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The Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN)

Evaluation Report: 2008-2016

USAID's Work on Local Solutions and
MFAN's Influence

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Acronyms

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|--------------|---|
| CAP | Center for American Progress |
| CGD | Center for Global Development |
| COWG | Country Ownership Working Group (MFAN) |
| IPR | Implementation and Procurement Reform |
| MFAN | Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network |
| NGO | Nongovernmental organization |
| PPD-6 | Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |

USAID's Work on Local Solutions and MFAN's Influence

As part of a retrospective evaluation of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network's (MFAN's) first eight years (2008-2016), the evaluation team explored in depth four outcomes to which MFAN members believed MFAN contributed significantly. The reform of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) policies and procedures to advance local ownership was among these four.

USAID Local Solutions: Outcome of Interest

The reform of USAID policies and procedures to advance local ownership¹

According to a senior staff member at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the agency substantially revised its thinking on the fundamentals of development between 2011 and 2016. During this time, reforming development policies and operational practices to advance local ownership was a major focus for USAID senior leadership. As a key stakeholder, the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN)² helped spur this significant organizational change through alliances with reformers within the agency, especially during the roll out of Implementation and Procurement Reform³ (IPR) in 2011 and 2012, and later with the implementation of USAID's Local Solutions initiative (2013-2016). Throughout both phases, MFAN was a strong voice for the principle of ownership: clarifying what ownership meant, and amplifying the ownership message within the administration and the development community, as well as on the Hill.

During the first phase, when USAID was rolling out its procurement reform policies,⁴ which included increasing the amount of direct aid going to local partners to 30 percent by 2015, the MFAN Hub, along with members such as Oxfam, successfully waged a campaign to help neutralize opposition from some international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and to counterbalance the voice of private contractors on the Hill who wanted to restrict USAID's ability to limit bids to local grantees. MFAN, led by Hub staff and Oxfam, educated congressional members and their staff, and took steps to block language being inserted into USAID appropriations bills that would put restrictions on USAID contracting procedures. MFAN co-chairs and the Hub successfully persuaded MFAN members to take a public stand in support of IPR. As a result, one MFAN member said, "the debate on Capitol Hill among the appropriators was reset," and some international NGOs began changing their internal policies to elevate local partners and make them primary contractors. MFAN also called on USAID to move from measuring success simply in terms of dollars transferred to a focus on the development outcomes that result from local ownership.

In 2013, when USAID reframed IPR as the Local Solutions initiative to focus on the ends rather than the means of development aid, USAID reformers began working on how to rewrite the operational procedures that USAID and implementing partners use to design, implement, and evaluate USAID-funded projects. MFAN, and particularly MFAN member PLAN, played a critical role as a sounding board for USAID staff, helping them figure out how to embed local ownership in its operating procedures. Members of MFAN's Country Ownership Working Group (including the Center for Global Development, Save the

¹ MFAN and the development community generally use the term "country ownership." The term "local ownership" is most favored by USAID reformers. USAID uses "local ownership" to refer not only to partner governments, but also civil society and the private sector.

² References to MFAN in this document include its fiscal sponsor, New Venture Fund. New Venture Fund serves as the official legal and fiscal entity for MFAN and exercises management oversight over the project.

³ Implementation and Procurement Reform was part of USAID's broad reform agenda USAID Forward. Through it, USAID sought to reform its procurement processes to increase its ability to fund local organizations directly.

⁴ Other procurement reforms included more fixed price contracting aimed at reducing costs, as well as reducing the transaction time and cost of doing business for multilaterals partnering with USAID.

"I'll tell you where I think that MFAN has been the most helpful. It was [these] last three years (2014-2016). We made a huge strategic shift for the agency by really explaining what we do, having a Local Solutions strategy, having teams, and [figuring out] how we measure Local Solutions. This has been a tremendous amount of work. MFAN has been our sounding board. We don't always agree with each other, but it has been the group we depended on because they have understood this at a deeper level than sometimes we can get our colleagues to understand because everyone is just so swamped."

USAID senior staffer

Children, and Oxfam) were also instrumental in helping USAID overcome internal obstacles to moving forward on measurement.

