forefront of meeting human needs around the world, and are excellent implementing partners for development programs because of their dedication to results, their ability to reach the grassroots level of society and their capacity to mobilize societies for positive change. Rick Warren, Pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA talks about how no matter where you are in the world, even if there is no electricity, no running water and no real infrastructure..even if they are meeting under a tree, you can still almost always find a church. This is a resource that cannot be ignored when working with hard to reach populations.

I am amazed at the willingness of faith and community based organizations to join together with one another as well as private and public sector agencies in order to combine their strengths to confront critical issues. When properly

implemented the Faith-Based Initiative brings together unique collaborative partners who design and deliver effective and efficient social service delivery systems. To say it more simply, when properly implemented the Faith-Based Initiative frees average people to join with other average people to do extraordinary things in their communities... extraordinary things that are so unique to their village or hometown that no government agency or political body could ever construct or mandate a solution so exquisitely tailored to heal individuals & families and the communities in which they live.

Because of this, USAID has been partnering with faith-based and community organizations since its inception. When it comes to meeting human needs in far away and hard to reach places, faith-based and community organizations get results. Therefore, USAID is putting the vast capabilities and resources that faith-based organizations provide to good use in Africa.

Outreach to Faith-Based Organizations

By Executive Order (13280), dated December 12, 2002, President Bush established a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) at USAID. At that time the President also issued an Executive Order (13279) "to guide Federal agencies in formulating and developing policies with implications for faith-based organizations and other community organizations, to ensure equal protection of the laws for faith-based and community organizations, to further the national effort to expand opportunities for, and strengthen the capacity of, faith-based and other community organizations so that they may better meet social needs ... and to ensure the economical and efficient administration and completion of Government contracts...". (Executive Order 13279, Introduction).

The USAID CFBCI has worked to fulfill this portion of the executive order through a multi-faceted approach. First, we respond to direct inquiries. Faith-based and community organizations call the Agency daily asking for information on how to obtain USAID funding for their projects around the world. My staff also meets regularly with these organizations in groups or individually whenever possible. This assistance takes place primarily through facilitating meetings with appropriate USAID staff either in Washington or in our overseas missions. These meetings help build institutional working relationships with the Agency; and assist FBOs in their efforts to secure USAID funding. This service provides these potential new partners, and those existing partners who would like to expand their relationship with USAID, with essential, up-to-date information on USAID and its programs.

Feedback provided to Faith-Based or Community Organizations (FBCO) is practical and honest, and often includes some form of technical assistance. FBCOs that lack the capacity to manage large sums of federal dollars are encouraged to partner with larger organizations that already receive USAID funding. We also encourage partnerships and the formation of consortiums to enhance the ability of FBCOs to compete when applying for federal assistance.

Another important aspect of outreach is CFBCI participation in conferences that target faith-based and community organizations. CFBCI has co-sponsored, with the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, conferences for Faith-Based and Community Organizations. Over a dozen conferences have been held in cities across the U.S. with attendance ranging from 500 to 1,700. Participants are given an overview on CFBCI and answers to frequently asked questions, including what they can and cannot do with government funding. Participants are able to get specific questions answered on funding opportunities from Agency staff. These conferences provide a unique opportunity for FBOs to interact and exchange valuable information. Contacts are often made that help smaller FBCOs in the competition process.

CFBCI produces materials that highlight opportunities of particular interest to smaller and medium sized faith-based or community organizations. Examples include American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA), Ocean Freight Reimbursement, Limited Excess Property Program and micro enterprise development. Each opportunity includes a web link for more information and contact information for a person representing each program.

Policy Changes to Implement the Initiative

As with all of USAID's partners, faith-based organizations must comply with the same rules and regulations as any other non-government entity that receives Federal funding from USAID to provide critical services. These include the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rules and regulations governing federal grants and contracts. In addition to the rules and regulations applicable to all USAID contractors and grantees, faith-based partners are prohibited from using federal assistance for inherently religious activities, including proselytizing, prayer services and religious study. A faith-based organization may still engage in these activities, but they must be privately funded, separate in either time or location from the secular activities funded with

federal assistance and voluntary for program beneficiaries. USAID currently funds faith and community-based organizations that represent a wide variety of faiths and denominations including those of no faith affiliation at all.

USAID's CFBCI makes itself available as an ombudsman to which faith-based or community organizations can turn if they feel that they are being discriminated against by the agency or contractors. However, the number of complaints has been few, and those rare instances were resolved quickly. Where a compliance issue is raised about a USAID-funded organization, it may be directed to the USAID mission in country, the USAID regional Bureau, the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA) in Washington, or the USAID Inspector General. All complaints received by USAID are investigated, and if warranted, the program in question may be subjected to financial review or formal audit.

Measuring Results

Agency wide, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, USAID made 347 awards totaling over \$591 million to Faith-Based organizations. This amount is up from the 235 awards for over \$521 million made in FY 2004. It is important to note that in almost every case, the implementing organizations competed with other organizations for funding. This is an increase of more than 13% from the prior year. In FY 2005, specifically in the area of HIV/AIDS, USAID's Office of HIV/AIDS provided faith-based partners with over \$23 million in assistance, with the vast majority of that aid going to Sub-Saharan Africa. This total does not take into account the many sub-partnerships with FBOs which would add considerably to the total amount.

