Public Announcement on Availability of FY 2019 Disability Program Funding

The Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) within the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is inviting all interested USAID Missions to apply for FY19 Disability Funding to support programming in the area of **Employment and Economic Empowerment (EEE).**

Approximately $6 million is available for this Mission-wide, competitive program (subject to finalization of funding levels). Submissions will be considered within the following two funding ranges: from $300,000 to $500,000 and from $500,001 to $1,000,000.

Projects may be stand-alone targeted programs, or they can be mainstreamed within larger Mission programs. Within the EEE theme, projects should reflect the most pressing needs in the country and align with the Mission's development priorities. All proposals must be guided by the values and provisions set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

All awards (grants or cooperative agreements) under this request for concept papers will be administered through and managed by Missions. Funding will be provided from USAID/Washington to Missions for this purpose and they are responsible for all obligation requirements, award management, and project oversight. Please note this announcement is NOT a USAID/Washington-issued Annual Program Statement (APS) or Request for Proposals (RFA). Rather, USAID Missions have been informed that these funds are available should they wish to participate in applying for them.

Qualified organizations interested in this funding opportunity should contact their local USAID field Mission for more information on this program. Mission contact information can be found at: http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work or http://www.usaid.gov/mission-directory

I.   BACKGROUND
According to the World Health Organization and World Bank, approximately 15% of any population constitutes persons with disabilities, with a higher incidence in countries that are post conflict or affected by natural disasters. The prevalence of disability is expected to rise in coming years due to an ageing global population and an increase in chronic health conditions. Of the estimated 1 billion persons with disabilities throughout the world, 80% live in less resourced nations.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty. Women and girls with disabilities often experience heightened discrimination on the basis of gender and disability. Due to stigma, discrimination and inaccessibility, persons with disabilities are less likely to be able to access basic services related to education, employment, and healthcare, amongst others. The lack of access to vital services and programs contributes to their marginalization and exclusion, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

Societies that are inclusive of their diverse populations are more likely to be democratic, participatory, and equitable. They are more likely to meet their development goals, and disability-inclusive development is an important tool in supporting the Journey to Self-Reliance for USAID partner countries. In spite of this, and although disability is a cross-cutting development issue, persons with disabilities often remain invisible in the global development agenda.

In July 2009, the United States signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), affirming its commitment to the human rights of persons with disabilities around the world. To date, most of the countries in which USAID operates have signed and ratified the CRPD, signaling a global movement towards the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and their role in the international development community.

USAID's Disability Policy states that USAID will not discriminate against persons with disabilities, and will work to ensure the inclusion and active participation of persons with disabilities in USAID-funded programs and activities. To this end, USAID has mainstreamed disability in many of its key policies and sector strategies. The Policy also calls on Missions to reach out to partners, host country counterparts and other donors to lead a collaborative effort to end discrimination against, and promote equal opportunity for, persons with disabilities. Increasingly, Missions are including disability in their Country Development Cooperation Strategies and other foundational documents.

Disability rights are human rights. As the Agency's Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance outlines, a deliberate human rights lens should be applied across USAID's portfolio to ensure that the Agency is not inadvertently contributing to marginalization or inequality. By using a human rights lens, potential beneficiaries who are most at risk of having their rights neglected or abused—such as persons with disabilities—will be better recognized and included in programming.

For more information about USAID and disability inclusive development, visit: https://www.usaid.gov

II.   THEME: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Countries that can mobilize the economic contributions of all members of society – including persons with disabilities – are more likely to be successful in their Journey to Self-Reliance. However, in many countries persons with disabilities remain an untapped resource, as they continue to face societal barriers that inhibit their ability to participate fully as drivers of economic growth and innovation.

Consistent with the CRPD,[1] DCHA/DRG seeks concepts that will promote the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through equal access to employment that is freely chosen in a labor market and work environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with disabilities. Illustrative activities are included below, however other innovative ideas are welcome:

- **Advancing workforce development** so that persons with disabilities have the skills and training necessary to secure jobs, including by:
    o   Promoting access by persons with disabilities to apprenticeships, internships, and other proven skills development interventions, especially those that have previously been restricted by policy or practice to non-disabled job-seekers or that have not been available in the open labor market.
    o   Forging linkages with business and industry to ensure that training and skill-development for persons with disabilities respond to actual business and industry needs, and are provided by the private sector to the extent possible.
- **Fostering entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities** so that persons with disabilities have access to capital, markets, technical assistance, and networks on an equal basis with others, including by:
    o   Ensuring access by persons with disabilities to microfinance or microcredit programs, bank loans and other forms of financial credit, especially as an intervention to catalyze business start-up.
    o   Connecting persons with disabilities to mentors and networks that can promote job-related skills and access to information.
- **Promoting enabling environments** so that legal, regulatory, and cultural barriers that constrain persons with disabilities from being able to fully and freely participate in the economy are removed, mitigated, or avoided as applicable, including by:
    o   Reforming legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks that promote segregated approaches to employment of persons with disabilities, fail to prohibit non-discrimination and/or mandate reasonable accommodation, or that facilitate

