



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



USAID MESSAGE MANUAL

JUNE 2024



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INTRODUCTION

To continue to streamline and improve communications across the Agency, the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs updated its message manual in June 2024. This version includes: (1) USAID’s communications framework and message triangle; (2) overall USAID core messaging; and (3) USAID communication priorities and concise toelines for each theme.

Our communication efforts aim to increase awareness and clarity about USAID’s work and how it advances global development progress and American interests. In all our communication products we strive to better tell the USAID story to engage audiences.

We invite you to use this document in your ongoing communications efforts and share as a resource with all USAID and partner communicators as appropriate.

OVERVIEW

USAID is the United States' government agency that leads international development and humanitarian assistance efforts to partner countries globally. We are not simply an agency for international development, but an agency for inclusive development—broadening our coalition to include people from more diverse backgrounds and partners of all kinds to contribute to a shared mission. Our goal is to drive the Agency's impact beyond its foreign assistance programs—**Progress Beyond Programs**.

We work together with individuals, communities, and countries around the world to improve everyday lives. USAID efforts provide humanitarian assistance, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, advance economic opportunities, and help achieve progress beyond programs.

In the 21st century we live in an interconnected world. Our work benefits people around the world, including those in the United States. Many of the issues that we are encountering in the United States, like pandemics, climate consequences, and threats to the rule of law, are issues that people around the world are also facing. USAID's investment in communities around the world helps achieve sustainable development progress, advancing our collective security, health, and prosperity.



OUR AUDIENCES

As an Agency rooted in collaboration, partnership, and shared knowledge, we need the support and participation of multiple stakeholders. Our communication efforts aim to increase awareness and clarity about USAID's work and how it advances global development progress and American interests. We need to ensure each of our stakeholders feel a level of ownership or personal stake in our shared work and progress; they must be assured of the importance and value of their contributions to our mission.

USAID STAFF: This is our team. Our core message must be understood and effectively communicated by these key ambassadors, both at Missions and at headquarters.

WASHINGTON POLICYMAKERS: These officials make decisions and propose policies based on economic, national security, and development considerations. Policymakers include Congress, the White House, and other U.S. government agencies.

DONOR NATIONS: The United States is the largest bilateral donor in the world. But we cannot solve the world's challenges on our own. We need to work in partnership with other donors and encourage more countries to become effective donors.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC: In order to effectively communicate to the broader public, we need to communicate especially with those who have the ability to move forward key programmatic objectives. In times of crises related to humanitarian aid, we often focus our communications on diaspora communities with family, friends, and loved ones in impacted areas.

OUR HOST COUNTRY AUDIENCES: Communications at Missions often reach unique audiences. Some of these audiences include:

- USAID program recipients.
- Local, regional, and national government officials.
- Tribal, religious, and community leaders.
- Journalists and bloggers.
- NGOs, private sector partners, and others in the development community.

THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY: This includes international, national, and local NGOs in the regions where USAID does its work, other government development agencies, as well as faith-based organizations.

PRIVATE SECTOR: USAID is transforming its operations and approaches to ensure effectiveness and to act as a catalytic force for change. To achieve sustainable development progress and address the needs we face in the world, we are deepening engagement with the private sector, including multinational corporations, as well as private companies and entrepreneurs in the countries where we work.

MESSAGE FRAMEWORK

Our goal is to speak as one USAID voice. In all of our communications, we should explain and champion our mission. Our core message explains what USAID is and how we do our work around the world. By drawing our audiences back to a common mission, we help them to understand why USAID should matter to them. This messaging can and should be adapted based on key audiences.

To maximize messaging resonance, we must devise tailored communications that speak directly to each of our audiences in a way that consistently reinforces the significance of their participation. You can describe this participation through the three lenses of “what,” “how”, and “why.”

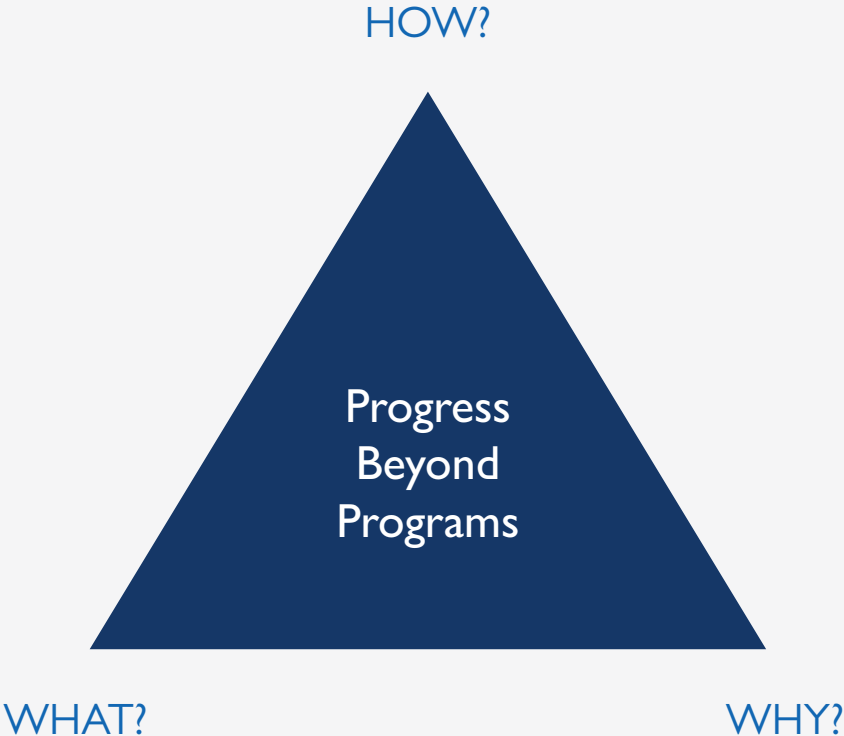
WHAT: This is our Achievable Goal. This is a clear articulation of our Agency’s programmatic objectives. It is where we explain in clear, understandable language what we are trying to achieve and, ideally, by when. It is also where we provide the context and persuasive argument for our work. Here are some tips:

- Be focused on outcome as opposed to process (people fed, laws changed).
- Include a larger goal when possible (establishing 60 million sustainable power connections in Africa by 2030).
- Provide evidence on why our goal is obtainable (we have already helped save 4.6 million children since 2008).

HOW: This is defined as our unique approach. It is an explanation of what USAID does to meet goals and how our approach is different than what others may be doing. Our approach should demonstrate our value added to the overall work of development. It may take many forms, including our focus on: inclusive growth, results and accountability, resilience, and partnership.

WHY: Why we do our work can be expressed by common good. Our work benefits people around the world, including those in the United States. Central to the common good is our Agency’s focus on inclusive development and ensuring that no one is left behind. Broadly, the common good includes messages such as: It is the right thing to do; it is good for local and global economies; it protects all of us and our shared resources; and it reflects shared progress and shared future.

MESSAGE TRIANGLE



At the center of our communications framework is our mission, expressed by our core message and supported by the three cornerstones of the message triangle. The three cornerstone messages of the triangle explain the “what,” “how,” and “why” of our work. This construction is designed to allow us to tell a clear and compelling story of our collective efforts and to engage our audiences in our work.

WHAT [ACHIEVABLE GOAL]

USAID is focused on driving development progress, not simply development programs. Our goal is to drive collective action to deliver progress beyond programs.

USAID is focusing its efforts to look beyond the execution of its programs. We are committed to not only managing our programs but to harnessing our full catalytic force for impact. While programs are, and will always remain, core to achieving the results we seek, they are not our only tool to spark change. In a world where foreign aid alone cannot resolve the problems we face, we are committed to inspiring and driving collective action.

Therefore, we must strive for impact even beyond the reach of our programs. This means acting as a catalytic force for change—convening key actors from philanthropy to the private sector to heads of state, and catalyzing resources beyond the public sector to build innovative and sustainable solutions to the world's toughest problems. We are working hand-in-hand with partners, communities, and governments, building the relationships that are so crucial to driving progress.

HOW [UNIQUE APPROACH]

USAID is focusing on the following priorities:

- Responding to humanitarian crises around the world.
- Investing in resilient food security.
- Addressing a changing climate and implementing environment solutions.
- Countering corruption, defending against authoritarianism, promoting democracy, protecting dignity, freedoms, and human rights.
- Strengthening global health systems and security.

What USAID is doing differently in its approach to address these challenges:

- Advancing diverse, accessible, inclusive, and equitable development.
- Prioritizing locally led development and humanitarian assistance.
- Deepening engagement with the private sector.
- Elevating the practice of development diplomacy.

WHY [COMMON GOOD]

We live in an interconnected world and what affects one will affect us all. Together we can seize the opportunities that tackling today's challenges present. As we invest in communities and programs around the world, we are also investing in U.S. security and advancing sustainable development progress and global prosperity.

DON'T FORGET THE WHO [THE HUMAN STORY]

Research has repeatedly shown that humans are inspired to care about a topic when they can make an emotional connection with that issue. We do this by telling stories that “humanize” the work of USAID, its staff and—most importantly—its recipients.

There are many ways to reach beyond the program elements that fill our fact sheets in our narrative stories, videos, and other communications. One commonality is focusing on the “humanity”—the universal, relatable, human emotions, and experiences—in every story you tell. Going beyond the data points and focusing on the personal stories ultimately helps us communicate with even greater impact about the difference our work makes around the world.