Despite this positive trend, we also see that the vast majority of faith-based awards are made to a small number of groups. Therefore, it remains an important role for the Agency to continue its proactive efforts to bring on new partners to the Agency.

Four examples of the USG's efforts to bring on new partners in Africa are detailed below. These programs implement the requirement set forth in Executive Order 13280 Sec. 3(d), to "propose the development of innovative pilot and demonstration programs to increase the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal as well as State and local initiatives."

CORE Initiative-(Community Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic). USAID provides strategic assistance, organizational development, direct grants, and other support to community and faith-based groups in developing countries. Geared to utilizing faith networks, priority is given to groups who commit their own resources and demonstrate the ability to meet needs for care, support, and stigma reduction.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Annual Program Statement for Abstinence and Healthy Choices for Youth (ABY). Through this procurement, \$100 million in new grants will be utilized by faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and other groups to mobilize rapidly to help adolescents, teens and young adults avoid behaviors putting them at increased risk of HIV/AIDS infection in the 15 focus countries of the President's Emergency Plan. The focus countries, which are home to more than 50 percent of HIV infections worldwide, are: Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Annual Program Statement for Orphans and Vulnerable Children affected by HIV/AIDS (OVC). \$100 million in new grants to support orphans and vulnerable children as a part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Eleven organizations, including a number of faith-based organizations, won the five-year grants through a competitive awards process. In 2003, more than 15 million children worldwide under age 18 had lost one or both parents to AIDS. By 2010, it is estimated that more than 25 million children will have lost at least one parent to AIDS. Each U.S. grant will provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in at least two of the 15 focus countries of the President's Emergency Plan.

New Partners Initiative (NPI). This Initiative was announced by President Bush on Dec. 1, 2005. Through NPI, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief will provide \$200 million for grants to new partners to provide HIV/AIDS prevention and care services. The Emergency Plan will reach out to organizations through NPI, working to help build their capacity and assist them in becoming new partners with the U.S. Government. USAID, along with other USG agencies, is an implementing partner of this initiative.

Examples of "Success"

To more fully illustrate USAID experience in working with and through FBOs, I'd like to provide some concrete examples drawn from four African countries.

Uganda

Uganda is largely a religious country with 97% of its people claiming to be one of the following: Catholics, Anglican Protestants, Muslims, Seventh Day Adventists, or Orthodox Christians. In order to reach the mostly rural population, USAID works with organizations of faith, especially in education and health. Through support of Madrasa schools, Islamic religious education has been integrated with secular early childhood education in order to help needy three-to-five year olds better prepare for further education. Through networks reaching into the farthest and smallest communities, religious and faith-based organizations are in a unique position to capitalize on the trust of their constituencies to provide guidance to people about health and behavioral change. The dramatic decline in HIV/AIDS prevalence recorded in the mid-1990's is partly attributed to the involvement of religious and faith-based organizations at grassroots levels and the ability of these networks to mobilize communities. Since the early 1990's, USAID/Uganda has collaborated with faith-based organizations to utilize their established networks to raise awareness, influence behavior change and fight stigma. Faith-based organizations also play unique roles in providing home-based care for people and families affected by HIV/AIDS, mobilizing and referring people to service delivery points, spearheading HIV prevention with particular emphasis on abstinence and mutual fidelity as well as providing end-of-life care and post-bereavement support to families. The spiritual and end-of-life support is particularly critical in the context of a culture that fears speaking about death and dying. USAID/Uganda's partnership with faith-based organizations is currently being expanded through the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), which unites all five traditional religious faiths in Uganda. With USAID/Uganda support since 2001, IRCU has evolved into a nationally accredited coordination mechanism for the faith-based HIV/AIDS interventions in Uganda. Using PEPFAR resources over the last two years, IRCU has provided sub-grants and technical assistance to over 100 FBOs reaching 30,000 people affected by HIV/AIDS including orphans and vulnerable children. In June 2006, USAID/Uganda signed a three year direct contract of \$15 million with IRCU to further roll out prevention, care and treatment services, by targeting underserved areas and populations including those ravaged by armed conflict.

Angola

Since the end of the civil war in Angola in 2002, USAID has worked with faith-based organizations, both international and Angolan, to help the country rebuild, reintegrate and reconcile. Two prominent FBOs among the organizations that have been active partners with the USG in this effort are World Vision (WV) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Through the \$75.5 million Consortium for Developmental Relief in Angola program (March 2003 - December 2005) WV and CRS, along with three other non-governmental organizations, supported the resettlement and agricultural recovery process in the Planalto provinces of Kwanza Sul, Benguela, Huambo, and Bié, helping 210,000 vulnerable and food insecure households transition from emergency to development assistance.

