February 2, 2021, 4-5:30pm

DRG Briefing for Ambassador Power in advance of Confirmation Hearings

SP Opening

-I know how precious your time is
-This portfolio is near and dear to my heart. It is one that can be flagship and has been at time for USAID programming and impact
-It is one that is at the heart of america's comparative advantage compared to our rivals
-For those of you laboring in the previous administration, particularly for HR rights or women's rights or LGBTI rights or minority rights, and yet USAID continued to do the work, below the radar sometimes or above at times.
-I want to express my gratitude to you as a citizen. It could have been worse. It is not an accident that we have had more protests in the world in the last 2 years. People not loving their govs and this creates a real opening for us to promote trans[arency and accountable and amid all the terrible trends around shrinking civil society space we can be a gov and agency to stand with the people that have the same aspirations we have and standing firm promoting these values
-The arc of the universe is long, if we don't give up, stay determined and learn from our mistakes we can make a difference.

<noted snow day and kids at home and possible interruptions>

Don - strategic priorities
-Working for several years on democratic backsliding, but our work does not match the gravity of the challenge. Especially as it has grown in the last year during COVID pandemic. There needs to be a greater focus on the what, on the programmatic areas such as combatting disinfo, working on media development, working on closing space and address digital technologies. But also the how. We have an opportunity to leverage all our work across the agency to focus on the fundamental challenges of authoritarianism and backsliding - Doing Development democratically

-With regards to HR. in recent years it has been reduced to a minimal number of rights related issues that have driven programming in the field rather than a broader HR assessment. We have an opportunity to find the space for HR to have a broader applicability throughout the DRG space

-Alot of AC work across USAID but there is space for it to be elevated across the agency so it becomes part of the work of other sectors as well. For the outcomes of other development sectors, AC is central. There is a opportunity for us to bolster our engagement on AC and the USG approach to it.

David B - DRG Sector budget

Question - Is it good with State, the more the merrier? Or?

You may be asked about duplication and overlap in your hearings.
Some overlap is good, especially in challenging environs. It is good to have multiple ways to get in.
In other ways there are challenges. There is some competition. More overlap than is necessary.

A lot of good processes in place to do coordination and collaboration,but
Discussion with State and Hill after confirmation about how best to allocate DRG resources for State and AID

<kid interruption>

Nils - Countering RA/China

Question - What is Clear Choice

What the previous administration called its Countering china work.

Mariam - Civil society/civic space

Question - is the China factor? Is there much more Hill interest than before? I don't like the clear choice thing but it is the spectre of who is providing assistance. This trend predated China exporting these technologies? Is there more interest now?

Sonali - Bip concern and support both on the chinese and russian influence. A lot of support for DRG in this space. We get a lot of questions on how much is going into DRG

Casey - Hill interest in DRG is longstanding. DRG for DRG's sake is huge for SFRC.

But what are the trendlines?

Going beyond DRG, countering China and Russia and great power competition resonates on the hill in a variety of sectors.

Casey - where you see the squeeze with directives so DRG has kept pace and gets squeezed

Nils - CCIF created by COngress this year. $300 m. Sen Graham one of the leaders of making it happen. Concrete reflection of congressional interest in empowering our work in this sector.

David B - Overall directive has been quite level but due to over directors, putting more money in some countries that don't need it, but DRG funding going down across Africa.

Laura - Media

Question - <SP started talking but was on mute>

Cory - Governance and Anti-corruption

Question - What are the trendlines for other bilateral and multilateral partners and donors work in AC space?

Jen - Corruption is increasingly under focus by all donors. As you well know from OGP and other multilat partnerships around increasing collective action, there has been an increase in the number of standards, norms, etc in this space. Other donors and peers have been pushing this work for some time. Where we see a gap is the harder aspects, sanctions magnitsky, from state, but donors are increasingly looking at this as a need. We see systemic corruption as needing a systemic solution and part of that requires us to bolster our work in the follow the money type work and illicit finance. Digitech holds perils and promise and we need to be able to meet our partners on digital corruption issues.

SP - I am sure you are tracking bu twe push on a much more ambitious level an AC agenda especially with COVID recovery. Mention of IMF.

Mickie - J&R

Question - Can you explain what that means? Shift from interagency to working in country? Did interagency work fall? Was AID not always doing work in country?

We are continuing to work within the interagency. We are trying to bolster our efforts in countries to build prevention efforts. Training up field staff so they can identify risks in countries.

Is the upshot that there is just more on the ground of shared AP agenda? Did more money or programming go into this?

Mark - After many battles in the interagency where we were helping the function/regional bureau splits and pushing on embassies, we found the most effective way was to mainstream it in our building. We are giving folks and our staff tools on this and avoid the policy squabbles.

SP - Belongs in DRG but also its own program area. When mission people have that training and raise flares has it been the case that there is somewhere for it to go in terms of influencing a policy discussion?

Policy discussion not better or worse where you left them but our ability to do programming around them is our sweet spot. Rather than pitch it as get it back to washington, it's let go out in front of it and how we can mainstream this issue

AP not a small narrow issue but a goal to which all of our work can contribute

Our conflict colleagues in the new bureau in large part thanks to the global fragility act are bringing this to the table too

The trend is positive.

On each of these issues, I am very interested in who our likely allies are? We haven't even gotten into trafficking. On AP is it still the Netherlands? The needs are so much greater than when I left and the dynamics have nothing to do with the Washington administration (well we can debate correlation

Corruption, shrinking space, atrocities associated with conflict or not

If our pie is not getting bigger part of our challenge is how do we make the OVERALL pie bigger. Resources don't necessarily dictate outcomes but I was struck by David's metrics earlier

As former UN ambassador I always wonder how do we multilateralize? How can the Biden administration leverage that space?