Consensus View

USAID likely would have taken some steps to reform procurement processes and increase the use of local partners without MFAN. However, the broader focus on local ownership and how to embed and sustain these principles within USAID's operating procedures and measurement systems would not have happened without MFAN as a strong, consistent partner and external voice for ownership. Within the global development community, there had been a growing consensus that development aid agencies needed to work more directly with local partners. There were also USAID Mission directors and senior career leaders who were strong advocates for working more with local partners. This measure became one of the key elements of USAID Forward, a broad agenda adopted to reform the agency and its work. One of the first initiatives under USAID Forward was Implementation and Procurement Reform (IPR). IPR was designed to increase the percentage of USAID funds directed to local partners. However, resistance to it by some international NGOs and private contractors threatened to slow down or derail USAID reformers' efforts. The MFAN Hub and co-chairs played a critical role in coalescing external support among a broad group of individuals and organizations, including some of USAID's implementing partners, to support the reformers' efforts. MFAN successfully neutralized most opposition among international NGOs. MFAN was less successful neutralizing opposition among for-profit contractors, although the MFAN Hub and Oxfam did successfully counterbalance the voice and influence of private contractors on Capitol Hill.

From 2013 to 2016, USAID shifted its strategy from measuring success based on the amount of money transferred to local partners (the means), towards a focus on local ownership and sustainability (the ends). MFAN's focus on country ownership and the publication of *The Way Forward: A Reform Agenda for 2014 and Beyond* was instrumental in helping USAID staff work through the priorities and challenges entailed in realizing local ownership and resourcing, and how USAID can support rather than supplant local systems to produce and sustain results.

Without MFAN, there would not have been a strong, consistent, external voice for ownership supporting the USAID reformers. This voice was especially powerful because MFAN brought together a mix of think tanks (e.g., the Center for Global Development and the Center for American Progress), NGOs (e.g., Oxfam, Women Thrive Worldwide, Save the Children, and PLAN) with a vast field presence. Without this strong external pressure, the development community would have been unlikely to embrace and advocate for local ownership. Additionally, USAID would have been far less likely to overcome internal obstacles to progress on measuring local ownership and its development impact.

MFAN's Contribution

President Obama continued to elevate development as a key pillar of U.S. national security and foreign policy, a priority that began under President Bush. In September 2010, President Obama issued a Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (PPD-6) which set an agenda for U.S. global development policy that aligned with principles emerging from global High-level Fora on Aid Effectiveness discussions (The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation). These principles included local ownership, mutual accountability, inclusive partnerships, and delivering on results.

USAID was not well positioned to align its systems with the international development communities' guidelines because it largely relied on a small number of U.S.-based NGOs and private contractors to deliver 90 percent of its assistance. This was a result of budget and staff cuts that took place in previous decades. Some senior career leaders and USAID Mission directors started advocating for working more directly with local partners during meetings in 2009 and 2010.

IPR and MFAN's Contribution (2010-2013)

In 2010, USAID put forward a comprehensive reform agenda referred to as USAID Forward, calling for:

- Talent management;
- Rebuilding USAID's policy capacity;
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation;
- Rebuilding budget management;
- Local solutions;
- Science and technology; and
- Innovation.

Early strategies for implementing USAID Forward focused on developing new models of investing in public-private partnerships and increasing the percentage of aid going directly to partner governments and local organizations. The aim was to make development efforts more effective, more enduring, and less costly. USAID proposed these reforms after acknowledging that it was extraordinarily dependent on large U.S. for-profit contractors and international NGOs to carry out its work.⁵ USAID set a goal of directing 30 percent of its annual grants and contracts to local partners by the 2015 U.S. government fiscal year, which would triple local procurement compared to the 2009 fiscal year.

In 2011, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah gave a major speech at the Center for Global Development, in which he challenged the current procurement approach saying that he was "no longer satisfied with writing big checks to big contractors and calling it development." According to John Norris of the Center for American Progress, "Shah argued that development firms were more interested in keeping themselves in business than seeing countries graduate from the need for aid."⁶

⁵ In fiscal year 2010, the first year of procurement-reform implementation, almost 65 percent of USAID's grants and contracts flowed to U.S.-based organizations, while less than 10 percent of USAID's development work was carried out with benefiting country partners in a top-line implementing role. (Casey Dunning, November 2013, "Is Local Spending Better? The Controversy over USAID Procurement Reform," Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ProcurementReform.pdf>)

⁶ John Norris, July 18, 2012, "Hired Gun Fight: Obama's aid chief takes on the development-industrial complex." Foreign Policy, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/18/hired-gun-fight/>.