The recovery process included activities such as distributing seeds, tools and animals for traction; strengthening extension services; rehabilitating rural infrastructure including roads, bridges, irrigation systems, community storage structures, schools and meeting centers; reforestation activities; and establishing and training community based organizations to lead conflict resolution and broad-based community participation in decision-making processes. Another project funded by the Mission enables CRS to work on grassroots reconciliation in the province of Benguela by enhancing and broadening citizen participation in local-level decision-making, community initiatives, and conflict management. Finally, the Mission supports the work of the Center for Economic Studies and Scientific Research, an independent think-tank housed in the Catholic University of Angola, which has resulted in new market oriented analyses and the development of several new publications promoting policy reform dialogue.

Kenya

Shortly after losing his wife to AIDS in 1992, Ugandan Canon Gideon Byamugisha became the first African clergyman to openly declare his HIV-positive status. Since then, he has sought to eliminate HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination by advocating the 4 Es-empathy, empowerment, equipment, and engagement; and the 6 Ps-prayers, policies, plans, programs, personnel, and partnerships. With support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through USAID, clergy have recently begun to implement Canon Byamugisha's approach in Kenya.

The Kenya Network of Religious Leaders Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS (Kenerela), the first such network in East, Central, and Southern Africa, was established in February 2004 by 44 religious leaders at a retreat in Limuru, Kenya.

While religious leaders wield significant influence in Kenya, where the vast majority of people are members of faith communities, Kenerela's pointed out that "a deafening silence permeates religious communities with regard to HIV and AIDS." In April 2004, Kenerela members were given technical guidance and financial assistance from USAID via World Vision that enabled them to define their mission and begin work on a plan of work to take them through 2007. Goals include establishing eight regional branches to work "with stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS-related stigma, denial, inaction, and discrimination in our congregations, thus reducing the [HIV] prevalence to 20% within the age group of 15-49 years."

The POLICY Project, also in collaboration with World Vision, helped bring together 52 religious leaders from five African countries, all of whom are living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. They shared a common vision of a Kenya "where stigma, denial, and discrimination are nonexistent" and religious leaders "are witnesses of hope and forces of change in their congregations and communities." In August 2004, Kenerela members met with members of faith-based organizations and with people living with HIV/AIDS to discuss ways to work together to reach their shared goals.

Kenerela membership now totals 1,000 in eight provinces and includes pastors, HIV-positive religious leaders, clergy who have lost or are caring for close relatives and congregants. Kenerela encourages congregations to provide home-based care, counseling, and peer education for people living with HIV/AIDS, and for local orphans and vulnerable children. Kenerela also teaches local groups how to effectively manage their projects. Perhaps Kenerela's most important function is to provide accurate information, communication, positive role models, and nonjudgmental support to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Sudan

In Sudan, churches and faith-based groups have played a critical role in the last 35 years, pushing for national, regional and inter-communal peace. Since the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement which concluded an extended peace process to end a 15-year civil war between the dissident Anyanya group and the Sudanese government, and brought relative peace to the country for a 10 year period, church groups have worked to parley issues of church and state, religious, cultural and ethnic diversity and formal mediation methodology into reconciliation processes. The role of churches and faith-based groups, not only as mediators but also as advocates, has continued in recent years, both in the North-South conflict, as well as in the ongoing Darfur conflict.

In the South, church groups have played a part in reconciling various factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and even more actively in facilitating reconciliations between warring tribes and clans. The classic example of the Wunlit Peace-brokered by the New Sudan Council of Churches with assistance from international churches through their "people-to-people peacemaking" methodology- reconciled the Dinka and Nuer people in 1999 and stands as a symbolic model for other ethnic groups in the South to follow.

USAID's programming has bolstered support for this methodology to be applied in reconciling other ethnic groups in conflict, particularly against the backdrop of a North-South conflict which exacerbated these tensions and divided these communities further. Sudanese faith-based groups, with support from their international sister organizations, have continued to be critically involved in quelling tensions in Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal, where they are seen as a credible, legitimate mediators for inter-communal conflict.

On this side of the ocean, FBOs continue to remain engaged in advocacy for support to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and respect for human rights. Most recently, with the Darfur crisis, the world has witnessed how a broad-range of faith-based groups from all religions have coalesced around the Darfur cause and become a powerful advocate on the US political stage for their counterparts in Sudan."

Conclusion

A particularly meaningful resource of the faith-based community to the work of USAID is its deep connections to the most vulnerable people in Africa. FBOs have been and continue to be on the front lines in places like Sudan, Angola, Rwanda, and Uganda. As faith-based organizations have a long history of working with vulnerable populations and an overall successful track record in these areas, we feel it is sound development policy to continue to support them to achieve our mutual objectives. I am encouraged by the steps that have been taken to ensure their participation and look forward to strengthening our relationships with the faith-based community as we seek to pursue our common goals.

Mr. Chairman, I sincerely appreciate this Committee's continuing interest in the use of faith-based organizations and USAID's critical role on the continent of Africa. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today and share with you how the Faith-Based Initiative is making a difference in the lives of people all over the world. I cannot overstate my support of this initiative because I see on a daily basis how it draws diverse groups into incredibly innovative partnerships that can truly transform lives, communities and perhaps even nations. I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to serve in my current position and now would be happy to answer any questions you might have for me at this time.