



Democracy, Human Rights and Governance

Empowerment and Inclusion Division

The Empowerment and Inclusion Division (EI), Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG), works to reduce risks to and reinforce the capacities of communities, local governmental organizations and governments to provide services and protection to vulnerable populations. Its programs and policies help vulnerable populations gain access to opportunities that support their full participation in society.

EI also manages five congressional directives and the Center on Children in Adversity. Each has its own purpose and strategy, but they share a focus on providing assistance to poor and vulnerable populations, child and adult. Each emphasizes the value of family and community as the first resort in providing protection, care and support to vulnerable children, civilian victims of war, torture survivors and people with disabilities. These are the Disability Program, the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), the Center on Children in Adversity (CECA), the Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF), the Victims of Torture Program (VOT) and the Wheelchair Program.

The Empowerment and Inclusion Division (EI) works to improve the safety and well-being of at-risk populations often beyond the reach of USAID's programming. EI works to empower individuals to not only enjoy improved security and well-being, but also to thrive, achieving the full and effective participation and inclusion in society that is their human right.

EI programs drive significant change with limited resources. Programs use funds selectively to support promising initiatives that can yield lessons applicable to many populations and settings. EI shares those lessons widely to further the state-of-the-art in its respective focus areas, to leverage additional resources to expand programming, and to highlight and capitalize on synergies with other development sectors.

EI programs work with partners across the spectrum in order to spark systemic change. These include practitioners and service providers working closely with those in need; to small, local organizations; to nongovernmental organizations; to other donors; to host-country governments. EI programs have also played a catalytic role in founding technical networks and societies.

The EI portfolio comprises five congressionally directed programs—Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF); Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF); Victims of Torture fund (VOT); Disability Program and Wheelchair Program—and the Center on Children in Adversity (CECA). All are housed within USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). Each provides a dedicated source of financial and technical assistance in their respective programming areas.

Empowerment and Inclusion Division initiatives have been at the forefront of developing innovative, state-of-the-art programming for children affected by war; in setting orthopedic, rehabilitation and wheelchair standards in developing countries; and in improving treatment and healing options for survivors of torture. They have also led worldwide policy change on barrier-free accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in family and community. EI is also home to overall coordination of the U.S. Government's Action Plan on Children in Adversity (APCA). Empowerment and Inclusion programs are found in more than seventy (70) countries around the world.

Center on Children in Adversity/Displaced Children and Orphans Fund

In spring 2014, USAID's Center on Children in Adversity (CECA) and Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) merged. This strategic move aligned program, policy, coordination, staff and budget resources to better fulfill the legislative mandate set forth under Public Law 109-95: The Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005



Photo courtesy Sue Eitel

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(PL109-95). This act established USAID as the primary U.S. Government Agency responsible for identifying and assisting orphans and other vulnerable children in developing countries. To better coordinate its efforts on behalf of children, USAID established a Center on Children in Adversity in 2012. Together, the programs support U.S. Government and host governments and civil society partners to develop and implement programs and policies that address the objectives of the U.S. Government's Action Plan on Children in Adversity.

Through CECA/DCOF, USAID plays a particularly strong role in the achievement of APCA Objective 2, "Putting Family Care First," by applying relevant national child protection legislation and policies, developing information systems to identify and monitor children at risk, building social service workforce capacities, and strengthening community capacities to identify and protect vulnerable children.

USAID uses these dedicated resources selectively to support promising projects that yield lessons that can be applied in other situations. It shares those lessons as widely as possible with practitioners, funding organizations and governments.

Leahy War Victims Fund

Established in 1989, USAID's Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF) works to increase the availability of and access to a wide variety of programs benefiting people with disabilities in conflict-affected countries.

Historically, the LWVF has devoted the major proportion of its resources to establishing and improving accessible and appropriate prosthetic, orthotic (P&O) and physical rehabilitation services. This is evidenced through

its extensive investments in the establishment and maintenance of P&O workshops; promotion of professional training, standards and accreditation for P&O technicians; and support for increased mobility and physical functioning in general.