“On IPR/Local Solutions there was a lot of pushback from the partner community, and I know MFAN tried to play a broker, mediator role, bringing the different groups together and explaining the different positions.”

USAID senior staff

“MFAN helped us define what we meant by local ownership, and how it looks on the ground, giving clarity to what we are thinking here.”

USAID senior staffer

“MFAN has provided a forum for us to speak to a broader audience and get our message out more broadly; that’s helpful. Sometimes, it is difficult for us to clearly articulate what we are doing and why, and MFAN has always been a big supporter in getting that message out.”

USAID senior staffer

Private contractors were particularly concerned about the 30 percent target, and began advocating against it. Some international NGOs, many represented by InterAction, also greeted the reforms lukewarmly, feeling that USAID’s local procurement efforts largely ignored the significant contributions U.S.-based NGOs make to building the capacity of local counterparts to undertake effective development. InterAction, an MFAN member, issued a report in 2012 entitled *More Effective Capacity Building within USAID Forward*. The report enumerated the many contributions of U.S. NGOs around the world, and called on USAID to do more to build the enabling environment for civil society, as well as to more fully integrate and elevate capacity building as a policy priority, objective, and budgeted activity in USAID programs. According to the report, without these supports, failure was more likely, and USAID Missions might not be able to deliver results. InterAction’s member organizations were concerned that the timeframe for reaching the 30 percent threshold was unrealistic, and that making it the primary metric for success was short-sighted in terms of building sustainable local ownership. Meanwhile, InterAction was skeptical about endorsing USAID’s procurement reform strategy of shifting aid to local partners without also reforming the rules and requirements that govern risk and compliance with USAID policies.

The opposition to IPR was deeply frustrating for USAID, which had expected broader support from the development community. IPR risked losing momentum. MFAN member Oxfam felt that MFAN urgently needed to step up its support of USAID’s procurement reform efforts, and was growing impatient with MFAN principals’ inability to agree on a formal statement endorsing IPR. In May 2012, Oxfam, acting on its own, released a progress report on IPR, endorsing USAID’s approach, and calling on Congress, the foreign aid community, and citizens to support the reforms and hold USAID accountable for meeting ambitious reform targets. The report was posted on MFAN’s website. Oxfam also sent an open letter to Congress signed by 16 prominent anti-corruption and human rights activists in strong support of USAID’s efforts to reform procurement practices. This letter helped congressional leaders understand that IPR wasn’t just a USAID initiative, but also had external stakeholders behind it, including some implementers who endorsed the letter. Oxfam’s efforts were also designed to spur the MFAN coalition to become a stronger external voice for procurement reform.

The MFAN co-chairs and Hub decided the time had come to make a public statement to buoy momentum for reform. In June 2012, MFAN released a policy statement, "Implementation and Procurement Reform: A Gateway to Country Ownership," recommending that "U.S. strategies in developing countries incorporate plans to support the ability of citizens and local civil society to help drive the development process, set development priorities, combat corruption, and hold their own governments accountable." MFAN translated its two-page statement into an open letter to USAID Administrator Shah and asked members to sign it. By having individuals and organizations sign the letter, they would be on record with their support. Several large USAID implementing partners like Save the Children and CARE supported MFAN's position, but others were ambivalent. According to one MFAN member, this open letter process "made it difficult" for NGOs not to support IPR. According to a participant at an MFAN evaluation workshop on IPR, "It made it unpalatable for a humanitarian advocate to come out against USAID working with local organizations." In signing this letter, the vast majority of MFAN member organizations and a number of external allies agreed to play a critical, strategic role in building support for procurement reform and neutralizing opposition.

MFAN explored channels of communication with private contractors to see if they could find common cause to work together. Although representatives from each side regretted that the other had not made more effort to dialogue, each felt that there was not enough common ground to warrant the effort. Instead, MFAN directed its energies toward Congress, advocating for local ownership, and neutralizing opposition from the private contractors. Over time, opposition to procurement reform decreased, as some contractors recognized their resistance was negatively affecting their reputations as development actors, and that the actual threat of the shift entailed by the reform was not as great as they feared.

