

**Ask the Procurement Executive Conference Call**  
**Thursday, June 23rd, 2016**  
**9:30-10:30AM EDT**

**Background**

The purpose of this call is to provide a forum for partners to ask questions and have a discussion on pressing matters with USAID's acquisition and assistance leadership. In advance of the call, USAID contacted five associations and asked them to submit questions. The associations were: InsideNGO, InterAction, Small Business Association for International Companies, Society for International Development -- Washington, and Council of International Development Companies.

**USAID Participants**

1. Roy Plucknett, Senior Procurement Executive, M/OAA
2. Mark Walther, Deputy Director, M/OAA Washington Operations
3. Crista Wise, Ombudsman, M/OAA
4. Teneshia Alston, Senior Program Managers, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)
5. Steve Tashjian, Division Chief, M/OAA/CAS
6. Stephanie Fugate, Branch Chief, M/OAA/SIDP
7. Jennifer Armstrong, Contract Specialist, M/OAA/E3
8. Erik Singer, Senior Advisor, M/OAA Foreign Operations

## **Conference Call Transcript**

### **Ms. Wise Remarks:**

I'd like to start off by thanking each of the associations -- InsideNGO, InterAction, Council of International Development Companies, Society for International Development - Washington, and Small Business Association of International Companies -- for reaching out to their members and sending us questions for our call discussion.

I want to note that we will be posting a transcript of the call, a recording, and a full document of the questions submitted with their respective answers.

I'll now turn it over to our Director, Roy Plucknett, for a few words.

### **Mr. Plucknett Remarks:**

Thank you so much for joining us this morning and thank you for sending us your questions.

But before we go any further, I just want to take the opportunity to thank you for what you do, with us in partnership around the world. We, as an Agency, would not be able to achieve our mission in helping those less fortunate around the world without the continued close partnership that we have with you, our implementing partners. Thank you.

Last time we held our Ask the Procurement Executive call I had just joined the Office of Acquisition and Assistance as the new Director. Since that time, I have had a chance to meet with several hundred of our implementing partners through a number of different engagements. I appreciate your interest in the work of USAID and the work of our office. We want to continue to engage with our partners on topics and issues that are relevant to you. I really enjoy the Q&A part of our discussions, too.

Before we move into our question and answer session, I want to take a moment to briefly update you on a few of our priorities for this year.

At the forefront of our priorities is our work related to ADS 304 -- Selecting the Appropriate Acquisition or Assistance Instrument. As many of you know, USAID's ADS 304 was recently revised. Since that time, we have heard from many of you. We welcome your comments and feedback. I want you to know that we hear your concerns and have been discussing them with our senior leadership throughout the Agency. I want to reiterate a key point that is made in the

ADS 304 chapter -- USAID has no preference between acquisition or assistance instruments. We are working diligently to develop additional tools and guidance, similar to what has been developed for our democracy related programs, that provide further clarity on making choice of instrument decisions. Choice of Instrument is a topic of daily discussion within the Agency and we will continue to engage with you, with Senior Leadership, with Program Staff, and with our Contracting and Agreement Officers. There is much more I can share on choice of instrument. However, we will be answering multiple questions about choice of instrument during our call today which you provided to us.

A second priority is related to Procurement Action Lead Time or PALT. As I have previously shared, we have begun tracking all major awards being issued this year and have been holding monthly meetings with Senior Leadership. As we move into the end of the fiscal year, these meetings will increase in frequency. Additionally, I'd note that during AARAD reviews, with Administrator Smith, I ask how PALT will be managed and seek the support of Mission Director's, Assistant Administrators, and Deputy Assistant Administrators in helping to ensure that PALT milestones are achieved. In addition to this, we are forming a PALT working group internally who will be responsible for developing a PALT management best practices guide and conducting training for both contracting and program staff on how to manage PALT. We are also widely disseminating best practices. For example, Kosovo used PEB 15-01 on Assistance Streamlining and was able to do a competitive RFA/NOFO in 41 days. Another best practice, I recently heard during an AARAD review with the Southern Africa Mission, was that they have developed a Mission Order to require technical evaluation committees (TECs) to be sequestered and the staff participating in the procurement are required to schedule their leave accordingly.

