



## CII Spotlight: Sofia Stafford

Program Assistant  
Center for Accelerating Innovation and Impact



**Q: What is your role at USAID?**

A: I am a Program Assistant at USAID's Center for Accelerating Innovation and Impact (CII). In this role, I primarily work on the Saving Lives at Birth Grand Challenge and help to source and support a diverse portfolio of innovations that have emerged from our pipeline over the last seven years. I have the privilege of working with our inspiring innovators and dedicated partners to scale tools and approaches that address some of the biggest global health challenges facing mothers and their babies around the time of delivery.

**Q: How did you end up at USAID?**

A: My interest in global health, particularly girls' and women's health, comes from my high school years during which I served as a teen advisor for the UN Foundation's Girl Up Campaign. In my role, I had the privilege to meet with adolescent girls around the world who shared their passions for the future and the obstacles that prevented them from achieving their dreams. More often than not, these obstacles were the result of a ripple effect that stemmed from a lack of access to basic health services and information. I went on to study Global Health and Cultural Anthropology at Duke University, and through USAID's Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) program, I had the opportunity to intern at CII in the summer of 2016. Once I graduated, I could not think of a better place to start my career in global health than at USAID, and I was excited to return to CII full-time.

**Q: What makes you passionate about your job?**

A: The people -- our team and our innovators. There is nothing more energizing than getting to work alongside a talented and passionate team with diverse backgrounds and experiences who are committed to pushing the boundaries and improving the lives of people around the world, particularly those who lack access to quality healthcare. Additionally, our innovators are a testament to the fact that good ideas can come from anywhere and with the right partners, tools, support, and resilience, they can create real impact.

**Q: What topic(s) in global health interest(s) you the most and why?**

A: I continue to be particularly interested in adolescent girls' health and development. Adolescent girls have challenging mental and physical health needs that are often distinct from every other segment of the population, and yet these needs often do not receive the attention they deserve. We also know that when girls are educated, healthy, and safe, they empower others and transform their communities. I believe that ensuring girls have equitable and sustainable access to quality healthcare is the key that can unlock their potential.