Concept: Promoting Information Integrity and Resilience Initiative (PRO-INFO)

I. Problem Statement

Mis/dis/malinformation has become one of the most enduring challenges of our time, affecting democracy in the Global North and South. We are at a watershed moment in how we respond to the threat of disinformation. *If we do not come together as a community of democracies to shape the enabling environment that best responds to disinformation and to address whole-of-society approaches that put information integrity and resilience at the forefront of our strategies around democratic renewal, we will lose the moment to ensure a human rights centered approach to governance.*

The problems center around four main issues. First, while current bilateral and multilateral fora have made initial investments to address information integrity and resilience, no platform exists to bring together countries from Global North and South along with stakeholders from the private sector, content producers, civil society, and emerging technology companies to jointly address this challenge. Similarly, no donor coordination platform has the ability to rally development agencies to spur investment for this critical challenge and agree on how to develop and implement responses that effectively respond to the issue. Third, greater investment is needed at the country level to strengthen capacity building efforts and bring diverse stakeholders to the table to respond to disinformation related challenges with appropriate localized context. Fourth, gender-based disinformation, including disinformation and propaganda aimed at women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trangender, Queer, Plus (LGBTQ+), immigrants/minority populations and other marginalized groups, is a growing problem that undermines democratic principles and values, drives a wedge between citizens, and fosters stigmatization.

II. Objectives, Key Components, and Illustrative Ideas

Vision of success: Building upon and expanding USG efforts to address information integrity and resilience globally, the U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Department Of State will: 1) strengthen existing multilateral and multi-stakeholder bodies to address information integrity; 2) improve international donor coordination; 3) enable USAID Missions to strengthen the provision of information integrity and resilience technical assistance; and 4) integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility standards and best practices into policy making and technical assistance. These efforts will help to **strengthen private - public-civic partnerships and develop common solutions that are coordinated and that apply lessons learned on the most effective measures to support information integrity and resilience.** This initiative will build on the recommendations from the S4D Information Integrity Cohort's efforts and aim to actualize one of their key recommendations to convene and scale a sustained community of practice focused on information integrity and resilience, and coordination.

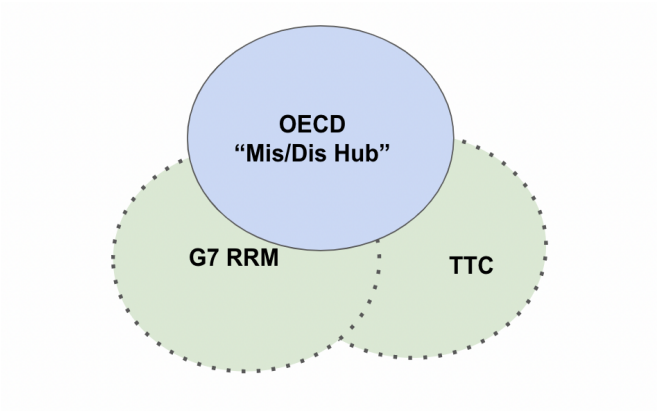
Objectives: PRO-INFO will strengthen information integrity and resilience through the following objectives and activities:

OBJECTIVE 1: ***Strengthen existing multilateral / multistakeholder engagements globally to more effectively address disinformation through increased coordination among like-minded governments, civil society, and private sector stakeholders across the Global North and South.***

PRO-INFO will deepen linkages between and across State-Department-led diplomatic approaches at the multinational level, USAID-led development solutions at the local levels, with a particular emphasis on the Global South. These activities will enhance collaboration and shared understanding around key legal norms, policies and regulatory issues.