Finally, I wanted to share that our next Partners' Day event will be taking place in early 2017. Engaging with our Partners is extremely important to us and we very much wanted to have a big Partners' Day event this year. However, with the end of the fiscal year, the election, and transition of Administrations, we decided to push our Partners' Day to early 2017. We are still planning on issuing a progress report at the end of this fiscal year, similar to what we issued last year.

With that, I would like to turn now to the question and answer session of our call.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to join us today. We look forward to answering your questions.

## Questions and Answers

1. **CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT:** What was the impetus for revisions, which removed many indicators that Agency staff used to determine the purpose of an award and the intended relationship between USAID and implementing partner?

### **USAID Response:**

- Over the last several years there were an increased level of concerns raised by implementing partners and partner associations on COI. In parallel, there were the CMS and Hymas cases related to COI.
- Given the above context, we also viewed it as an opportunity to:
  - Clarify the roles and responsibilities for recommending, documenting and approving the type of instrument,
  - Clarify the legal framework that informs selection of instrument decisions,
  - Emphasize that selection of instrument decisions begin early in the design and planning process, and
  - Emphasize that solicitation documents and post-award administration must adhere to the requirements of the selected instrument type.
- There were discussions on how much to include in the Chapter compared to supplemental tools/guidance.
- Given the swings in the case law, it was determined to keep the Chapter succinct, and to work on additional tools/guidance to further assist Planners and COs/AOs.

2. **CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT:** We are concerned that the revisions may lead Agency staff to narrowly interpret the range of options at their disposal, which in turn will limit USAID's flexibility to deliver its mission in complex operating environments. How will M/OAA ensure that Mission staff understand *how* the award's purpose and Mission's intended relationship with implementing partner drive instrument selection, especially when the revised ADS removes explicit indicators (in prior ADS 304.3.2) and introduces assistance examples without sufficient context to properly illustrate *how* purpose and relationship were determinative factors in selecting assistance?

### **USAID Response:**

- We find that the Foreign Assistance Act, the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, the Competition in Contracting Act, the FAR, etc. provide the Agency with broad authorities for acquisition and assistance (A&A).
- There was no intent and we do not believe that the updates should be interpreted as narrowing the range of options at the disposal of Agency staff.
- On 6/9/16, M/OAA undertook a worldwide outreach call to COs/AOs on the background and updates to ADS 304.
- We are in the process of completing additional tools that will be shared with AOs/COs as well as key community stakeholders. Additional outreach will be undertaken on these draft tools.

- Finally, we will be developing training modules specifically related to COI as well as adding as appropriate to existing courses.

- 3. CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT:** Does the recent revision of ADS 304 (Choice of Instrument) signal a change regarding the level of operational control USAID expects to exert over assistance instruments? If not, how will USAID prevent this outcome, given that the revision appears less clear than the prior version of 304 as well as ADS 303?

*Background: Only in 304.3.4.2, which limits assistance instruments for construction, does the revision explicitly state that USAID can legally assert "limited management oversight" over recipients of assistance awards. And whereas ADS 303 states the AOR's responsibilities post-award are defined in the schedule of award delegated by the AO and as noted under the "substantial involvement section" of cooperative agreements, revised ADS 304 no longer specifies that "the USG is supporting the [assistance] program but is not running it," and "the [assistance] program objectives are best met by having an independent entity implement them" (prior version of 304.3.2). The distinctions between acquisition and assistance instruments provides USG broad options to select the delivery vehicle that will optimize program success. The onerous "contract-style" management of assistance awards does not enable USAID to realize the benefits of "hands-off support" of a recipient's programs.*

**USAID Response:**

- The extent of operational control in assistance instruments should be consistent with "substantial involvement" as provided in ADS 303.
- Both the prior ADS 304 and the updated Chapter maintain an element related to Operational Control and Programmatic Involvement, and continue to indicate that control is not an acceptable instrument selection criterion, but may be an indication of a requirement for goods and services.
- The updated Chapter clarifies that substantial involvement is a decision for consideration between a grant and cooperative agreement. (From prior and updated ADS 304)
- Please note that our above responses to these questions related to Choice of Instrument are not intended to forgo the acceptance of suggestions on clarifications to the updated Chapter or to upcoming tools. We welcome questions as well as specific suggestions.

