

## **USAID Branding Initiative: Redefining the Image of America**

### **BACKGROUND:**

USAID was officially established in 1961, though its roots and our nation's foreign assistance date back to the Marshall Plan. Although it is headquartered in Washington, D.C., this federal agency is charged with providing humanitarian and economic assistance overseas. USAID has "missions," with U.S. "direct hire" American staff in more than 80 countries, but provides aid to more than 150 countries in the developing world when counting "non-presence" countries (with only local hire staff).



There are approximately 8,000 USAID employees around the world with only 10 percent based in Washington. More than half of the staff is Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs). Mission Directors are the "field commanders" leading operations overseas. Unlike the State Department, who has oversight for the Agency (the Administrator reports directly to the Secretary of State), USAID is historically a very decentralized organization, with each mission developing its own strategies, aid programs, materials, communications, and unique identity: focused on appealing to the host-country citizens and their local culture.

Although an Agency logo was available on the website, missions were using various adaptations developed over time, and the logo alone was not communicating an effective message. There were no official graphic standards for the programs, projects, activities, public communications, or commodities being produced with the Agency's \$14 billion budget.

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**

**The over arching goal was to increase the visibility and value of U.S. foreign assistance.**

To accomplish this the following overall objectives would need to be met:

- Bring to life the Agency's unique positioning/differentiate from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other bilateral donors
- Improve impact and consistency of communications across bureaus, sectors, and missions
- Increase positive perceptions of the US among host-country nationals

### **AUDIENCE:**

The initial audience for the new organizational identity and graphic standards was the senior leadership and employees of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). They needed to embrace the new concept of global standards and adopt them. Hundreds of contractors, hired to design and manage aid programs, were key to execution; they needed to stop including their own logo on the U.S. government-funded work, creating misperceptions in the marketplace. Ultimately, and over time, our government needs to enhance perceptions of the United States among people in the developing world, who receive our aid.

## **CREATIVE STRATEGIES:**

The need was clear from the start that USAID not only needed to produce a graphic standards manual—to ensure global consistency among missions and contractors—but also create a new “identity” and a campaign to “brand” foreign assistance.

USAID maintained, but updated, the Agency’s logo (to make it easier to read and reproduce) as it had equity, especially what then Secretary of State Colin Powell called, “Our famous handshake.” Most importantly, a brand name or landmark, **USAID**, was added to the logo differentiating U.S. foreign aid from Japanese aid or assistance from any other donor. And, a tagline that clearly communicates their unique positioning: “**FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.**” Together, these form the USAID Standard Graphic Identity. The new USAID landmark is a bold graphic that delivers a powerful message, especially when applied in local languages to markings on aid packages and other forms of communication.

USAID began the branding process with a presentation to the Agency’s senior leadership at a worldwide Mission Director’s conference; building a giant wall of completely inconsistent communications, that showcased USAID did NOT speak with one voice, nor could they even find their voice. Creative sessions with key staff were held to develop the new identity. To extend buy-in across their global network, design concepts were field-tested with nearly 600 employees responding to the web-based survey.

The 94-page comprehensive Graphic Standards Manual JDG designed details proper use of the USAID Identity, standard typography and color palette, examples of brand applications across all media, publications hierarchy and grid, and desired photographic images. It was distributed worldwide with branding kits that included a message from the Administrator and the USAID Identity on banners, pins, hats, mouse pads, and stickers to mark commodities they fund like computers. A PowerPoint presentation was included to explain the new campaign to staff as well as a CD with all graphic files and a series of templates to standardize common communications like press releases, country profiles, and success stories. All branded materials are available online at [www.usaid.gov/branding](http://www.usaid.gov/branding).

The online branding resource center is a well-organized clearinghouse for all digital files related to branding anything that represents, and is produced by, USAID, its grantees and its contractors. The resource center provides all necessary logo artwork for each of the more than 80 mission-specific brands and digital templates to assist all staff and contractors in the creation of “self-serve” but brand-compliant communications. The extraordinarily detailed, 94-page Graphic Standards Manual has since become the working reference for development of all USAID professionally produced communication products. Creation and distribution of this manual and these electronic templates has resulted in a consistent brand for USAID across all points of contact, around the world.

