

False Aid: Why Congress Must End Funding of the InterAction Nonprofit

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The U.S. InterAction nonprofit coordinates international humanitarian and development NGOs and primarily lobbies Congress to increase funding for its members.

Analysis of InterAction’s website and programs shows that it is focused on shaping U.S.-funded international assistance to support a woke and discriminatory agenda.

Congress should end its funding of InterAction—U.S. taxpayers should not fund any organization that promotes Marxist ideas of division and discrimination.

The InterAction nonprofit organization bills itself as “the largest U.S.-based alliance of international NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and partners” and functions primarily as a lobbying firm, attempting to influence legislators and legislation in Congress to increase funding for its members, which include most of the world’s prominent aid organizations, such as Care USA, the Red Cross, World Vision, and Catholic Relief Services.

This *Issue Brief* includes a review of InterAction’s website and an analysis of the political-contribution data of InterAction employees from the Federal Election Commission. The finding is that InterAction is focused on shaping U.S.-funded international assistance to support a partisan, woke agenda.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/ib5326>

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InterAction's Woke Website

InterAction lists 10 issue areas on its website.¹ Following is a review of the issue areas, as well as the links included on the respective webpages.

Immigration. One would think that as an advocate and coordinator for U.S.-funded international assistance, InterAction would steer clear of contentious domestic political issues, but from the Crises & Countries in Conflict page, InterAction links to an internal blog that advocates far-left immigration and asylum policies that are even more extreme than those promoted by the Biden Administration.

In the blog, InterAction objects to new Biden immigration rules that would reject asylum applicants who have not sought protection in a third country before reaching the United States (as is required under international refugee law); and would not allow applicants to claim general violence in their home country as grounds for asylum. InterAction also rejects a new policy that would require asylum applicants to use the new U.S. Customs and Border Police One app, which collects personal identifying and biometric data to conduct background checks, including any previous encounters with border agents or asylum claims in third countries.²

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Heritage Senior Fellow Mike Gonzalez suggests that DEI is promoted by an international network of committed Marxists dedicated to overthrowing America and its entire system.³ In *Psychology Today*, Pamela Paresky, PhD, a scholar at the University of Chicago, compares DEI to a cult, stating: “Cults rely on a closed system of logic in which questioning dogma is an indication that something is inherently wrong with the questioner.”⁴

In May 2022, InterAction issued “The DEI Compact: INGO Commitments Toward Greater Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”⁵ to jump-start collective work by its international nongovernmental organization (INGO) members on applying radical DEI principles. “The DEI Compact” assumes the need to reform an allegedly racist, sexist, and discriminatory international development sector. The compact describes a long list of its members’ organizational sins, using typical Marxist language. Highlights include:

- “Around the world, the experience of oppression and privilege is historically inherent in the power structures of society and replicated within our organizations.” Power structures, oppression, and privilege are foundational concepts of Marxism-based critical race theory (CRT).

- “The lack of genuine efforts to relinquish privilege unjustly or unfairly held by the dominant culture within any environment continues to be a barrier to realized equity of opportunities, compensation, and services from our organizations, both internally and externally.” This statement echoes the core DEI belief that “privilege” is an ascriptive characteristic based solely on race, ethnicity, sex, or sexual orientation.
- “Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination,” and, “[a]nti-Blackness voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues.” The new concept of “anti-Blackness,” and the attempt to redefine the meaning of “racism,” have been introduced by the far left in response to criticism that DEI itself is inherently racist (in the traditional sense) and discriminatory. In its working notes on blackness and racism, InterAction states that anti-blackness is “rooted in white supremacy” and that “racism and anti-Blackness have been historically built into our work.” It continues by referencing “a problematic white gaze” that “often places people of color...against a model of whiteness.”⁶
- On LGBTQIA+ individuals, the compact explains that “prejudicial legal and social structures related to gender identity and sexual orientation or expression prevent equal access to safety, health, justice, and other critical outcomes sought by development and humanitarian organizations serving vulnerable people in the U.S. and around the world,” providing a “development” justification for programs that seek to alter cultural norms and legislation both overseas and in the U.S. The very real cultural imperialism inherent in this attempt to alter culture and law is a common criticism of U.S. foreign assistance voiced by its “beneficiaries” in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.
- “People’s identities are multifaceted. Race, class, gender, religious beliefs, age, ability, tribe or ethnic group, political affiliation, and so many other individual characteristics intersect with one another in ways that factor into advantage and disadvantage.” The compact explicitly endorses “intersectionality,” another conceptual foundation of critical theory, on which CRT is based.