- 4. CHOICE OF INSTRUMENT:** Does USAID have a comprehensive strategy to educate and train staff on the revised ADS 304 guidelines? Does USAID plan to have ongoing training so that mission staff are updated and refreshed on the proper selection between assistance and acquisition mechanisms? If USAID has such plans, can USAID make them public? How can USAID partners and mission staff better collaborate in the conceptualization and forecast stages to ensure the proper mechanisms are used?

**USAID Response:**

- M/OAA is working on various outreach and training efforts related to ADS 304.
- We undertook a worldwide outreach call to COs/AOs on 6/9/16 to provide them background and rationale associated with ADS 304, the draft DRG Amplifying Guidance, and the additional tools we are working towards.
- We plan to have draft tools completed in a couple of weeks, and will be sharing them in draft with COs/AOs and undertaking a second worldwide outreach call.
- We will also be collaborating with GC and others at USAID as well as the Partner community on these further guidance tools.
- We will build upon these initial efforts with additional training, and will provide further updates as we move forward.
- Please note that these efforts are being pursued to better ensure a more consistent understanding related to choice of instrument internally and externally.
- Again, thank you for the question.

**5. SMALL BUSINESS DESIGNATION:** Has USAID moved away from designating a percentage of large procurements for small businesses?

**USAID Response:**

- USAID continues to identify procurements small (below the simplified acquisition threshold which is currently \$150,000) and large (above \$700,000 or \$1.5M for construction) for small businesses. If according to market research the procurement is considered too large for small businesses the focus shifts to ensuring that there are subcontracting opportunities.
- USAID's fiscal year 2016 small business goal for prime contracts is 11 percent and its subcontracting goal is 20 percent.

**6. 10% de MINIMIS OVERHEAD RATE:** Could you clarify USAID's stance with respect to allowing the 10% de minimis overhead rate that is now an option under OMB's Uniform Guidance when a recipient or a subrecipient does not have a recognized, negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the USG? Some recipients are hearing from AOs and COs that the only option for subrecipients without a NICRA is to direct bill all costs. Clarification will be appreciated.

**USAID Response:**

- Thanks, Crista, for the question.
- The 10% de minimis rate is a viable option for any recipient who does not have a NICRA.
- However, if a recipient has indirect cost rates but does not yet have a NICRA issued because they have yet to have a prime award with the USG, they are encouraged to propose those indirect cost rates in their application for award.
- Those rates will be reviewed for propriety and if the recipient is successful in winning the award a NICRA will subsequently be issued shortly after award.

- The 10% de minimis rate is intended for recipients who don't have the accounting sophistication to accurately track and account for indirect costs and is not intended as a substitute for rates when a recipient already had established indirect cost rates supported by financial statements but just hasn't had a NICRA issued.
- USAID will not issue NICRAs for subrecipients as they have no legal privity.
- Responsibility for negotiating indirect cost rates for subrecipients rests with the prime recipient under the award. USAID AOs or COs should not be dictating how indirect cost rates should be handled for subrecipients.

**7. USE OF CO-CREATION IN SOLICITATIONS:** We notice that elements of the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) process, specifically aspects of co-creation/co-design workshops and concept papers, have been incorporated by AOs/COs in issuing Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). Does this represent a shift in how USAID will conduct business moving forward, and can contractors participate in such opportunities?

**USAID Response:**

- All solicitations identify if USAID intends to award grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts, or some other form of agreement as a result of the solicitation.
- Under the BAA process, all entities may participate--that is for-profit contractors, non-profits, and others.
- It is important to note that we have awarded assistance awards and contract awards from the BAA process.
  - The BAA process has resulted in approximately 60 awards over the FY14-FY16 years so far.
  - The BAA process is simply one tool we use of many to partner.
  - Choice of Instrument, in collaboration with the eventual awardee, is determined with the Agreement/Contracting Officer.
- The use of workshops or other exchanges with potential partners is not solely reserved for BAAs. Neither is the use of phased applications or a down-select process to streamline the amount of information needed from potential partners.
- Co-creation is not exclusive to BAAs. We are looking at using this new method of collaboration through other ways such as pre-award, during procurement, post-award and even during implementation.
- AOs/COs may engage in such processes when it makes sense to do so for their programs, keeping in mind that when we use the BAA process, we are designing towards a solution and not towards a particular instrument.