Key Components Include:

- **Strengthen, Coordinate and Engage Multiple Stakeholder Fora to Expand Capacity:** increasing investments in and additional support will help to expand the capacity of three existing multi stakeholder and multilateral bodies so that they can build out collective solutions, strengthen coordination, and exchange lessons learned to address information integrity and resilience globally, including in the Global South, where information challenges are particularly acute. An effectively coordinated approach enables the U.S. to maximize impact, strengthen partnerships, and share principles and investments (see figure 1)
    - We propose that the U.S., led by the Department of State, join the new Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s "Mis/Dis Resource Hub." Illustrative activities for this Hub could include: create a data hub that includes governance policies and initiatives to address information integrity and resilience; convene a government and multi stakeholder dialogue, build an analytical center to create consensus around effective practices; engage with civil society, private sector, and media experts to address policy effectiveness; and create a stocktaking review of existing development. (See Tab 1 for more details on these activities).
    - In addition, with State and White House active participation, PRO-INFO would deepen cooperation and engagement with other multilateral bodies that address information integrity and resilience, most notably, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM) and U.S.- EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC). This will enable us



OBJECTIVE 2: ***Build on and expand donor coordination to support information integrity and resilience.***

USAID will encourage donor agencies and the private sector to increase and more effectively allocate resources. Across this objective, USAID will help shape donor priorities through policy dialogues and by identifying country-level lessons learned.

- **Harmonize Approaches Across Governments:** This activity will rally like-minded governments and philanthropies to invest and fund activities to strengthen information integrity and resilience, most notably in the Global South. USAID will seek to boost donor coordination efforts at the OECD (through, for example, the Development Assistance Committee, the Mis-Dis Hub, and/or Govnet) by establishing a platform for donor coordination on information integrity and resilience, as described in the following paragraph below. In addition, it will strengthen coordination within other multilateral bodies that the U.S. participates in with donors, including the European Union and G7 countries.
- **Ensure that the Cohort on Information Integrity Endures Post S4D2:** In addition to OECD DAC and the Hub, USAID will also seek to institutionalize the Summit for Democracy Cohort on Information Integrity in order to establish a permanent platform for coordination to address MDM. The body could be housed under a multilateral or foundation entity and would provide a permanent home for like-minded partners who are already actively addressing these issues–including current cohort members from like-minded governments, civil society and foundations. Efforts would be made to expand existing membership and to elevate the critical need for greater private sector engagement. The Cohort would provide an important platform for members to identify the most urgent information integrity issues, establish an order of priority for addressing those issues, and promote greater investment of resources to tackle these priorities.

OBJECTIVE 3: ***Strengthen USAID's information integrity and resilience programming through technical assistance, evidence and learning, and multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level.***

USAID development activities complement Objectives 1 and 2 by incorporating best practices into USAID programming. These efforts will focus on providing technical assistance and funding to USAID partners on the ground at the regional level, as well as advancing evidence and learning in this space**.**

Key Components May Include:

- **Expand Effective Models, Technical Assistance, and Rapid Response Funding**: Building on successes and lessons learned from existing programs, USAID will develop a suite of tools and services to support country level programming led by USAID Missions. This component could include:
    - **Showcase "Model" Country and Regional Programs:** USAID would draw upon existing, successful USAID-supported programs, to identify and share lessons learned and emerging practices with other USAID Missions, donors, or civil society groups. USAID regional platforms could coordinate study tours and regional exchanges to disseminate research as well as programmatic lessons learned, provide technical assistance to bilateral missions, and foster private

sector partnerships with regional and multinational private sector entities. They could also provide opportunities for private - public-civic partnerships at the country level, to include partnering with local private sector entities to bring best in class solutions to address information integrity and resilience. These include: digital platforms, as appropriate, emerging technology solutions, advertising, and strategic communications capabilities.

- **Expand Technical Assistance:** USAID would expand technical assistance to USAID Missions for design support or amendments to existing programming. This would include support for comprehensive planning and design such as: conducting local assessments and political economy analyses, drafting contextually based program design and procurement documents, supporting technical evaluations of programs, development monitoring and evaluation baselines and ongoing tracking, feedback support for adaptation, and work planning.
- **Provide advanced support for Localization, Adaptation and Scaling:** USAID would assist staff or local partners to co-create *local* adaptation of model programs, and source the appropriate technical assistance needed for the adaptation or new programming. Rapid Response support through this initiative could fund small, innovative pilots to kick-start programs to address information integrity and resilience for priority missions, and local civil society and private sector partners.