Local Solutions and MFAN's Contribution (2014-2016)

In 2010, Local Solutions was identified as a core strategy of USAID Forward. The goal was to achieve long-term, sustainable development with support of the local institutions, private sector partners, and civil society organizations that serve as engines of growth and progress in countries that receive U.S. development aid. The narrow framing of the IPR initiative (launched in 2011) limited the scope of reform compared to what had been a broader agenda. In 2013, USAID reformers sought to reclaim the broader framing by going "back to the original focus of working locally, local ownership, the principles of Busan, what we were trying to do from a policy and strategic level as opposed to an operational and tactical level," according to a USAID senior staffer.

One of the first steps, in 2013, was to appoint a Local Solutions coordinator at USAID who could get the agency to work together to implement the Local Solutions initiative. Locating the position in the front office that directly supported the USAID Administrator gave the coordinator "gravitas

"The research that has come out has helped us clarify our thinking around local ownership and Local Solutions. We are not always able to do that research, so it's very helpful to have external stakeholders who can inform how we respond to implementing this."

USAID senior staffer

"MFAN advocated for a very new way of doing business. It was very helpful to have an external advocate that could help. When you are trying to make change, the forces are often quite strong."

USAID senior staffer

"I always felt like they had a good pulse on what was happening out there. It's easy to get isolated and you think everything is fine, but then we would have a meeting with MFAN and they would say no, here's what people are upset about, which groups are talking to whom. So I know they were doing a lot of things behind the scenes."

USAID senior staff

to work across the agency.” One of the coordinator’s early efforts was to shift the focus from the amount of funds transferred to local partners to a focus on the sustainability of development outcomes. With the Local Solutions initiative, USAID moved away from focusing on a single metric (30 percent of its grants and contracts transferred to local partners) to a set of metrics for assessing the sustainability of outcomes for all of USAID’s investments. MFAN played a critical role as a thought partner and external advocate for broadening and reframing USAID’s work on Local Solutions.

In April 2014, USAID released *Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development*, a paper which focused on how systems – government, civil society and private sector – produce and sustain results. The framework laid out 10 principles for engaging local systems, identified key changes needed in the agency’s incentive system, and proposed a way forward, including embedding local systems thinking⁷ into the program cycle,⁸ and developing ways to measure the effectiveness of the local systems approach, as well as its sustainability. At the same time, MFAN released *The Way Forward*, calling for the U.S. government to significantly expand its commitment to developing country ownership in three areas: ownership of priorities, ownership of project implementation, and ownership of local and external financial resources. MFAN’S framework was helpful to USAID staff as they sought ways to embed and institutionalize local ownership into their practices.

Following the release of the Local Systems paper, MFAN promoted USAID’s Local Solutions initiative within USAID and across the development community. In May 2014, MFAN co-chairs met with USAID Mission directors to discuss the Local Solutions initiative. Also in May, the Brookings Institution held an event on local ownership in partnership with MFAN and FHI360. The event discussed USAID’s Local Systems paper and what local ownership means with the broader development community.

MFAN member the Center for American Progress issued a report in late 2013 tracking the results of USAID’s procurement reform, and making recommendations for cementing reform. In late 2014, MFAN member Save the Children published research on how six countries have addressed country ownership over time, using criteria developed by MFAN.

MFAN and especially MFAN’s Country Ownership Working Group was an effective external advocate for pushing USAID to make progress on embedding and institutionalizing local ownership across the agency; this helped to neutralize some internal opposition.

USAID staff also valued MFAN’s input because MFAN had a pulse on what was going on behind the scenes in Congress. USAID staff saw MFAN as a bi-partisan, honest broker with the development community.

Rewriting ADS 201,⁹ the program cycle operational policy that provides guidelines for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming at the country level, took two years of sustained effort by USAID. MFAN, and especially MFAN member PLAN, provided a consistent voice for local ownership throughout the process. According to one senior USAID staff person, they consistently “stuck with it, and had something to bring to the table to help us figure out where to go next with it.” According to a senior USAID staffer, ADS 201 was “like everyone’s Christmas tree, everyone wanted their ornament on the tree. Everyone felt really passionately about what should be in that ADS.” There was pressure to

⁷ See <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

⁸ USAID’s “Program Cycle, codified in the Automated Directive Systems (ADS) 201, is USAID’s operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming.” See <https://usaidelearninglab.org/program-cycle-overview-page>.

