

## The Development Deep State: Sexual Progressivism in USAID

By Craig Austin Rose II

### INTRODUCTION

Since the Obama Administration began in 2008, the United States has witnessed a sharp increase in left-wing domestic and international social policy and strategy. In recent years, the U.S. government, aligned with United Nations agencies, has pressured developing and conservative nations to liberalize their abortion laws and adopt pro-LGBTQ policies and programming. However, a look at the history of U.S. foreign policy reveals that its promotion of these controversial agendas is not new. Leaders of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were outspoken advocates for abortion and implementers of population control programming until the Helms amendment in 1973, which required USAID's progressive directors to utilize more clandestine policy channels and partnerships to enforce its leftist agenda. This *Definitions* will examine the rise of USAID strategies and policies to entrench progressive sexual and social policy in international aid and bypass congressional oversight.

### USAID and Abortion—A Brief History

With the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, various U.S. development and assistance organizations from President Truman's Marshall Plan were gathered into a single agency for foreign economic advancement: the United States

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Agency for International Development (USAID). In the 1970s, the agency’s priorities shifted from capital assistance programs to “Basic Human Needs,” including population planning, food and nutrition, health, education, and human resources development.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the “population bomb” alarmism, President Lyndon Johnson emphasized the immediate need for action against population growth—“next to peace, the most important task.”<sup>2</sup> The first Director of the Office of Population and Development at USAID, Dr. Reimert Ravenholt, was a staunch abortion and contraception advocate. Under Ravenholt, family planning and population mitigation efforts included abortion as a primary means of achieving population targets and lowering fertility. In the spring of 1973, Ravenholt and his office finalized manual abortion devices to reach rural populations and ordered the manufacturing of ten thousand devices, with plans to call his abortion method “menstrual regulation.” These efforts were interrupted, however, by the passage of the Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act by Congress in December 1973, which proscribed the use of U.S. funds for abortion overseas.<sup>3</sup> A decade later, the executive order by Ronald Reagan known as the Mexico City Policy prohibited *all* U.S. family planning funding to organizations that promoted or provided abortions whatsoever. Since the Mexico City Policy is an executive action and not a law, its removal and reinstatement historically alternate under Democratic and Republican administrations.

Despite pro-life legislative and executive actions, USAID’s Office of Population and Development, incorporated into USAID’s Global Health Bureau and renamed “Family Planning and Reproductive Health,” continues to find ways to advance the abortion agenda. In a 2015 panel at the Wilson Center of former USAID family planning leaders, the directors of the Office expressed their “resilience” and “innovation,” navigating “hostile” (pro-life) administrations and regulations. Duff Gillespie, who led the department from 1986 to 1993, disclosed that despite the Mexico City Policy regulations, the Office worked closely with International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Population Action International (PAI)—international abortion giants—to lobby in Washington to “protect the program.” He also lamented, “the fact that Obama will not interpret the Helms amendment the way it should be interpreted is inexcusable, it’s outrageous.”<sup>4</sup> Another former director Margaret Neuse, who led the Office from 2000 to 2006, said the USAID Office was alert to “infiltration of [Republicans] into the Global Health Bureau,” and expressed that its leadership “looks at rules,” such as legislative pro-life action, as merely “guidelines.”<sup>5</sup> The Office and its directors lauded its ability to outlast unfavorable administrations and maintain its primary

leftist efforts, which continues to present day. After her time serving at USAID, another panelist, Liz Maguire, spent sixteen years as the president of Ipas, an organization with a singular focus on promoting abortion around the world. Ipas, formerly known as the International Pregnancy Advisory Service, took over the manufacturing and distribution of manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) abortion kits from Ravenholt and USAID in the 1970s after the passage of the Helms Amendment.<sup>6</sup>

As the remarkably frank discussion between USAID’s former family planning administrators makes clear, the office has a longstanding and deeply entrenched pro-abortion bias. It has gone to great lengths to undercut pro-life laws and policies, including those that attempt to keep family planning separate from abortion. U.S. foreign assistance—paid for by taxpayer funds and delivered in boxes marked “From the American People”—should not be complicit in overseas abortions.

### The Rise of the USAID Policies and Strategies

Near the end of Obama’s first term as president, the 2010 midterm election of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress witnessed the largest Republican majority in the House of Representatives since 1947. Since the Democrats retained hold of the Senate, the result was a congressional gridlock of heightened partisan tensions.<sup>7</sup> Prior to the midterms, the Obama administration condemned the Defense of Marriage Act and announced that it would not legally defend it. President Obama signed the legislation repealing the policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” which banned open homosexuality in the U.S. military. The Obama White House also issued directives and established programming in favor of LGBTQ advocacy groups.<sup>8</sup> With the arrival of the Republican House majority, progressive legislation stalled. However, within the executive branch, and USAID in particular, new policies were implemented to continue pushing the progressive agenda. Between 2011 and 2016, USAID produced *twenty-two* policy documents in Obama’s last five years in office; a sharp contrast to the four published over the course of the previous fourteen years, beginning with the first USAID “Disability Policy Paper” in 1997.