**8. DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES:** In the March 10, 2016 Ask the Procurement Executive call, USAID noted that it is in the process of preparing a definition of agricultural commodities for purposes of ADS 312. Is there an update on that? Recipients report inconsistent interpretations by AOs and COs on the definition of agricultural commodities resulting in lack of clarity on what approvals are needed, and corresponding delays in the approval and procurement process.

**USAID Response:**

- The information that was shared during our previous Ask the Procurement Executive was shared with all of the Agency's Contracting and Agreement Officers.
- Recognizing that there are instances where it is not immediately apparent whether an item is an "agricultural commodity," we are continuing to develop a definition that will provide guidance to AOs and COs to help ensure compliance with the legal and policy based requirements for agricultural commodity financing described in ADS 312.
- Once a definition has been developed, we will be sure to share it with our A&A staff and with the partner community.

- 9. SMALL BUSINESSES ON IDIQS:** Can you please confirm that Small Businesses on IQCs must keep 51% of labor on all task orders won?

**USAID Response (UPDATED 7/15/16):**

- If the award to a small business under an Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract was issued as a small business set-aside or small business reserve, the small business must maintain 51 percent of the direct labor on each task order.
- If a small business was awarded a contract under an unrestricted IDIQ award pool, the 51 percent direct labor regulation is not applicable.

- 10. LOCAL SEVERANCE PAY:** Local law requires severance pay in many countries in which USAID operates. Nonetheless, many Contracting Officers disallow severance pay. What guidance can be given to Contracting Officers to ensure that contractors are not put in a position where the contract contradicts the labor laws of a country?

*Background: CIB 98-03 communicated a Class Deviation to 31.205-6(g)(3), Foreign National Severance Pay Under Professional Services Contracts permitting the reimbursement of reasonable severance pay costs to professional service contractors employing foreign service nationals overseas. The discussion points stated in the deviation request are still valid. While some Contracting Officers include FAR clause 52.237-9, "Waiver of Limitation on Severance Payments to Foreign Nationals", prior to contract award, others are not as clear on the implications of this restriction and what procedures are required to include the waiver clause. The AIDAR requires the contractor to follow local law but is silent on the issue of severance pay. This class deviation expired in 2000 and the AIDAR has not been modified.*

**USAID Response:**

- As the question highlights, salary and severance pay solutions vary depending on the specific country laws and context.
- IPs should coordinate with Missions in identifying specific implementation challenges that may impede successful performance.
- Mission COs and RLOs work in tandem to create Mission-wide resolutions to challenges that uniformly impact programs in the specific country context, such as disagreements with host country law and federal regulations and policy.

- In most circumstances related to CCN and TCN PSCs under a local compensation plan, [FAR 31.205-6](#) provides sufficient flexibility within CO discretion to meet activity goals without disallowing costs or violating local labor laws.
- Often, IPs and Missions may have to clarify the legal usage of the term ‘severance pay’ in the specific context to determine if ‘severance pay’ is really at issue or if different terminology is more appropriate, e.g. performance/incentive pay, bonus, 13th month salary, etc.
- If, in a specific country context, a solution cannot be created, Missions may have to consider a deviation or exception request. IPs are encouraged to contact Missions as early as possible during solicitation or implementation to highlight upcoming constraints to implementation.

**11. LEADER WITH ASSOCIATE AWARDS:** USAID, as part of its implementing mechanisms, uses Leader with Associate awards. While the solicitation process for the leader award is fairly determined, the process to award specific associate awards lack transparency and in some cases is used to implement programs that should otherwise be accomplished by acquisition. What steps is M/OAA taking to ensure that associate awards are not being used when acquisition is the proper instrument?

**USAID Response:**

- Associate awards are to be consistent with LWAs, and it is the responsibility of the AO and AOR to ensure that such award terms and processes are consistent with policies in ADS 303 and all other regulatory references to assistance awards.
- In accordance with ADS 303.3.26, the AOR of the Leader Award must concur that the program description for an Associated Award is within the program description and does not extend beyond the scope of the program, etc.
- The M/OAA Evaluation Division undertakes approximately 14 A&A reviews per year in the Missions and Washington, and sampling of awards including Associate Awards fall within their reviews.
- If there are concerns related to the terms and processes associated with any associate award, the AO and the Ombudsman are available to review and respond to the concerns.

**12. USAID LOCAL WORKS PROGRAM:** Can you please explain how the new local works program will operate? How can local NGOs get involved? Will there be a role for US-based partners?