⁹ See <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>.

water down the commitment to local ownership. The new ADS 201 guidelines were released in October 2016.

On the measurement issue, MFAN released a white paper, *Metrics for Implementing Country Ownership*, in July 2015. It suggested methods to measure progress towards meeting ownership objectives, and proposed a more practical and enhanced set of guidelines for policymakers trying to advance the country ownership agenda. One USAID senior staff person did not think USAID would have made the progress it did without MFAN.

Initially, Oxfam representatives had been skeptical of the paper's value, but in hindsight they concluded the paper had been quite useful.

All interviewees agreed that USAID is not where it needs to be on metrics, but it has made considerable progress with MFAN's help.

The MFAN Country Ownership Working Group held USAID accountable for making progress and worked as partners with USAID to come up with appropriate measures for assessing that progress.

While USAID has made progress on measurement, one senior staff member worries that future progress may stall, if MFAN does not have the resources to stay engaged. Other senior staff are heartened that a USAID Forward coordinator now sits in the agency's Bureau for Policy Planning and Learning, and that, as one USAID staffer explained, staffers have a menu of indicators of local ownership, "informed heavily with our conversations with MFAN that they are beginning to vet and review, and preparing to field-test." Measurement is a conversation that continues largely "due to MFAN's support and pushing, and interest in it."

MFAN's Capacities

MFAN's Country Ownership Working Group— MFAN's Country Ownership Working Group (COWG) was formed in 2014 to advance the country ownership agenda within USAID and other government agencies, the development community, and the Hill. COWG got off to a slow start. In COWG's early days, there were differing agendas within it that were difficult to reconcile. COWG leadership prioritized drafting a white paper on metrics, while other MFAN members, like Oxfam, wanted more attention given to meeting and educating congressional staff on the Hill. The process of writing the white paper did not go smoothly – in part because MFAN was undergoing major leadership transitions, and COWG did not have members with sufficient field and contracting expertise to help with the paper. That changed when MFAN brought on new COWG co-chairs in 2015. The new co-chairs brought field-level and technical expertise, as well as a strong advocacy capacity on the Hill. This helped move the country ownership agenda forward with the Appropriations Committee in the Senate, and ensured that research, ideas, and advice were based on a deeper understanding of USAID operations and limitations.

"The local ownership piece consistently stayed in there, not only because people worked hard in this building, but I really believe the consistent MFAN voice was absolutely instrumental. I've watched a lot of different stakeholder groups over the years, and what I saw with MFAN on this issue, they stuck with it, and they had something to bring to the table to help us figure out how do you really integrate [local ownership] into project design and evaluation."

USAID senior staff

"I'll tell you very frankly I don't think we could have gotten this building to move on [the] measurement side if it weren't for MFAN. When MFAN put out the model, it really helped us move, and lead the way."

USAID senior staff

"[The white paper] was immediately embraced by the Local Solutions team. It got them moving in the right direction. They had asked us for help, and this paper landed at USAID and made a positive impact quickly."

Oxfam representative

“MFAN put [ideas] out there to help us solve problems and they have stuck with it, and innovated. I’ve seen stakeholder groups who are passionate about their issues, but [what matters] is helping us to get over the hump. This is a new and emerging field, we have not figured this out.”

USAID senior staffer

“When we were pushing on the measurement issue, having MFAN come in as a vocal advocate to amplify our voice behind that to others in the agency was very helpful. There are times when we have run into obstacles along the way and MFAN keeps pushing us along and keeping that discussion alive.”

USAID senior staffer

Member engagement and dedicated funding – Of evaluation survey respondents who self-identified as “very active” on Local Solutions (13 total), all but one received funding from the Hewlett Foundation to work on aid reform. These organizations included Save the Children, Women Thrive Worldwide, Oxfam, InterAction, Bread for the World, the Glover Park Group, the Center for Global Development (CGD), and the Center for American Progress (CAP). Funding enabled MFAN member organizations to engage in education, research, content development, and public communications efforts that supported and pushed USAID to make progress on reform. Without these grants, MFAN’s influence would have been diminished.

Save the Children, Oxfam, CGD, and PLAN were the core MFAN organizations involved in working closely with USAID on Local Solutions, with Women Thrive Worldwide involved to a lesser degree. This group of organizations had a complementary set of skills, knowledge, expertise, and relationships that gave them access to, and influence with, USAID, Capitol Hill, and the development community.

