

Counselor White's Visit to Prairie View A&M University

Session: International Development: Partnerships, Priorities and Opportunities

March 10th, 2023: 8:30-10:00 am

Introductory remarks

- Good morning, everyone! It is a great honor to join you today and discuss USAID's commitment to fostering partnerships with representatives from such great institutions, both here on the panel and all of you joining us here in this session. I also would like to thank Dean Gerard D/Souza, Dr. Ali Fares, Annoop and Ripendra and all the organizers of this event.
- My colleagues, Michael, Angela and I have enjoyed learning more about Prairie View yesterday and its history, such as it produces the highest number of graduate engineers among HBCUs, that we are on hallowed ground, given this used to be a slave plantation, and we don't walk on the grass, to respect them, as well as the advanced research in farming.
- I also enjoyed looking at the fascinating and in-depth presentations by the students on Climate Change, Water, and Agriculture practices. I can sleep easy knowing that the next generation is at the cutting edge of innovation to help the world.
- I also had a great time meeting many of you last night through dinner and bowling. I couldn't believe that great talent in this group, when Bahwana, Rhyan, Chris, Jansu, Ruben, and Underdog, bowled together and kept getting strikes, or how KB helped me improve my game with his good luck.
- Also, having gone to Southern University for a little bit, another school in this SWAC Division, I know just how great these HBCUs are not only in Academics but how the teachers, faculty and administrators truly care for the student well being. And I promise not to get into the battle of the bands, and how Southern is the best, I will save that for another day.
- I am delighted to be here and I thank you, Dr. Nicole Lefore, for your many years of research to address water management in agriculture and in turn, to strengthen nutrition and improve livelihoods. You provide tremendous leadership to the Innovation Lab for Small Scale Irrigation, and I am so grateful for your efforts to advance gender and social inclusion and improve natural resource governance.
- I want to acknowledge the important points raised today and the stellar research contributions of the panel here. Dr. Melkamu Derseh, your work at ILRI on animal feeds and nutrition is critical to improving productivity, competitiveness, and the profitability of livestock value chains. Dr. Ephraim Nkonya, your efforts to improve land and natural resource management is central to poverty reduction. Dr. Seifu Tilahun, your research into soil and water conservation practices is leading to greater yields in food production and enhanced quality of life in rural communities. Thank you all for your contributions to the field and for your dedication to strengthening international agricultural research and our climate.
- I also want to commend Dr. Parker and Dr. Esters, for the research you conducted in 2020 and what you have presented here today. You outline important findings that we can use to strengthen how the Feed the Future Initiative, the Innovation Labs, and we at USAID can better approach and partner with minority serving institutions.
- This is what I would like to discuss with you today. We at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have an important mission to promote peace, stability, and poverty reduction by fostering economic growth, supporting environmental and agricultural growth and sustainability,

protecting human health, increasing access to high-quality education, providing emergency humanitarian assistance, and enhancing democracy in low and middle income countries. How we strive to achieve this, and who is involved in these efforts, is critical to our success.

- Ending global hunger is one the greatest challenges that we face today, and we see the work that you all do at the heart of the solution. Effective food security investments in the research that you implement, which is expanding and protecting economic opportunities around the world, helps to create a more stable and prosperous world.
- USAID sees great potential in our partnership to reduce poverty by growing agriculture, to enhance U.S. prosperity and security, and to advance equity for all.

USAID's Feed the Future Initiative

- Born out of the wake of devastating food price spikes in 2007 and 2008 and led by USAID, the Feed the Future initiative brings partners together to address the root causes of hunger and poverty by boosting agriculture-led growth, resilience, and nutrition in countries with great need and opportunity for improvement.
- Since its launch, the Initiative has since helped millions of people in vulnerable conditions around the world by reducing hunger and malnutrition, increasing household incomes through agriculture, and creating economic opportunities both on and off the farm.
- USAID's partnerships and programs — including those of the Feed the Future Initiative — are a blueprint for the many ways in which HBCUs and the U.S. government can work together to multiply the lifesaving impacts we already have in communities across the country and the world.

Addressing the global food insecurity via inclusive development approaches

- The issue of global food security is one that USAID dedicates significant time and resources to addressing. From the Horn of Africa to Peru, USAID works with food producers and distributors to mitigate global shocks that impact the world's food supply, such as the unprovoked war in Ukraine by Russia, COVID-19, and climate change.
- The global food crisis does not have a one-size-fits-all solution. Each country has a different context, and so our responses demand locally driven and managed solutions based on trust and inclusion.
- When working with partners and communities around the world, we live by the motto of “nothing about them, without them”. This means that we are intentional and purposeful in providing a space for communities who are facing hardship to participate and drive the development process, so that we collectively develop solutions. This process is key towards building meaningful and lasting success.
- At USAID, we call this concept “Inclusive Development”, which is defined as “the concept that every person, regardless of identity, is instrumental in the transformation of their own societies and their inclusion throughout the development process leads to better outcomes.”
- Using an inclusive process to address global challenges like food security builds sustainability and ownership. One great example of USAID's inclusive development process in food security is our Feed the Future program's work in West Africa. Among other measures, the initiative is working closely with African American and diaspora groups to broaden and diversify Feed the Future's volunteer base. They are also recruiting and training mentors to ensure that Feed the Future volunteers are fully equipped to

work with USAID and local communities every step of the way. Tuskegee University is pivotal to this effort, and we are working directly with faculty and students to continue assessing how to remove any constraints or barriers for volunteers.

