

DRAFT

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID/Panama

October 2005

Part I: Overall USAID/Panama Communications and Outreach

Background

Communication and outreach are important tools for USG foreign policy. If utilized effectively, they can enhance the impact of USAID development assistance and improve the image of the U.S. abroad. In Panama, where the USG and USAID have had a very prominent role in the country's development; communication, outreach, and local receptivity to our communication and outreach efforts have historically been strong. However, with USAID/Panama resources more recently at a relatively reduced level due to the emergence of more critical Agency priorities, visibility of USAID programs has suffered a decline. Accordingly, there is a need to raise awareness and knowledge of USAID assistance in order to reinforce the mostly positive image of the USG in Panama as well as to keep our USG and Panamanian counterparts and stakeholders informed about our programs.

Developing a strategic and formalized communication and outreach process that assures proactive and thorough dissemination of information will help to maintain broad support for USAID/Panama programs and will further USG foreign policy objectives. In these efforts, USAID/Panama will collaborate closely with the Embassy, USAID/W colleagues, and implementing partners to promote a better understanding of USAID achievements both within the USG as well as among Panamanian government, private sector, and civil society counterparts; Panamanian media; and the Panamanian general public.

Issues

- Although historically many Panamanians have been knowledgeable about past USAID assistance and programs, recent awareness is mixed. Many Panamanians do not currently know of USAID or USAID programs, or their awareness is superficial or incomplete.
- USAID's Panamanian stakeholders – particularly our current and potential beneficiaries; government, private sector, and civil society counterparts; and implementing partners – need to continue to receive current information on the impact and success of the USAID/Panama program.
- There are frequent missed opportunities when the Panamanian media does not include information about USAID in stories related to our projects. Coverage of USAID in Panamanian media overall is low.
- Our USG colleagues, particularly those in the Embassy and in USAID/Washington with whom we regularly collaborate, would be better positioned to support us and to receive support from us if they had a more thorough knowledge of USAID/Panama programs.
- A current USAID/Panama staff shortage may require a slower “ramp up” of Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) activities than would otherwise be preferred.

Goals and Objectives

- Increase awareness and knowledge of USAID programs among Panamanians, particularly among current and potential beneficiaries; government, private sector, and civil society counterparts; and the general public. Strengthen the level of trust among Panamanians of the goals of USAID programs.
- Enhance understanding of USAID programs among the Panamanian media, improving the accuracy of Panamanian press stories related to USAID programs and heightening the prominence of USAID therein.
- Increase in-house (internal to USAID and the USG) understanding of USAID/Panama programs. Strengthen teamwork on communications and outreach within USAID/Panama and among Embassy and USAID/Washington colleagues.
- To the extent possible, increase U.S. audiences' knowledge of the impact of USAID/Panama programs.

Audience

Panamanian

Primary

Panamanian media
Current and potential beneficiaries
Panamanian government (all levels)
Panamanian civil society organizations
Panamanian business community
Panamanian community and religious leaders
Panamanian decision-makers / opinion shapers

Secondary

Other donors in Panama

American

Primary

U.S. Embassy in Panama
USAID/Washington

Secondary

U.S. general public
U.S. media

Mechanisms/Tools

Due to a current staff shortage, USAID/Panama's Communications Strategy will be implemented in a two-tiered approach:

- The first six months, Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) activities will be undertaken in an abridged fashion to ensure strategic use of resources while DOC capacity is built.
- In the second six months, after USAID/Panama's current vacancies are filled, DOC activities will be accelerated, using knowledge and skills gained in the initial six month period.

In-Reach:

“In-reach” activities that educate our in-house colleagues (within USAID/Panama, in USAID/Washington, and at the Embassy) about our programs have the potential to increase our program impact and enhance our communications and outreach efforts by 1) improving teamwork among staff and stimulating cross-program synergies and collaboration; 2) expanding our supporters’ base of USAID/Panama program knowledge; and 3) heightening support for USAID/Panama communications and outreach efforts.

