LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS
OVER-THE-HORIZON STRATEGIC REVIEW

Overview. This landscape analysis serves as the foundation for the ***Over-the-Horizon Strategic Review*** (OTH), which aims to position USAID for a world altered by COVID-19. The paper provides only an initial snapshot and will inform scenario-planning and policy, program, budget, operations, and human-resource analysis to follow. This effort does not replace Transformation or the Agency's COVID-19 Task Force.

The landscape analysis describes the overall state of play and then observations around **five emerging trends**. For each, the paper summarizes the trend and highlights key takeaways. The current context is uniquely complex and rife with uncertainty. The observations herein are based variously on real-time data, modeled projections, news reporting, and expert analysis. These are all subject to inaccuracies and biases. Forecasts, in particular, should be interpreted cautiously.

- [The pandemic today](#)
- [A health crisis unprecedented in scale](#)
- [A new national security imperative](#)
- [Severe shocks to mobility and the economy](#)
- [Rising pressures on governance, democracy, and stability](#)
- [Devastating impacts on households](#)

Revisiting projected best and worst cases. The global landscape is changing rapidly. In April, USAID staff conducted a 'best case/worst case' exercise, the conclusions of which were presented to the Agency Front Office. In the months that have elapsed since, many outcomes appear on trajectories toward worst-case rather than best-case scenarios – although several remain ambiguous. There remains substantial uncertainty about the relative scope, severity, and persistence of these effects.

BEST CASE	WORST CASE
☐ Current assumptions hold	☑ Negative social, governance, and economic impacts of prevention and mitigation measures
☑ Systems strain, but don't collapse	☐ Ongoing conflicts and crises are exacerbated
☐ Largely V-shaped economic impact	☑ Widespread U and L-shaped economic impact

☐ COVID Infodemic sparks backlash against malicious disinformation	☐ Democratic backsliding entrenched
☐ Return to Sustainable Development Goal implementation pre-pandemic	☑ Undermining of information integrity leads to further erosion of democratic governance
☐ International community uses crisis to innovate, advance peace talks, and take advantage of other opportunities	☐ Malign actors gain outsize influence
	☑ Mobility, access, and accountability impacts donors' ability to operate; donors face pressure to redirect funding domestically

The pandemic today. As of August 11 2020, more than 20 million coronavirus cases have been reported in 188 countries and territories. This is approximately twice the number of people who contract tuberculosis yearly in half the time. To date more than 730,000 people have died from the disease, greater than the number of people killed yearly by malaria. The U.S. reports the highest number of cases and deaths in the world. [1] Globally, the spread of COVID-19 continues to accelerate. There is currently no treatment or vaccine for COVID-19.

A health crisis unprecedented in scale.

It remains impossible to make predictions about the peak and ultimate duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Impacts are differing across regions and countries. As the virus is readily transmissible, it may turn into an endemic disease without universal vaccinations, raising complex and costly challenges for health systems in poor countries.

Daily Confirmed COVID Cases among USAID-Supported Countries (By Region)
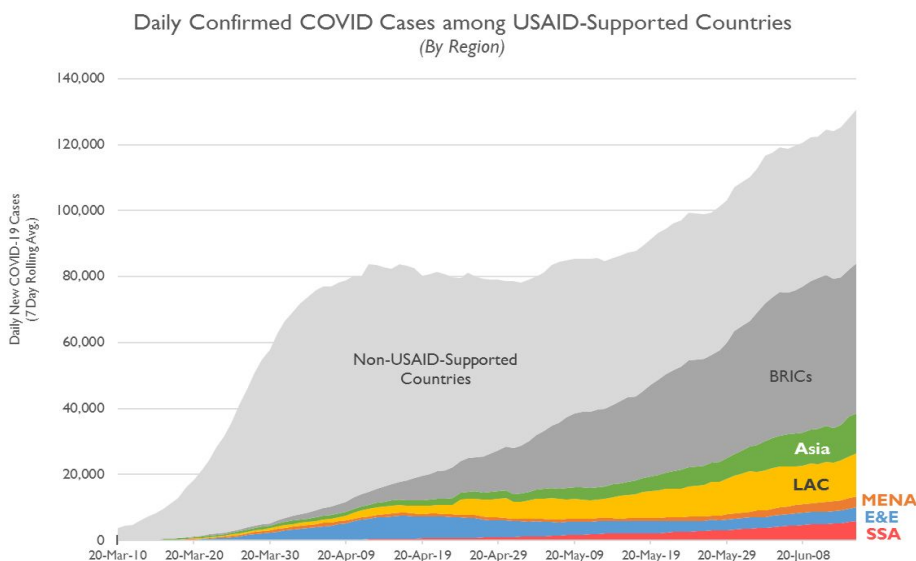
- COVID-19 **deaths and severe outcomes are occurring predominantly in older adults and persons who have certain underlying chronic medical conditions** such as lung disease, asthma, cardiac disease, diabetes, or immunocompromising conditions. For most developing countries COVID-19 is likely to expand challenges associated with the youth bulge.

