How to Tell Your Story:
Working with USAID Communications

November 17, 2022

OHA Communications Role

- Amplify USAID and **partner programming achievements** as we work towards sustainable control of HIV/AIDS

- **Find and create opportunities to collaborate with partners** to amplify and disseminate HIV/AIDS program work and achievements (i.e., webinars, social media, blogs, etc.)

- **Serve as the focal point for public affairs and communications**, working across USAID, with other U.S. government agencies, and **implementing partners**

OHA Comms External Activities

- Social media management
- Conferences and events
- Content creation: blogs, articles, social media toolkits, newsletters, USAID/OHA web pages
- Relationship building: partners, advocates, priority audiences

Contact us: OHA-Communications-Team@usaid.gov

Communications Tips and Resources

PEPFAR

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Branding & Marking

- Branding Manual sets the standard for all USAID communications produced by employees, contractors, grantees, and other partners

- "Branding Follows Funding," (i.e., logo placement (in order): PEPFAR, USAID, IP)

- [Branding and marking training](#)

https://www.usaid.gov/branding/gsm

Why Branding and Marking is Important

- The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 requires USAID-funded programs and program assets to be marked with our logo, which includes the seal, the brand name (USAID), and the tagline "From the American People."

- Branding helps raise awareness for USAID's presence around the world—and ensures transparency and accountability to host countries and American taxpayers. By branding USAID programs, everyone knows where the funds come from and what they support.

Writing Tips

Write for your audience (Government officials, USAID partners, USAID beneficiaries, advocates, etc.)
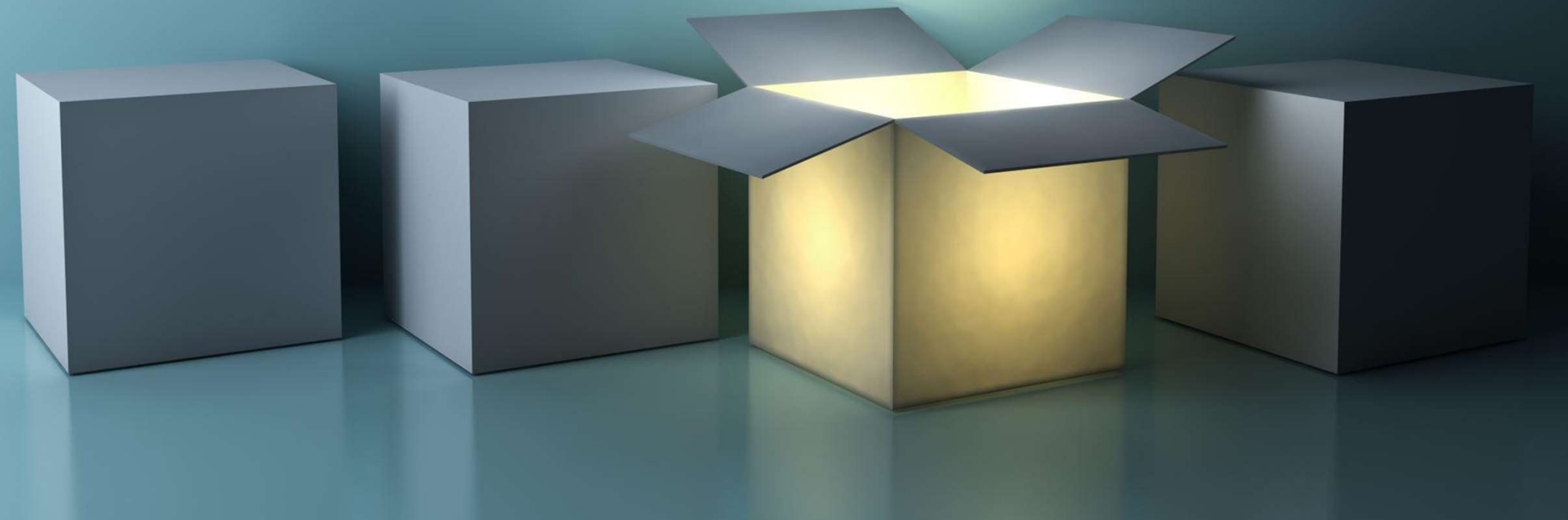
Reference the USAID style Guide

Avoid unexplained acronyms and jargon

Show the human impact

Reference USAID's storytelling guidelines

REPACKAGE YOUR CONTENT

START WITH 1 PIECE OF CONTENT ➤ **INTERVIEW A BENEFICIARY**

1. Write a **success story** to submit to USAID

2. Include in a **text box in your next report.**

3. Write a **press release** and submit to local media outlets.

4. Record the **interview on video (or just audio)** and **insert a clip in your next report** or share in your next meeting with the donor.

5. Take some **photos** at the interview to include in your success story, in reports, and as a social media post (in accordance with your specific agreement/contract).