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[1] See in particular CRPD articles: Article 27 (Work and employment), Article 12 (Equal recognition before the law), Article 24 (Education), Article 28 (Adequate standard of living and social protection), and other articles as applicable.

persons with disabilities being paid less than their non-disabled counterparts in comparable jobs.

- o Promoting access to information so that employers understand their legal obligations with respect to prospective and current employees with disabilities, and how best to comply,[2] as well as ensuring robust monitoring and enforcement by appropriate authorities.
- o Reforming legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks that hinder the ability of persons with disabilities to effectively exercise autonomy over their own financial affairs.

Within the theme of employment and economic empowerment (EEE), **DCHA/DRG will prioritize submissions that demonstrate robust participation and involvement of Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs)**.[3]

Proposed projects should complement Missions' Country Development Cooperation Strategies and other pertinent documents (e.g. "Getting Employment to Work for Self-Reliance: A USAID Framework for Programming"), and be guided by the values and provisions set forth in the CRPD.

Projects that highlight and incorporate strategies to address the needs of persons with disabilities within marginalized groups, such as women and girls, youth, indigenous peoples, and members of the LGBTI community are encouraged. Projects that address the needs of persons with disabilities, including individuals who are deaf, deafblind, and persons with cognitive, developmental, or psychosocial disabilities, are also encouraged. **All programs, regardless of implementing partner, must verify significant involvement of persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.**

III.   ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS EXCLUDED
The following activities and programs will **not be considered for funding**:

- ● Programs promoting segregated working environments, or income generating activities that perpetuate negative stereotypes of persons with disabilities and that do not provide

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[2] For example, the United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy funds the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). JAN provides free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

[3] Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) are civil society organizations run by and for persons with disabilities. DPOs exist at local, national, regional and global levels. They may focus on specific issues (e.g. elections, women's rights), specific disability types (e.g. associations of blind, deaf, or autistic persons), or be cross-disability groups (e.g. a national association of persons with disabilities that is open to members representing different disability types).

meaningful employment (e.g. programs promoting sheltered workshops, focused on handicrafts, or hiring persons with disabilities for jobs that are inconsistent with an individual's own skill potential and offer no meaningful opportunities for advancement).

● Programs that presume suitability for employment based on type of disability rather than an individual's skills and employment interests.

● Programs that seek to promote acquisition of skills that are not informed by actual market and industry needs.

● Programs that encourage compensation of persons with disabilities at rates below those for non-disabled persons performing comparable work.

● Programs with significant infrastructure or construction activities. Minor refurbishment of existing facilities (e.g. making toilets accessible, installing ramps) may be considered and must comply with "USAID Policy on Standards for Accessibility for the Disabled in USAID-Financed Construction" (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacg011.pdf).

● Due to the availability of alternative funding, programs primarily focused on the provision of assistive devices or physical rehabilitation.

● Programs supporting institutionalization of, or perpetuation of institutions for, children or adults with disabilities.

● Programs with a primary focus on awareness raising.

● Due to the availability of significant funding through PEPFAR, disability funding may not be used to support HIV-AIDS-related activities.

● In recent years, there has been significant Disability Program funding for inclusive education, and these investments continue. Inclusive education activities without a clear linkage to labor market/employer skill demands and employment will not be supported through this call.

IV.   REVIEW CRITERIA
Eligible projects submitted under this call will be reviewed based on the criteria listed below.

1. **Within the EEE theme, represents a pressing need in the country and demonstrates a clear linkage with USAID Mission priorities:** The proposed project responds to a pressing EEE need in country that has yet to be adequately addressed and demonstrates a clear linkage with existing Mission priorities.

2. **Sound technical approach and likely to contribute to sustainable and institutional change:** The proposed project demonstrates a sound technical approach based on promising practices, lessons learned and/or international standards in EEE, and demonstrates how and to what extent it will contribute to sustainable and institutional change either at the person-, community-, or country-level. The project goes beyond addressing the symptom of a problem and seeks to identify and mitigate the root causes of inequality and persistent exclusion.