- **Strengthen Evidence and Learning:** While USAID and partners have sourced key lessons learned, it is important to improve evidence-based understanding of how MDM affects and undermines USAID's democracy and human rights efforts, as well as the efforts of other development sectors. Given the current disconnect between research and practice, these activities will build consensus around a learning agenda, indicators of measurement, and theories of change. USAID will build upon its global experience in programming in the information integrity and resilience space to generate applied learning products for dissemination among the development community. The following resources and tools will be developed within USAID and can be shared with the OECD Mis/Dis Resource Hub, G7 RRM, and the TTC for broader uptake and coordination. This component will produce:
  - **MDM Research Best Practices Guidebook:** Building from the 2021 USAID Disinformation/Misinformation primer and the assessment of current programming, this guidebook will recommend a detailed set of approaches, including analytic frameworks for data collection and aggregate information integrity and resilience performance indicators. The guidebook will address a range of operating contexts and program characteristics that will assist policy and programming specialists in adapting methods in new contexts.
  - **MDM Learning Event Series:** Created for the broad community of policymakers, donors, practitioners, experts, and academics to inform programmatic effectiveness.
  - **Learning Tools:** To address the dynamic growth of knowledge about mis/disinformation, we will continuously produce a range of accessible digital content such as an update of the 2021 USAID Disinformation Primer, e-learning modules, podcasts and briefs, offering continuing education and professional

development opportunities to advance understanding of MDM issues, tactics, and solutions.

OBJECTIVE 4: Integrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) into MDM programming. Information integrity programming must consider the impact of mis/disinformation on all members of society and to build an information ecosystem that ensures trust and safety for numerous publics. Women, LGBTI+, minority communities, and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by disinformation: frequently targeted and victimized by it. The guiding principle of this initiative will address how these groups are affected by MDM and will explore how to support their leadership, representation and participation in all aspects of the information ecosystem, research community, and policy dialogue. Illustrative activities include:

- Convene civil society, policy makers and advocates to put forward a roadmap for the strategies, legislation and specific tools needed to ensure policymaking and regulatory frameworks related to the information ecosystem, including digital security acts and media policies, are inclusive of a DEIA framework
- Capacity development and training opportunities for policymakers and advocates around LGBTQ+, social inclusion and DEIA principles as they relate to disinformation, misinformation and malinformation
- Offer small grants, fellowships, and mentoring opportunities for women, LGBT+ and other minority groups to improve their knowledge, networks, and leadership skills related to public policy and advocacy around MDM issues.
- Support measures to coordinate and collaborate with international efforts and communities that address the gender and MDM axis.
- Include representation from historically marginalized and underrepresented community members – inclusive of a broad representation of all stakeholders.
- Ensure indicators on evidence-based frameworks are inclusive and equitable and are disaggregated appropriately.
- Mitigate barriers to participation/amplify voices of underrepresented communities in advocacy platforms.

III. Illustrative Year I Plan (to commence after the S4D2)

Year 1 of the initiative will involve the following:

- **Objective 1: Engagement with OECD Hub, G7 RRM and U.S.-EU TTC**
    - With participation from USAID, U.S. Department of State will lead the U.S. joining the OECD "mis / dis resource hub," and determine cadence for engagement and meetings.
    - With participation from USAID, U.S. Department of State to engage with G7 RRM and establish an upcoming cadence of engagements and priorities.
    - The NSC, U.S. Department of State and USAID to engage the U.S. - EU TTC Working Group 5 and 6 to strengthen collaboration and develop solutions on information integrity and resilience with a focus on Global South per timeline developed by the NSC.