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The bulk of these policies include progressive language that had been strongly debated in Congress; in 2012, USAID published its *USAID Policy Framework 2011-2015*, a document that “provides [USAID] staff and partners worldwide with a clear sense of our core development priorities...and explains how [USAID] will apply these principles across our entire portfolio.”<sup>9</sup> In the framework, which governs all internal and

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external functions, the Agency commits to “empower social actors and civil societies,” including “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, and other vulnerable populations,” as core tenets of promoting “democracy”.<sup>10</sup> All USAID subsequent policies use this language, in increasingly controversial terms. It is important to note that USAID policy and strategy documents are structured to overlap and reinforce other such documents, including from other agencies and departments. USAID and the State department frequently cite each other particularly on social issues of gender and sexuality. In the 2012 *USAID Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment*, the Agency distinguishes between “women” and “female,” claiming that females are individuals “assigned” a sex at birth, whereas “women” includes non-biological women, or individuals identifying as a woman since “their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity to not match.”<sup>11</sup> After President Obama’s unprecedented presidential memorandum for all executive departments and agencies, the “International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons” in December of 2011, USAID announced in 2014 the *LGBT Vision for Action*, which includes international goals “to promote LGBT civil society participation in politics and advocacy at the local regional, and international levels...including media production and media campaigns,” and other policy goals.<sup>12</sup>

When Donald Trump became president in 2017, his administration inherited over twenty USAID strategy documents, most of which had been launched during the Obama administration. During Trump’s four-year term a few new policies were initiated, on themes like digital technology and working with the private sector. A few others were replaced, but most Obama-era policies remained in effect guiding programmatic funding. One strategy replaced at the end of Trump’s term in office was the policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment, released in 2020.<sup>13</sup> The backlash was immediate. Leading Senate Democrats issued a letter criticizing the initial draft as “read[ing] like a political document,” “fail[ing] to give due emphasis to intersectionality,” and “ignoring the fact that access to comprehensive reproductive health services is essential to achieve equality and empowerment.” Much was made of the fact that the document removed “all references to LGBTQI individuals.”<sup>14</sup> In 2022, President Joe Biden replaced the policy once again, leaving its precursor with the distinction of the shortest tenure of any USAID Policy document—a mere two years.

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USAID—experienced significant pushback in implementing his policies, the election of Biden led to an immediate shift in a progressive direction. The repeal of the Mexico City Policy emboldened USAID to expand its ideological policies and funnel grant money to organizations that promote abortion internationally. Some abortion organizations retained funding under the Trump administration since the policy was not applied to existing multi-year grants. While USAID must receive congressional approval for budget requests and funds, grant recipients, partnering organizations, and policy publications are left to internal discretion and priorities. Almost all policies across development sectors, including climate, biodiversity, governance, and water infrastructure include explicit references to LGBTQ identities, and “reproductive health and rights.” Most USAID policies and strategies are not legislatively mandated unless stipulated through a Congressional bill. They bypass democratic processes and implement contentious subjects through partnerships with progressive NGOs in target countries and its established development missions worldwide. These partnerships are often characterized by the flow of not just funds, but also personnel; the “revolving door” phenomenon between USAID and its contractors.<sup>15</sup>

An example of a bill that did legislatively mandate a strategy to guide U.S. development assistance for women and girls is the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act passed in 2018. The Act which contains a definition of gender as men and women, has largely been abandoned by the Biden administration opting to move away from the economic advancement of women and girls to the promotion of gender ideology in U.S. foreign development and humanitarian assistance.

USAID strategies to promote gender ideology are not innocuous. They are integrated in the policy and programming process at all levels in “ADS Chapter 205.”<sup>16</sup> This internal bureaucratic directive details how all USAID policies at all stages of development, design, implementation, grantmaking, etc. must integrate gender ideology and be vetted by “gender specialists” in every office and bureau of USAID and the U.S. State Department. Without executive pro-life directions, this automated bureaucratic process is already streamlining abortion and LGBT mandates in all USAID programs and policies.