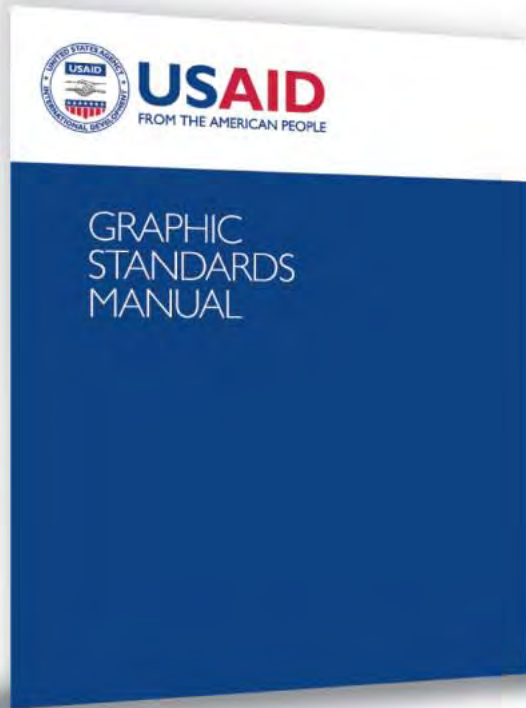
## **RESULTS:**

There has been 100 percent compliance with the new brand standards from their global network. All USAID Bureaus and Missions have appointed “brand champions” and are following the guidelines in the Manual. The new USAID Identity is required to “mark” all programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities. It is being used consistently on everything from business cards to brochures, even their famous sacks of food aid.

There is now global consistency. Brand Confusion is no longer an issue; contractors are not permitted to use their logo on USAID projects. The new landmark and tagline make it clear their assistance is from American taxpayers, not an NGO.

Clear evidence of the new visibility and value of foreign aid came during the Tsunami, the first time the new branding was used publicly. According to a State Department study, in 2004, favorable opinions of the U.S. were at record lows in many Muslim countries. But, in early 2005, favorability of the U.S. nearly doubled in Indonesia (from 37 to 66 percent) thanks to the massive delivery of—for the first time—“well branded” US aid. A Pew Research study confirms this; “Positive opinions of the U.S. in Indonesia, which had plummeted to as low as 15 percent in 2003, also have rebounded to 38 percent. The U.S. tsunami aid effort has been widely hailed there; 79 percent of Indonesians say they have a more favorable view of the U.S. as a result of the relief efforts.”

USAID Mission Director for Indonesia Bill Frei summarized the impact of our campaign this way, “The people of Aceh (Indonesia) saw the branding; they knew right away the U.S. government was responding. That absolutely had a major impact on their perception of the U.S. Without the branding, USAID would have been just one of 550 NGOs working in the area. I think our new global branding is a major foreign policy achievement.”