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[1] Data from: John Hopkins University. (2020). Coronavirus Resource Center COVID-19 Dashboard. Retrieved from: https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19; U.S. Foreign Aid Explorer. Available from: https://explorer.usaid.gov/. June 29, 2020. USAID.

- The exponential growth in infected individuals has **overwhelmed health care providers and facilities** worldwide. Health workers, equipment, and facilities have been reallocated to respond to the novel virus; disruptions to supply chains have reduced availability of critical resources; mobility restrictions have prevented access to essential services; and health workers themselves are getting sick from the disease.

- The **stress on health systems is exacerbating other diseases**. Millions of people are now vulnerable to dying from insufficient maternal and child health care, lack of other preventive and treatment services, and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. At least 68 of 129 countries where data were available are reporting moderate-to-severe disruptions in vaccination campaigns, to include suspensions of diphtheria, measles, and polio vaccinations, putting at least 80 million children under one at risk.

- At the center of this health emergency is the **fragility and inequality of many countries' health systems**. Public health performance is poor across much of the developing world and the persistence of deep inequities in access to essential services is concentrating the adverse impacts among vulnerable and marginalized groups.

A new national security imperative.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an acute national security crisis. It has caused more than 160,000 known American deaths and the steepest economic contraction on record. While on its face a public health emergency, the complex crisis has far reaching geopolitical implications.

- The pandemic underscores that **security and prosperity at home are linked inextricably to development and humanitarian challenges abroad** – and our responses to them. COVID-19 presents **a uniquely complex and interconnected problem set**, exacerbated by existing challenges such as rising authoritarianism, extreme poverty, food insecurity, and inequalities, all of which are projected to rise with destabilizing effects on already fragile states.

- The pandemic is **altering the international order, upending regional geopolitics, and weakening states.** Countries, and governments, that have mishandled their responses to the crisis are losing influence to competitors with more effective responses. Likewise, the pandemic is spurring isolationist and nationalist tendencies that may heighten cross-border tensions, as well as increasing competition in the information environment and over influence in multilateral institutions.

- **Adversaries are exploiting the pandemic to more assertively compete with the U.S.** Authoritarian regimes are taking advantage of the crisis to undermine public trust in Western countries and the international rules-based order and employ disinformation to discredit democracies. Violent extremist

organizations, terrorist groups, and criminal networks are capitalizing on the pandemic: increasing attacks and illicit activity where governments are distracted, blaming the West for the crisis, and providing response services that earn local popular support.

- **China is seizing the opportunity** to advance its long-term interests, export its authoritarian approach to information control, expand its influence, increase exports of surveillance and other technologies, and establish global digital connectivity monopolies. China has also pledged $2 billion in assistance over two years for COVID-19 response to developing countries. Despite China's deployment of misinformation and aid, China has suffered significant reputational damage due to perceived failure to contain the virus, address underlying failures that give rise to multiple zoonotic epidemics, suppression of information, persecution of independent voices, and repeated failures to address the illegal wildlife trade.

Severe shocks to mobility and the economy. COVID-19 has led to a major disruption of the U.S. and global economy. COVID-19-related **policies and behavior change have impeded the movement of people, capital, and information**. Severe reductions in the demand for labor and energy commodities have depressed prices for energy commodities, reduced remittance flows, led to a near-cessation of international tourism, and reduced private investments in many developing countries. The IMF projects a -4.9% contraction in global GDP this year, and -3.0% for emerging markets and developing economies specifically, which will disproportionately affect, and exacerbate, existing vulnerabilities in low-income countries.

- **To date, low- and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) have been relatively less disrupted** by COVID-19 (see figure at right). Workplace mobility, a strong proxy for economic activity, fell less in many developing countries than in wealthier regions.
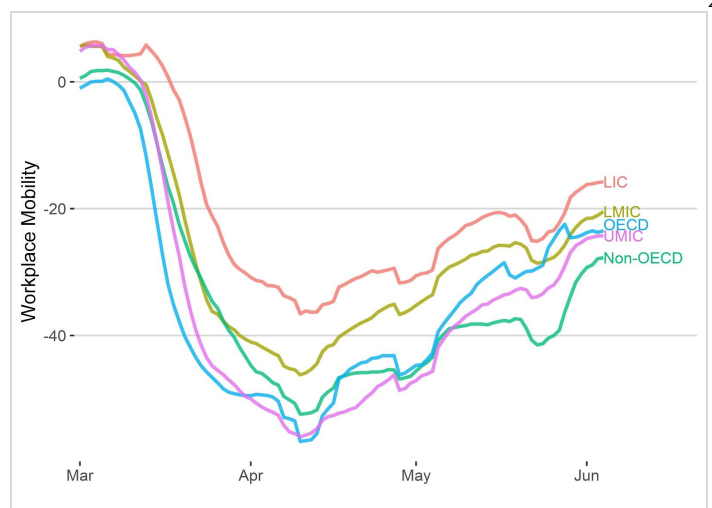
- **The economic impact of COVID-19 in developing countries has been closely linked to the economic recovery in the West.** Many developing country economies rely on capital in-flows, often in the form of tourism or other service industries, primary commodity exports, foreign credit or remittances, from the West. Foreign direct investment is expected to plunge by up to $620 billion, or 40%, and remittance flows are expected to fall by more than $130 billion this year.