### **Biden’s Present USAID**

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The youth policy exhibits resources affirming “safe abortion” procedures, USAID-sponsored CSE, and an array of “toolkits” for policymakers, activists, and students. Many of the toolkits under the USAID youth policy, called YouthLead, are created for instructors to use as a curriculum for children and adolescents.

the United Nations. At the UN General Assembly, delegates from the world's national governments debate and negotiate documents in which every word must be agreed to by consensus. Certain concepts that are controversial, including abortion, bodily autonomy for children, and issues of gender identity and sexual orientation, are often obstructed because they are not universally acceptable. However, the UN's various agencies and funds have increasingly become untethered from international consensus in setting their own policy course, including the promotion of contentious issues in countries where they deliver aid and peacekeeping and humanitarian services. The majority of these recipient countries are the same member states that object to abortion and gender ideology in international policy.

Paralleling UN agencies' instillation of western sexual ideology into developing countries, the Biden administration holds abortion, LGBTQ rights, and sexual autonomy as matters of international development and security. These views are shared by Democrats in Congress, as demonstrated in June 2021, when Senate democrats introduced the Global Respect Act of 2021. This bill proposed sanctions on any individual in a foreign country, including U.S. citizens and leaders of foreign governments, responsible for “violating” the “human rights” of people who identity as LGBTQ+.” Those in violation of the act would be inadmissible for entry into the U.S.; those already living in the U.S. will be sanctioned with visa revocation and deportation.<sup>17</sup> While this bill has little chance of advancing in a divided Congress, it nonetheless demonstrates the commitment to expand the sexual rights agenda around the world.

To export these ideological goals, USAID participates in global efforts to sexualize young people in and out of schools with comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)<sup>18</sup> and “gender-transformative education.” The *USAID Youth in Development Policy 2022 Update* prioritizes the re-education of young people in conjunction with other USAID policies, incorporating other progressive cross-sectoral strategies from USAID's global water strategy, gender policy, and menstrual health brief. These policies streamline progressive gender ideology and contain language that promotes abortion. The youth policy exhibits resources affirming “safe abortion” procedures, USAID-sponsored CSE, and an array of “toolkits” for policymakers, activists, and students. Many of the toolkits under the USAID youth policy, called *YouthLead*, are created for instructors to use as a curriculum for children and adolescents. One is titled “Children and Adolescents' Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Toolkit,” which promotes sex and sex-education that

includes a core message that girls have “the right to protection from...unsafe abortion,” including by offering so-called “safe” abortion beginning at age 14.<sup>19</sup> Another toolkit for school officials details strategies to create transgender-friendly policies in schools, as well as strategies to approach “non-affirming” parents who disagree with gender ideology or transgender self-identification of their child.<sup>20</sup> With schools and non-governmental actors as the primary means of implementation, USAID can easily fund and partner with progressive organizations to use U.S. assistance for their own designs under the guise of humanitarian aid.

The Trump-era *Global Water Strategy*, which extended to all relevant government agencies including USAID, cited various USAID strategies with novel gender ideologies, though it did not contain explicit LGBTQ or abortion language. However, it has since been replaced by the Biden administration’s *U.S. Government Global Water Strategy 2022-2027*, which is replete with controversial policies.

Using every development sector to introduce progressive programming, USAID states that, “water is also an entry point to advance core democratic values of equality, transparency, accountability, human rights, women’s empowerment, and strong civil society.”<sup>21</sup> The listed high-priority countries consist of strongly conservative nations that have expressed direct opposition to the western sexual agenda in the United Nations, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, and Uganda.<sup>22</sup> In short, traditional countries can expect U.S.-funded water infrastructure programs to target sexual norms.

Furthermore,

“The U.S. government will seek to bolster the participation of marginalized people and communities across sector institutions and processes. It will partner with civil society organizations, particularly those led by and for underserved or marginalized groups, to support their capacity to identify and resolve policy barriers to service access.”<sup>23</sup>

“Marginalized people and communities” are defined as “populations that typically have access to lower quality and more expensive services and inequities due to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics.”<sup>24</sup>

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In addressing the need for adequate sanitation facilities and safe menstruation resources, the document defines menstrual health and hygiene as “the ability of women, girls, and transgender and gender non-binary individuals who menstruate (‘menstruators’ or ‘individuals who menstruate’).”<sup>25</sup> The term “menstruators,” as opposed to “women” or “females,” originates from another USAID supporting document, the *USAID Menstrual Health and Hygiene Technical Brief*, which not only includes the confused definition of “women” but also enforces the need for comprehensive sexuality education.<sup>26</sup>

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In November 2022, USAID celebrated the success—in partnership with Johns Hopkins University—of India’s first “comprehensive health clinic for the transgender community in Hyderabad” in January 2021. Known as Mitr Clinics, these health facilities offer guidance on hormone therapy and “gender affirming” surgical procedures and legal aid and social protection services to the transgender individuals in a “stigma-free environment.”<sup>28</sup> A documentary about the clinic was presented at an event commemorating Transgender Day of Remembrance and World AIDS Day. The documentary, titled “Mitr Clinic – Pride and Beyond,” showcased how USAID, the Government of India, civil society groups, and community leaders are promoting the LGBTQI+ agenda in India.