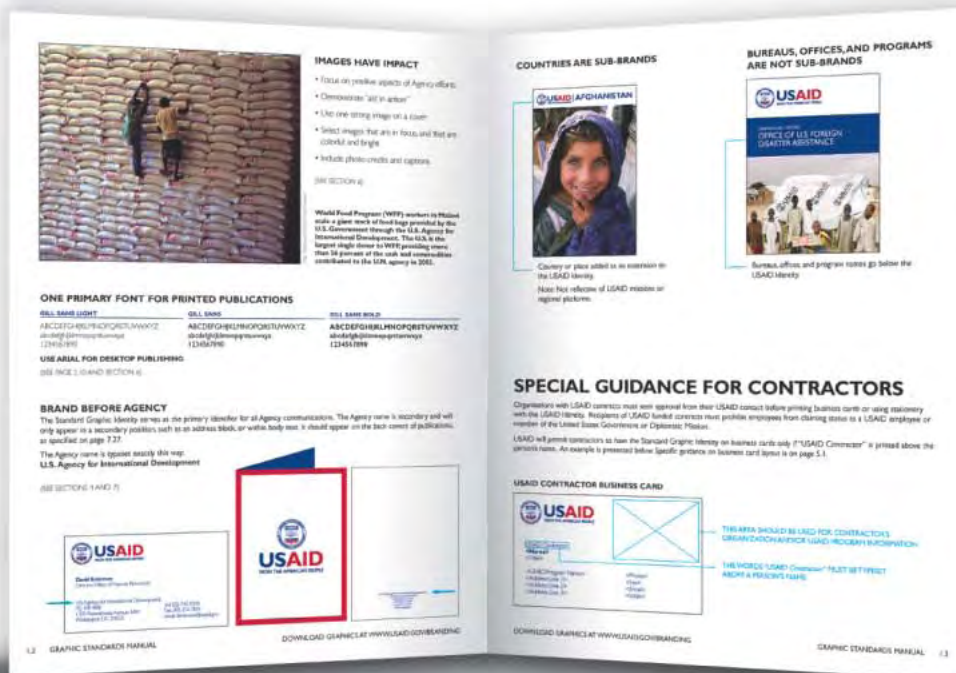
## INTRODUCING GRAPHIC STANDARDS

USAID employs thousands of people around the world, and those thousands are supported by tens of thousands of contractors. USAID has a presence in more than 80 countries and it communicates with the governments, businesses and citizens of those countries on a daily basis in a wide variety of ways.

Prior to JDG's development of a detailed and thorough USAID Graphic Standards Manual there was no consistent way for employees or contractors to communicate with the public or each other.

JDG considered and created standards for nearly every aspect of communication. JDG developed basic standards such as color and typography, guidance for photography, and rules for brand and co-brand usage, as well as graphic standards for stationery items, correspondence, brochures and reports, exhibits, vehicles, on-air graphics, event branding and uniforms.

JDG also worked with USAID to create an *online* branding resource center where users can download thousands of useful files, including country-specific logos and pre-formatted templates for typical documents.



## UPDATED LOGO

The updated USAID logo has improved readability, reproduction quality and overall clarity.

The previous logo was often hard to read, especially in a small size or at a distance and sometimes difficult to reproduce, especially the famous handclasp. The updates to the logo below increase readability and improve reproduction quality. A new landmark was also added to enhance the overall communication. The Agency logo is a powerful symbol of hope for millions of people around the world.

### BEFORE



The United States Agency for International Development text wrapped in a 360° circle, which made it difficult to read.

### AFTER



In the updated logo, the "United States Agency" and "International Development" text is right reading.

### SERIF FONT



The serif font was difficult to read and reproduce at many sizes.

### SANS SERIF FONT



The sans serif font is easy to read and reproduce at any size. This example is shown for reference

### OLD HANDCLASP



The handclasp was difficult to understand and reproduce at most sizes.

### UPDATED HANDCLASP



The updated handclasp is easy to understand and reproduce at any size. This example is shown for reference only.



Original 1948 design was adapted from the Great Seal. "For European Recovery Supplied by the United States of America" was translated into the languages of the recipient countries



In 1953, Eleanor Gault discovered that "clasped hands" have been recognized as a sign of unity, goodwill, and cooperation for centuries



In the early 1990s, a completely new logo was developed. This image was viewed as too radical a change, and it was soon rejected.



The Agency returned to the shield in the mid-1990s. Color was removed from the handclasp to ensure no specific race was identified.



In 2001, the Agency seal with a circle around the shield was adopted as the official marking.



The logo was updated in 2004 to make it easier to read and reproduce. A brand name and tagline were added to ensure people understand the assistance is provided by U.S. taxpayers.

## BRAND APPLICATIONS

Some of the most important branding opportunities are those that are seen at the point of aid delivery, such as on project signage at places like schools, power plants, water treatment plants, hospitals and new roads.

Other important branding opportunities include diplomatic and media events within a host country, project launches and on vehicles used to deliver assistance.



## BRANDING RELIEF AND ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian and relief aid is one of the most visible forms of communication. The examples shown on this page communicate a clear and consistent message to aid recipients and the world.