MFAN Hub – The MFAN Hub played a critical role in drafting an open letter to USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah supporting IPR in 2012, and mobilizing over 80 individuals and organizations to sign on. The Hub’s coordinator worked to convince most members who were on the fence to sign onto the letter. This required working through differences of perspective without watering down the result. The Hub also played an important role in helping USAID stay abreast of where the political winds were blowing in Congress, and became a valuable source of information for USAID reformers.

USAID Local Solutions Timeline of Key Events

2008: Release of the Accra Agenda for Action that takes stock of progress and sets the agenda for accelerated efforts to meet the aid reform targets established in the 2005 Paris Declaration, a roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development (over 100 countries have agreed to adhere to its terms).

September 2010: USAID launched USAID Forward, committing the agency to, among other goals, directing 30 percent of its Mission program funds to local entities by the 2015 fiscal year.

August/November 2011: InterAction issued its country ownership policy paper and its related report, Country Ownership: Moving from Rhetoric to Action.

December 2011: The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation was endorsed by the United States and 160 other countries. The document highlighted a set of common principles to improve aid effectiveness: ownership of development priorities by developing countries, a focus on results, partnerships for development, and transparency and shared responsibility.

January 2012: Federal guidelines issued on Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID Federal Program Funds.

February 2012: USAID Implementation & Procurement Reform (IPR) brief published sharing stories from the field about how the agency's Missions are implementing IPR around the core objectives.

March 2012: MFAN Hub staff met with USAID Bureau for Policy Planning and Learning (PPL) staff about the push back on IPR from contractors and some NGOs and the need for USAID to do a better job framing the issue.

April 2012: MFAN hosted event with USAID with Liberia's Foreign Minister Amara Konneh and Secretary Clinton's Senior Advisor for Development Steve Radelet discussing the Fixed Amount Reimbursement Agreement with Liberia.

May 2012: Oxfam released progress report on IPR, "New USAID Reforms Put Foreign Aid to Work Fighting Corruption and Waste." Greg Adams authored a blogpost on the Oxfam website on fighting corruption with aid dollars. Oxfam sent an open letter to Capitol Hill signed by prominent anti-corruption and human rights activists in strong support USAID's efforts. MFAN published a blog post: Oxfam Takes on Implementation and Procurement Reform.

May 2012: House appropriations bill and committee report critical of IPR; Senate appropriations bill with language supporting IPR and government-to-government programs.

May 2012: Women Thrive Worldwide hosted a gender roundtable on the USAID IPR agenda and produced a one page fact sheet on why IPR is central to building capacity and ensuring development solutions are country-led.

May/June 2012: MFAN held an educational meeting with the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee staff to discuss IPR.

June 2012: MFAN released a position paper on procurement reform entitled "Implementation and Procurement Reform: A Gateway to Country Ownership."

June 2012: MFAN members met with USAID staffers on IPR, addressing development community misunderstandings and USAID's plans.

July 2012: John Norris from CAP wrote a blogpost in the journal Foreign Policy entitled Hired Gun Fight.

July 2012: Oxfam launched a field research project in seven countries on how procurement reform has advanced country ownership.

September 2012: MFAN sent an open letter to USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah signed by 80 individuals and organizations endorsing procurement reform; several members required much discussion before agreeing to sign. A few did not sign.

October 2012: InterAction paper More Effective Capacity Building within USAID Forward issued.

November 2012: USAID hosted a two-day summit on strengthening country systems, which brought together USAID staff and implementing partners to build a baseline body of knowledge around country system strengthening.

March 2013: USAID issued its first [USAID Forward Progress Report](#) providing detailed resource data on the breakdown of its implementers, and the anchoring their reforms around pillars of aid effectiveness, and why shifts in funding are critical for better development results.

March 2013: MFAN blogpost [grading the USAID Forward agenda](#); MFAN high-level meeting with USAID staff to discuss guidelines for USAID Missions on contracting.

November 2013: CAP released a report by Casey Dunning, [Is Local Spending Better?: The Controversy over USAID Procurement Reform](#); Oxfam shared the report with House appropriators.

April 2014: MFAN released [The Way Forward: A Reform Agenda for 2014 and Beyond](#) calling for the U.S. government to significantly expand its commitment to developing country ownership in three areas: ownership of priorities, ownership of implementation, and ownership of resources.

