USAID/Vietnam Media and Event Planning Guidelines

USAID/Vietnam promotes media coverage of U.S. assistance programs in Vietnam 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 for our joint activities by planning public events and engaging local media, beneficiaries, and officials from the host-country and U.S. government. These guidelines are intended to improve our coordination of media relations and public events related to U.S. assistance activities. They are not meant to hinder contractor/grantee media relations, but rather 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 would like to propose the following guidelines for dealing with the media in order to help us better coordinate and monitor press coverage.

Interviews with Foreign or Local Correspondents

The USAID Mission strongly encourages activity managers, contractors, and grantees to keep local and foreign media well-informed about assistance activities. We suggest that contractors and grantees inform the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) and the Mission's Development Outreach and Communications Advisor (DOC) when an American, foreign, or national level media outlet requests 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 U.S. government funded activities. The DOC, Richard Nyberg, can be contacted at the Mission, 935-1249, or at lhamilton@usaid.gov. The DOC will then coordinate with the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer (PAO) or Public Information Officer (PIO) as necessary. All USAID employees are also required to inform the DOC about any of the above.

You must limit your comments in the interview to the activities you are working on. Any question involving U.S. foreign policy (for example, "What does the United States think about the Vietnamese government's economic reform program or the future of Vietnam?") should be politely declined, as these are questions that only an official representative of the Embassy can address. You may refer journalists to the PAO or PIO in Dakar.

Attribution to USAID/U.S. Government

Given that contractors and 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 or 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. Standard provisions state: "USAID shall be prominently acknowledged in all publications, videos or other information/media products funded or partially funded through this award." For the full text go to http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303maa.pdf. The language included in contracts is even more specific for media contacts.

Public Events

Involving the U.S. Ambassador, other U.S. government representatives, and host country officials in public events, such as a press conference, ribbon-cutting ceremony, or conference, is an effective method for attracting media coverage. 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 U.S. government participation will require additional briefing materials, planning, and coordination time. This is due to the need to ensure that officials in attendance are properly prepared to represent the United States, whether by giving a formal or informal opening, making remarks, or responding to questions. This is the case even when media attention is not the primary purpose for 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 the PAO as required. It also allows us all to better share information about our activities. All requests for the Ambassador or Mission Director's participation in a public event regarding a USAID activity must be coordinated through the DOC in the USAID Mission. If the Ambassador is requested, the DOC will coordinate the appearance with the PAO.

Public events that do not involve official participation should be included on the USAID Mission calendar of events. The implementer should coordinate all public events with the CTO and DOC, who in turn will coordinate with the PAO/PIO as necessary. Some events may warrant media coverage and a press release regardless of official participation. The implementers and DOC will work together to highlight important events and developments to media through press releases and advisories or by pitching a story to a specific media outlet.

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

1. Event Calendar

All entries to calendar should be made 14 days in advance of event.

Please provide the CTO and DOC with a monthly calendar of events highlighting all public activities or significant milestones, including ribbon cuttings, other ceremonies, and conferences sponsored or supported by the U.S. government. Activity managers, contractors, and grantees should update the calendar at least weekly via email. Please check that your event does not coincide with other major local or national events that could affect coverage and attendance at your event. Send email updates to lhamilton@usaid.gov.

2. Request for Official Participation

Requests should be made two weeks before events involving senior State Department or other U.S. government officials.

Please request participation by officials via email to the DOC and CTO no later than the times presented above. The email should contain the purpose of the event, the agenda; the date, time, and location of event; and a list of expected participants, as well as other speakers. Please indicate who will organize and control the event (for example, USAID, implementers, or Government of Vietnam).

3. Press Materials

Have these ready five days before events with high level participation, four days before other events.

Prior to an event, the implementer or CTO should draft a press release and, if necessary, draft media advisories (which precede press releases and invite press) for the event. The press release should answer the following fundamental questions: Who, what, when, where, and why? The press release will have a release date as well as contact information. You may also want to include a quote from a beneficiary or official in a press release. If the PIO/PAO needs to invite media representatives in advance of the event, the DOC will draft a press advisory based on the press release and send it to the PIO/PAO, who will issue it and help to follow up and confirm media participation. Those drafting press releases must specify if a media advisory is necessary. If you need a sample press release or media advisory, contact the DOC or visit the mission web site: http://vietnam.usaid.gov/.

The press release should be sent to the DOC via email within the time frame indicated above. The DOC will then review, coordinate with the contractor or grantee regarding any additional information needed, and finalize draft press release. The draft will be sent to the PAO/PIO for final approval. The PIO/PAO will be responsible for tracking press release edits and coordinating with the DOC on the final release, translating the press release if necessary, and disseminating the press release or advisory to all major media outlets. The DOC will send the final press release

to the implementing partner to be handed out at the event, post the press release on the Mission's web site, and send the press release to LPA and the Desk Officer. Press kits should be prepared for all events with high-level participation. The press kits should contain a press release, a fact sheet on USAID activity, brochures, and contact information. The DOC will provide staff with press kits or coordinate with USAID staff and the implementer to produce press kits. USAID implementers often have their own public education staff members who produce press kits.

4. Talking Points and Scenario

Provide talking points and scenario a week before the event.

Senior USAID/State Department or other U.S. government officials should receive talking points five days in advance of the event. The DOC will be responsible for working with implementers or CTO to draft talking points. The DOC will format and finalize talking points according to that official's preference. If you have questions about drafting the talking points, please contact the DOC for examples.

When implementers are inviting CTOs to deliver a public address, please check if they need talking points. Often CTOs do not require talking points on the projects they manage.

The proposed scenario 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, etc.), who will do what (for example, who will present the documents in the signing books to the principals), who will interpret, 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 out by the event organizers and given to the DOC if USAID is not organizing the event. The DOC will be responsible for disseminating the scenario to relevant officials.

Make sure you have informed the DOC if the event involves a press conference, who is expected to be present, and who is responsible for inviting the media.

5. Media Briefings

If one is necessary, a briefing should be put together seven to 10 days before an event.

A media briefing can be a good way to educate the media on a specific topic related to your activities prior to the event. If you are interested in organizing a media briefing, send an email to the DOC requesting assistance in organizing the briefing. The briefing should take place several days prior to event. Media briefings are most effective when the direct beneficiaries of USAID's activities deliver them in conjunction with others.