TIPS:

- Find the “hero” in every story you want to tell. Often the most compelling way to communicate about the good work we are doing is to find an individual recipient or an implementing partner with a compelling personal story. Focus your narrative on those things that make us human — dreams realized, alliances built, and hardships overcome — and ask questions in a way that helps you capture those answers. Engagement with a cause is not just about numbers. It’s emotional and it’s with individuals.
- Simplicity is an art. The most compelling stories are not necessarily the most complicated or loaded with detail. In fact, excessive detail can slay a good story. And, in case it’s not obvious: no jargon, no technical speak and no acronyms, unless absolutely necessary.
- Know what you want to say. It may seem obvious, but if you can’t easily summarize your story, you probably don’t have a compelling story to tell.
- Always keep your audience in mind. Remember your goal, your audience, and what they will respond to. Audiences should be able to see themselves/relate to the “hero.”
- It’s important to show there is a possibility of hope. Do not focus only on negative aspects. Development work can be powerful and inspirational. Don’t be afraid to let some emotion shine through. Emotion inspires action.

TOPLINE MESSAGING

AGENCY TOPLINES

- Founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, USAID has been the world's leader in international development for more than 60 years, implementing development efforts and responding to humanitarian crises.
- USAID is the United States' government agency that leads international development and humanitarian assistance efforts to partner countries. USAID works in more than 100 countries covering the regions of Africa, Asia, Europe and Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East.
- USAID works together with individuals, communities, and countries to improve everyday lives. USAID efforts provide humanitarian assistance, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, advance economic opportunities, and help achieve progress beyond programs.
- USAID aims to address some of the world's greatest development and humanitarian challenges, including an ongoing global food crisis, emerging threats to global health, a changing climate, rising threats to democracy and civil society, and erupting disasters.
- USAID is the world's largest bilateral development agency with a global staff of more than 13,000—with approximately 40 percent nationals of the countries where they work; nearly 4,000 implementing partners; and an average annual budget of \$30 billion in foreign assistance. The foreign assistance request makes up [less than one percent](#) of the total federal budget.
- As part of its humanitarian assistance efforts, USAID responds to an average of 75 crises in more than 65 countries every year ensuring that assistance reaches people affected by natural disasters—including hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes—as well as drought and conflict.

- In the 21st century we live in an interconnected world. Many of the issues that we are encountering in the United States, like pandemics, climate consequences, and threats to the rule of law, are issues that people around the world are also facing. Our security is connected to the security of people around the world. USAID's investment in communities around the world helps support sustainable development progress of our partners, advancing our collective security, health, and prosperity.
- Working closely with our partners around the world—governments, citizens, workers, entrepreneurs, businesses, activists, public servants, faith leaders, and many others—USAID helped spark the Green Revolution and avert an age of famine. We helped eradicate smallpox, reverse the spread of AIDS, contain Ebola, lead the campaign that has nearly eradicated polio, and turn back the tide on malaria and tuberculosis. And we supported dozens of transitions from autocracy to democracy, enabled millions of girls to attend school, and provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to communities that have been impacted by disasters, conflicts, and other crises.
- USAID's development model seeks to support our partners to meet their own goals and aspirations, and elevates transparency, partnership, and good governance, as well as respect for human rights and democratic norms as key elements for sustainable economic growth.
- To date, 17 former recipients of USAID assistance have transitioned from recipients to substantial providers of development. Collectively they provided more than \$9 billion of their own development assistance in calendar year 2022 to help other countries solve global challenges.



PROGRESS BEYOND PROGRAMS

- As the world faces global, complex, and compounding challenges, we must reimagine what development leadership entails and what development partnership looks like.
- As an Agency, we are extending our impact beyond our foreign assistance programs, bringing together development and humanitarian partners, international institutions, and the private sector to extend the reach of democracy, prosperity, and human dignity to billions more. And we must do this in partnership with the people whose lives our work touches, including the most marginalized, elevating their voices to drive change in their own communities.
- We are advancing not only a vision of international development but a vision of inclusive development, broadening our coalition to include people from more diverse backgrounds and partners of all kinds to participate in a shared mission. In addition, we are striving to make aid more equitable, focused on the voices, needs, and ideas of diverse groups in the countries in which we work, including the most marginalized.
- USAID is focusing its efforts to look beyond the execution of its programs. While programs are, and will always remain, core to achieving the results we seek, they are not our only tool to spark change. And while we will continue to build on existing efforts to make our programs more effective, we are expanding our impact beyond the scope of what our programs can achieve in an effort to broaden the gains we can deliver. In a world where foreign aid alone cannot resolve the problems we face, we are committed to inspiring and driving collective action.
- Through our convening power with key multilateral institutions, our global footprint, our partnerships with the private sector, and our long-standing history and reputation, we have the potential to drive collective action with the goal of delivering progress beyond programs.

