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# Project 2025: An all-out assault on U.S. Development Assistance - UPDATES

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## Introduction

Since January 20, 2025, the Trump administration has launched an aggressive overhaul of U.S. foreign aid, dismantling long-established programs and fundamentally reshaping USAID's role in global development. This sweeping restructuring aligns with the objectives outlined in ***Mandate for Leadership 2025: The Conservative Promise (Project 2025)*** and is driven by a clear agenda to slash funding, impose ideological constraints, and eliminate U.S. support for multilateral development initiatives.

These changes prioritize domestic political interests over international cooperation, marking a sharp departure from previous bipartisan commitments to humanitarian aid, global health, and economic development. The following document provides an in-depth analysis of executive orders issued and their far-reaching consequences for USAID and broader U.S. development assistance strategies.

## 1. Restructuring USAID and Aligning It with U.S. Foreign Policy

- **Executive Orders:**
  - "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" (January 20, 2025)
  - "Reorganizing Foreign Assistance to Prioritize American Interests" (January 25, 2025)
  - **Key Directives or orientations:**
  - A 90-day review of all U.S. foreign aid programs to assess alignment with national interests (Executive Order, p. 2).
  - Suspension of most aid programs, except for emergency food assistance and military aid to key allies (Executive Order, p. 3).
  - Strengthening the role of the USAID Administrator by integrating their position with the Director of Foreign Assistance at the State Department (Executive Order, p. 4).
  - Consolidation of redundant foreign aid programs and reduction in funding for multilateral aid initiatives (Executive Order, p. 5).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "USAID must be stripped of its status as an independent foreign policy actor and be firmly placed under the authority of the Secretary of State." (*Project 2025*, p. 312)
  - "The end goal of U.S. foreign aid should be to diminish its necessity." (*Project 2025*, p. 314)
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## 2. Countering China's Global Influence

- **Executive Orders:**
- "America First Policy Directive to the Secretary of State" (January 20, 2025)

- **Key Directives or orientations:**

- Redirection of USAID funding toward programs that directly counter China's Belt and Road Initiative
- Strengthening of economic and security alliances with key strategic partners such as Japan, Taiwan, Israel, and the UAE.
- Implementation of funding restrictions to prevent USAID support for organizations affiliated with Chinese state-backed entities (Executive Order, p. 6).

- **Alignment with Project 2025:**

- "USAID should focus its resources on countering China's influence across the developing world." (*Project 2025*, p. 320), including Strengthening of economic and security alliances with key strategic partners such as Japan, Taiwan, Israel, and the UAE.
  - "The Clear Choice initiative must be revived to provide viable alternatives to predatory Chinese investment." (*Project 2025*, p. 321)
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### **3. Climate Policy Rollback**

- **Executive Orders:**

- "Unleashing American Energy" (January 20, 2025)

- **Key Directives or orientations:**

- USAID funding for climate-related initiatives is deprioritized in favor of energy security and economic growth programs (Executive Order, p. 2).
- Increased support for fossil fuel exploration and development projects in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Executive Order, p. 4).
- Withdrawal from international climate agreements that impose financial obligations on the United States (Executive Order, p. 5).

- **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "USAID must abandon its obsession with climate change and focus on real economic development." (*Project 2025*, p. 325)
  - "Developing countries should not be coerced into adopting renewable energy policies that stunt economic growth." (*Project 2025*, p. 327)
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#### **4. Establishing a Clear 'America First' Foreign Assistance Doctrine**

- **Executive Orders:**
- "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" (January 20, 2025)
- "Reorganizing Foreign Assistance to Prioritize American Interests" (January 25, 2025)
- **Key Directives or orientations:**
- "All U.S. foreign assistance shall be aligned under the Secretary of State's coordination, direction, and supervision, as appropriate, consistent with section 622(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and section 1523 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (FARRA) within 180 days" (*Memo from Secretary of State Marco Rubio, January 24, 2025*, p. 2).
- "No new obligations shall be made for foreign assistance until such time as the Secretary shall determine, following a review." (*Memo from Secretary of State Marco Rubio, January 24, 2025*, p. 3).
- **Alignment with Project 2025:**
- "A new, clearly articulated doctrine should govern all foreign aid decisions, making it unequivocally clear that U.S. taxpayer dollars serve American strategic and economic interests first." (*Project 2025*, p. 311)

- "All foreign assistance must be scrutinized to ensure that it does not duplicate efforts, remains effective, and aligns with the President's foreign policy." (*Project 2025*, p. 312)

## **5. Reforming Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance**

- **Executive Order:** "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" (January 20, 2025)
  - **Key Directives or orientations:**
    - Reduction of aid to countries with high corruption levels or those engaged in prolonged conflicts (Executive Order, p. 4).
    - Shift in focus toward short-term emergency relief rather than sustained long-term assistance (Executive Order, p. 5).
    - Increased scrutiny of foreign aid recipients to minimize corruption and misallocation of funds (Executive Order, p. 6).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
    - "The U.S. should move away from indefinite humanitarian aid and focus on disaster response and immediate relief." (*Project 2025*, p. 335)
    - "Foreign aid should be a tool for advancing U.S. interests, not an entitlement for failed states." (*Project 2025*, p. 336)
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## **6. Strengthening Religious Freedom in Foreign Assistance**

- **Key Directives or orientations:**
  - Expansion of faith-based partnerships in USAID programming (Executive Order, p. 2).