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[2] Data from: Google Covid Community mobility reports. (2020). Available from: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/ Accessed June 16, 2020
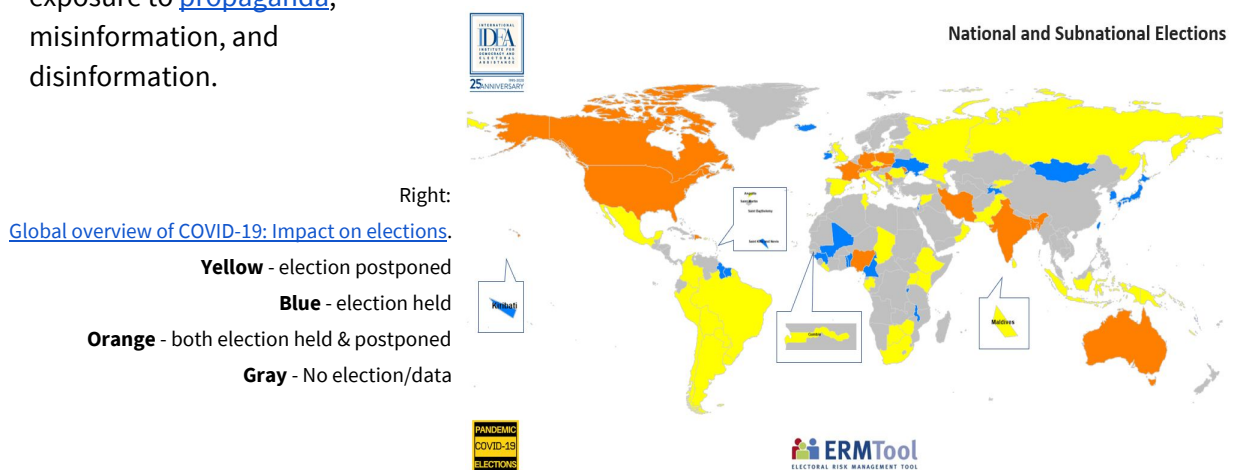
- **Declining commodity prices, particularly for energy and certain metal exports, pose a real threat to public financial stability and growth in developing countries.** Many developing countries are particularly reliant on primary exports as a source of foreign exchange. In recent decades, high commodity prices brought in new investment, created employment and supported public sector funding across the global south. The recent and sudden decline in commodity prices, particularly for primary energy and base metal exports, is likely to lead to severe economic challenges in natural resource/energy export-dependent economies.

- **The impact on global trade and supply chains is unclear**. Notwithstanding initial concerns over the global supply chain, driven by factory closures and a series of temporary export bans on key food products, the global trade system has proved to be relatively resilient.   The value of global trade in 2020 is expected to decline by 20%; the decline in trade is partially attributable to lower prices for energy commodity prices and reduced demand for automobiles and other transportation craft.

- **COVID-19 is affecting migration.** Overall migration numbers have been volatile, with record highs early in 2020 and significant swings in asylum-seeker arrivals. Europe saw a record high in asylum applicants in early 2020, but lower numbers in April and May. Decreases in applications are related to emergency protective measures – countries that implemented the strongest measures saw the largest drop in applications. It is not yet known how easing emergency restrictions will impact migrants or the drivers of migration.

- **Recent trends point to a deeper recession and slower recovery than originally anticipated, with lasting, but somewhat unpredictable, effects from the lockdown**. While the IMF originally forecasted a gradual rebound, they are now projecting global output to decline by 4.9 percent in 2020, 1.9 percentage points below their April forecast, followed by a partial recovery, with growth at 5.4 percent in 2021.

Rising pressures on governance, democracy, and stability.

Government and citizen responses to COVID-19 are disrupting democratic practices and weakening democratic development. Restrictions on assembly and expression, postponement of elections, and overreach of executive authorities could have long-term, negative effects on democratization around the globe. At the same time, authoritarian regimes are taking advantage of the crisis to advance their objectives, such as discrediting the liberal world order and altering norms around human rights and privacy, and countering the argument that democracies perform better against pandemics.