In-reach activities planned for the initial six months of the strategy will include:

- Continue to include USAID/Panama staff and Embassy colleagues in site visits and non-traditional events (i.e., other than ribbon-cuttings)
- Include associated partners’ activities and planning into USAID/Panama communications plans
- Maintain a Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) Calendar of key in-reach and outreach dates and events

In-reach activities planned for the next six months of the strategy will additionally include:

- Conduct briefing sessions/brown bags for USAID/Panama staff and Embassy colleagues about USAID projects: Goal = 1 per quarter
- Hold semi-annual informal meetings involving all counterparts and partners to share experiences and network
- Distribute a USAID/Panama DOC Quarterly Report (an update on USAID/Panama in-reach and outreach activities) via e-mail within USAID/Panama and to Embassy and USAID/W colleagues

Outreach:

Outreach activities will primarily target Panamanian audiences. During the initial six months of the strategy they will include:

Events

- Continue to invite media to site visits/events/briefings (inaugurations, events, official and unofficial tours, etc.) – in coordination with Embassy/PAS

Informational Materials

- Rework and/or refine USAID/Panama “canned” briefing materials/fact sheets:
 - 1 1-pager on USAID/Panama programs (text only)
 - 3 1-pagers on each SO (mostly text, 1 photo per SO)
 - 3 3-pagers on each SO (text and photos)

- Create a USAID/Panama Communications and Outreach electronic library and binder containing:
 - USAID/Panama program briefing materials, including fact sheets, scene setters, talking points, press releases, “telling our story” narratives, and brochures in both English and Spanish
 - External reporting on our programs such as press clippings, press reports, television footage, radio transcripts, FrontLines articles, etc.
 - Program and activity photos
 - DOC monitoring and evaluation data

Outreach activities planned for the next six months of the strategy will additionally include:

Events

- Schedule media interviews of the USAID AIDREP and other appropriate USAID/Panama staff, in coordination with Embassy’s Public Affairs Section: Goal = 1 per quarter
- Arrange for USAID/Panama staff to speak at professional events (conferences, roundtables, symposiums): Goal = 1 per quarter
- Encourage USAID/Panama staff – in coordination with Embassy/PAS – to speak at local venues (e.g. universities, high schools, community centers, IT community centers, etc.): Goal = 1 per quarter

Informational Materials

- Develop English-language and Spanish-language websites for USAID/Panama
- Provide “telling our story” articles to local media: SO Team Goal = 1 per quarter

Outreach activities will secondarily target American audiences. During the initial six months of the strategy, USAID/Panama will liaison with LAC/CAM, the LAC Bureau Public Outreach Staff, and LPA to:

- Share the material produced for the Panamanian market for re-packaging to the American market.
- Continue to provide briefing materials and help arrange site visits for VIP visitors
- Share local media coverage with the LAC and LPA Bureaus

The next six months of the strategy, outreach activities targeting Americans will additionally include:

- Submit articles and features on USAID/Panama activities to *FrontLines*: USAID/Panama Goal = 1 every 6 months
- Submit USAID/Panama DOC Quarterly Reports via e-mail to LAC and LPA
- Encourage USAID/Panama staff as appropriate to speak at events, meet with Congress, and conduct interviews while on TDY in the U.S.
- Encourage USAID/Panama staff to contribute technical articles for publication in technical journals

Additional, Specific In-Reach/Outreach Opportunities to be undertaken as resources permit:

- A Panamanian Weekly has expressed interest in covering USAID activities on a regular basis. USAID/Panama will follow-up with the Weekly to determine whether this opportunity should be pursued.
- Copa Airlines has requested video footage of USAID/Panama's work in the Darien for potential use in the airline's in-flight entertainment. USAID/Panama will follow-up with Copa to determine whether this opportunity should be pursued.
- The SO2 Team Leader has previous experience in the following and could potentially facilitate similar activities/events for USAID/Panama:
 - Photographic exhibit and presentation at the USAID Library in Washington on specific USAID/Panama activities/programs
 - Development of documentaries on our PVO partners by Visionaries Inc. (a non-profit media outfit). For example, with \$US 30,000 USAID/Dominican Republic was able to obtain three videos for airing on the World Link system, reaching approximately 1.6 million U.S. households, to help its partner PVOs sell their story to the U.S. private sector to diversify their funding sources.