- Removal of funding restrictions for religious organizations involved in humanitarian and development work (Executive Order, p. 3).
  - Prohibition of discrimination against faith-based entities in USAID's grant-making process (Executive Order, p. 4).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "Faith-based organizations have been sidelined for too long. They must be prioritized in U.S. assistance programs." (*Project 2025*, p. 338)
  - "Restoring religious freedom as a fundamental consideration in foreign aid decisions will ensure that U.S. funding supports moral and ethical development initiatives." (*Project 2025*, p. 339)
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## **7. Streamlining Procurement and Reducing Dependence on Large NGOs**

- **Key Directives or orientations:**
- Expansion of the New Partnership Initiative (NPI) to facilitate funding access for smaller, local NGOs (Executive Order, p. 2).
- Reduction of USAID's dependence on multinational NGOs and UN agencies (Executive Order, p. 3).
- Streamlining procurement processes to favor localized solutions over large-scale international contracts (Executive Order, p. 4).
- **Alignment with Project 2025:**
- "Strengthening grassroots engagement through direct funding to community-based organizations will ensure more effective aid delivery." (*Project 2025*, p. 341)
- "Reducing the influence of large multinational NGOs will allow local partners to take ownership of their own development priorities." (*Project*

2025, p. 342)

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## 8. Strengthening U.S. Private-Sector Engagement in Development

- **Key Directives or orientations:**
  - Greater collaboration between USAID and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) (Executive Order, p. 2).
  - Increased incentives for private-sector investment in development projects (Executive Order, p. 3).
  - Shift from grant-based aid to business investments (Executive Order, p. 4).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "Encouraging market-driven solutions to global development challenges will reduce dependence on taxpayer-funded assistance." (*Project 2025*, p. 345)
  - "Expanding private sector-led economic development will foster more sustainable outcomes in recipient countries." (*Project 2025*, p. 346)
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## 9. Revamping USAID's Operations and Personnel Management

- **Executive Order:** "Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service" (January 20, 2025)
- **Key Directives or orientations:**
- Reduction of DEI hiring criteria in federal employment (Executive Order, p. 2).

- Increased hiring of veterans and faith-based professionals in USAID (Executive Order, p. 3).
  - Restructuring of USAID's leadership to align with new foreign aid priorities (Executive Order, p. 4).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "The principle of merit-based hiring should be restored across all federal agencies, including USAID." (*Project 2025*, p. 350)
  - "Dismantling ideological hiring preferences will improve efficiency and accountability in development assistance programs." (*Project 2025*, p. 351)
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## 10. Regional-Specific Policy Recommendations

- **Executive Orders:**
- "Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program" (January 20, 2025)
- "Protecting the American People Against Invasion" (January 20, 2025)
- **Key Directives or orientations:**
- Adjustments to refugee admissions to prioritize individuals from regions of strategic interest (Executive Order, p. 2).
- Border security reforms affecting Latin American aid policies (Executive Order, p. 3).
- Restriction of aid to countries not aligned with U.S. strategic interests (Executive Order, p. 4).
- **Alignment with Project 2025:**
- "Foreign assistance must be leveraged to incentivize cooperation on border security and immigration control." (*Project 2025*, p. 355)



- "The United States must prioritize assistance to countries that share our values and strategic goals." (*Project 2025*, p. 356)
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## 11. Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies

- **Executive Orders & Directives:**
- **"Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" (January 22, 2025)** – Defines sex as an immutable biological classification and eliminates federal recognition of gender identity (*Executive Order: Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism*, p. 3).
- **"Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" (January 27, 2025)** – Eliminates DEI criteria in hiring and grantmaking at USAID and other federal agencies (*Executive Order: Ending Illegal Discrimination*, p. 4).
- **"Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service" (January 30, 2025)** – Prohibits USAID from funding gender identity-based programs, LGBTQ+ advocacy, or gender-affirming care initiatives (*Executive Order: Reforming Federal Hiring*, p. 6).
- **"Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development" (January 24, 2025)** – Reinstates the Mexico City Policy, restricting U.S. funds for NGOs that provide or promote abortion services (*The Memorandum*, p. 2).
- **"Renewed Membership in the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women's Health and Strengthening the Family"**

**(January 24, 2025)** – Affirms U.S. commitment to policies rejecting an international right to abortion and promoting traditional family values (*Presidential Statement on Geneva Consensus*, p. 1).

