The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Plans USAID-Inspired Development Model in Bid to Extend Global Influence

July 08, 2025



Yevgeny Primakov, head at Rossotrudnichestvo. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Russia is advancing plans to revamp its international development efforts, with U.S. foreign aid models serving as inspiration, the head of the state cultural diplomacy agency said Tuesday.

The initiative reflects Russia's broader push to assert its presence on the global stage amid Western sanctions and growing competition for influence in developing regions, particularly in the Global South.

The Foreign Ministry is currently drafting legislation aimed at more effectively managing Russia's foreign aid and development programs, Rossotrudnichestvo head Yevgeny Primakov told the RBC news outlet, with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) serving as a model.

Primakov said Russia does not aim to rival USAID directly, but that “even matching nations such as Finland... would be a significant accomplishment.”

Under current regulations, Rossotrudnichestvo requires separate government decrees for each international development project, which Primakov described as inefficient. He said that formal legislation would improve transparency and allow for more purposeful strategic planning.

Related article: Russia Welcomes USAID Cuts, Calls Agency ‘Machine for Interfering’

He also argued that the new agency should put more emphasis on direct humanitarian influence abroad than Rossotrudnichestvo.

“We live in an active world, so we too must be active,” he said.

Rossotrudnichestvo’s annual budget of approximately 5.5 billion rubles (about $70 million) is largely consumed by overhead costs covering 80 offices in 70 countries, while only a quarter is directed toward active project funding, he added.

USAID was founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy to provide global humanitarian and development assistance.

Russia itself had banned USAID in 2012, accusing it of attempting to "influence political processes."

Since Donald Trump’s return to the White House in January, 83% of USAID programs have been cut and 94% of staff laid off, with its remaining programs absorbed by the State Department.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/07/08/russia-plans-usaid-inspired-development-model-in-bid-to-extend-global-influence-a89731