Corruption is a bright shining object in a way AP probably isn't. But there are likely discrete stakeholders on AP that we can work it.

Julie - Elections

Question - You mentioned upgrading technology. Is part of what we do downgrading (election) technology?

Part of what we also do is advise countries when they are looking at for example BVR. a bright shiny object.ve part of our role is to advise countries how to do this correctly if we are going to do it and what the intitial inputs are, recurring costs, and additional risks

We might be advising a low or lower cost solution than what vendors might be pitching

SP - out of the democracy summit, this is an example, where there will be high level imprevative - online misinfo and cybersecurity - these diff dimensions of strengthening democracy. Summit, So complex this is like OGP but worse. Out of it I suspect all of us with a set of technical tasks and collaborations. That is exciting. High level wind in our sails. an d a reflection fo the deep hole democracy finds itself including in america

Out of the summit and the spirit of follow through, a set of working groups that will comprise this portfolio. It will put AID in a very implrtant positions with other countries.

Programs we do and then the learnings we have given our resource and I expected we will have things to share that are quite note worthy

I think it will be amped up.
Elections and corruption likely to come up.

When other heads of state are putting more resources and our mission people are sitting down with people who are better funded than the past - I want to flag the link between everything we talked about today,and democracy for democracy sake but also pooling resources for example as we have in the covid space

SP - So how much currently would you be able to, you being the missions, for example enlist DHS like CESI (Chris crebb) for fighting online disinformation? America in our own dark place. But despite the assault on our infrastructure, we learned a lot since 2016. How much can AID draw on DHS expertise and how interesting would that be for our mission directors? Seems low costs now that we are all zooming and not traveling. Would that kind of collaboration or cross national learning?

Alot being led by GEC at State Department, bringing together interagency colleagues and also bringing in the private sector angle - more on a country by country basis with platform countries. That could also be scaled up

Infrastructure vs. misinform. Would that engagement on specs around election infrastructure live at State?

Julie - That expertise per se does not reside at state they are just convening.

Josh - We are seeing DHS coming in some times. One of the problems with that is that in a lot of the countries we don't have a whole of gov response to this as we would like. And sometimes the government might be the disseminator of disinfo. We are experimenting a lot with different approaches. We are working with journalists and civil society on the front lines.

Georgia - doing a lot of media programming, doing a standalone disinfo program that tries to work and engage with gov and civil, teachers, artists, writers. Trying to find trusted interlocutors. We hope to have a handbook out/primer to DRG officers for the social science and experiments around programming.

GEC is a great resource but not always interested in the countries where USAID works. We are trying to build the analytics and data science type work they do at ht local level in USAID partner countries.

"Josh I love your response" I like to see the universe in a grain of sand. I would love a deep dive in Georgia on pretty much every issue beyond OGP. AP and corruption. Would love to know how those lessons have been applied or not in Ukraine.

Finding those specific country examples and drilling in. I want to understand better why there are countries that the GEC Is not as interested in. especially if we no longer see the world in terms of shit hole countries

What other Low cost intellectual assets we can use?

We need to have great humility in critiquing over governments,

Other Questions

SP - My basic view is that we still have a great story to tell about american democracy. We have a story to tell about institutions bending but not breaking. We have a story to tell about courts, but it is complicated. But what is NOT complicated is what civil society has done for the past 4 years and over the course of American history. Democratic accountability is imperative.

Georgia (US) is the latest example. I am in close touch with Stacey Abrhams. I wanted to go to texas. Now I am being too partisan. I think there are parts of these stories we can take on the road, including related to election technology.

If what I am saying resonates, how can we get more mileage in our programming or ow can we make our flagship engagement on democracy and civil society
<kid interruption>

What is the best way to integrate the best part of the city on the hill. Which is not htat joe biden is president but it is how these things came about. Questions of resilience, organizing, and movement building?

How do you guys think about this?

Don - There is a story to tell and there is something we need to comm to our partners and our part countries and civil society. It is something we are grappling with right now. This is our first opportunity to really talk about the connectivity between what we see in the US and how relevant it is to our work in the field. We are very much in sync with what you are discussion and where our value is right now, what about the american experience is worth sharing

Mark - story with great humility to approach these topics with our partners and find common cause. Not a moment to shrink but to stand up. Disinfo - other countries have as much to teach as we have technical assistance to offer them. We love the spirit of where you are going. We can't wait for you to come here and lead with that same example

SP - humility and the lessons at the gov level, and the spirit of how change happens and the humility of being beneficiaries from a bottom up message.

I can't wait to talk to you guys more about this. I think there is a way one can lose sight of that. With governmental programs and case studies, we have all this broadening of civil society space programming but it is a really profound affirmation of what that can do against really steep odds with a big impact in america

Thank you and apologies for the distractions. You are kind in saying these are my areas and this is where my heart has always been but i am a generalist. It is beyond thrilling to me to have 25 people to talk about democracy, governance, human rights, civil society, and civic space is a dream. To have an army of talented people that prevailed, I feel really honored by the chance to do this. I hope to get in there soon.

No question is too dumb or too small or too large. This is a moment because of china, because of authoritarianism, Because of corruption, because of more conflict than any time since cold war, trafficking and increases in sexual trafficking, it is a moment to look with fresh eyes at what we are doing and build on the great that has been done. Strengthening it and finding more partners, we need more resources given the scale of the crisis.