### The Dark Past and Future of USAID Operations

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administrations that attempt to rein it in. USAID has been the subject of investigative hearings on its activities, including accusations of involvement in harmful or coercive activities overseas.

One sobering example is the allegation of forced sterilization and abortions in Peru. In 1998, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee held an investigatory hearing in the subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights on the Peruvian population control program that forcibly sterilized women, with suspicions of USAID involvement. Representative Christopher Smith of New Jersey chaired the hearing, with input from Grover Joseph Rees, subcommittee staff director and chief counsel. The witness questioned was Mr. Mark Schneider, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean for USAID, a staunch defender of “family planning” initiatives. In 1995, Peruvian President Fujimori made family planning a priority and legalized sterilization as a primary method of family planning. In 1996, government health workers conducted sterilization campaigns, resulting in reports of non-consensual or uninformed consent sterilizations from various organizations including the Catholic Church, human rights groups, feminist groups, and the government’s ombudsman.<sup>29</sup>

In response to Congressman Smith’s opening remarks and concern over reports of USAID involvement in Fujimori’s campaign, Schneider denied any involvement in Peru’s coercive sterilizations, stating that such violations of human rights run “directly counter to the values and foreign policy of the United States.” Schneider claimed that a day before the hearing, the government of Peru informed the U.S. government of improved standards in their family planning program, ensuring counseling to women before operations, requiring certification for facilities to prevent substandard operations and facilities, and assurance of compensation for medical malpractice. Why this was not the case at the inception of the program when USAID began funding was a grave oversight and omission.<sup>30</sup>

Worried that USAID’s population programs would be sullied by the hearing, Schneider said, “It is my hope that in the discussions generated by the controversy over surgical contraception in Peru that we do not lose sight of the benefits of family planning programs or of the principles that do guide USAID’s efforts.” In line with USAID’s strong family planning stance, Schneider claimed there was a “pent-up” demand for access to surgical contraception (tubal ligations and vasectomies) before it was legalized in Peru in 1995, and that the Peruvian government sought to “help meet this demand” for surgical contraception with their performance-based “family

planning” campaign. This claim would later be contradicted by another witness, Peruvian medical physician Hector Chuchon: “for those who really want to help my country, it would be better to invest in education and job creation the millions of dollars that go in[to] population control programs.”

Schneider recounted USAID’s concerns with a campaign strategy when it was discovered “that in some cases the right to fully informed consent may have been violated and that tubal ligation and vasectomies have not always been safely performed.” Schneider asserted that USAID urged Peru to discontinue surgical contraception campaigns and any provider targets. Subsequently, he said, “we are pleased that the government of Peru, as I indicated in this statement and in the statement that we just received from the Government of Peru, has determined to take these steps.”<sup>31</sup> Addressing the human rights violations of the Peruvian Government, Schneider claimed there were only nine instances of abuse, and that “though clearly not even one abuse is acceptable, the allegation of mass abuse without informed consent has not been substantiated.”<sup>32</sup> It was later discovered that over 200,000 women were forcibly sterilized in the USAID-funded program.<sup>33</sup>

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A report published by Elizabeth Liagin titled, “USAID and Involuntary Sterilization in Peru,” analyzed the action made between 1995 and 1997 by the Peruvian government. According to the report, the internal archives of USAID showed that the United States took charge of the national health system of Peru in 1993. The bilateral accord of 1993 that put the United States in an advantageous position is the same year Schneider assumed position as USAID Assistant Administrator. Known as Project 2000, it was signed by the Peruvian and American authorities in September 1993, ending in 2000.

Carlos Polo, director of the Population Research Institute office for Latin America, said of the Liagin report in 2018, “an examination of this document shows that USAID-PERU, the office in Lima of USAID, was in any conceivable form, in control of the Peruvian health sector, before and during the years that the abuses took part.”<sup>34</sup>

In a recent budget hearing in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, USAID Administrator Samantha Power was questioned by Republican members seeking a greater understanding of USAID’s sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programming in developing countries. Power claimed no knowledge of the programs to the frustration of congressional

representatives and deferred to providing information after the hearing.<sup>35</sup>

There have been several hearings in Congress examining USAID's work, and individual members have issued calls for greater transparency into the agency's dealings. Nevertheless, the legislative branch has not fully exerted its investigative powers to uncover the complex inner workings of USAID's funding and partnerships. Meanwhile, USAID has managed to continue its controversial and ideological work in developing countries in partnership with other progressive global powers. Without greater transparency and adequate pro-life and family safeguards, precise legislation regulating the agency, and administrative knowledge and authority over its operations, USAID will continue to be a valuable means for the left to propagate cultural dismantling.

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