The compact commits InterAction members to a long list of obligations, including:

- Establishing targets for “diversity”;
- Exploring and unpacking how implicit bias, white dominant cultural norms, and saviorism complex show up in recruitment, hiring, and operational practices;
- Applying a DEI lens to organizational governance structures and approaches, as well as to partnerships, vendor relationships, and associated policies and procedures;
- Mainstreaming and institutionalizing DEI principles and commitments into all stages of programming;
- Applying an intersectional, inclusive lens to the existing approaches, tools, and processes InterAction members use to develop and deliver programs from conception to funding to implementation;
- Strategically working to make DEI-focused recommendations relevant to public policy priorities within members’ relevant areas of influence locally, nationally, and internationally; and
- Ensuring that DEI is explicitly incorporated into internal and external communications.

Given the Supreme Court’s June 29, 2023, ruling prohibiting affirmative action in college admissions, and the July 13, 2023, letter from 13 Republican state attorneys general warning CEOs of serious legal consequences to using DEI to discriminate in hiring based on race, sex, or ethnicity, many of the obligations imposed by InterAction on members may be illegal.⁷

Empowering Civil Society. InterAction offers its members the “Disinformation Toolkit 2.0.”⁸ Controlling “disinformation” has become synonymous at home and abroad with leftist efforts to censor political speech and discredit, blacklist, or imprison political dissenters.

Climate. InterAction describes how it developed and launched the NGO Climate Compact.⁹ The purpose of the Climate Compact is “to pledge concerted, unified, and urgent action to address climate change.” Through this compact, the CEOs of InterAction’s member organizations agree to principles that provide climate excuses to fund ineffective development programming and to justify increased, perpetual, and costly climate adaptation programs.

The section includes an article on “decolonizing aid” which, along with USAID’s localization program, seems to be an effort to shift accountability for the sector’s inability to facilitate actual development among local populations.

Foreign Aid. InterAction is one of the key lobbyist groups pressing Congress to annually increase the foreign assistance budget. InterAction supports the globalist Group of 7 (G7) policy positions on global development. The “2021 G7 Summit Recommendations,”¹⁰ drafted by the G7/G20 Advocacy Alliance (an ad hoc group of InterAction members), include dedication of “at least 2% of ODA [official development assistance] to GBV [gender-based violence]...and at least 25% of GBV funding to women’s rights and feminist organizations.” Since the U.S. provides about \$40 billion a year in foreign assistance, that would be \$800 million for GBV, with \$200 million of that earmarked to directly support “women’s rights and feminist organizations.”

In a recommendation titled “Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” (code-speak for abortion), the Advocacy Alliance demands that the U.S. government “safeguard the basic right of and access to essential healthcare, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, for all people.”

Under “Feminist Action for Climate Justice” the U.S. government should “[e]nsure that at least 20% of ‘principal’ and 100% of ‘significant’ climate funding promotes gender equality” and “directly support women’s rights organizations and eco-feminist efforts...and integrate gender considerations into all climate change plans and initiatives.” Under “Feminist Movements and Leadership” the U.S. government should “announce [its] intention to draft a feminist foreign policy, in line with commitments from other G7 members, Canada, France, and the European Union.”

In the 2023 “G7 Policy Paper”¹¹ drafted by InterAction, under “Gender Equality,” InterAction urges the U.S. government to “[a]dvance economic justice for women, girls, and *gender nonconforming people* by addressing structural barriers through an intersectional lens” (emphasis added) (intersectionality is a Marxist concept and key component of identity politics), and “strengthen accountability to past and current commitments on gender equality and work with feminist civil society organizations to complement existing mechanisms with analysis on progress and gaps.”

