FINAL REPORT

Sister Cities International's

Community Connector

October 28, 2009

Honorary Chairman – President of the United States
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Report content based on direction of grant CTO, Thomas Carter, USAID

I. Statement of the problem/s addressed

NGOs, nonprofits, and other civil or religious organizations devote considerable time to searching for and securing resources to support their activities. While monetary funding is often the most flexible and desired form of support, physical resources as well as expertise or training are often just as needed, and can lead to further opportunities for the organization. This need for physical resources and expertise is most pronounced among small nonprofits, who unfortunately are also the least likely to be able to devote time and energy to searching for and soliciting much needed donations.

On the other hand, some small nonprofits, particularly religious and civil organizations, might lack financial resources but are quite active in charitable donations of time or donated goods. However, they may find it difficult to find recipients who would properly benefit. The donated goods might be unneeded locally, yet the nonprofit would not have the capacity to solicit recipients beyond the usual word-of-mouth. Often these materials may end up in a place where they are of little or no use.

Sister Cities International worked to address two fundamental problems for nonprofits that are donating or soliciting materials:

1. Some nonprofits wish to donate goods or services, but cannot find reliable organizations whose specific needs would make the donations most effective.
2. Some nonprofits do not have the capacity to do a wide-ranging search for potential donors to support their activities.

In partnership with the USAID Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI), Sister Cities International utilized its long history of twinning cities and projects to develop Community Connector (www.sister-cities.org/c2), a website designed to serve as a resource for small nonprofits that wish to identify and contact potential donors or recipients.

II. Specific objectives of the project stated in clearly measurable terms (i.e. stated in such a way that a group of naive observers would agree that they had/had not been achieved.

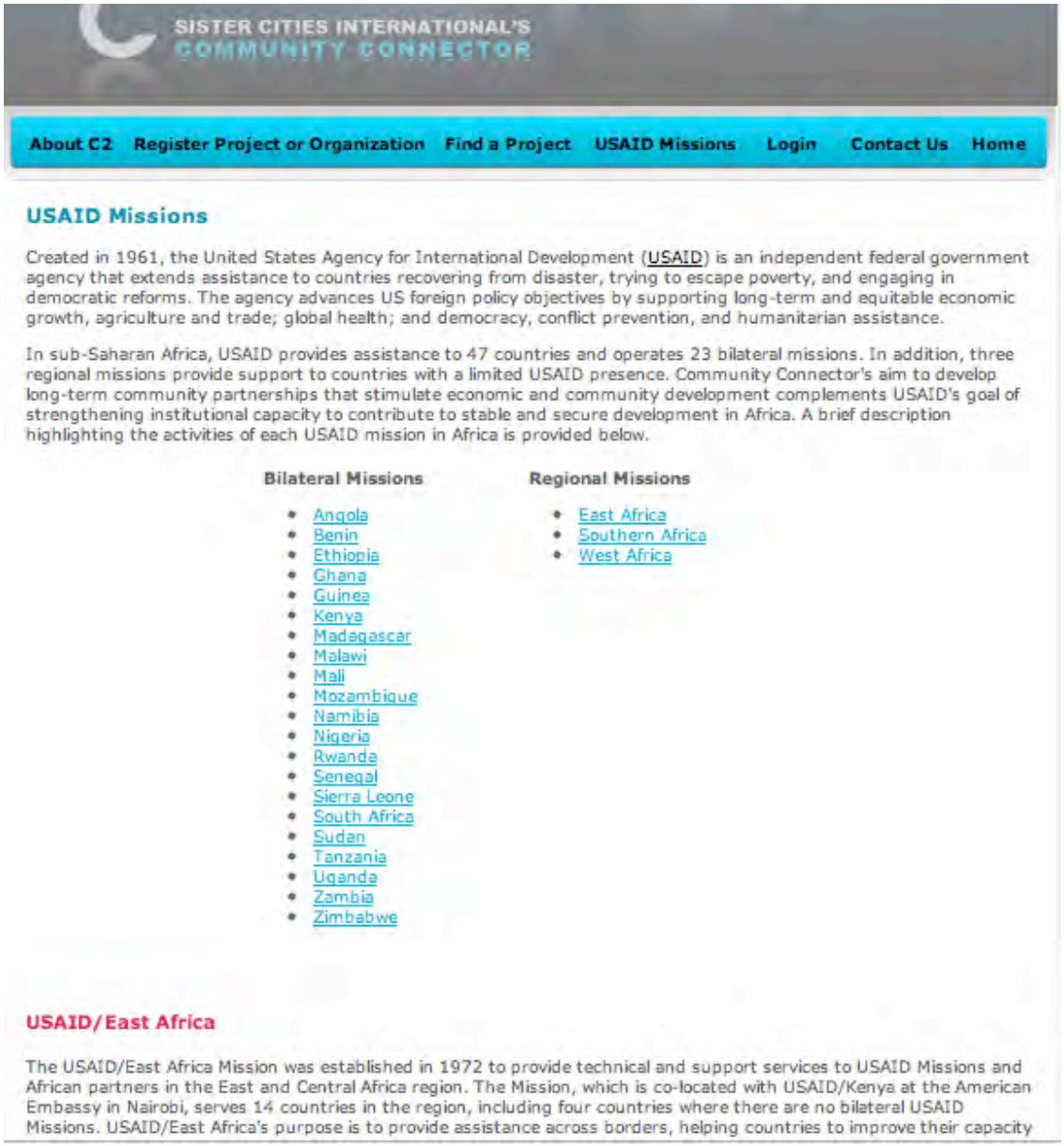
Community Connector (C2) was designed and developed to address four major objectives:

1. Design an easy to use online resource to match aid with communities in need.
2. Create a resource for international communities to identify the needs of their community.
3. Accurately and efficiently vet and verify organizations requesting support.
4. Pilot the project from search through delivery of aid to communities in South Africa.

III. Description of the strategy undertaken to achieve each objective

Sister Cities International's strategy for developing C2 was based on three stages: design, development, and post-production review and revision. Given that the primary users would be nonprofits with limited capacity and perhaps less experience with online tools, the guiding principles for each stage were simplicity, flexibility, and ease of use.

The website's initial design called for a searchable database that would allow nonprofits to post profiles of their organization and projects, including resource needs, and would allow users to browse the postings by different criteria. Potential donors would then be able to contact the nonprofit to begin the dialogue that would result in the transmission of aid. The site would also serve to inform users of USAID's activities in a particular country (see screenshot).



http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/usaidmissions.cfm

To prepare, Sister Cities International performed a review of some current websites which link donors and recipients, such as Global Giving, Razoo, and Heifer International for best practices, potential ideas, and to avoid redundancy.

Organizations that post project profiles would have to be reputable organizations in good standing and organizations soliciting resources would be prohibited from soliciting direct financial support. The site was designed to anticipate a wide range of requests for resources (medical, educational, technological) yet accurately categorize requests and still be searchable. It would need to include an effective means of initiating communication between potential donors and recipients while maintaining privacy.

Sister Cities International anticipated that after an initial version of the site came out that revisions would have to be made to account for unexpected problems as well as to allow improvements in functionality and design after an initial pilot stage. A former Senior Software Engineer with significant experience in testing and verifying new software was brought to Sister Cities International to provide additional oversight and recommendations for improvement of functionality.

The vetting process also faced significant challenges. Because C2 is designed to reach out to nonprofits that might not be large or well-known, the vetting process would have to include the use of resources beyond Sister Cities International's institutional capacity. It was decided early on that other verification/vetting sources, such as USAID missions, local sister city programs abroad, or other nonprofits such as Guidestar would be utilized to help in this objective.