Monitoring/Evaluation

Measure results by tracking:

- Newspaper reporting about or related to USAID activities
- TV/radio segments on USAID activities
- Number of Page Views or Website hits, and their origin
- Attendance at USAID events (staff speakers, beneficiary forums, road shows)
- Anecdotal information on target audience's awareness and knowledge of USAID programs
- Requests for more information about USAID or USAID programs
- Responses to the question on knowledge of USAID in Embassy annual survey of attitudes (get baseline data in year one and changes in year two and onward)

Present outputs and results via:

- USAID/Panama DOC Quarterly Reports distributed within USAID/Panama and to LAC and LPA in USAID/Washington -- in final six months of Strategy period
- Updates at general staff meetings
- Year-end summary for inclusion in Annual Performance Report

FY05 Estimated Costs

Activities listed in this strategy will require additional staff time particularly initially as informational materials are developed. However, no additional financial costs are expected to be incurred.

Timeline

Month 1

- Hold USAID/Panama and Embassy/PAS DOC Meeting to brainstorm on/develop initial 6-month plan (months 1 to 6) for:
 - Media site visits
 - Guidance for reworked/refined USAID/Panama briefing materials
- Develop a USAID/Panama DOC Calendar on shared drive
- Compile initial DOC Online/Offline Library
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 2

- Begin media site visits
- Finalize USAID/Panama English-language briefing materials
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 3

- Translate USAID/Panama briefing materials into Spanish
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 4

- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 5

- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 6

- Hold USAID/Panama and Embassy/PAS DOC Meeting to brainstorm on/develop final 6-month plan (months 7 to 12) for:
 - Media site visits
 - Interviews by USAID/Panama staff
 - Professional events, local venues, and talking points for staff speakers
 - “In-Reach” briefing sessions/brown bags
- Begin English-language website development
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 7

- Continue English-language website development
- Plan first USAID/Panama staff interview (1 per quarter)
- Plan first staff speech at professional event (1 per quarter)
- Begin drafting first “Telling our Story” narrative (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 8

- Finish English-language website development
- Conduct first USAID/Panama staff interview (1 per quarter)
- Give first staff speech at professional event (1 per quarter)
- Plan first staff speech at local venue (1 per quarter)
- Plan first “in-reach” briefing session/brown bag (1 per quarter)
- Finalize first “Telling our Story” narrative (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 9

- Translate website into Spanish
- Draft and disseminate first USAID/Panama DOC Quarterly Report
- Give first staff speech at local venue (1 per quarter)
- Hold first “in-reach” briefing session/brown bag (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)

- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 10

- Plan second USAID/Panama staff interview (1 per quarter)
- Plan second staff speech at professional event (1 per quarter)
- Begin drafting second “Telling our Story” narrative (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Update website (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 11

- Draft article on USAID/Panama activities for submission to FrontLines
- Plan first USAID/Panama semi-annual informal counterparts / partners meeting
- Conduct second USAID/Panama staff interview (1 per quarter)
- Give second staff speech at professional event (1 per quarter)
- Plan second staff speech at local venue (1 per quarter)
- Plan second “in-reach” briefing session/brown bag (1 per quarter)
- Finalize second “Telling our Story” narrative (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Update website (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Month 12

- Conduct first USAID/Panama semi-annual informal counterparts/partners meeting
- Review and update second USAID/Panama 12-month Communications Strategy
- Finalize article on USAID/Panama activities and submit to FrontLines
- Draft and disseminate second USAID/Panama DOC Quarterly Report
- Give second staff speech at local venue (1 per quarter)
- Hold second “in-reach” briefing session/brown bag (1 per quarter)
- Update DOC Calendar on shared drive (ongoing)
- Update DOC Online/Offline Library (ongoing)
- Update website (ongoing)
- Conduct media site visits (ongoing)
- Continue public events (ongoing)
- Continue project visits to collect outreach materials (ongoing)

Part II: Guidelines on Media Relations and Planning Public Events for USAID Cognizant Technical Officers, Contractors, and Grantees

USAID/Panama promotes media coverage of U.S. assistance programs in Panama to increase public understanding of, and support for, USAID goals and activities. USAID expects its implementing partners to also discuss, promote and attract positive publicity on our joint activities by planning public events and engaging local media, beneficiaries and officials from the host-country as well as officials from the USG.

