



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## AMBASSADOR'S FUND GRANT PROGRAM

# Empowering Vulnerable Populations



The Ambassador's Fund Grant Program (AFGP) is a five-year (2017-2022) initiative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) managed by the Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA). The purpose of the Fund is to award grants to improve the economic and social conditions of the people of Pakistan.

The Fund supports high-impact activities focused on five priority areas: Culture and the Arts, Disaster Preparedness, Energy Solutions, Social Entrepreneurship and Vulnerable Populations. This document explains the Empowering Vulnerable Populations priority area, provides advice about designing a grant project related to this priority area and describes a sample project.

## What is “Empowering Vulnerable Populations”?

Vulnerable populations are groups of people who are marginalized or under-served because of economic, political, physical, social, or cultural factors. Typically, members of such marginalized groups are not completely included in the social fabric of a community or country. They may have inadequate resources – including information, skills and access – to protect their rights and interests. Laws and policies discriminate against some vulnerable populations; social and cultural biases are other contributing factors. These disempowering circumstances make it very difficult for vulnerable populations to improve their lives.

Examples of vulnerable populations might include persons with disabilities, transgender persons, bonded laborers, brick kiln workers, landless farmers, female heads-of-households, religious and ethnic minorities, survivors of violence, street children, displaced persons, orphans and elderly persons. Other populations also might be vulnerable. Women in general should not be considered vulnerable, but specific categories of women or girls might be appropriately described as vulnerable or marginalized. Some groups of people struggle with multiple vulnerabilities, such as poor women with disabilities.

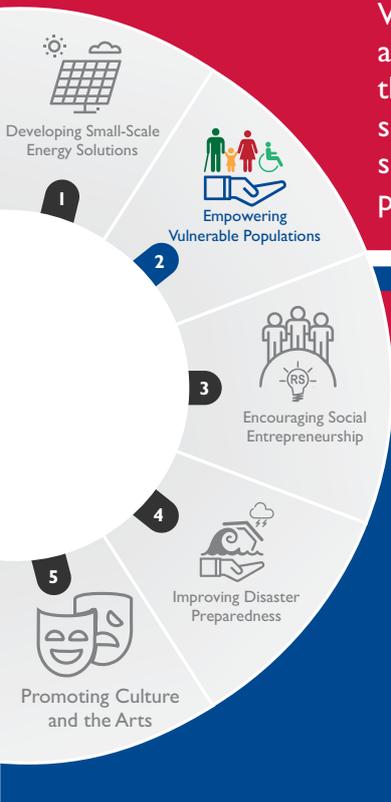
Empowering vulnerable populations does not simply mean involving them in activities. True empowerment requires providing people with the knowledge, resources and tools that enable them make their own decisions and control their own lives. Vulnerable populations should be empowered to exercise their rights to education, health, employment and income-generation, civic and political participation, social and cultural involvement and advocacy for their own interests. In general, grants focused on vulnerable populations should be about self-reliance – supporting their efforts to help themselves.



**For the USAID AFGP, grant projects related to the Priority Area of Vulnerable Populations should be designed to empower vulnerable populations with information, skills and links to sustainable resources, such as markets and services. The goal of these activities is greater independence and self-reliance as well as social and economic inclusion.**



Vulnerable Populations grant funds may be used to provide training and technical assistance, materials and supplies, and opportunities for people to act and advocate on their own behalf. Offering vocational training is usually not sufficient to ensure the success of a grant application. Grant funds should be invested in activities that will make a sustainable difference in peoples lives in multiple ways, such as both economically and politically.



## Grant Application Approach

Vulnerable Populations grant applications should address the following questions:

1. What is the vulnerable population that you want to empower? What is the group's significance and why is it important to empower them?
2. How have the women and/or men from the relevant vulnerable population been involved in developing the plans for the project?
3. How many women, men, girls and/or boys will benefit from the project?
4. How exactly will the planned activities empower the vulnerable population?
5. How will the benefits be sustained after the project ends?

## Vulnerable Populations

include:

Persons with Disabilities



Minorities



Survivors of Violence



Street Children



Displaced Persons



Poor Persons



## Grant Project Example

ABC Development Organization is managed by and dedicated to improving the lives of all categories of People with Disabilities (PWDs). ABC designs a project to increase public awareness about PWD rights and the challenges they face, to advocate for policy changes, and to empower PWDs in XYZ province.

First, ABC works with a local street theater group to develop an entertaining script related to inclusion and respect for PWDs. The interactive production, which includes a song and humor, is performed in urban centers around the province. Several PWD novice actors and actresses are included in the theater troop. Informational leaflets with colorful images explaining the rights of PWDs are distributed at each event.

ABC also drafts a policy brief about PWDs' legal rights that are not being implemented and enforced. Themes include government employment quotas and benefits to which PWDs are entitled. The draft brief is discussed at a workshop among experts on PWD rights. ABC then uses the brief in meetings with district and provincial officials to advocate for improved implementation of the law.

During the street theater performances, ABC identifies 482 PWDs who do not have the special National Identity Card (NIC) that enables them to access government services. ABC facilitates these citizens to apply for the special NICs, and follows up with the relevant authorities to ensure that the NICs are received.

The theater performances attract significant media attention, leading to television panel discussions with ABC on PWD rights. The advocacy meetings with government officials, coupled with the positive media coverage, result in implementation of hiring quotas and streamlined procedures for PWDs to get the special NICs, among other policy improvements. The ABC project ends, but the impact for PWDs in XYZ province continues.

## Empowering Vulnerable Populations

