

USAID's Troubling Ties to the Left's Dark Money Network

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My name is Tyler O'Neil.¹ I write and edit commentary and investigative reporting for The Daily Signal. I wrote two books, "Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center" and "The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government." The views I express in this testimony are my own.

Chairwoman Greene, Ranking Member Stansbury, members of the subcommittee, I am honored to be invited to testify before you today.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has troubling ties to the Left's dark money network, which propped up an influence campaign in the Biden administration.

USAID has rightly become Exhibit A of the waste, potential fraud, and abuse of the American taxpayer under scrutiny by the Department of Government Efficiency.

DOGE has highlighted how USAID spent millions propping up the Marxist ideology of "diversity, equity, and inclusion;" the unfair and divisive transgender orthodoxy; and the climate alarmist movement. Examples include \$1.5 million to "advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in Serbia's workplaces;"² \$6 million to "advance the human rights and social inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people" in Guatemala;³ and \$250 million for a Climate Finance for Development Accelerator, aiming to "mobilize \$2.5 billion in public and private climate investments by 2030."⁴

Some of these grants arguably undermine America's standing in the world—damaging USAID's goal.

Giorgi Labadze, an American studies professor at the Tbilisi State University in the European country of Georgia, has raised alarms that the Civic Education Program and the

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² USA Spending Prime Award ID 72016922FA00001 to Grupa Izadji.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_72016922FA00001_7200 Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

³ USA Spending Prime Award ID 7200AA22CA00008 to Outright International.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_7200AA22CA00008_7200 Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

⁴ "Climate Finance For Development Accelerator." USAID Report. April 2024. <https://chemonics.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CLIMATE-FINANCE-FOR-DEVELOPMENT-ACCELERATOR.pdf> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

Basic Education Program, programs funded by USAID, have promoted “anti-U.S. sentiments in classrooms.”⁵

To make matters worse, critics have raised serious questions about whether American “aid” has propped up socialist leaders by silencing their opponents.

USAID’s spending aligns with the Left’s dark money network, which has propped up left-wing activist groups that staffed and influenced the Biden administration.⁶

USAID’s spending has long dovetailed that of Hungarian American billionaire George Soros and others in the Left’s dark money network, and that is no accident.

In 2001, the Soros foundations network listed USAID among its “donor partners,” alongside other government aid agencies in countries such as Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria.⁷

The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which lists both the Open Society Foundations and USAID as donors, has attacked criticism of Soros as an “anti-Soros crusade.” Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation, had drawn attention to Open Society Foundations efforts in the European country of Macedonia.

“Why am I paying through my tax dollars for a foreign operation to attack me?” Gonzales asked The Daily Signal. “Why is a foreign operation attacking domestic political actors on behalf of the U.S. government?”⁸

Open Society Foundations and USAID have also partnered in supporting the East West Management Institute, which received \$31.2 million from USAID in the last full fiscal year ending on Sept. 30. The institute launched court changes in Albania that critics allege resulted in the prosecution of Albanian opposition leader Sali Berisha, silencing the opponent of the country’s socialist prime minister.⁹

⁵ Stepman, Jarrett. “How USAID Damages US Relations With Foreign Countries.” The Daily Signal. Feb. 5, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/05/how-usaid-damages-u-s-relations-with-foreign-countries/> Accessed Feb. 24, 2025.

⁶ O’Neil, Tyler. “The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government.” New York: Post Hill Press, 2025.

⁷ Soros Foundations Network 2001 Report. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/0025bb89-fc0b-4dd6-b134-5d861e9095ef/a_complete_9.pdf Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

⁸ O’Neil, Tyler. “USAID and George Soros’ Foundation Bankrolled a News Outlet That Spurred the First Trump Impeachment.” The Daily Signal. Feb. 7, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/07/usaid-george-soros-foundation-bankrolled-news-outlet-spurred-first-trump-impeachment/> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

⁹ Doescher, Tiana Lowe. “USAID gave \$270 million to a Soros NGO, but it only needed \$9 million to doom democracy in Albania.” Washington Examiner. Feb. 7, 2025.

Open Society Foundations has also hired at least 5 former USAID staff. Beth Dunlap, a director at the Open Society Foundations, previously served as a “senior transition adviser” at USAID. According to her LinkedIn profile, Dunlap “provided strategic guidance, facilitation, and operational support to programs funding political transition in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.” Her profile lists 13 countries, notably Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine.¹⁰

Former USAID Administrator Samantha Power met at least twice with Open Society leaders while leading the agency.¹¹

Open Society Foundations has disavowed receiving funding from USAID or directing USAID’s funding.