- **COVID-19 and the response to it is affecting democratic and good-governance practices**, such as anti-corruption measures, protections for civil liberties and privacy, social inclusion, and electoral integrity. At least 70 countries and territories have postponed elections due to COVID-19 and 39

countries have issued measures that curtail free expression. A central question is whether the negative impacts will prove temporary or become entrenched.
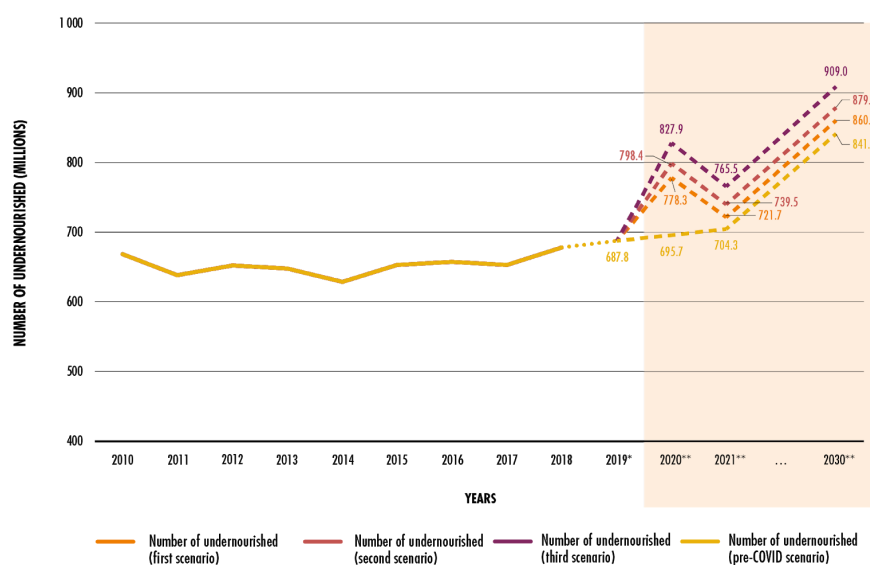
- Many **aid recipient countries will experience political volatility, sustained democratic backsliding, instability, or conflict** as they face the combined strain of increased health care, stimulus and social welfare costs; loss of investments and government tax revenues; sovereign debt crises; increased corruption; and citizen unrest over feckless responses to the pandemic, loss of livelihoods, and reductions in civil liberties.

- The pandemic and subsequent **policy responses have had both positive and negative effects on conflict and stability**. In some settings, civil unrest has increased, violent actors have seized the opportunity to launch attacks, and peacekeeping operations have been disrupted. But elsewhere temporary ceasefires have been put in place. The net effect on levels of violence, to date, is negligible, if not slightly positive.

- Most of the governance impacts thus far have been negative, but **there may be some long-term positive impacts as well**, such as increased civic engagement; more empowered local communities; more demand to hold governments accountable for higher quality health services; and organized pushback on faulty hardware and ideologies.

- **Digital technology is accelerating access to services but increasing risk.** Authoritarian regimes are exporting technologies and behaviors that undermine sovereignty. Governments and the private sector are increasingly using digital technology to understand and address COVID-19, but this further widens the digital divide, as most developing countries are unable to implement digital health and online schooling. Pervasive social media and frustrated populations quarantined at home increases risk of exposure to propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation.

Right:

Global overview of COVID-19: Impact on elections.

Yellow - election postponed

Blue - election held

Orange - both election held & postponed

Gray - No election/data

National and Subnational Elections

Devastating impacts on households. As of August 2020, fewer than 11 million people across the globe have been impacted by the direct health crisis. The measures to control the outbreak and the resulting economic fallout, however, have affected nearly all of humanity. The impacts on vulnerable households have been especially devastating. The unprecedented sudden loss of income and livelihoods is aggravating existing humanitarian emergencies, and likely to result in major setbacks in development gains. Early evidence suggests widespread increases in poverty, food and water insecurity, malnutrition, education gaps, other socioeconomic strains, and rising inequality.

- Immediately prior to the pandemic, **global humanitarian needs were at historic highs,** driven by entrenched conflicts, natural disasters, extreme weather, and economic shocks. Nearly 80 million people were forcibly displaced before COVID-19 – the highest number on record – stripping historic numbers of households of the ability to secure their families' well-being These crises already outstripped global response capacity, a gap that has only widened as resources have been diverted toward responding to COVID-19. New needs are likely to be concentrated in existing crisis contexts.

- **More than 113 million people are projected to face crisis-level food insecurity** this year, 25% more than anticipated prior to the pandemic. COVID-19 control measures are driving substantial increases in urban food insecurity.

- An additional **100 million people are expected to backslide into extreme poverty and chronic hunger** absent interventions, pushing the total population experiencing hunger as high as 827million this year; Africa will be hardest hit. Disruptions to food and health systems are also estimated to contribute to an additional 6.7 million wasted children over the next year, above the 47 million baseline. Moreover, food supply chains have been seriously strained. Lost livelihoods and consumers' inability to access food poses risk of unrest and food riots. [4]

Number of undernourished (first scenario) · Number of undernourished (second scenario) · Number of undernourished (third scenario) · Number of undernourished (pre-COVID scenario)

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[4] The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2020), page 17. Available from: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1majduKbhmvvtdvuygiKruOehdA2tuuCBUdP7Z1AhoJ8/edit Accessed Sept. 2, 2020

- More than **1.5 billion people worldwide** are employed in wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, vehicle repair, accomodation and food services, and business, real estate, and administration services, the sectors likely to be most affected by the crisis, including one-third of all workers in low- and middle-income countries.