- **Objective 2: Building on and Strengthen Existing and Institutionalize Boost Donor Coordination:**
    - Boosting Multilateral Donor Coordination
        - Launch learning retreats and evidence summit stocktaking exercise and commission of research to select programs to identify indicators and theories of change, and impact of efforts to address information integrity and resilience. Work with the Hub to determine if LOE exists for this initiative.
        - Incorporate USAID data and learning into OECD/DAC Mis/Dis Resource Hub.
        - Meet and partner with OECD Govnet / DAC, EU, G7, the private sector and other multilateral bodies to establish priorities and resource allocation for information integrity.
    - USAID will institutionalize the Information Integrity Cohort in collaboration with a multilateral entity or foundation to provide a permanent platform to promote greater coordination among governments, donors, foundations and the private sector.
        - Establish a list of the most urgent threats to information integrity and prioritize actions to address them
        - Expand membership of the Cohort to include more like-minded governments, donors, foundations, civil society and private sector partners
        - Develop a workplan for the Information Integrity Cohort based on established priorities
        - Promote additional investments to support information integrity development activities and coordinate funding to ensure urgent priorities and critical regions are adequately funded
        - Convene a launch event to showcase the Mis/Disinformation Donor Coordination Priorities, Work Plan and Donor Commitments.
        - Catalyze the Private Sector to invest responsibly in this area.
- **Objective 3: Activity Design**
    - USAID will begin the design of this activity, including exploring how various existing mechanisms could be used for implementation when complementarity exists. Illustrative activities:
        - Hold donor roundtable to discuss effective funding and program design models, avenues of technical assistance, and focus areas for rapid response funding. Rapid response funding could fund activities such as: new and

innovative approaches to media and digital literacy, strategic communication campaigns, and emerging technology solutions to address information integrity and resilience.

- Provide technical assistance to USAID Missions for design support or amendments to existing programming. This will include conducting local assessments and political economy analysis, drafting program design and procurement documents, supporting technical evaluations of programs, development monitoring and evaluation baselines and ongoing tracking, feedback support for refinement, work planning and other technical assistance as needed. This will reflect adaptation of existing programming or development of new approaches in order to build towards more effective or innovative approaches.
- Identify priority initiatives eligible for rapid response funds to improve information integrity and resilience at local and regional levels.

Objective 4: Integrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

- Information Gathering
  - Map out key workshops, symposia and learning events around DEIA and MDM issues
  - Compile a list of resources and do a literature review on materials useful for policymakers and advocates around best practices related to public policies on MDM and DEIA issues
- Address appropriate responses to these communities
  - Address how these groups are affected by MDM and explore how to support their leadership, representation and participation in all aspects of the information ecosystem, research community, and policy dialogue.
- Incorporate Feedback Loops
  - Put together a roster of experts, centers and the wider community of practice that can feed into the Information Integrity Cohort
  - Conduct an assessment in the monitoring, evaluation, research and learning space, together with OEDC-DAC evaluation community around DEIA and MDM indicators, tools and knowledge management

Resources

Objective	Program Area	Estimated Cost
Objective 1	(DOS-led)*:* Strengthen existing multilateral / multi stakeholder engagements globally: Invest	$ 32,000 (30,000 Euros OECD contribution) FY 22

	in OECD Dis/Mis Hub	
Objective 2	(USAID-led): Build on existing and institutionalize donor coordination and collaboration to support information integrity and resilience.	TBD
Objective 3	(USAID-led): Strengthen USAID's information integrity and resilience programming through technical assistance, evidence and learning, and multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level.	TBD
Objective 4	(USAID-led): Integrate DEIA	TBD