“The claims that the Open Society Foundations, founded by George Soros, receive funding from USAID or direct the funding of a multibillion-dollar U.S. government agency are manifestly false,” the foundation said in a news release earlier this month. “These allegations are part of a broader effort to undermine international development work and delegitimize the independent funding of civil society organizations worldwide.”¹²

Open Society is not the only major connection between the Left’s dark money network and USAID, however.

USAID has awarded more than \$27 million in grants to the Tides Center, which—along with its sister nonprofits Tides Advocacy and the Tides Foundation—has bankrolled many of the leftist groups that influenced the Biden administration.

The Tides Center launched an organization called Palestine Legal, which represents anti-Israel rioters in court and gives them legal advice. A Palestine Legal senior attorney said the group has “represented or advised hundreds of students” since Oct. 7, 2023.¹³

https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/3313896/usaids-gave-270-million-soros-ngo-only-needed-9-million-doom-democracy-albania/#google_vignette Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹⁰ Dunlap, Beth. LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/beth-dunlap/overlay/about-this-profile/> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹¹ Colton, Emma. “Viper’s Next: USAID accused of corruption, mismanagement long before Trump admin took aim.” Fox News. Feb. 3, 2025. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/vipers-nest-usaid-accused-corruption-mismanagement-long-before-trump-admin-took-aim> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹² Open Society Foundations Press Release “False Claims Regarding Open Society, George Soros, and USAID.” Feb. 12, 2025. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/false-claims-regarding-open-society-george-soros-and-usaid> Feb. 23, 2025.

¹³ Jalloh, Fatima and Jane Houseal. “Trump’s Executive Order Targets Pro-Palestine Students And Free Speech on Campuses.” In These Times. Jan. 30, 2025. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/trump-executive-order-gaza-students-for-justice-in-palestine> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

Former USAID staff have also gone on to work for nonprofits in the shadowy Arabella Advisors network of nonprofits. Arabella Advisors, a for-profit company, launched nonprofits that funnel cash to various left-wing initiatives, cloaking which donors fund which projects. New Venture Fund, one of the nonprofits, launched Governing for Impact, a shadowy nonprofit that advised top bureaucrats in the Biden administration.

Ann Van Dusen, who spent 25 years at USAID, now serves as a senior associate at Arabella Advisors.¹⁴ Chika Nwankwo, who worked as a research assistant for USAID, now works on vaccines via a contract with New Venture Fund.¹⁵

Leaders at the Rockefeller Foundation, another funder in the Left's dark money network, previously held roles at USAID. Rajiv J. Shah, the foundation's president, previously headed USAID under President Barack Obama. The foundation's chief of staff, Mike Muldoon, and its vice president for innovation, Andrew Sweet, also had elevated roles at USAID—as senior investment officer and senior adviser to the administrator, respectively.¹⁶

Ties between USAID and the left-wing nonprofits that staffed and advised the Biden administration do not end with the Left's dark money network, however.

Anne-Marea (Tangee) Griffin, who worked for one year at USAID, now works as a senior fellow for Africa at the Center for American Progress. Miriam Rashid, an associate director of racial equity and justice at the Center for American Progress, worked as a graduate research fellow at USAID.

Brandon Hooks, deputy director of creator and partnership strategy at the Human Rights Campaign, served as an LGBTI office intern at USAID. Jay Gilliam, who served as an LGBTQI+ coordinator at USAID until January, previously worked as director of global programs at the Human Rights Campaign. Before joining HRC, he spent four years at USAID.

Personnel is policy, and these connections between the Left's influence campaign on the Biden administration and USAID reveal how woke elites have captured the enterprise of foreign aid.

¹⁴ “Ann Van Dusen.” Georgetown University faculty profile. <https://gufaculty360.georgetown.edu/s/contact/00336000014RexrAAC/ann-van-dusen> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹⁵ “Chika Nwankwo.” LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nwankwochika/> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹⁶ O’Neil, Tyler. “USAID’s Troubling Ties to the Woke Nonprofits That Called the Shots in the Biden Administration.” The Daily Signal. Feb. 16, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/16/woketopus-usaids-troubling-ties-woke-nonprofits-called-shots-biden-administration/> Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.