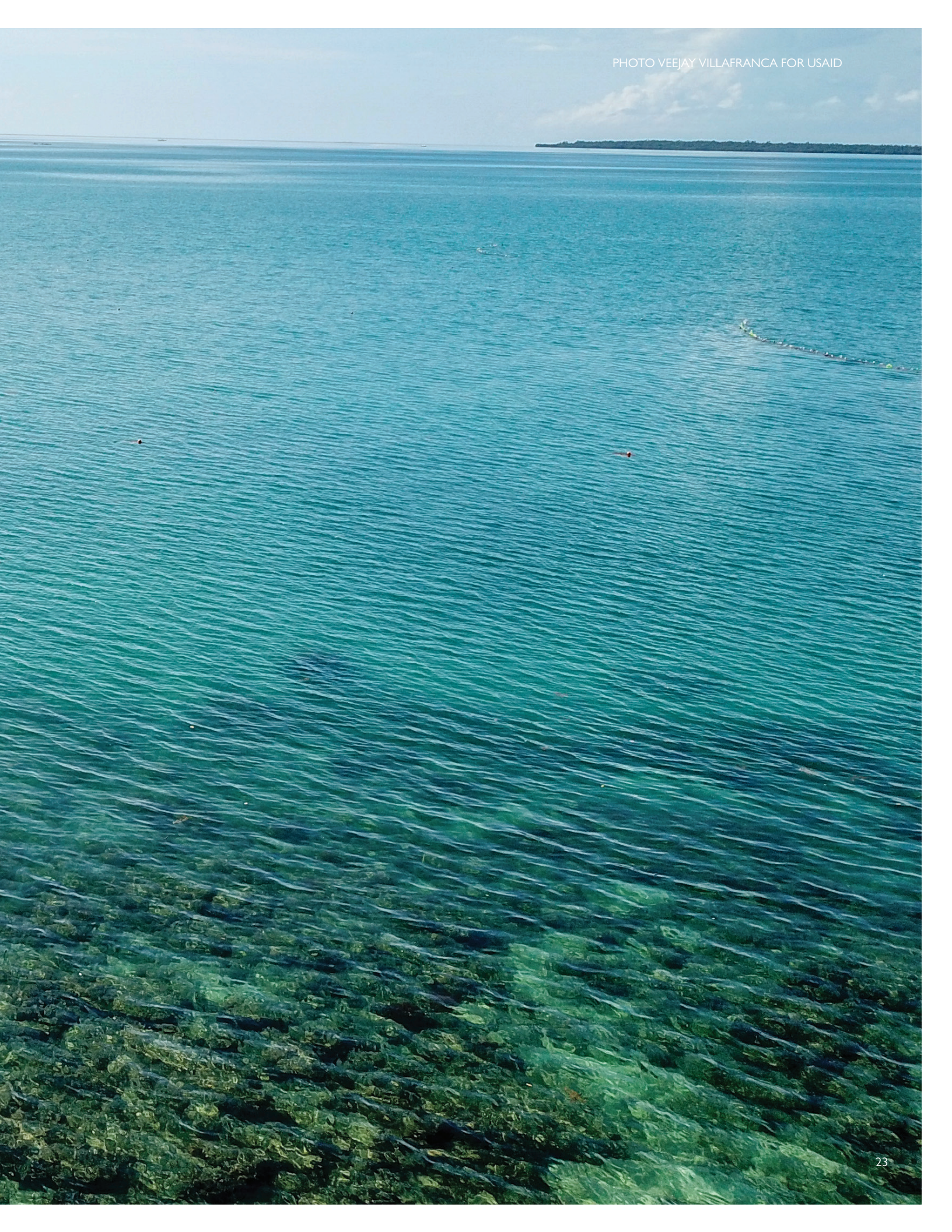


THEMATIC PRIORITIES

FOOD SECURITY

- The world is facing a global food security crisis with multiple causes and drivers, among them climate change and conflicts, including Putin’s war on Ukraine. The climate crisis is crippling global agricultural production and has caused unprecedented droughts in the Horn of Africa. Ongoing conflicts around the world are compounding these issues further.
- The United States is leading efforts to mitigate the global food security crisis by:
 - Addressing immediate humanitarian needs.
 - Mitigating the global fertilizer shortage.
 - Increasing investments in agricultural capacity and resilience.
 - Cushioning the macroeconomic shock and impact on vulnerable communities.
 - Sustaining high-level political engagement.
- Through Feed the Future, the U.S. government’s initiative to combat global hunger co-led by USAID, the United States works hand-in-hand with partner countries to develop their agriculture sectors and break the cycle of poverty and hunger, advancing opportunities for a new generation of young people, while building a more stable world.
- To overcome the immediate food insecurity challenges and strengthen food systems to withstand new shocks, Feed the Future is expanding efforts to transform what we grow, how we grow it, and who benefits. We are also equipping farmers with training and access to finance, tools, fertilizer, and seeds to sustainably increase productivity and boost soil health.
- We are supporting cutting-edge research to discover and develop agricultural innovations like improved seeds that can better withstand climate risks. For example, in eastern and southern Africa, almost 7 million farm families are growing drought-tolerant maize hybrid seeds on 18 million acres. These seeds yield 40 percent more than regular varieties during times of drought. This is helping families feed themselves at a precarious time while also injecting more than \$1 billion per year into the regional economy and reducing the need for emergency relief.





ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

- The effects of a changing climate impacts us all. It threatens lives, health, economic progress, and our ability to live on Earth. Around the world, temperatures and sea levels are rising. From more intense forest fires in California to more prolonged droughts in the Horn of Africa to recurring typhoons in Southeast Asia—much of the world is already experiencing the negative impacts of a changing climate. This is a global problem that sees no border and we can no longer delay or do the bare minimum to address it. Implementing environment solutions and addressing this problem requires international cooperation.
- Climate change is also threatening development progress and exacerbating global inequities; contributing to conflict and displacement; and increasing water and food scarcity, as well as the need for humanitarian assistance.
- USAID has direct climate change programs in more than 60 countries totaling more than \$660 million in fiscal year 2022. In addition, combating climate change is a cross-cutting issue that involves the various development sectors USAID invests in.
- In April 2022, USAID launched a climate strategy setting ambitious targets for 2030 including: helping half a billion people be better prepared and resilient to negative impacts of climate change (adaptation through President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE)); preventing 6 billion tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions (mitigation); conserving 100 million hectares of key ecosystems like tropical forests; and mobilizing \$150 billion in public and private climate finance.
- In FY 2023, USAID supported our partners to prevent 295 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions (equal to taking 25 percent of cars in the United States off the road for a year), help communities in more than 60 countries build their resilience to climate impacts, conserve 82 million hectares of tropical rainforests (an area twice the size of California), and mobilize \$16.7 billion in outside public and private finance in addition to USAID's work.



PHOTO: DIEGO PÉREZ AND WALTER SILVERA FOR USAID

DEMOCRACY

- Today we are at a pivotal moment as democracies are confronting serious challenges from within and outside their borders and autocratic forces are undermining the essential principles that unite all free people. Despite these challenges, democracies are poised for a comeback—but they must demonstrate the ability to deliver for their citizens. Supporting and strengthening a democratic renewal will require building on traditional democracy assistance, while modernizing to include a more expansive set of tools and approaches to address both new and longstanding challenges and opportunities.
- USAID has democracy programs in more than 80 countries, with a roughly \$1.6 billion annual budget. USAID works with its partners around the world to strengthen democratic institutions and systems. This is done through programming that includes promoting fairness and access to justice; enabling credible, free, fair, and peaceful elections and transitions of power; protecting human rights; advancing freedom of the press; and fostering citizens' abilities to gather, debate, propose common solutions, and hold their governments accountable, and to protect those ignored by their government.
- The U.S. government is undertaking coordinated action, along with its allies and partners, including in the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal—a landmark set of foreign assistance and policy initiatives to bolster worldwide democracy, combat corruption, and defend human rights.

- In December 2022, USAID released its first Anti-Corruption Policy, establishing countering corruption as an Agency priority, cutting across all sectors. Consistent with the U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption, this policy solidifies USAID’s emphasis on transnational corruption, grand corruption, and kleptocracy as detrimental to development progress.
- USAID is modernizing its approach to address evolving challenges to democracy, and taking a more holistic and integrated approach to support democratic governance. In 2022, USAID launched the Democracy Delivers Initiative with the conviction that when a country experiences a promising democratic opening—when there’s an opportunity to enact democratic reforms, strengthen transparency and the rule of law, and advance human rights and development—we need to help its government, civil society, and citizens seize the moment. USAID is not only investing in traditional work to bolster democracy, but is also channeling resources to support democratic reformers as they work to achieve tangible benefits across development sectors that citizens can feel in their everyday lives.
- The United States will champion the democratic values and practices that go to the very heart of who we are as a nation and a people—freedom, equality, opportunity, and a belief in the universal rights of all people. By galvanizing our partners and allies, we can forge collective action to advance the vital cause of democracy and uphold every person’s individual dignity.

GLOBAL HEALTH

- As countries continue to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic that killed millions and weakened health systems, the world is facing growing stresses. An increase in conflict—to rates that we haven't seen since the Cold War—is disrupting the treatment and prevention of all diseases. Our changing climate is driving an increase in health conditions like malaria and heat stress. And the global food crisis is upping rates of malnutrition—which is a contributing factor in nearly half of childhood deaths. And after seven decades of uninterrupted progress, global life expectancy declined. This underscores the importance of USAID's global health work.
- USAID's work to improve life expectancy takes many shapes: helping mothers safely give birth, delivering vaccines, increasing access to HIV treatment and prevention options, improving health safety standards, and slowing the spread of malaria, tuberculosis, and countless infectious diseases.
- USAID invests in strengthening the health systems that support primary health care. Investing in primary health care workers and preventing worker shortages is imperative to the continued progress of global health. Through USAID's primary care initiative Primary Impact, we work with country governments to develop action plans that identify their most pressing needs in the primary care systems.
- Since 2014, USAID has invested more than \$1.6 billion to ensure the necessary systems are in place to prevent, detect, and respond to emerging infectious disease threats, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID has significantly expanded its global health security investments. USAID, through its Global Health Security Program, is now working in more than 50 partner countries to address health security gaps and strengthen their capacity.