These guidelines are intended to improve our coordination on media relations and public events related to U.S. assistance activities. They are not meant to hinder contractor/grantee media relations, but only to ensure that we maximize our public education efforts and coordinate our messages.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Given that contracts and grants include specific instructions regarding media interaction and communications products, we provide the following guidelines for dealing with the media that will help us better coordinate and monitor press coverage.

Interview with Foreign or Local Correspondents

USAID/Panama strongly encourages activity managers, contractors and grantees to keep local and foreign media well informed of assistance activities. We strongly urge contractors and grantees to inform the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) and the USAID/Panama Program Office when an American, foreign or national level media outlet request an interview regarding activities under a USAID contract or grant. We also request that you inform us when you are planning to publish an opinion piece discussing USG funded activities. USAID/Panama's Program Officer responsible for Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) activities is Nilka de Varela, who can be contacted at USAID/Panama at +507-208-1000 or email: nvarela@usaid.gov.

Our Program Officer in charge of DOC activities will then coordinate with the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS), as necessary. All USAID employees are also required to inform the Program Officer responsible for DOC activities on the above. You must limit your comments in the interview to the activities on which you are working. Any question involving U.S. foreign policy (i.e. "What does the U.S. think about the Panamanian government's economic reform program or the future of Panama?") should be politely declined, as these are questions that only an official representative of the Embassy may address. You may refer journalists to the Information Officer, William Ostick (phone: +507-207-7223, email: OstickWA@state.gov).

Attribution to USAID/USG

Given that contractors/grantees may be partially or wholly funded by the U.S. government through USAID, you must make it clear that you work on a contract/grant

for USAID and that funding for your activities comes from the U.S. Government. Please be aware that many contracts and grants require all publications and information products (brochures, studies, press releases, etc.) to contain specific mention of USAID funding. From standard provisions: ***USAID shall be prominently acknowledged in all publications, videos or other information/media products funded or partially funded through this award.*** For full text: <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/303maa.doc> The language included in contracts is even more specific for media contacts.

PUBLIC EVENTS

An effective method of attracting media coverage is involving the U.S. Ambassador, other USG representatives and host-country officials in public events, such as a press conferences, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, conferences, etc. USAID encourages our contractors and grantees to solicit the participation of officials as well as public opinion-makers in project-related events.

Guidelines for planning press events on USAID funded activities are presented below. Please note that events with high-level State Department, USAID, or other USG participation will require additional briefing materials and planning, as well as additional coordination time. This is due to the need to ensure that officials in attendance are properly prepared to represent the U.S., whether by giving formal or informal opening or other remarks, or responding to questions. This is the case even when media attention is not the primary purpose of inviting the official. Advance planning, within the time frames presented below, permits USAID to review plans and public information materials for public events, and to clear these materials with PAS, as required. It also allows us all to better share information on our activities.

All requests for the Ambassador or the USAID/Panama AIDREP participation in a public event regarding a USAID activity must be coordinated through the USAID/Panama Program Office. If the Ambassador is requested, the Program Office will coordinate with Embassy/PAS.

Public Events that do not involve official participation should be included on the USAID/Panama DOC Calendar of events. The implementer should coordinate on all public events with the USAID/Panama CTO and Program Office, who will coordinate with Embassy/PAS as necessary. Some events may warrant media coverage and a press release regardless of official participation. The implementers and the USAID/Panama Program Office will work together to highlight important events and developments to media through press releases/advisories or by pitching a story to a specific media outlet. USAID/Panama's comprehensive Communications Strategy will ensure that all activities receive coverage.