- **Households are experiencing a range of interrelated, negative shocks**. These include an increase in lack of access to basic drinking water and water for handwashing beyond the existing 785 million people world-wide without drinking water, school closures affecting over 60% of the world's student population and disruptions are affecting 1.6 billion learners without the benefit of online learning, and growing violence against women and girls, as high as a 30% increase in some countries.

- **COVID-19 is likely to have more adverse economic and health effects in cities than in rural areas, even as poor rural and displaced households dominate current humanitarian caseloads**. Camp-based, slum-dwelling, and otherwise displaced populations are especially vulnerable to new shocks.

OVER THE HORIZON

PLANNING FOR A WORLD ALTERED BY COVID-19

SNAPSHOT

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over the Horizon was a strategic-planning exercise to **prepare USAID for a world altered by COVID-19** and its increasingly complex development and humanitarian landscape.

- Through the exercise, **USAID established three Strategic Objectives to focus assistance on addressing pressing challenges exacerbated by COVID 19**—by building more stable and resilient systems; responding to rising poverty, food insecurity, and lost educational opportunities; and strengthening strained public and private health systems and health security.

- As part of Over the Horizon, USAID identified a set of focus countries to concentrate its medium- to long-term response, as well as **32 specific recommendations to adapt policy, programs, and operations** to the evolving global context.

- The findings of the exercise underscore that **USAID's unique on-the-ground expertise and assistance toolkit are more essential than ever to U.S. national security** and to this unprecedented crisis—but, to be as effective as possible, USAID must exercise leadership, equip itself to be agile, and prepare for heightened uncertainty.

A RESHAPED DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

The global spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has had an extraordinary impact on the people, places, and partners to which the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides assistance. The pandemic has created a new, acute national security threat for the United States. Globally, **COVID-19 presents a monumental, multifaceted humanitarian and development challenge**.

As of October, more than 40 million cases and more than 1.1 million deaths have been recorded worldwide. That amounts, in less than one year, to more than twice the number of people killed by malaria annually. **Disruptions to economies and governance are imperiling hard-won development gains and aggravating humanitarian needs**, which were already at an all-time high.

COVID-19 has profound implications for USAID's mission and operations. **USAID anticipates significant backsliding on recent development progress**—in food security and nutrition, maternal and child health, basic education, livelihoods and poverty reduction, and in other areas. Further, the crisis seems to be amplifying pernicious trends, such as tightening restrictions on political freedoms, worsening fragility and instability, and competition among global powers. Widespread movement restrictions also constrain USAID's operations on the ground: more than 800 staff left USAID overseas Missions on authorized departure, program access has been curtailed, and many implementing partners are under stress. Yet, amid this disruption, there are also new opportunities to enhance the impact of foreign assistance, such as from the rapid acceleration of digital transformation.

Foreign assistance is critical to the United States' foreign policy. Delivering assistance effectively strengthens U.S. national security and economic prosperity—and it supports millions of people and partners around the world in building better lives, shaping their own futures, and doing so with a focus on self-reliance. As the lead U.S. international development and disaster assistance agency, with a presence in 80 countries and programs that reach dozens more, **USAID must confront challenges and seize opportunities posed by COVID-19**.

OCTOBER 2020

THE OVER THE HORIZON STRATEGIC REVIEW

USAID launched Over the Horizon (OTH) to prepare for a world altered by COVID-19. **OTH was a four-month, whole-of-Agency strategic review** that took place primarily between June and October 2020. OTH complemented the work of USAID's COVID-19 Task Force, which oversaw the obligation of more than $1.3 billion of assistance and ensured continuity of operations around the world.

Whereas the Task Force managed the immediate response to the pandemic, OTH ensured USAID plans for an uncertain future. In this way, OTH built directly on the Journey to Self-Reliance and on reforms undertaken through USAID's Transformation—and will ensure their continued relevance in a rapidly evolving global context.

To oversee OTH, **the Acting Administrator established a staff-level Planning Cell and a senior-level Executive Steering Committee** (ESC) on June 17, 2020. The Planning Cell, housed in the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL), reported directly to the Agency's Front Office. Career experts from across USAID staffed the unit. The ESC, likewise, reflected broad expertise from 20 Senior Foreign Service officers, Senior Executive Service officials, and political appointees, including Bureau leadership and the Agency Counselor. A Mission Director Resource Group also advised the Planning Cell.

The Planning Cell conducted research and analysis in collaboration with a wide array of Agency and external experts. The Planning Cell reported findings to the ESC, which provided further guidance throughout the exercise. Through OTH, USAID analyzed the evolving strategic context, including emerging humanitarian and development needs and implications for USAID operations and U.S. national security. These findings informed **concrete and actionable recommendations to adapt policies, programs, and operations**. The process included a global, structured scenario-planning exercise, a comprehensive review of all USAID strategies and policies, surveys to field staff, a series of roundtables with external stakeholders, and thousands of person-hours of intensive data analysis and research.