InterAction also requests that the U.S. government “ensure that 100% of foreign policy funding integrates gender equality objectives and at least 20% of foreign aid promotes gender equality, using an intersectional lens, as a primary objective,” and urges investment through “feminist organizations and movements.”

In totality, the U.S. foreign aid section advocates that the U.S. government adopt a wholly woke, partisan, and leftwing approach and agenda for what should be nonpartisan international development assistance and humanitarian relief. This contradicts the aid industry's public claims to Congress that it advocates for the world's poor, marginalized, and oppressed.

Federal Campaign Contributions from InterAction Employees in 2019–2020

According to data from the Federal Election Commission, during the 2019–2020 campaign period, 29 InterAction employees made 366 individual political contributions totaling \$18,470.53. All of the contributions (100 percent) from employees went to Democratic candidates and causes.

The absence of any Republican employee contributions suggests systemic and institutionalized political bias and discrimination in hiring by InterAction.

InterAction's Funding Sources. InterAction has not published a financial or annual report since 2020, but according to its last report, it is funded by “members, public and private foundations, and stakeholders such as the U.S. government, U.N. agencies, and partner institutions.” The annual report provides no breakdown of sources or purpose for U.S. government funding, but notes that InterAction received \$680,000 in 2020, \$1,500,000 in 2019, and \$211,000 in 2018.

According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy,

Approximately a third of InterAction's funding comes from membership fees. The remaining is made up of grants from governmental and philanthropic partners, including SDC [Swiss Development Cooperation], SIDA [Swedish International Development Agency], USAID, UNHCR and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, ClimateWorks Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Tides, the UPS Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.¹²

SIDA and the SDC are the official development agencies of their respective governments. SIDA was a pioneer in the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in its development programming, beginning in 2007.¹³ All foundations mentioned support for far-left programs, with the Open Society Foundations, founded by extreme leftwing billionaire George Soros, being the most open in their support for extremism.¹⁴ Wellspring may be comparable to the Open Society Foundations in influence but is

a “secretive network of grantmaking organizations funded by three hedge fund billionaires”¹⁵ specifically to “disguise” donations and “avoid almost all public scrutiny.”¹⁶

Recommendations for Congress and Faith-Based Groups

Despite its claims to the contrary, InterAction is a highly partisan association that consistently takes public policy positions that are politically controversial and divisive. Its promotion of Marxist ideas is inconsistent with U.S. government foreign policy objectives that seek to promote democracy and market-based economic development.

Congress should:

- **End U.S. government funding for InterAction.** U.S. taxpayers should not fund any organizations at home or abroad that promotes Marxist ideologies that threaten global democracy and discriminate against Americans because of their race, ethnicity, religion, or viewpoints.

Faith-based organizations should:

- **Reconsider their affiliation with InterAction** due to its woke and anti-Christian principles on abortion, gender, and family.

Conclusion

InterAction’s socially divisive and partisan public policy positions and political discrimination in hiring puts at risk the bipartisan consensus that supports foreign assistance and violates the American taxpayer’s trust in the international aid community.

The leftward tilt of U.S. foreign assistance driven by InterAction and its partners is also damaging our standing in the developing world. The relentless neocolonialist promotion of leftist propaganda in socially conservative countries in Africa (most recently the promotion of the LGBTQIA+ agenda in Uganda) has engendered further hatred of the U.S., pushback against the leftist agenda in the form of repressive laws, such as Uganda’s 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, and rejection of U.S. assistance in favor of “other sources,” including China and Russia.

InterAction’s focus on promoting radical ideology comes at the expense of real development work. With government agencies indifferent to the

damage wrought by InterAction and its members, only Congress has the power to end the politicization of U.S. foreign assistance and ensure that its focus returns to humanitarian relief and development aid for the poorest of the poor.

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Endnotes

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