The following activities will allow us all to better prepare for high profile public events. Please provide the following briefing materials during the time frames indicated for all events involving USG officials and include all public events in the calendar regardless of official participation:

1. **Event Calendar**: **All entries to the event calendar (Annex B) should be made 14 days in advance of event.** Please provide the USAID/Panama CTO and Program Office with a monthly calendar of events involving all public activities or significant milestones, including ribbon cuttings, other ceremonies, and conferences sponsored or supported by the USG. Activity managers/contractors/grantees should update the calendar at least weekly via email. Please check that your proposed event does not coincide with other major local or national events that could affect coverage and attendance of your event. Send email updates to the USAID/Panama Program Office, who will coordinate with the Embassy PAS.
2. **Request for Official Participation**: **Ten days before for events involving senior State Dept. or other USG officials.** Please request participation of officials no later than the times presented above via email to the USAID/Panama Program Office and CTO. The email should contain the purpose of the event, the agenda, the date, the time, and the location of event, a list of expected participants as well as other speakers. Please indicate who will organize and control the event—USAID/implementers, local government or others.
3. **Press Materials**: **Five days before for events with high-level participation, four days for others events.** Prior to an event the implementer/CTO should draft the press release and, if requested, a press advisory that precedes the press releases and invites press for the event. The press release should answer the following fundamental questions: **Who? What? When? Why? Where?** The press release will have a release date at the top of the page and contact information. You may also want to include a quote from a beneficiary or official in a press release. If the PAS needs to invite media representatives in advance of the event, the Program Office will draft a press advisory based on press release and send it to the PAS, who will issue it and follow it up to confirm media participation. Those drafting press releases must specify if press advisories are necessary. If you need a sample press release or advisory, contact the Program Office.

The press release should be sent to the Program Office via email within the time frame indicated above, who will review it, coordinate with the contractor/grantee on any additional information needed, and provide the draft press release for final approval by the PAS. The PAS will be responsible for tracking edits to the press release and coordinating with the Program Office on final release, for translating press release, if necessary, and for disseminating the press release/advisory to all major media outlets. The Program Office will send the final press release to the implementing partner for handout at event and for sending it to LPA and the Desk.

Press kits should be prepared for all events with high-level participation. Press kits should contain: press release, fact sheet on USAID activity, brochures and contact information in Spanish. The Program Office will provide staff with press kits or coordinate with USAID staff and the implementer to produce press kits.

USAID implementers might have their own public education staffs that produce press kits.

4. Talking Points & Scene Setter: **Three to five days before event.**

Talking Points: Senior USAID/State Dept. or other USG officials should receive talking points five days in advance. The Program Office will be responsible for working with implementers/CTO to draft talking points. The Program Office will format and finalize talking points according to that official's preference. If you have questions about drafting the talking points, please contact the Program Office for examples.

Please check if the CTO needs talking points when the implementer invites CTOs to deliver a public address. Often, CTOs do not require talking points on the projects they manage.

The Scene Setter: The proposed scene setter will lay out the event step by step, stating who will speak in what order, what will happen (a document signing, ribbon cutting, diploma presentation) and who will do what (for example, who will present the documents in the signing books to the principals), who will interpret, and who will be sitting to the side or standing in back of the principals as part of the delegation, and who may take part in the event should questions arise. The scenario should be written by the organizers of the event and given to the Program Office, if USAID is not organizing it. The Program Office will be responsible for disseminating the scene setter to relevant officials.

Make sure you have informed the Program Office if an event involves a press conference and who is expected to be present.

5. **Media briefings: Five to 10 days before an event, if necessary.** A media briefing prior to the events can be a good way to educate the media on a specific topic related to your activities. If you are interested in organizing a media briefing, send an email to the Program Office requesting assistance in organizing the briefing. The media briefing should take place several days prior to event. Media briefings are most effective when the direct beneficiaries of our activities participate in the delivery of the message.
6. **Site or activity visits:** In addition to formal events, guided media visits are an effective way to publicize USAID activities and programs. Projects should consider media tours for significant milestones in a project's development. Media tours should be coordinated with the Program Office and Embassy PAS. Support materials will be similar to those listed above.