**USAID Response:**

- The *Localworks*, now in its second year, is a new program which seeks to promote locally-owned and locally-led development through strengthening networks of local actors. The challenge is to work with and through country-centered resource organizations that can provide the organizational, human resource development, technical and financial support over time. The program was established through a \$45 million congressional earmark in 2015 known as the "Small Grants Program". It is administered by the Office of Local Sustainability in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment.

- Most of this funding is transferred to pilot missions in the field which design and implement their own *Localworks* programs. Four pilot missions (Vietnam, Morocco, Malawi, and Serbia) have been selected to receive FY15 funds. We anticipate the addition of three missions this year. These missions have recently begun an extensive design effort which should eventually lead to funding opportunities, but it is not yet possible to anticipate a target release date.
- Both local and US organizations are eligible to receive funding under *Localworks*, provided they have not received more than \$5 million in US government funding over the past five years. There are and will be roles for US organizations who have the right capabilities, who share a commitment to local development and who are willing and able to transfer their knowledge and skills to local organizations in the countries where they work.
- To be considered for *Localworks* funding, eligible organizations may either 1) submit an application in response to a solicitation issued by a *Localworks* mission or 2) submit an unsolicited proposal or unsolicited application to the relevant mission per USAID's standard procedures. Unsolicited proposals will be reviewed by the relevant country mission.
- Additionally, some US partners may provide technical assistance and conduct research in support of *Localworks* through awards managed directly by E3/LS in Washington. Currently, the competition for these awards has ended and E3/LS has no plans to issue a new solicitation under *Localworks* for the foreseeable future. It is important to note that any awards issued under *Localworks* will need to demonstrate a clear alignment with the intent and core principles of the program.
- Information on the Localworks program may be viewed at: <https://www.usaid.gov/partnership-opportunities/ngo/localworks>.

**13. PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVE BULLETINS:** We notice that four PEBs from 2015 are currently on the website. Does USAID plan to publish any still-active PEBs that pre-date these from 2015 as well as any from thus far in 2016? If so, what is the timeframe for that? We appreciate USAID's progress, and would welcome completion of this effort to bring the PEB postings up-to-date.

**USAID Response:**

- Great, thanks for the question.
- As a result of the question, which has been asked in the past, yesterday we were able to upload to our external website the current PEBs.
- When you visit the site, there may be fewer than you anticipate.
- Recently we went through a review of all of the Agency's PEBs and retired ones that are no longer applicable.
- Thanks for re-asking this question -- it helped steer us in this direction.

**14. IDIQs:** Why do IDIQs take significantly longer to award than all other contracts?

**USAID Response:**

- IDIQs over the years have gain more and more interest from the partner community especially as more efforts have been undertaken to expand opportunities for small businesses.
- Thus, it is not uncommon to receive a larger number of proposals (e.g., 10 or more) for major IDIQs. The evaluation of these larger number of proposals often contributes to longer lead times to award IDIQs.
- We have undertaken efforts to develop an IDIQ template and gain more consistency among IDIQs, but continue to work towards reductions in lead times.
- We are undertaking an internal working group with Washington and field representatives among COs and Technical/Program colleagues to develop a PALT Implementation Guide to be issued by the end of FY16, and be a catalyst to achieve a 40% reduction in lead times by the end of FY2017.
- Separately, we welcome any examples and suggestions you may have on timely management of PALT based on USAID or other federal experience.

**15. QUICK CLOSE-OUTS:** Would USAID consider giving for-profit recipients an option of a quick close-out under cooperative agreements similar to FAR 42.708? The Uniform Guidance was written for non-profit recipients that are required to go through audits annually within 9 months after the end of the audit period. In the case of for-profit recipients and sub-recipients, audits are on average conducted 7-9 years after the project completion, which means that the cooperative agreements will remain open until then in line with 2 CFR 200.344 (a)(2). The quick close-out option would reduce the administrative burden for USAID, lower the costs for recipients and for USG, and is in compliance with the spirit of the Uniform Guidance.