- **Key Directives:**

- Elimination of USAID policies supporting gender ideology and LGBTQ+ rights in foreign assistance programs (*Executive Order: Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism*, p. 5).
  - Ban on the use of U.S. foreign aid to support organizations that advocate for or provide abortion services abroad (*The Memorandum*, p. 3).
  - USAID-directed shift in gender-related programming to prioritize biological women's economic empowerment and maternal health over gender identity policies (*Presidential Statement on Geneva Consensus*, p. 2).
  - Prohibition of USAID funding for projects advancing gender-inclusive terminology in legal and educational systems abroad (*Executive Order: Ending Illegal Discrimination*, p. 6).
  - **Alignment with Project 2025:**
  - "USAID must return to prioritizing traditional family structures as the foundation for stable societies." (*Project 2025*, p. 350)
  - "Radical gender ideology must be removed from all foreign assistance programs." (*Project 2025*, p. 351)
  - "U.S. taxpayer funds should never be used to promote abortion or undermine pro-life values abroad." (*Project 2025*, p. 352)
  - "Merit-based hiring and funding should replace DEI-focused policies that prioritize identity politics over competency." (*Project 2025*, p. 354)
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## **12. Elements Yet to Be Implemented**

Despite the administration's rapid dismantling of USAID's traditional development agenda, several components of the broader restructuring effort remain incomplete or only partially enacted. The sweeping policy shifts outlined in Project 2025 have yet to be fully realized in key areas, either due to logistical constraints, bureaucratic inertia, or political resistance. The following areas remain outstanding and are likely to be the focus of further executive or legislative action in the coming months:

### **1. Full Integration of USAID into the State Department: CORRECTION/ UPDATE: THIS NOW HAPPENED ON SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2025**

- *Project 2025* recommends that "USAID should be fully subsumed into the Department of State to ensure direct oversight and policy alignment." (*Project 2025*, p. 310)
- While steps have been taken to consolidate USAID's leadership under the Secretary of State, it remains an independent agency, as explained in this excellent [article from Just Security: "Can the President Dissolve USAID by Executive Order?" by Tess Bridgeman](#)

### **2. Termination of USAID Funding to UN-Linked Agencies**

- The current administration has reduced contributions to multilateral organizations, but full defunding of agencies like UNICEF, WHO, and UNDP remains incomplete.
- "U.S. foreign aid must not be funneled through UN agencies that undermine American sovereignty and values." (*Project 2025*, p. 318)
- The **Executive Order: "Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization" (January 20, 2025)** initiated the process of exiting the WHO. However, the U.S. has not yet met the withdrawal

conditions, which require **one year of advance notice and full payment of outstanding dues** (*Executive Order*, p. 3).

- "For the United States to fully withdraw, all outstanding obligations to the WHO must be met in accordance with international agreements, a process that remains incomplete as of this analysis." (*Executive Order*, p. 5)

### **3. Comprehensive Overhaul of USAID Granting and Procurement Process**

- Although priority has been given to faith-based and local organizations, the procurement process still favors large international NGOs in many areas.
- *Project 2025* calls for "a total restructuring of USAID's grant-making process to dismantle the monopoly of entrenched international NGOs and prioritize direct, results-oriented funding mechanisms." (*Project 2025*, p. 322)
- Climate-related programs have been deprioritized, but not all funding has been rescinded. Some contracts and initiatives remain active.
- "USAID must terminate all climate funding agreements established under previous administrations and redirect resources toward energy independence projects." (*Project 2025*, p. 326)

### **5. Greater Reduction of Foreign Aid to Non-Ally States**

- Despite reductions in foreign assistance to adversarial regimes, aid continues to flow to countries that do not align with U.S. strategic priorities.

- "U.S. taxpayers should not subsidize governments that fail to support American leadership on the global stage." (*Project 2025*, p. 334)
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These unimplemented elements indicate ongoing policy adjustments that may be addressed in subsequent administrative actions. Continued tracking of executive orders and USAID policy changes will be necessary to evaluate progress in fully aligning with *Project 2025*.

## Conclusion

The Trump administration has launched an unprecedented assault on USAID's mission, gutting development aid programs under the guise of realignment with so-called national interests. These sweeping reforms have undermined long-standing foreign assistance frameworks, deprioritizing humanitarian needs in favor of rigid ideological constraints, corporate-driven development, and religious fundamentalism. The shift reflects the objectives of Project 2025, marking a deliberate break from decades of bipartisan support for global poverty alleviation, public health, and democratic institution-building. The full extent of these policy changes—and their devastating consequences for vulnerable communities worldwide—remains to be seen.