INPUTS TO THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

- **Scenario Planning: ~75** USAID technical experts reviewed **200+** data sources as part of a structured scenario-planning exercise

- **Policy Review: 40+** issue-owners and independent reviewers conducted the first comprehensive review of all **42** active USAID development policies

- **Field Consultations: 50+** field staff from **20+** Missions and other posts, spanning regions and including Foreign Service National staff, shared detailed suggestions and insights in surveys and consultations; a Resource Group of **8** Mission Directors also provided counsel throughout the process

- **Partner Roundtables: ~150** participants from **~75** organizations, including implementers, think tanks, academics, and other partners, shared their perspectives in roundtable discussions

- **Collaborative Research: 50+** experts in headquarters conducted analysis on and developed recommendations for critical priorities, investments, reforms, and innovations

- **Leadership Dialogues: ~20** senior USAID leaders convened in facilitated sessions to review analysis, provide guidance, and deliberate on USAID's long-term response to COVID-19

- **Intelligence Briefings:** Engagement with the National Intelligence Council Strategic Futures Group on global trends

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

To understand the fluid strategic context, USAID conducted a landscape analysis followed by a rigorous, Agency-wide scenario-planning exercise. **The landscape analysis synthesized real-time data, modeled forecasts, expert opinions, and news reporting.** In the analysis, USAID identified five major trends:

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN TRENDS

- **A new U.S. national security imperative:** COVID-19 has far-reaching geopolitical implications. China, Russia, and Iran are exploiting the crisis to advance their agendas, including "vaccine diplomacy," exporting authoritarianism, and building digital monopolies. Further, criminals and violent extremists are using the crisis to undermine governments and the rule of law.

- **A health crisis of enormous scale:** COVID-19 is overwhelming health care providers, facilities, and supply chains. Beyond the direct impact of the virus, the burden of other disease may grow. For example, nearly 120 million children risk missing measles vaccines this year.

- **Rising pressures on governance, democracy, and stability:** COVID-19 is straining governance and social cohesion. Dozens of countries have curtailed free expression, assembly, and media in its wake. More than 70 countries postponed elections. The rapid shift to digital platforms creates opportunities for civic engagement, but it may also entrench digital divides and increase exposure to propaganda and misinformation.

- **Severe shocks to mobility and the economy:** COVID-19 disrupted the movement of people, capital, and information. The global economy is projected to contract by 5.2 percent this year. Foreign investment in is expected to plunge by 40 percent and remittances by more than $130 billion. Falling commodity prices and tax revenue imperil public finances in many places.

- **Devastating impacts on households:** COVID-19 is compounding household shocks: declining access to drinking water, school closures affecting more than 60 percent of the world's students, and rising violence against women and girls, as high as a 30-percent increase in some countries. More than 113 million people will face crisis-level food insecurity this year, and 100 million people are expected to be pushed into extreme poverty, the first global increase since the 1990s.

Building on the landscape analysis, **USAID conducted a scenario-planning exercise to better understand the range of possible futures** for which the Agency and its partners may need to prepare. More than 75 Agency technical experts participated in the scenario planning, consulting more than 200 data sources—much larger in scale than any similar effort in USAID's recent history.

Working in five independent teams, organized around each trend but also considering their overlaps, **USAID experts developed more than 30 plausible, high-impact future scenarios**. These examined interactions among major drivers of change, such as between the scale of the global economic fallout and the resiliencies of governments and other domestic institutions amid this fiscal stress. Scenarios included:

- **Catch 2022:** An economic recovery but at a cost; innovation drives uneven growth, with a significant first-mover advantage; digital divides create winners and losers, while malign actors exploit weak cybersecurity.

- **Costly Containment:** A safe vaccine is developed, but manufacturing stagnates; distribution is skewed and limited; outbreaks spread but many countries' public and private health systems prove resilient and able to meet basic needs.

- **New Equilibrium, New Divides:** Global mobility returns; economies rebound to 2019 levels, but other headwinds remain; new capital reaches developing countries.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Grounded in the landscape analysis and scenario planning, USAID established an OTH Goal, three Strategic Objectives (SOs), and a set of Strategic Principles to provide a framework for USAID's medium- to long-term response to COVID-19. **This strategic approach will underpin policy decisions in headquarters and programming in the field, and it was the basis for recommendations**, below—but it does not supplant USAID's Policy Framework and the Journey to Self-Reliance, nor other sectoral or regional goals, objectives, or policy and program priorities.