6. Pull quotes from interview and **share on social media.**

7. Add a **snippet to your newsletter** and link to it your website/blog.

CONSIDER LOCAL LANGUAGES

Offer translation for interviews to **allow interviewees to respond in the language they are most comfortable speaking.**

Be sure to **translate accurately** in your final piece.

Photo Tips

- Clear, well-focused, and high-resolution photographs.
- At least 1800 pixels wide is recommended
- Images should be well composed and relevant to the story
- Signed consent forms are required for all photos, videos, and stories.
- Avoid photos of minors faces
- [Photo guide for USAID partners](#)

This is a clear, well-focused, and interesting photograph.

This is an unclear and uninteresting photograph.

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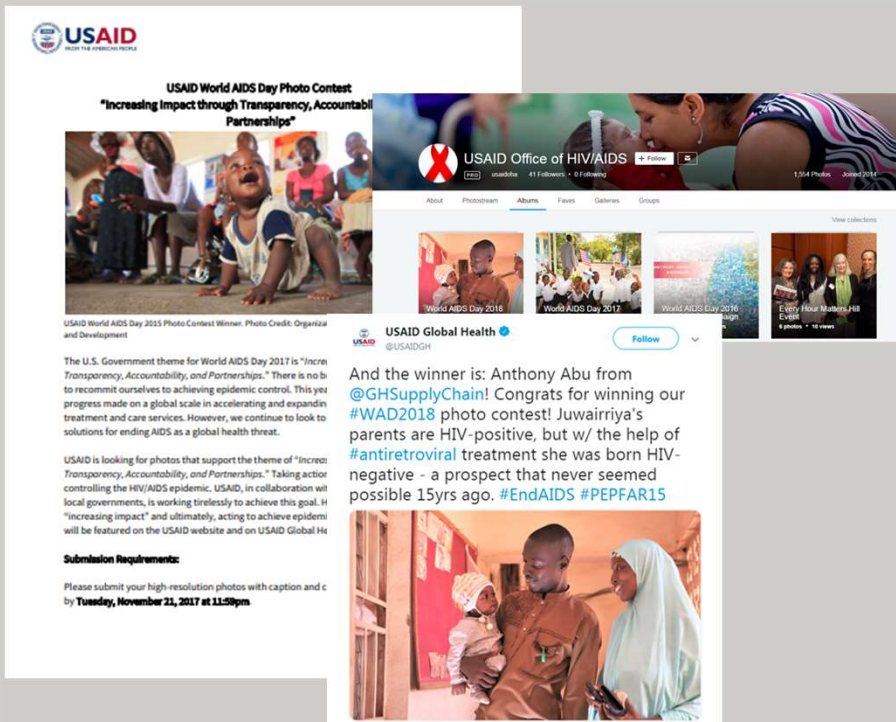
Examples from USAID OHA partners

Photo Inventory

- Send us your program photos!
  - Photo Contest
  - Social Media graphics

*Hi-Res, w/ caption, **proper credit** (Photographer Name/Organization), and **photo release forms** from each individual photographed

Rule of
Thirds

Don't automatically put your subject in the center of every photo.

PHOTO: MORGANA WINGARD FOR USAID

PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA FOR USAID

PHOTO: DOUGLAS GRITZMACHER FOR USAID

PHOTO: MORGANA WINGARD FOR USAID

THE IMPORTANCE OF
CONSENT & DISCLOSURES

GET PERMISSION BEFORE YOU START

WRITTEN, PHOTO, & VIDEO

A **signed USAID or donor disclosure form** is due for all video and photos of beneficiaries, as well as for written interviews and quotes.

Protects the interviewee, your organization, and the U.S. government.

The form must be offered in the language the individual can read.

An **English version** of the form is available on the USAID website and **additional languages** are available through country Mission offices.

GIVE CLARITY & *GET* PERMISSION

1. **Be up front** about where the photo, video, or interview could *potentially* be published.

2. **Allow the person the opportunity to say no.**

3. **Be sure they can read and understand** the disclosure form.

4. **Get the form signed.**

5. **Keep** the form on file.