April 2014: USAID released [Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development](#).

May 2014: MFAN's Country Ownership Working Group (COWG) began meeting to discuss congressional appropriations strategies, partnering with USAID to conduct domestic resource mobilization¹⁰ pilots, and writing a white paper on ownership.

May 2014: MFAN met with USAID Mission directors; Local Solutions initiative reportedly widely accepted by Missions.

June 2014: In partnership with MFAN and FHI360, the Brookings Institution hosted an event on local ownership discussing USAID Local Systems paper and what local ownership means.

June 2014: MFAN members held off-the-record conversations with USAID staff to discuss the Local Systems paper and how to come up with outcome indicators.

September 2014: USAID released a work plan on Local Solutions to USAID bureaus; MFAN sent a letter to House and Senate appropriators praising good ownership language and urging its inclusion in the final bill.

October 2014: MFAN met with USAID staff to discuss implementation of the agenda for the Local Solutions initiative; MFAN learned USAID had been doing much more than thought to try to institutionalize Local Solutions and move beyond the 30 percent of funds target as the only metric. USAID staff and MFAN agreed that COWG needed to put specifics around the metrics.

December 2014: Save the Children published its research report, [Tracking USAID's Efforts on the Local Solutions Initiative: A Review of Select Procurements in Six Countries](#), calling on USAID to report on progress and scale up promising practices and adopt standardized indicators.

January 2015: MFAN issued a 2014 scorecard that included six MFAN initiatives related to Local Solutions and the degree of progress made on each.

January 2015: MFAN's Hill Strategy Working Group tasked with educating Congress on country ownership and influencing appropriations reporting language related to strengthening use of local solutions.

¹⁰ Domestic resource mobilization (DRM) is "the process through which countries raise and spend their own funds to provide for their people." See <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/economic-growth-and-trade/domestic-resource-mobilization>.

January 2015: MFAN co-chairs blog, "[State of the Union 2015: What "Smart Development" Means for Reform as the Clock Winds Down,](#)" urging President Obama to institutionalize reforms on country ownership and appoint a USAID Administrator capable of taking the reforms forward.

March 2015: MFAN's Country Ownership Working Group transitioned its leadership.

March 2015: PLAN hosted panel discussion on institutionalizing local ownership and sustainability in developing countries with USAID and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

April 2015: The co-chairs of the Country Ownership Working Group urged USAID Acting Administrator Alfonso Lenhardt to publicly endorse USAID's Local Solutions initiative.

May 2015: USAID Forward data demonstrating USAID's progress on its reforms released.

May 2015: MFAN co-chairs meet with USAID Acting Administrator Lenhardt on MFAN priorities and urged him to publicly endorse USAID's Local Solutions initiative.

June 2015: U.S. Government Accountability Office published its report on government-to-government assistance entitled [USAID Has Taken Steps to Safeguard Government-to-Government Funding but Could Further Strengthen Accountability](#).

June 2015: Save the Children report, [The Local Solutions Initiative in Practice: A Case Study of USAID/Philippines](#), issued; Brookings Institution Global Economy and Development Program and Save the Children held a release event for the report.

July 2015: MFAN white paper [Metrics for Implementing Country Ownership](#) released.

August 2015: MFAN meeting with USAID Local Solutions staff on measuring ownership.

December 2015: Gayle Smith (former MFAN co-chair) confirmed as USAID Administrator. MFAN co-chairs sent a letter to Gayle Smith outlining [2016 priorities](#), one of which called for establishing public metrics of sustainability and institutionalizing the Local Solutions initiative.

March 2016: MFAN Letter to Gayle Smith supporting ADS 201.

May 2016: USAID released USAID Forward data.

May 2016: Casey Dunning (CGD) blogpost "[USAID Didn't Hit Its 30 Percent Target for Local Solutions – Here's Why I'm Still Cheering.](#)"

May 2016: "[MFAN Letter to USAID: Establish Specific Indicators for Country Ownership](#)" by Greg Adams and Nora O'Connell.

September 2016: PLAN blog by Justin Fugle, "[Sustainability Through Local Ownership: Coming Soon to More USAID Missions.](#)"

October 2016: [ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy](#) issued.

November 2016: Blog by Diana Ohlbaum, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "[From Policy to Practice: Implementing Evaluations at USAID.](#)"