- USAID's maternal and child survival programs in more than 25 countries aim to reduce mortality rates among mothers and children by providing access to essential health care services, collectively preventing pregnancy-related complications for expectant mothers, supporting the best possible birth outcomes for newborns, and preventing illnesses and infections in young children. In 2023, USAID helped more than 92 million women and children access essential care.
- USAID, in coordination with its partners, supported life-saving treatment for nearly 7 million people in FY2023 through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief; helped save 11.7 million lives and prevent more than 2 billion malaria infections since 2000 through the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative; and helped save more than 75 million lives from tuberculosis since 2000.
- In 2024, USAID launched an effort to raise awareness about the profound impacts of lead exposure on health, child development, education outcomes, and overall economic development in low- and middle-income countries. USAID is working with partner governments and relevant ministries to urge governments to direct their attention toward combating lead exposure, including with new regulations.



WHAT'S NEW IN OUR APPROACH

In order to meet these significant challenges and implement programs to address these priorities, we must drive progress in ways that surpass the confines of the budgets we control or of the programs we administer. USAID must transform its operations, approaches, and way of doing business to ensure effectiveness. As part of that, USAID will focus on the following.

ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

- USAID works to embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles in our work at every level so that our programs, people, policies, processes, and partnerships are inclusive, reflect diversity, advance equity, and enhance accessibility. DEIA principles are an essential framework for transforming USAID's workforce and internal processes, and are a foundational lens we apply to all of our work to deliver development gains that are truly inclusive. Our work must benefit all individuals, including women and girls, and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, ages, disability statuses, and racial, ethnic, religious, caste, and socioeconomic groups.
- The success of our mission depends on partnership and respect for the communities we partner with. Our partners are sources of invaluable knowledge and feedback, and should play a critical role in the decisions that impact their everyday lives.
- DEIA is not a staffing strategy or a task to complete. It is a lens through which to look at all our work and our processes. It is embracing the core idea that regardless of identity, background, or experience, every human being deserves respect, opportunity, and dignity.

PRIORITIZING LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- USAID is committed to shifting funding and decision-making power to the people, organizations, and institutions that are driving change in their own countries and communities. Experience shows that local leadership of development and humanitarian goals and programming is important for equity, effectiveness, and sustainability. USAID defines localization as a set of internal reforms, actions, and behavior changes to orient the Agency's work around local actors' priorities and strengthen local systems. USAID strives to advance locally led development and humanitarian assistance, in which local actors set their own agendas, develop solutions, and mobilize the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality.
- As an Agency we are striving to channel a quarter of our funding directly to local actors. Recognizing that opportunities for funding local partners will vary by context, Missions are setting their own direct local funding targets.
- Localization is also more than direct awards to local partners. We have made a commitment that, by the end of the decade, at least half of our programs will be locally led, in terms of setting priorities, designing activities, implementing programs, and defining and measuring results. We will track progress toward this objective across the many ways we engage with local actors—whether they are recipients of direct funding, sub recipients or sub contractors, participants in a USAID program, or members of a community affected by USAID programming.

ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- To achieve sustainable development progress and address the needs we face in the world, we are deepening engagement with the private sector, including multinational corporations, as well as private companies and entrepreneurs within the countries in which we work.
- We are working with partners to help avert economic crises, respond to humanitarian crises, accelerate reforms, and stabilize economies in the short-term, while revitalizing inclusive growth that can help communities rise out of poverty in the longer term.
- We are also working with partners, especially local ones, to help close gender, racial, and other gaps that impede inclusive progress, and we will continue to strengthen the capacity of our own internal systems to make it easier to partner with the private sector.

ELEVATING DEVELOPMENT DIPLOMACY

- We aim to leverage our Missions' presence and relationships with local leaders, multilateral organizations, international financial institutions, fellow donors, philanthropic foundations, U.S. firms, universities, and other key partners to mobilize resources, synchronize actions, reduce duplication, fill gaps, achieve economies of scale, amplify local voices, encourage policy reforms, and inspire greater collective action.
- We aim to leverage our extensive technical expertise and country-level experience to bring contextual understanding, a development and humanitarian perspective, and our values as an Agency to foreign policy and national security deliberations in Washington.
- We aim to leverage our relationships in multilateral forums and institutions, such as on UN executive boards, to shape norms, decisions, and programmatic approaches that further our development and humanitarian objectives.

