



Stop the Coup 2025

a public education and mobilization campaign

CHAPTER 9 . AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT . Author: **Max Primorac**, former Chief Operating Officer and Assistant to the Administrator, Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance, USAID; also Director, Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy, The Heritage Foundation.

USAID leads the US government’s international development and disaster assistance programs. Here, Primorac lays out a radical reordering of the agency to reverse, on Day One of a new Administration, “the gross misuse of foreign aid by the current Administration to promote a radical ideology that is politically divisive at home and harms our global standing.” Biden has “decoupled US assistance from free-market reforms that are the keystone of economic and political stability,” Primorac charges.

Project 2025 calls for a radical overhaul to make USAID a pro-life agency, staffed with conservatives, funding only local NGOs and international programs aligned with pro-life values and priority conservative foreign policy objectives, and actively seeking to fund aligned faith-based groups. Primorac calls for returning to the approach begun by Trump, to cut back on USAID’s foreign aid, and instead, encourage countries to be self-reliant, while promoting international religious freedom as a pillar of the agency work and fighting reforms related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Trump restructured the agency to provide grants to local faith-based organizations, and implemented USAID reforms to promote conservative Christian pro-life and pro-family policies. Project 2025 would go much further and deeper to extend this.

Proposals include:

- ✓ Cutting USAID’s global footprint to its pre-Covid 2019 budget level
- ✓ “Deradicalize” agency programs and structures (DEI, gender reforms), and realign to promote conservative Christian values and ideology
- ✓ To help execute the agency reforms, authorize the USAID Administrator to take on the additional role of Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA), with the rank of Deputy Secretary at the Department of State in charge of all US foreign assistance. (A similar role was created under the George Bush administration and ended by Obama)
- ✓ In foreign policy, make China a USAID priority focus and take steps to highlight the US free market system vs. China’s “mercantilist authoritarianism” to encourage other countries to economically engage with the US over China
 - The US should establish a “counter-China” infrastructure at USAID, and “end the climate policy fanaticism that advantages Beijing,” suggests Primorac

Climate policy funding reversals:

Under Biden, USAID declared itself a climate agency that “has incorporated its radical climate policy into every USAID initiative,” states Primorac, and redirected its private-sector

engagement strategy to shift away from fossil fuels to renewable energy. He proposes a sharp reversal of course for the next Administration, arguing that, globally, “the financial resources needed to transition away from fossil fuels are unachievable”

Climate proposals include:

- ✓ Rescind all climate policies from US foreign aid programs -- specifically USAID’s Climate Strategy 2022–2030
- ✓ Shut down USAID’s offices, programs, and directives designed to advance the Paris Climate Agreement
- ✓ Narrowly limit funding to traditional climate mitigation efforts.
 - USAID resources are best deployed to strengthen the resilience of countries that are most vulnerable to climatic shifts, Primorac argues.
 - USAID should stop collaborating with, and funding, progressive foundations, corporations, international institutions, and NGOs that advocate “climate fanaticism”

Eliminate funding for DEI policies:

Primorac levies vitriol at the integration of DEI reforms and policies throughout USAID’s structure, including creation of DEI committees and adoption of an agency-wide DEI dashboard and scorecard for its bureaus, missions, and offices. “The upshot has been to racialize the agency and create a hostile work environment for anyone who disagrees with the Biden Administration’s identity politics,” writes Primorac, calling for complete dismantling of the DEI policy apparatus.

DEI proposals:

- ✓ Eliminate the Chief Diversity Officer position and DEI advisers and committees
- ✓ Cancel the DEI scorecard and dashboard; remove DEI requirements from contract and grant tenders and awards
- ✓ Issue an agency directive to cease promotion of the DEI agenda, including “the bullying LGBTQ+ agenda”
- ✓ Provide staff a confidential medium through which to adjudicate cases of political retaliation that agency or implementing staff suffered during the Biden Administration
- ✓ Eliminate funding for partners that promote DEI practices and consider debarment in egregious cases
- ✓ Return the authority over all civil rights issues at USAID to the agency’s Office of Civil Rights

Anti-gender reforms. Primorac critiques USAID’s support for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, “gender equality,” and “women’s empowerment” and advocacy for individuals who claim minority status or vulnerability. That is a guise for promoting abortion, gay rights, and race-based DEI policies, he suggests.

He calls for replacing current officials who head USAID’s gender offices with pro-life political appointees, and revising agency regulations to reflect pro-life values with a focus on family.