GOAL: USAID advances U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives by leading the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance for a world altered by COVID-19, so that partner countries continue to build self-reliance and progress beyond assistance.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3
Build more stable, resilient systems in countries that are increasingly fragile due to COVID-19	Respond to dramatic increases in food insecurity, extreme poverty, and loss of educational opportunities in communities most impacted by COVID-19	Strengthen public and private health systems strained by COVID-19 in partner countries critical to global health security

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES: Continue to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance, protect hard-won development gains, and counter the negative impact of malign actors in areas of significant USAID investment and partnership.
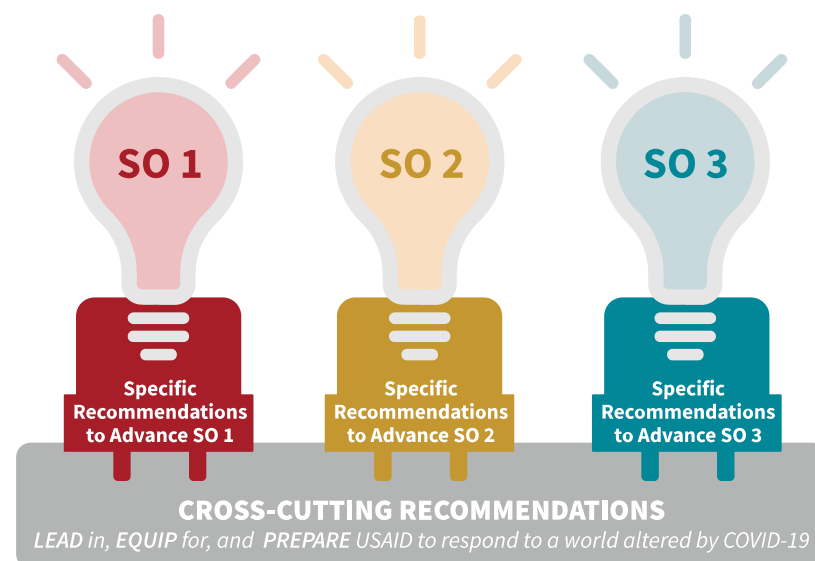
RECOMMENDATIONS

To position the Agency for new and evolving challenges, USAID developed 32 OTH recommendations. These include **16 policy and program recommendations to advance each Strategic Objective and 16 cross-cutting recommendations** that reflect the Strategic Principles and will ensure USAID makes operational changes and provide the support to lead in the interagency and internationally, equip itself to be agile, and prepare for heightened uncertainty.

For each of the 32 recommendations, **USAID identified specific actions** to operationalize it. For example, recommendations to

advance SO 1 include for USAID to develop a strategy to improve coherence at the nexus of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs for countries facing compounding challenges due to COVID-19. Recommendations to advance SO 2 include for USAID to invest in digital educational tools and remote, remedial, catch-up, non-formal, and training programs, especially for marginalized populations, where learners are affected by widespread school closures. Recommendations to advance SO 3 include for USAID to help governments plan for COVID-19 vaccine rollout and to ensure equitable access, including through community engagement.

Operational recommendations cut across the SOs and support broader Agency changes to adapt to COVID-19, building on USAID's Transformation. These include for USAID to enhance strategic communications to counter disinformation about the virus, vaccines, and related topics; to standardize good-practices in empowering Foreign Service National (FSN) staff, such as enabling FSNs to serve as office directors and senior advisors, more urgent due to the authorized departure from Missions of many Foreign Service Officers; and to establish a strategic foresight unit to build on horizon-scanning tools like FEWS NET and institutionalize planning for future uncertainty and high-impact events.

SO 1 — Specific Recommendations to Advance SO 1

SO 2 — Specific Recommendations to Advance SO 2

SO 3 — Specific Recommendations to Advance SO 3

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS
LEAD in, EQUIP for, and PREPARE USAID to respond to a world altered by COVID-19

FOCUS COUNTRIES

To select focus countries, **USAID conducted a data-driven, deliberative process** to analyze country needs (both underlying needs and emerging, acute needs due to COVID-19), programmatic opportunities, and U.S. national security interests. This process employed a prioritization framework that USAID developed to overlay quantitative and qualitative data and expert perspectives. For example, indicators of need for SO 1 included both a baseline index of macroeconomic resilience and real-time data on civil unrest since the onset of COVID-19. Indicators of opportunity included an assessment of alignment with current USAID country development objectives and with areas of investment for major U.S. development initiatives, such as PEPFAR. The process also considered earlier and ongoing prioritization exercises, such as USAID's Resilience Focus Countries and the interagency effort underway to identify conflict-prevention and stabilization priorities, as required by the Global Fragility Act. USAID staff and senior leaders reviewed and refined the analysis through a series of deliberations, reflecting both technical and geographic perspectives.

The selection of OTH focus countries will inform strategic pivots, as needed, in headquarters and the field. In some focus country Missions, programs will already align with the SOs and will continue. In others, programs will need to adjust, or the Mission may design new activities to support the SOs. **Outside of the focus countries, the wider array of USAID programs and initiatives will continue as before**.

