



December 5, 2019

*The Administrator*

Mark Keenum, Ph. D  
Chairman  
Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD)  
President  
Mississippi State University  
75 B. S. Hood Road  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Dear President Keenum,

Many thanks to you and your colleagues for your thoughtful and rigorous synthesis of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations from BIFAD's 179th public meeting. As always, I value your intellectual contributions and deep engagement with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Together, we have the opportunity to make transformational changes that can lead to a food-secure and prosperous future for the world.

I agree with your general findings and recommendations that we should streamline our policies and procedures related to international exchanges and training. Some of the issues you have raised—such as requirements that holders of J-1 visas return to their home country before applying for additional classes of visas or permanent residency in the United States and USAID's non-transferable responsibilities as a sponsor under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program—are beyond our control. However, we are doing what we can to address these concerns, including by updating our operational policies in Chapter 252 and 253 of our Automated Directives System (ADS). As you know, we are also redesigning our current data systems for training and exchanges and plan to launch a new system in early 2020. We appreciate the feedback and input from BIFAD and U.S. universities on this work.

Thank you very much for your dedication and service to USAID and to ending hunger around the world. I know we are both committed to a resilient, food-secure future for all people. I look forward to our upcoming discussions, and to continuing to work with you and the Members of BIFAD on these important issues.

Sincerely,  
Mark Green

**Summary of Responses by the U.S. Agency for International Development to the  
Recommendations of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development  
(BIFAD): Public Meeting on U.S. University Feedback on the Implementation of Chapter  
252 (Visa Compliance for Exchange Visitors) and 253 (Participant Training and  
Exchanges for Capacity Development USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS)  
April 9, 2019**

Recommendation 1: USAID should make it a priority to streamline and simplify current USAID visa requirements, in particular, participant training and exchange visitor definitions, policies, and procedures, with the intention of removing burdensome restrictions and expanding opportunities for individuals seeking to be involved in U.S. university undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programs.

Some of the issues BIFAD has raised—such as the requirements that holders of J-1 visas return to their home country before applying for additional classes of visas or permanent residency in the United States, and USAID’s non-transferable responsibilities as a Sponsor under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program—are beyond the Agency’s control. However, USAID is taking the following steps to improve the efficiency of its training policies and systems for international exchanges:

- New, User-Friendly Information Technology (IT) System: The Bureau Economic Growth, Education, and the Environment (E3) is collaborating with the Office of the Chief Information Officer in the Bureau for Management (M/CIO) to design a new IT system, the Training and Exchanges Automated Management System (TEAMS), which will replace the aging and obsolete TraiNet/Visa Compliance Systems (TraiNet/VCS). We expect to launch TEAMS in early Calendar Year 2020. This system is the main platform for implementing partners to enter training data and information needed to obtain DS-2019 forms (*i.e.*, “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status”) that allow for participants to obtain J-1 visas and participate in U.S.-based programs. The new system, designed with feedback from BIFAD, U.S. universities, and dozens of other stakeholders, will be more user-friendly.
- Consolidated and Simplified Policies and Procedures: E3 is working to simplify and consolidate ADS Chapter 252, “Visa Compliance for Exchange Visitors,” and ADS Chapter 253, “Participant Training and Exchanges for Capacity Development,” into a single, new chapter to clarify our definitions of international exchange and training based on legislation, remove unnecessary and outdated requirements for health and accident insurance coverage, and generally clarify procedural requirements.

Please note that responsibility for the Agency’s function for tracking and reporting on training data is planned to move from the E3 Bureau to the Bureau for Management (M) as part of the USAID’s Transformation. The M Bureau’s expertise in improved business processes and IT systems can continue to streamline our policies and infrastructure moving forward.