Deliverable Lead Office: USAID/DDI/DRG

Department/Agency Lead POC: Vera Zakem and Susan Abbott

TAB 1 - Support U.S. Department of State leadership in joining the OECD "Mis/Dis Resource Hub." The Mis/Dis Resource Hub is a new platform under the OECD that is open to like-minded governments, including those from the Global South, practitioners, project implementers, academics, and private sector actors, the initiative will foster knowledge sharing on-the-ground as well as within global forums to *build understanding of the most effective measures and increase coordination for their implementation to strengthen societies ability to address information integrity and resilience.* USAID will support State Department colleagues in joining the OECD initiative to expand this platform to focus on the institutional and policy solutions, including whole-of-society partnerships, that are required to fight mis- and dis-information and strengthen information ecosystems. The "Hub" will engage OECD's membership and multi-disciplinary directorates, committees, and the DAC to create formal and enduring channels to engage with civil society and private sector, identify effective approaches, priorities, and supporting coordination of implementation. The "Hub" will provide:

- **A data hub that includes governance policies and initiatives to address information integrity and resilience.** Building on the collective experiences of OECD member countries by serving as an archive for relevant documents and resources, to include governance policies and initiatives aimed at preparing for and responding to the publication and spread of mis- and dis-information, as well as regulatory and policy measures designed to increase transparency and prevention, and reduce the economic and structural drivers behind mis- and dis-information. It will compare state approaches, expand the knowledge of key actors, partnerships, and measures to address disinformation to support reactions to real-time evolutions of emerging threats and prepare for future challenges.
- **A convener of government and multi stakeholder dialogue.** The "Hub" will convene regular government and multi stakeholder dialogue via the informal OECD Expert Group on Preventing and Combating Mis- and Dis-information, which includes experts and practitioners from across governments and will draw on efforts of other related OECD committees. The Hub will invite relevant experts from the private sector and civil society, including stakeholders from the Global South to participate in the multi stakeholder dialogue.
- **An analytical center.** Based on the convenings, data collected, and surveys, the "Hub" will develop a Report on Public Governance Responses to strengthen information integrity and resilience to advance policy making and build consensus around effective practices within the context of broader efforts to reinforce democracy. The report will support the design of governance measures to address threats and build more resilient societies; policy measures related to social media platform transparency and prevention measures; and policy measures that reduce economic and structural drivers of the spread of disinformation. It will identify innovative mechanisms for effective co-operation of governments, the media and civil society organizations and inform the understanding of good practices regarding whole-of-government and whole-of- society approaches to tackling disinformation and strengthening media and information ecosystems.
- **A forum for engagement with civil society, private sector, and media experts to address policy effectiveness.** This will include data collection and analysis to bring greater clarity to the "policy effectiveness" question, and support OECD's membership in developing approaches to countering disinformation that are informed by the success and

failure of already fielded mitigations, and the insights of non-governmental partners. The "Hub" will partner with the Forum on Information and Democracy and other relevant organizations to ensure the full engagement of media and civil society and that their perspectives inform the global reflection on the relevant challenges and governance responses.

- **Taxonomy of Approaches:** a stocktaking review of existing development programming designed to strengthen information integrity and resilience and development of a classification system of program types and theories of change.

CLEARANCES

Approved: A/DAA Ro Tucci Clear w/edits 1/13/23
Drafters: CDDRO: Vera Zakem, vzakem@usaid.gov; DDI/ DRG/ DRI: Susan Abbott, suabbott@usaid.gov; DDI/DRG/CSM: Laura McKechnie, lmckechnie@usaid.gov; DDI/DRG/CSM: Josh Machleder, jmachleder@usaid.gov; DDI/DRG/DRI:Lori Meils, lmeils@usaid.gov

Clearances	**Clearance Status**	**Date**
USAID/DRG/ADAA: RTucci 1/13/23	clear w/ edits	
USAID/DRG/AD: LPavlovic	clear w/edits	1/13/23
USAID/DRG/DD: MBillera	INFO	1/13/23
USAID/PPL/DAA: ALee:	INFO	
USAID/Summit Lead: BVogt	Clear with edits	1/12/23
USAID/CDDRO: VZakem	Clear	1/6/2023
USAID/DRG/DRI: MKaran	Clear with edits	1/11/2023
USAID/DRG/CSM: LKirby	Clear w/edits	1/12/2023