Communications Platforms

Story Platforms

- **USAID Medium Blog (22K followers)**
  - Medium has 600- to 800-word blogs with two to three photos.
  - Human interest stories are preferred for this platform.
  - **Example:** In Their Own Words: Three of Nigeria's Health Care Heroes Relive a Year of COVID-19 Care

- **USAID Exposure Page**
  - Exposure is an external online storytelling platform that USAID uses to post compelling photo essays. Exposure focuses heavily on photos.
  - 12-20 professional high-quality photos that tell a story showing the human impact of USAID's work.
  - **Example:** Peers Breaking Down Barriers to Care
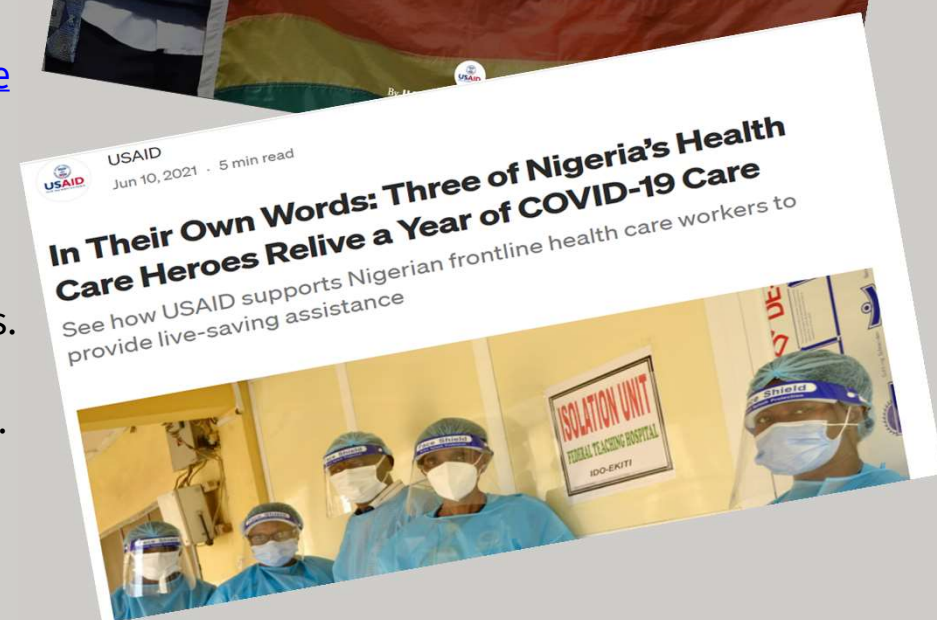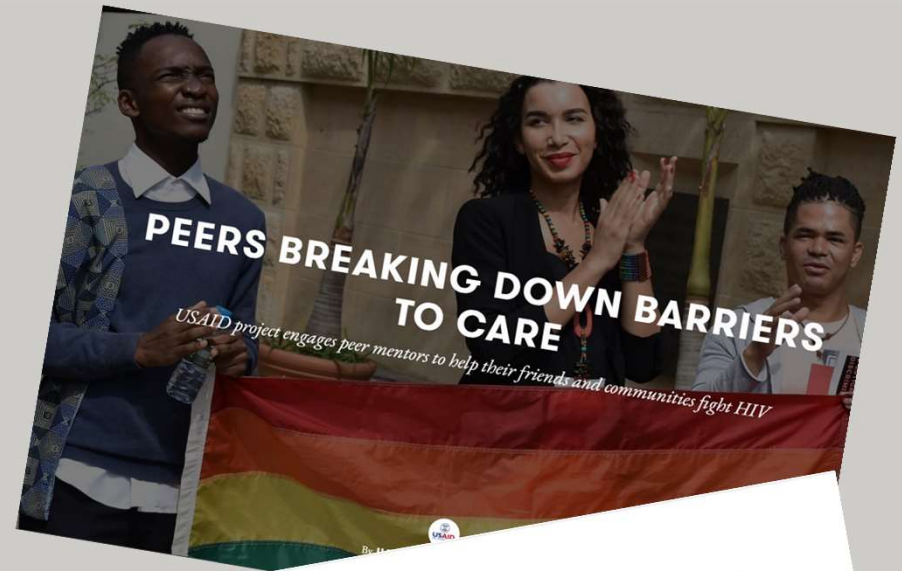
Story Platforms

