

# Calling the shots under country ownership:

## How should US foreign aid decisions be made to ensure that poor countries are in the lead?

*At the heart of many of USAID's current aid reforms is country ownership—the idea that countries and people develop themselves, with local leaders from government and civil society directing the development process. The US can best support local leadership when US decision making happens in country at the Mission level, rather than in Washington.*

*USAID is now working to implement new Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) in an effort to better define its efforts within particular countries. If USAID wants to maximize country ownership, what might USAID's decision-making process for CDCSs look like in practice?*

*The flowchart opposite is one idea for how USAID can maximize the opportunity for local leaders to direct their own development. All countries are different—one plan cannot fit all contexts—but by building a process that presumes that local decisions should prevail in choosing aid policies and investments, USAID can better support local leaders working for change in their own countries.*

1. **Country sets priorities.** The country creates a national development plan or equivalent, in thorough consultation with citizens and civil society.



2. **Country asks US to support elements.** Recipient country's planning ministry or ministry of finance tells USAID what components it wants them to contribute toward the country's national development plan.



3. **USAID mission responds to country request.** USAID mission negotiates with ministry based on:
  - a. Mission's assessment of how well the request reflects citizens' needs and wants (by consulting with civil society groups; inclusion of issues like human rights, gender, and climate change adaptation; etc.)
  - b. Washington reality (i.e., remove non-starters, like a new international airport, whose primary purpose is not developmental and anti-poverty)



4. **USAID mission finalizes country investment strategy and submits it to USAID headquarters.** USAID mission and recipient government arrive at an advanced draft of the country investment strategy. (Note: The strategy is not a compact. There will be elements in the plan that the US will decide to fund irrespective of government buy-in, e.g. rights advocacy.) Mission shall report back to headquarters on areas of disagreement with the government.



5. **USAID submits strategy to Development Policy Committee (DPC).** USAID mission presents country investment strategy to the DPC in Washington, and DPC approves or rejects the strategy. The DPC shall not edit or amend the document, but if the document is rejected and returned to the mission, return to step 2.



6. **USAID communicates to Congress.** USAID Mission, USAID Washington, or the "F" Bureau submits Congressional Notification of the country investment strategy.



7. **Mission sends country strategy to the "F" Bureau or equivalent.** Bureau aggregates the country investment strategy totals, which becomes the requested number for Development Support Funds (DSF). As part of this process, "F" reports to Congress how much each sector is receiving in the aggregate and to accomplish what outcome (i.e., 10 million more girls in school).