Proposed reforms:

- ✓ Rename the USAID Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) as the USAID Office of Women, Children, and Families and refocus and realign resources to that office
- ✓ Re-designate the Senior Gender Coordinator to be “an unapologetically pro-life politically appointed” Senior Coordinator of the Office of Women, Children, and Families
- ✓ Eliminate over 180 gender advisors and USAID points of contact embedded in Missions and Operating Units throughout the Agency
- ✓ Rescind President Biden’s 2022 Gender Policy and refocus it on Women, Children, and Families
- ✓ Revise the agency’s regulation on “Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID’s Program Cycle” to remove all references, examples, definitions, photos, and language on USAID websites, in agency publications and policies, and in all agency contracts and grants that include the following terms: “gender,” “gender equality,” “gender equity,” “gender diverse individuals,” “gender aware,” “gender sensitive,” etc.
 - also remove references to “abortion,” “reproductive health,” and “sexual and reproductive rights” and controversial sexual education materials
- ✓ The Office of Women, Children, and Families should implement the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Women’s Health and Protection of the Family and prioritize partnerships with local organizations, including faith-based organizations (FBOs)

Pro-Life Proposals: Arguing that “protecting life” should be among the core objectives of United States foreign assistance, Primorac says that promotion of pro-life policies must be a key goal of USAID’s work. He calls for reinstating the “Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance (PLGHA) policy,” – known as the Mexico City Policy – that Biden then revoked.

The PLGHA requires foreign NGOs to agree to not perform, or actively promote, abortion in foreign countries as a condition of receiving US assistance. Trump expanded the Mexico City Policy to “global health assistance furnished by all departments or agencies” estimated to total \$8.8 billion annually.

Biden also restored funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) which had been taken away due to its support for women’s reproductive health.

Primorac argues international NGOs who support abortion continue to receive US government funding and benefit from loopholes in laws that conservatives must act to close with new legislation. They should also rescind President Biden’s memorandum entitled “Protecting Women’s Health at Home and Abroad,” issued on January 28, 2021, and continue to apply the Helms Amendment, which forbids the use of US taxpayer dollars for abortion.

Religious freedom Conservatives consider “international religious freedom” to be central to USAID’s development efforts, but the Biden administration has resisted that, states Primorac.

To do that, USAID should:

- ✓ Train all USAID staff on the connection between religious freedom and development
- ✓ Integrate religious training into all the agency’s programs, including the five-year Country Development and Coordination Strategies due for updates in 2025

- ✓ Strengthen USAID relationships with local faith-based leaders and build on local programs that serve the poor
- ✓ Congress should appropriate funding to USAID to support persecuted religious minorities in line with Executive Order 13926
- ✓ Appoint a political appointee to be USAID’s Senior Procurement Executive and Director of its Office of Assistance and Acquisition (OAA) in the Bureau of Management (M) – M/OAA – a critical position -- to oversee procurement, contracts, and USAID grants for adherence to language and terms of the Policy on Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance

PEPFAR The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is given high marks for “localization” – successfully and rapidly scaling up its HIV and health programs. The PEPFAR model should be replicated, states Primorac, including its data reporting system that supports transparency. He also calls for:

- ✓ Beefing up the Global Health Bureau’s portfolio
- ✓ Increasing grants to faith-based institutions, among local partners
 - Work to expand networks of private and faith-based health organizations.
- ✓ Aggressively cut back on partnerships with “wasteful, costly, and politicized UN agencies, international NGOs, and Beltway contractors” – those deemed not aligned with a conservative religious values mission

“All new programs in Africa should build on existing local initiatives that enjoy the support of the African people,” the author states – a veiled reference to supporting pro-life issues but not pro-choice policies or issues such as gender or LGBTQ+ equality.

WHO, UN: The next conservative Administration should designate a political appointee to help coordinate cross-agency efforts to hold the US government’s multilateral partners (UN and WHO agencies and other international organizations) accountable to financial and programmatic benchmarks, “including assurances that language promoting abortion will be removed from UN documents, policy statements, and technical literature,” states Primorac.

Humanitarian Assistance

Primorac argues that humanitarian assistance for natural or man-made disasters has morphed into a pseudo-aid industry that is propped up by ongoing crises.