- ## OHA Blog
    - The OHA blog shares how USAID demonstrates its leadership in advancing HIV epidemic control.
    - Should have 600 to 800 words (similar to Medium, with two or three images), but can be more technical in nature since it lives on the OHA web pages of the USAID.gov site.
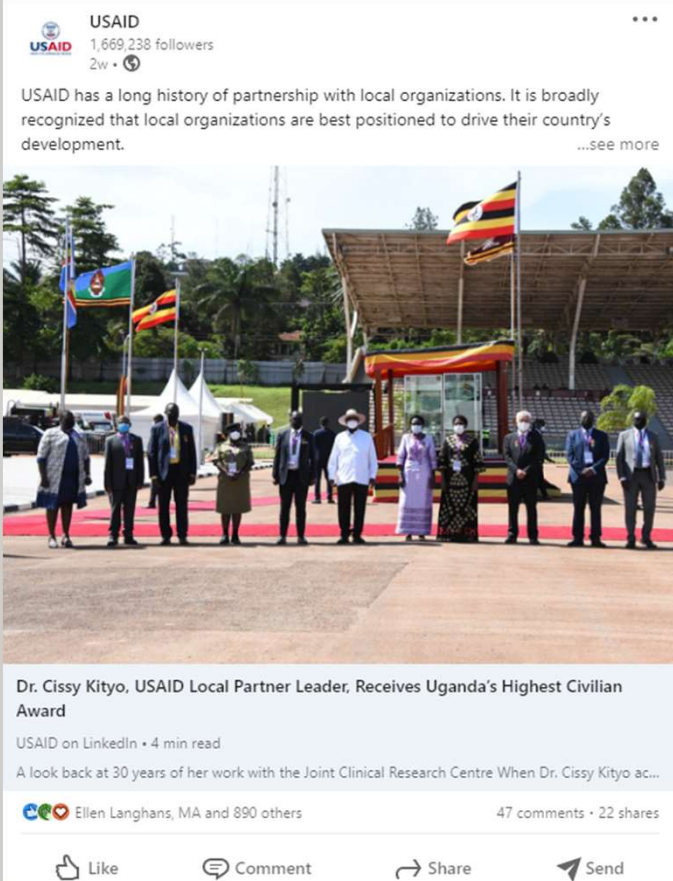   - Blogs should use plain language.
    - **Example:** Propelling Change

- ## USAID's Storytelling Hub
    - USAID's Storytelling Hub is an award-winning immersive multimedia platform that showcases human-centered stories about USAID's work.
    - Should have a professional, high-quality human-interest video accompanied with professional photos.
    - **Example:** Maggie Reaches for her DREAMS

Story Platforms

- **USAID LinkedIn** (2M followers)
    - External blogging platform with a professional audience that includes USAID staff, partners, members of the development community, and the general public.
    - 600- to 800-word blogs with two to three photos.
    - These blogs can be a bit more technical in nature (more about USAID programs and staff) as LinkedIn is primarily used for professional networking.
    - **Example:** Dr. Cissy Kityo, USAID local partner leader, receives Uganda's highest civilian award

Note to Implementing Partners Newsletter

- Sent monthly from OHA Director
  - Share USAID/OHA headquarters news, updates, tools and resources; partner stories and successes; and communications campaigns
  - 750+ members and growing

Social Media Landscape

GH Channels:
- @USAIDGH Twitter (220K+Followers)
- USAIDGH Facebook (200K followers)

Agency channels:
- @USAID Twitter (913K)
- USAID Facebook (1M)
- USAID YouTube (19K)
- USAID Instagram (366K)

Social Media Tips

- Tag @USAIDGH and @PEPFAR in your post
- If possible, include language such as "Through @PEPFAR and @USAIDGH"
- Always use "people living with HIV" instead of HIV patients.
- Use "life-saving treatment" when referring to ARVs.
- Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) type posts perform very well on social media. For example, "People living with HIV who are virally suppressed cannot sexually transmit the virus to others."
- Importantly, use plain language whenever possible - avoid jargon and acronyms.

Facebook

Create short posts

- <250 characters = 60% more engagement. More than 477 characters = "see more…"

ALWAYS use visuals

- Visually appealing photos increases engagement by 4x.

Use videos

- Videos get 59% more engagement than other posts.
- Caption videos. 86% of users watch on mute.

Facebook

Tag. Don't hashtag

- Tag organization with @ at beginning (FB pages have official names)
- Hashtags not proven effective on Facebook

USAID Global Health
September 1 at 12:04 PM ·

Gloria Samuel works around the clock running a medicines dispensary in Kebbi State in northwest Nigeria, an area of the country with the highest prevalence of malaria in children under 5. Her dispensary is hard to access due to impassable roads so medicines are often delivered by animal transport. To help her know when it is time to reorder malaria supplies so that she always has the medicines she needs to treat her patients and save lives, Gloria uses a logistics system supp... **See more**

Twitter

Create short messages
- 280 character limit. Shorter = better.

Use visuals

Use 1 or 2 hashtags
- Two or less can double engagement.

Add links last in message
- Links take up 20 characters

USAID ✓ @USAID · Jan 30
Partnership makes the #DevJourney possible! 👏

We partner across sectors such as:
📖 education
💧 #WASH
🍎 nutrition

This has helped 1.3 billion people receive medicines to fight neglected tropical diseases. #BeatNTDs

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Awareness Days

- International Day of the Girl: October 11, 2022
- World Children's Day: Nov 20, 2022
- International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women: November 25, 2022
- 16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence: November 25 - December 10, 2022
- World AIDS Day: December 1, 2022
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities: December 3, 2022
- PEPFAR Anniversary: January 28, 2023
- International Women's Day: March 8, 2023
- World Social Work Day: March 21, 2023
- World Health Worker Week: April 2- 8, 2023
- HIV Vaccine Awareness Day: May 18, 2023