USAID is committed to continuing its investments in those key services. At the same time, it is expanding its approach and embrace of overall rehabilitation programming.

Initially, the LWVF emphasized support for people injured by landmines—artificial limbs and physical rehabilitation were key areas of investment. However, over time the LWVF has recognized that in order to effectively provide assistance to survivors of war and civil strife, a broader approach is needed that includes individuals with spinal cord injury, children born with club foot, individuals with cerebral palsy and a wide range of other conditions that affect mobility or physical function.

This diverse population of people with disabilities needs an expanded variety of mobility devices, assistive technologies and techniques that can provide the most appropriate assistance to further mobility, function and independence. This population also needs a range of types of assistance in order to meet their needs, which go beyond physical rehabilitation to increased self-sufficiency and social inclusion. Providing mobility devices meets a critical human need, but it is just one step in addressing the comprehensive needs of an individual. USAID supports programs that provide people with disabilities with peer support, sports and recreation activities and meaningful employment that can offer an individual with the means to generate an income.

Victims of Torture fund

USAID works through its Victims of Torture fund (VOT) to assist the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals, families and community members who suffer from the physical and psychological effects of torture and trauma. VOT works primarily through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) overseas that (1) provide direct services to survivors, their families and communities; (2) strengthen the capacity of country-based institutions in their delivery of services to survivors; and (3) increase the level of knowledge and understanding about the needs of torture and trauma victims.

Five principles guide USAID's programming for survivors: (1) improving access to and quality of services available to affected communities; (2) targeting individuals who suffer reduced function due to direct or indirect exposure to torture and trauma; (3) building on existing community networks and resources; (4) breaking the silence experienced by individuals and communities affected; and (5) expanding knowledge on the needs of torture and trauma-affected populations and the effectiveness of treatment.

Disability Program

In September 1997, USAID adopted a groundbreaking policy that addresses the needs of people with disabilities. The policy states that USAID 1) will not discriminate against people with disabilities, and 2) will work to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in its programs and activities. The policy also calls on USAID missions to challenge their in-country partners to lead a collaborative effort to end discrimination against, and promote equal opportunity for, people with disabilities.

To implement its disability policy, USAID works to educate its employees on disability issues through courses and workshops. It provides tools and technical assistance to its field missions as they institutionalize the policy, and it has developed self-reporting mechanisms to track the Agency's progress in implementing the policy in Washington and overseas.

The Empowerment and Inclusion Division also manages a grants program to fund inclusive programming worldwide. This program provides funds directly to missions, promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of their programming. Projects work to reduce barriers that may limit people with disabilities' participation in society, community and family.

Wheelchair Program

Established in 2007, USAID's Wheelchair Program works to improve the availability

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of and access to appropriate wheelchairs and trained wheelchair service providers in the developing world.

While there are many humanitarian and development agencies involved in broader rehabilitation programs, there are far fewer who provide a comprehensive approach to the provision of suitable wheelchairs and the associated training and education that must accompany their distribution.

Despite an overwhelming need, only a small percentage of people in the developing world are able to obtain an appropriate wheelchair and the requisite training needed to assist them in obtaining their maximum independence and functionality. A wheelchair is more than just an aid to mobility. It can be a means to self-sufficiency and increased self-esteem. It may be a vehicle to meaningful employment and contributions to community and society. And, it reduces dependency and the associated burden placed on family and friends.

USAID is committed to helping address the severe gaps in the availability of and accessibility to appropriate wheelchairs and wheelchair services in the developing world. While many humanitarian and development agencies support rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities, far fewer provide a comprehensive approach to the provision of suitable wheelchairs and the associated research, education and training that must inform and accompany this work.

USAID continues to partner with local and international non-governmental and faith-based organizations to directly contribute to improved quality of life for existing and potential wheelchair users in low-income countries. However, we are also making investments in global, systemic improvements that will positively impact the wheelchair sector far into the future.



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