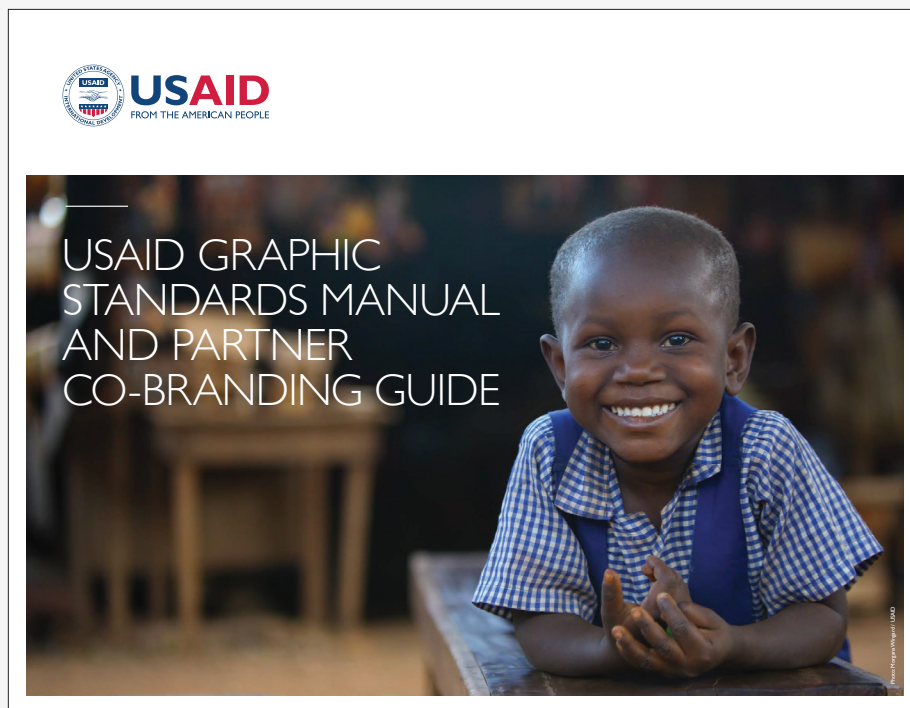
Development Diplomacy means using USAID's convening power, global footprint, standing in key multilateral institutions, private sector connections, and strategic communications channels to drive collective action far beyond the scope of our programming.

OUR BRANDING

Branding enhances the visibility and value of U.S. assistance while informing recipients that our aid comes from the American people. Federal law and USAID regulations require that USAID-funded projects are identified overseas as “American Aid.” USAID policy requires marking aid with USAID’s logo, including the tagline “From the American People.”

Proper execution of USAID branding is paramount to our success as an Agency. It ensures that our host country government partners and recipients understand that our aid is coming “From the American People.” Branding is everyone’s responsibility.

Additional information and helpful resources can be found at [usaid.gov/branding](https://www.usaid.gov/branding).





VISUAL ASSETS

A single photo or short video can humanize USAID’s work while conveying the impact our projects have.

People understand images much faster than text and remember visuals longer. Photos and videos can authenticate a story, engage the viewer, and symbolize an issue. They can establish an emotional connection that helps viewers care about an issue.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD IMAGE

Select uncluttered, documentary-style, color photos of recipients—preferably looking at the camera. Show emotion and the personal impact of USAID’s work. Choose photos that convey rapport and respect for the person photographed. The background and environment can provide context to help tell the story. Look for action portraits or mood. Where possible, include natural USAID branding embedded in the scene. If you need to show a sign, building, or other object, include a person in the foreground.

Make sure you get the necessary permission from those you are photographing by asking them to sign a consent form. In some cases, these will need to be translated to the local language. Include caption, photo credit, and alternative text for each image.



PHOTO: MORGANA WINGARD FOR USAID



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA FOR USAID



PHOTO: DOUGLAS GRITZMACHER FOR USAID



PHOTO: MORGANA WINGARD FOR USAID

WHAT TO AVOID

Avoid posed or staged images. Don't publish stagnant photos of meetings and panel discussions. Avoid cluttered backgrounds. Avoid photo collages or using multiple small photos — it's more effective to use one large photo. Avoid black+white and duotone images because they distance the viewer from the subject. Avoid gratuitous images of poverty or despair. Avoid retouching a photo if that could be misleading or change its meaning, damaging USAID's credibility. And finally, don't use stock photography to represent our work overseas.



PHOTO: LOGODEP



PHOTO: USAID



PHOTO: USAID

WHAT MAKES A GOOD VIDEO

USAID defines a well-produced video as a story that translates a multi-faceted program or development concept into an accessible and engaging journey for the viewer. The most effective video stories produced at USAID let the recipients and heroes tell their stories through their own voices. The length of the video depends on the target audience and platform.

It's important to develop a distribution strategy that includes tactics that help promote the video through targeted outreach, social platforms, and traditional media to ensure maximum reach and effectiveness.

There are different styles of videos you can use based on your goal, audience, and message. These include documentary-style videos that humanize USAID's work and show its impact; explainer videos that describe a project or concept in a compelling and efficient way; compilation videos that promote a specific theme for Agency campaigns and/or international days; summary videos highlighting high-level events/trips; and animation videos (especially when there is a lack of footage, sensitivities, or security concerns). Don't forget to get the necessary permissions prior to filming.

WHAT TO AVOID

When a story can be told through the voice of recipients, do not layer technical expert interviews or unnecessary voiceovers into pieces. Video stories are short teasers that are intended to build interest in our work and compel viewers to return to our digital mediums to learn more.

WORDS MATTER

USAID works around the world and has the benefit of being able to tell strong stories and feature authentic visuals. We should capitalize on that comparative advantage in our communication efforts: get close to the action; show, don't tell; stay relevant; be specific (specific is not the same as technical); and be clear and concise. Explain the work to a family member or friend who doesn't know USAID's work to see if they understand easily.