IMPLEMENTATION

To coordinate implementation of OTH, **USAID is establishing an Over the Horizon Senior Coordinating Committee and a secretariat to support it**. The Committee will promote coherence, ensure accountability, and track progress in enacting the recommendations. These bodies will liaise with existing coordination structures and engage broadly with USAID staff. Membership in the Committee will build on that of the OTH Executive Steering Committee, with representation across Regional, Pillar, and Central Bureaus, as relevant—particularly those leading implementation of specific recommendations. A primary task for the Committee and Secretariat will be to support field teams in focus countries as they develop context-specific action plans.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

USAID's webpage on [Preparing for a World Altered by COVID-19](#) contains all public documents related to Over the Horizon. USAID will continue to publish relevant materials as they become available, including further details on the recommendations and focus countries, additional analysis, a final report, and updates on implementation.

Photo: Pexels.com

TOPLINES: **RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE EACH OF THE OTH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3
SO1.1 Support **tailored, country-level analysis** to assess the impact of the pandemic in fragile contexts and inform Mission-level strategic planning and implementation	**SO2.1** Support partner-country governments in **developing response plans, adopting risk-financing to manage future shocks,** and devising blueprints for economic inclusion models, to move people off of humanitarian and social assistance	**SO3.1** Build **health-system resilience** by strengthening capacities across public, private, faith-based, and community health structures
SO1.2 Build the **resilience of local systems** to manage the direct and follow-on impacts of COVID-19	**SO2.2** Leverage public- and private-sector resources to mitigate rising poverty and chronic hunger by **financing and scaling up innovations and small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) in agriculture and food security	**SO3.2** Protect **U.S. and global health security** through a holistic approach inclusive of community-level health actors
SO1.3 Invest in **improving social cohesion, civic and political engagement**, inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized populations, and preventing and mitigating conflict	**SO2.3** Invest in **education plans, tools, training, strategies, and digital solutions**, so learners are safe, well, and learning, despite shocks and stressors related to COVID-19	**SO3.3** Invest in **sustainable health financing and public financial management** to improve health resilience and the accessibility and affordability of essential care
SO1.4 Invest in **effective and citizen-responsive governance to manage the impacts of COVID-19,** mitigate corruption, halt democratic backsliding, and build trust in democratic institutions	**SO2.4** Invest in **access to water, to accelerate economic recovery** and prevent the spread of COVID-19	**SO3.4** Promote **access to a safe, licensed vaccine against COVID-19 with a clear roadmap for its rollout**
SO1.5 Promote the **participation and leadership of women and young people** in pandemic relief and recovery efforts, conflict-prevention, and stabilization		**SO3.5** Invest in and promote **access to high-quality data** to improve the ability to collect and share accurate information on COVID-19, so appropriate interventions can be delivered
SO1.6 Optimize the **coherence of humanitarian, development, and peace programming** in order to address compounding challenges		**SO3.6** Support the ability of public and private health systems to **address the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV)**

TOPLINES: RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CUT ACROSS AND SUPPORT ALL OF THE OTH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

LEAD	EQUIP	PREPARE
L1 Enhance USAID's **leadership for a coordinated, global response to COVID-19** and the global economic downturn	**E1** Ensure **USAID Foreign Service Officers have the opportunity to return to the field and lead**, as U.S. overseas Posts reopen	**P1** Establish a **strategic foresight unit** to prepare for an uncertain and complex development and humanitarian landscape
L2 Leverage **access to capital to bolster the pandemic response** by USAID and partner-country governments	**E2** Develop a **more adaptive and diverse workforce**, including through rapid assessments of and adjustment to a changing environment	**P2** Increase the **flexibility and agility of Mission-level strategic planning,** in order to adapt to unpredictable and shifting contexts
L3 Orient USAID's assistance toward **digital development for greater inclusion, access, and efficiency** as countries rebuild and reopen	**E3** Strengthen USAID's capacity and culture to **pursue, scale, and learn from innovations** to respond to emerging crises	**P3** Improve USAID's **crisis preparedness, in anticipation of compounding crises,** new crises, and future pandemics
L4 Intensify **strategic communications to counter disinformation** and build trust in fact-based information, including on COVID-19 and vaccines	**E4 Accelerate the uptake of reforms in partnering and "connecting design to procurement,"** under USAID's *Acquisition and Assistance Strategy*, to expand the use of adaptive, locally driven approaches for more tailored programming responsive to COVID-19	
L5 Bolster **USAID's role as the lead U.S. Government agency for development and humanitarian assistance**	**E5 Review USAID's global distribution of resources systematically and regularly** to improve efficiencies, encourage mobility, and promote adaptability in programs, operations, and overseas presence	
L6 Streamline USAID's internal budget processes for program funding	**E6** Elevate **the ability of USAID's Foreign Service National staff to lead,** which is essential to the Agency's success at all times, but even more urgent under authorized and ordered departure	
L7 Work with key stakeholders to mutually identify areas for **increased budget flexibility in foreign assistance programming**		