

Introduction

On January 13-14, 2005, in Washington, DC, USAID held its Annual PVO Conference sponsored by the Office of Private Voluntary Cooperation - American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (PVC-ASHA). The Conference, themed “What Makes a Good NGO,” attracted nearly 500 attendees, including CEOs, managers, and directors of a wide variety of PVOs and NGOs, along with overseas NGO partners and those from the academic community. USAID and PVC-ASHA program staff were available to interact with participants and share diverse resources.

PVC-ASHA serves as a point of entry for PVOs and NGOs seeking USAID resources and programs. To this end, a PVO/NGO Knowledge Gateway organized as part of this year’s Conference gave PVO/NGO leadership and staff access to USAID information, resources, and business opportunities. Participants visited the community of 21 kiosks throughout the two days of the Conference to obtain print and online materials from USAID bureaus, offices, and programs.

Welcome Remarks

Judith Gilmore, Director, PVC-ASHA, USAID

Ms. Gilmore welcomed participants and noted the immense challenges in 2004 posed by security, conflicts, and natural disaster, in addition to the many issues with which organizations must grapple daily. She acknowledged the important work being done by PVOs and NGOs around the globe, and noted that they were making a difference, even in the face of formidable obstacles. Ms. Gilmore welcomed PVOs new to USAID, along with NGO program partners participating for the first time. She also acknowledged development stakeholders from the donor community as well as USAID representatives from a cross-section of program areas throughout the Agency.

Ms. Gilmore described the 2005 Conference as a culmination of efforts by PVC-ASHA to increasingly support PVOs and NGOs with more than financial resources, serving as a gateway to organizational development information and a point of access into USAID. This emphasis underlies the choice of conference theme, “What Makes a Good NGO?,” as it reflects participants’ diversity of experiences and environments—as well as commonalities. In bringing together these varying perspectives, the Conference would offer an opportunity for learning and exchange and for all stakeholders to share insights, gather information, and find new partners. Ms. Gilmore noted that while there is no right answer to the question of what makes a good NGO, the Conference sessions would present different concepts that help make sustainable, effective and accountable organizations.