We all know that the words you choose matter. Below are a few practical tips to consider before you start typing.

USE PLAIN LANGUAGE: Using plain language is good practice. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires the Federal Government to write in a “clear, concise, well-organized” manner that follows the best practices of plain language writing. So what is plain language? It's communications that your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.

CLEAR WRITING: IT'S NOT THAT 'SIMPLE': Though we certainly want your writing to be clear, don't confuse clear writing for just simplifying. Producing writing at the appropriate level of detail that makes it interesting for a general audience does not necessarily mean “simplifying.” It means being able to distill our technical work into prose that draws people in. So no jargon or technical speak, and keep acronyms to a bare minimum.

ABOUT JARGON: There is nothing that will turn your reader off more quickly than needlessly technical writing, and that includes overuse of acronyms (often “inside baseball”) and “aid-speak.” Translate technical jargon such as “capacity building” to “training” or other words that everyone understands. For example: “*in spite of their invaluable contribution to economic growth, farmers often lack the technical resources, human capacity and financial backing to respond to agricultural development challenges*” should become “*in spite of their invaluable contribution to economic growth, farmers often lack the money, tools and skills to succeed.*”

ONE VOICE: We are one Agency with one mission, and must use one voice in most of our official communications unless there is a specific reason not to. This means you should probably not be distinguishing your program or office. It is a USAID program, not a “Global Health” or “BHA” program. Please see the USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Partner Co-Branding Guide for additional information.



PHOTO CAPTIONS

COVER PHOTO: In Bangladesh, Shila Akter plays with her two children. Shila participated in handicraft training provided by Golden Jute Products, a Feed the Future Bangladesh Horticulture Activity partner. Shila collects jute and natural fibers and works in her spare time at home allowing her to earn income while looking after her kids.

Photo: SM Tamzid Al Fatah for Feed the Future

PAGE 4: In Cambodia, community members work together to protect and manage their community fish refuge and bodies of water that provide dry season sanctuaries for wild fish. They are using best management practices shared through the Feed the Future Rice Field Fisheries II project which strengthens food security and livelihoods.

Photo: Ou Andeng for Feed the Future

PAGE 7: In Zimbabwe, John Abisha Fawo is one of the 100 lead farmers participating in USAID's Enhancing Recovery and Resilience In Communities project implemented by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. This project provided farmers with improved varieties of drought tolerant crops and training.

Photo: Kudzai Tinago for USAID

PAGE 18: In Egypt, USAID teamed up with the Hurgada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association to protect the Red Sea's coral reefs. Worldwide, coral reefs provide an important ecosystem for marine life, protect coastlines from storms and erosion, and are central to the livelihoods of millions of people.

Photo: Sarah O'Gorman and Ana Laffoon, HEPCA for USAID

PAGE 20: In Ukraine, Yuriy and his team monitor a processing facility where trucks loaded with newly-harvested potatoes roll in. Mud-caked spuds pour onto conveyor belts to be washed and sorted. They will be turned into potato starch, a gluten-free flour used in cooking around the world. USAID launched the AGRI-Ukraine initiative to help Ukraine produce, process, and export food to contribute to global food security.

Photo: Vlad Sodel for USAID

PAGE 22: In the Philippines, seaweed farmers attend to their harvest from their farm lines and process them by the shore before selling to buyers. The Philippines is one of the top producers of seaweed globally. USAID helps seaweed farmers in and around Puerto Princesa access markets, resources, and funding to expand their businesses.

Photo: Veejay Villafranca for USAID

PAGE 25: In Peru, Jessica Morón is one of about 200 park rangers trained in wildland firefighting. Just in the first half of 2020, the number of fires in Peru's forests increased by 121 percent. USAID partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to support Peru improve the country's operational wildland firefighting capacity by supporting planning, training firefighters, and developing fire prevention strategies.

Photo: Diego Pérez and Walter Silvera for USAID

PAGE 30: In Malawi, Elinat Robert holds her two months old baby at Kainja clinic in Dowa district. These USAID-supported monthly clinics provide convenient care by bringing primary health care services closer to communities. Health surveillance assistants provide basic health services and beneficial health care information to prevent, identify, and treat childhood illnesses.

Photo: Fredrik Lerneryd for USAID

PAGE 36: In Bangladesh, a woman is harvesting jute plants. Through integrated crop management practices and climate-smart agriculture, farmers are able to improve their livelihoods. Feed the Future helps produce and market high-yielding jute seeds in Bangladesh.

Photo: Moniruzzaman Sazal for USAID

PAGE 41: In Fiji, a woman displays freshly harvested sea grapes. USAID's work with local communities promotes gender-equitable and socially inclusive planning to improve the protection of productive marine environments and equip communities with the knowledge and skills to sustain their livelihoods and strengthen food security resilience in their community.

Photo: Women in Fisheries Network for USAID





COVER PHOTO: SM TAMZID AL FATAH FOR FEED THE FUTURE