**USAID Response:**

- Audits do not on average take 7-9 years and in fact USAID had reduced its audit backlog by over 85% in the last three years so this should not be an issue going forward.
- That said, USAID supports the use of quick closeout procedures when all of the necessary requirements are met.
- Please note that quick closeout is not to be used in lieu of audit, it is to be used when the majority of costs have been audited and only a small portion of the remaining costs have not been audited.
- FAR 42.708 (a)(2) clearly states that the amount of unsettled direct and indirect costs needs to be relatively insignificant.
- In regard to your specific question, yes, quick closeout could be applied to a cooperative agreement awarded to a for-profit contractor if all the necessary requirements were met.

**16. BUSINESS CLASS FOR MEDICAL REASONS:** Business class travel for medical reasons is authorized per (FAR §301-10.123 (a) (2) (A), however, there have been several instances of Contracting Officer's denying business class travel for medical reasons stating that the CO is under no obligation to approve them. Since this is clearly allowed with the required

supporting documentation, what should your implementing partners do when it is denied and what is M/OAA doing to remind COs that such travel is authorized?

**USAID Response:**

- Absent specific language in a given award that states otherwise, there is no standard requirement for Contracting Officer (CO) approval for use of business class airfare.
- The operative language in AIDAR 752.7002 Travel and Transportation states:
  - "Determination of reasonableness, allocability and allowability will be made by the Contracting Officer based on the applicable cost principles, the Contractor's established policies and procedures, USAID's established policies and procedures for USAID direct-hire employees, and the particular needs of the project being implemented by this contract."
- The applicable cost principle at FAR 31.205-46, paragraph (b) states:
  - "(d) Airfare costs in excess of the lowest customary standard, coach, or equivalent airfare offered during normal business hours are unallowable except when such accommodations require circuitous routing, require travel during unreasonable hours, excessively prolong travel, result in increased cost that would offset transportation savings, are not reasonably adequate for the physical or medical needs of the traveler, or are not reasonably available to meet mission requirements. However, in order for airfare costs in excess of the above standard airfare to be allowable, the applicable condition(s) set forth above must be documented and justified."
- Accordingly, the Contractor is not required to obtain CO approval, but rather to document and justify the airfare costs adequate for audit, as applicable.
- Guidance for COs on such costs is currently available within an ADS 302 Additional Help document at: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/302sag.pdf>

**17. PRESOLICITATION NOTICES:** Can you please explain USAID's policy and/or standard procedures for the use of pre-solicitation notices? It is very helpful to be given an advance notice prior to the release of an RFP, but pre-solicitation notices are not used consistently. Are USAD Missions and Operating Units required to issue pre-solicitation notices or are they optional? How do you encourage offices to release pre-solicitation notices? How is the decision made on whether or not to release a draft?

**USAID Response:**

- I am all for releasing drafts and seeking industry input in advance of releasing solicitations.
- Specifically, we follow FAR Part 15.201, which encourages early and often vendor communication.
- At this point, we are encouraging missions to hold bidders conferences ahead of major procurements, while not requiring this effort. I've seen more and more RFIs and pre-solicitation notices being sent out that allow partners and potential bidders to review and provide comments. I've seen this adopted more and more as a best practice as a way to reduce PALT.

- Because each mission is faced with specific and unique challenges, we cannot make this effort mandatory; however, COs/AOs still try to be as transparent as practicable by regularly posting information about pre-solicitation conferences, draft SOWs, etc. on FedBizOpps.gov. This information is also shared on our @USAIDBizOpps Twitter handle.
- Additionally, two PEBs have been drafted, one for acquisition and one for assistance -- they will be available and posted to our external website once they have been cleared.
- Both PEBs speaks to importance of engaging with partners early and often.
- I believe firmly that you will begin to see a rise in this as a best practice, particularly with the focus we are putting on reducing PALT within the Agency.
- Thank you for that question.

**Roy Plucknett Closing Remarks:**

Just a final word. Again, I want to thank you -- not only for your participation today, but for our continued partnership around the world.

Again, as an Agency, we could not achieve what we do without you there -- side-by-side in Missions around the world.

Also, some of our staff have dialed into this call. I want to say thank you too, for the work that you do to advance our mission around the world. It is extraordinarily important, what you do, both here in Washington and in Missions around the world. As we move into the end of the FY, which is often busy and can be stressful, that I am here in Washington to support you in anyway that I can.

And thanks to everyone who submitted questions. We received some very very good questions on important issues. And thanks to the staff here that helped prepare the responses for everyone.

Thanks again -- I look forward to future engagements with the partner community.