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Bristol/UK, April 28, 2010

**Complaint: USAID response to FOIA submission** (FOIA Tracking No. F-00003-10)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to submit four complaints regarding USAID's handling of a FOIA request first submitted by me via email on May 13, 2009.

Specifically, I have the following four complaints:

1. USAID did not respond at all to my first three FOIA requests, emailed to [foia@usaid.gov](mailto:foia@usaid.gov) between May 13 and June 17, 2009. USAID only replied to my fourth request, emailed to the same address on September 29, 2009.
2. USAID employee Ms Sylvia Lankford of the Information and Records Division, who has been assigned to my case, assured me by email on December 23, 2009, that she would respond to my enquiry in the week of December 28, 2009. Despite three subsequent reminders sent to her email address on January 14, January 28, and February 24, 2010, I have not heard anything from Ms Lankford since, and have no idea about the current status of my enquiry.
3. On November 4, 2009, Ms Sylvia Lankford informed me via email that proceeding with my FOIA request would require USAID to pursue "submitter notifications" as the information that I had requested may contain "confidential commercial information". However, much (and possibly all) of the material requested pertains to non-governmental organizations that are non-profit entities. The category of "confidential commercial information" seems inapplicable to organizational entities that are by definition non-commercial in nature. There is no reason why USAID should delay release of information pertaining to non-profits, even if it should be pursuing "submitter notifications" with commercial contractors in parallel as part of the same enquiry.
4. Ten months after first filing my FOIA request with USAID, I have still received not received any of the documents requested.

In pursuing these four complaints, you may reveal my identity as the complainant to all interested parties, including to Ms Sylvia Lankford.

**Allow me to point out that I already submitted this complaint by email to [ig.hotline@usaid.gov](mailto:ig.hotline@usaid.gov) on March 9, 2010, but have received no reply to date. I strongly suggest that you conduct an anonymous testing of key generic emails at USAID - including your own - to check whether they are responsive.**

People reporting abuse to the IG from abroad are likely to first try and establish contact via email, and may not pursue the issue further if they do not receive a prompt reply. Not responding to emails could create the perception that USAID is not interested in pursuing cases of corruption or misconduct.

Please inform me as to how you will handle this complaint, including an indicative timeline. RSVP.

Thank you in advance, best wishes,

Till Bruckner

**Enclosed: FOIA timeline and communications with USAID**