- Creating spaces for underrepresented and marginalized communities is nothing new. As you may know, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been doing this since the 19th century and have since become pillars of educational excellence and opportunity.
- The impacts of the 1890s continue to be felt around the world to this day, from the historic inventions of George Washington Carver at Tuskegee University, to modern research at Langston University making pastoral agriculture more resilient in the face of drought and climate change, to Delaware State University's partnership with USAID to support our Feed the Future program - just to name a few. We value the strong partnership with 1890 institutions, HBCUs and all universities.
- The agricultural research and breakthroughs that land grant schools like the 1890 universities continue to advance is highly visible in USAID's collaboration with the food producers across the globe.

Partnering with minority serving institutions to promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility and advance Agency goals

- We want to leverage the expertise of universities such as yours because we see you as true partners in our development agenda.
- Over this past year USAID has established Memoranda of Understanding — or partnership agreements — with four HBCUs and one Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). These universities include: Alcorn State University, Delaware State University, Florida International University, Morehouse College, and Tuskegee University. We continue to seek out more partnership opportunities with minority serving institutions to advance our mutual goals of helping to resolve the world's most pressing development challenges.
- USAID and minority serving institution partnerships take shape in multiple ways. First, and the most traditional route, is by serving as a USAID implementer. In this type of partnership the minority serving institution and USAID have a contractual relationship and the university implements a development or humanitarian assistance program.
- For example, USAID/Nepal just provided a 5 million dollar grant to Tuskegee University to implement a USAID Agriculture Higher Education activity in Nepal. As the lead implementer of USAID Agriculture Higher Education, Tuskegee University will apply its considerable innovation in agricultural research, education, and extension services to the rural communities of Nepal through Agriculture and Forestry University.
- This is an example on how our implementing partner relationship allows USAID and minority serving institutions to work together alongside host country governments, local communities and other key stakeholders to address global challenges.
- Through a partnership with Alcorn State University, our USAID mission in the Caribbean has established an internship program through one of our local partners, The Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, where we sent two students to Guyana to conduct research on Food Security and Climate Smart Agriculture.

- In the near future, we have plans to launch a program where university faculty and staff members from the United States will travel to the location of a USAID Mission and serve as technical experts to the Agency.
- Additionally, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that USAID's Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility is currently planning our second annual conference with HBCUs to expose students, alumni, and institutions to our Agency and encourage them to work with us and represent the United States through the meaningful work we do. More information will be available in the coming weeks on the final date, but we invite everyone here to participate in the hybrid conference slated for later this Spring at Tennessee State University.
- Finally, I want to also mention that USAID staff are available to serve as resources to you. USAID's Development Diplomats in Residence, or DDIR, conduct outreach to diverse communities and partner with career development centers in universities and colleges, including HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions. We have a DDIR position at Morehouse University and at the University of California Long Beach.
- As you can see, there are numerous ways in which we can work together to contribute to our mutual goals and interests.

Championing inclusive development

- USAID is moving forward quickly on our commitment to inclusive development. As I mentioned, we not only look at our workforce, but we equally prioritize how diversity, equity and inclusion is incorporated throughout our development programming and humanitarian assistance. As we think about the challenge of global food security and how we develop solutions and mitigate risks to this challenge, we need to always be mindful of the communities we serve.
- At USAID, we champion inclusive development and working with local partners and stakeholders to address the most pressing development challenges like global food insecurity. We want to ensure we implement an inclusive process to address the needs of our local partners and engage them as we develop solutions. This process is inclusivity in action.
- For example in the Caribbean, when I was there, we began working with CARICOM, The Caribbean Community, which is an intergovernmental organization that is a political and economic union of 15 member states throughout the Caribbean. They have primary objectives to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, ensure that the benefits of integration are equitably shared, and coordinate foreign policy. We are working with them on developing programs and activities to address food security, climate change, and Water so that the people from these communities will benefit from our assistance so they can live a more prosperous and sustainable life.
- We also recognize, there still remains significant work ahead. Like many other organizations, we face challenges when it comes to fully implementing our inclusive development priorities. It is through partnerships like those we are building with the 1890 Institutions and greater HBCU network that we can continue to rise to the occasion and make Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility the priority it deserves to be. We encourage you to do the same.
- Thank you so much for the invitation to join you at this conference and to speak with you all. USAID is grateful for its partnerships with the 1890s, and I am eager to see the new ways we can all work together to prioritize food security, climate change, and Water for all.