Proposed Reforms:

- ✓ Resize and repurpose USAID’s humanitarian aid portfolio to “restore its original purpose of providing emergency short-term relief, prepare vulnerable communities for transition, and do no harm...” To do this:
 - Require USAID and the State Department to devise country-based exit strategies that term-limit the duration of humanitarian responses and transition funding from emergency to development projects
 - Transfer away from large awards to large, “corrupt” UN agencies, global NGOs, and contractors to local, especially faith-based, entities operating on the ground
- ✓ Move away from a foreign aid model to one that promotes private-sector solutions to development problems and ends the need for future foreign aid

- In the interim, Project 2025’s legal teams should prepare to help faith-based groups access the existing USAID pie. To do this:
 - Appoint a “commanding team of Schedule C attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) to issue clear guidance on the eligibility of faith-based organizations for USAID funding within weeks of the inauguration

Other proposals:

- ✓ On ‘Day One,’ USAID should halt all agency-wide training and put in place modules reflecting the new Administration’s policies
- ✓ On Schedule F with the Excepted Service: Make USAID “one of the agencies to pilot-test a reinstated Executive Order 13957,16 which created a Schedule F within the Excepted Service:
 - This would allow USAID to “aggressively recruit and place candidates into term-limited positions under Schedule A of the Excepted Service (especially veterans)”
 - To execute this reform, the White House Office of Presidential Personnel would allow the USAID Administrator to explore (with the Office of Personnel Management), *if* USAID could hire personnel under *both* the Administratively Determined authority and Schedule C of the Excepted Service
- ✓ Assure political appointees in the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (combined with hires under Schedule A) review and edit USAID’s public-facing web pages and social media accounts to eliminate material not conforming to Administration’s policies
- ✓ Shift USAID policy-making authority from the Bureau for Policy, Planning to the Office of Budget and Resource Management (BRM), located in the Office of the Administrator, and staffed by political appointees
 - A renamed Office of Budget, Policy, and Resource Management (BPRM) would then oversee USAID’s policy system, the Automated Directives System (ADS), including policy amendments and reviews to reflect Administration’s viewpoint
- ✓ Make rapid staffing of key positions at the Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation (DDI) a high priority. The DDI oversees USAID’s non-health, non-humanitarian funding
 - Carry out a rapid revision of policies under DDI responsibility and direct new funds to ethnic and religious minorities and faith-based organizations

STC 2025 Commentary: The proposed radical gutting to realign USAID’s mission, funding, and international programs to strictly reflect a neo-conservative, pro-life, Christian Bible-centered agenda is sweeping, and stands to have major impacts on key sectors, including economic, public health, education, environmental, relief and refugee, among others, including pluralism and democracy. It would strip US funding and support away from, among others, international and local aid agencies that now serve the most vulnerable populations in societies. The potential negative global impacts are enormous, given the current impact and influence of US assistance via USAID programs.

While the author praises PEPFAR for its successful “localization” scale-up funding of effective country-based HIV prevention and care programs, the veiled reference to cutting funds for programs that fail to adhere to a conservative agenda poses a veiled threat to current Biden PEPFAR programs and policies found to be most effective, that are tailored to educate and support vulnerable Key Populations, including LGBTQ+ individuals, sex workers, women and families, those living in poverty, including displaced, unhoused, and refugee populations.

The internal restructuring of authority at USAID, including in procurement and policy management, and proposed use of Schedule F in the Excepted Services, is in line with Project 2025's broad mission to rapidly place a corps of dedicated loyalists who may lack civil service experience to carry out conservative proposals, using novel legal and policy instruments. The result would be an unvetted, unelected team of Christian conservatives at USAID with possibly limited government experience, tasked to advance their extremist Christian pro-life foreign policy and foreign aid agenda, aided by private sector and aligned faith groups they fund.

Chapter 9 - Key Points:

- ✓ Cutting USAID's global footprint to its pre-Covid 2019 budget level
- ✓ "Deradicalize" agency programs and structures (DEI, gender reforms), and realign to reflect conservative Christian values and ideology.
- ✓ In foreign policy, make China a USAID priority focus, highlight US free market system
- ✓ Sharply reverse Biden policy: rescind all climate policies from US foreign aid programs
- ✓ Dismantle USAID's DEI policy apparatus; stop DEI promotion
- ✓ Make anti-choice policies the key goal of USAID's work
- ✓ Reinstate the "Mexico City Policy" ("Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance") (PLGHA) that denies pro-abortion policies as a condition of receiving US assistance
 - remove all references, examples, definitions, photos, and language on USAID websites, publications, policies, contracts, and grants that include the terms: "gender," "gender equality," "gender equity," "gender diverse individuals," "gender aware," "gender sensitive," etc.
 - remove references to "abortion," "reproductive health," and "sexual and reproductive rights" and "controversial sexual education materials"
- ✓ Make "international religious freedom" central to USAID's development efforts
- ✓ Assure groups given PEPFAR funds align with presidential agenda values
- ✓ Transfer away from large awards to large, "corrupt" UN agencies, global NGOs, and contractors to local, especially faith-based, entities already operating on the ground