3. **Substantial involvement of and direct benefit to persons with disabilities:** The proposed project demonstrates meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. The overall direct benefit to persons with disabilities and DPOs offers the best value for the amount of funding requested.

4. **Thoughtful integration of gender equality and women's empowerment:** The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment must be thoughtfully integrated into the main objectives, activities, and monitoring and evaluation plans of all applications, in accordance with USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy and USAID ADS 205. If the application is successful, gender considerations must likewise be integrated into the resulting program design.

5. **Sound monitoring, evaluation and opportunities for learning:** The proposed project includes relevant and meaningful indicators to measure both implementation progress as well as success in meeting the stated objectives, and realistic targets. In addition to required F Framework indicators, at least 3 illustrative indicators measuring project outcomes should be provided. The proposed project should also demonstrate how project learning will be captured and shared with a broad audience, including country stakeholders, USAID and other members of the international development community.

In addition to the criteria above, applications will also be reviewed for geographic diversity.

V.   AVAILABLE FUNDS

Subject to availability of funds, the total estimated level of funding available for awards under this **worldwide** request us up to $6,000,000 over a 24-36 month period. DCHA/DRG may fund individual programs in two categories:

1. Programs ranging from $300,000 - $500,000; and
2. Programs ranging from $500,001 - $1,000,000

Missions can use this funding for the procurement of new awards <u>or</u> use it to modify existing grant agreements.

VII.   PROPOSAL LIMIT

Missions may submit up to two proposals, one in each funding range.

VIII.   CONCEPT PAPER PROCESS

A. **General Guidance**:

USAID Missions have been informed that this funding is available to implement programs inclusive of persons with disabilities under the EEE theme. Interested and qualified organizations must apply for this funding directly through their local Missions.

1. **Contact local Mission (or relevant bureau/office)** – interested organizations should contact their local Mission or the Mission representative who is responsible for managing activities in the proposed country to assess interest and ability to participate in this funding opportunity. USAID/Washington does not maintain a list of participating Missions. It is the responsibility of interested organizations to engage directly with Missions. **Mission contact information can be found at: http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work or http://www.usaid.gov/mission-directory**
2. **Submitting applications** – Organizations should follow appropriate Mission instructions for application submission. Please note it may take Missions one month or more to review applications before forwarding them to DCHA/DRG in Washington. Please allow adequate time and submit your application early, well in advance of the DCHA/DRG Washington deadline listed below. Applications submitted by Missions after this deadline may not be considered.
3. **Review process** – Missions will conduct the first review based on their established procedures. Selected applications will be forwarded to DCHA/DRG Washington for further review. Final determinations will be communicated to applicants by the local Mission.

B. **Submission Deadlines**:

The deadline for Missions to submit applications DCHA/DRG in Washington is no later than **COB April 3, 2020**. **Applications must be submitted by USAID Missions only. DCHA/DRG will NOT accept applications submitted directly by potential implementing organizations.** Missions will establish their own internal deadline to receive applications under this call. Prospective applicants must check with their local USAID Mission to verify additional deadlines and plan accordingly.

D. **Application Format**:

Submissions must utilize the required application format provided in **Attachment A – FY 2019 USAID Disability Funding Program Application**. Be sure to complete all information requested on the application form. **The 10 page limit must be respected.** The cover page, annexes to the budget, and letters of cooperation between potential implementing partners are not subject to the page limit.

IX.   MISSION ELIGIBILITY

All interested USAID Missions are invited to apply for DRG Disability Program funds.

X.   POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNER ELIGIBILITY

Submissions of project concepts (utilizing the required application format provided in **Attachment A – FY 2019 USAID Disability Funding Program Application**) should be from qualified U.S. or non-U.S. entities, such as private, non-profit organizations (or for-profit

companies willing to forego profits), including private voluntary organizations, universities, research organizations, professional associations, and relevant special interest associations. **Local DPOs are strongly encouraged to submit project concepts**. Preference will be given to qualified DPOs and/or any of the above organization types that directly collaborate with and/or award sub-grants to DPOs while meeting the requirements for funding.

In their submissions to Missions, mainstream (non-DPO) organizations must include letter(s) of signed support from local DPOs they wish to partner with for the purpose of the project.

PIOs are not eligible to apply for funding under this program.

XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting on the project is required. The exact format for, preparation of, and timing for submission of all reports will be determined by the Mission. Recipients will be required to report on standard indicators required by Washington and additional indicators as determined by Missions. Though not required, Recipients are encouraged to submit photographs, success stories and/or other media as part of their progress reports.