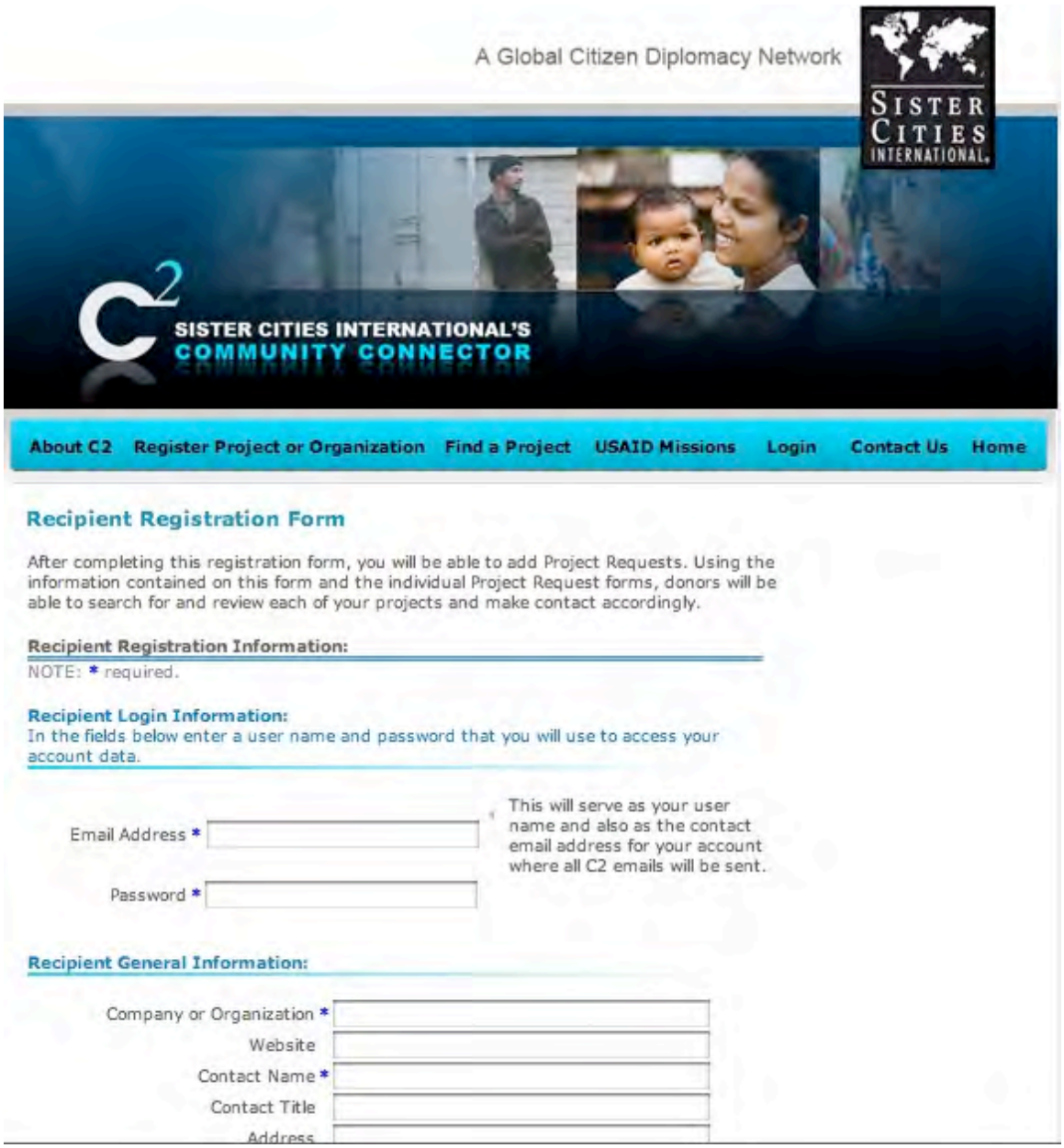
Lastly, Sister Cities International had to reach out to organizations and encourage them to use C2. For this Sister Cities International utilized not only its own worldwide network of members and partners, but also contacts from USAID missions, the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Sister Cities International's global network of communities, and religious or civil associations which could reach out to their members.

IV. Success/or otherwise of attempts to achieve each objective

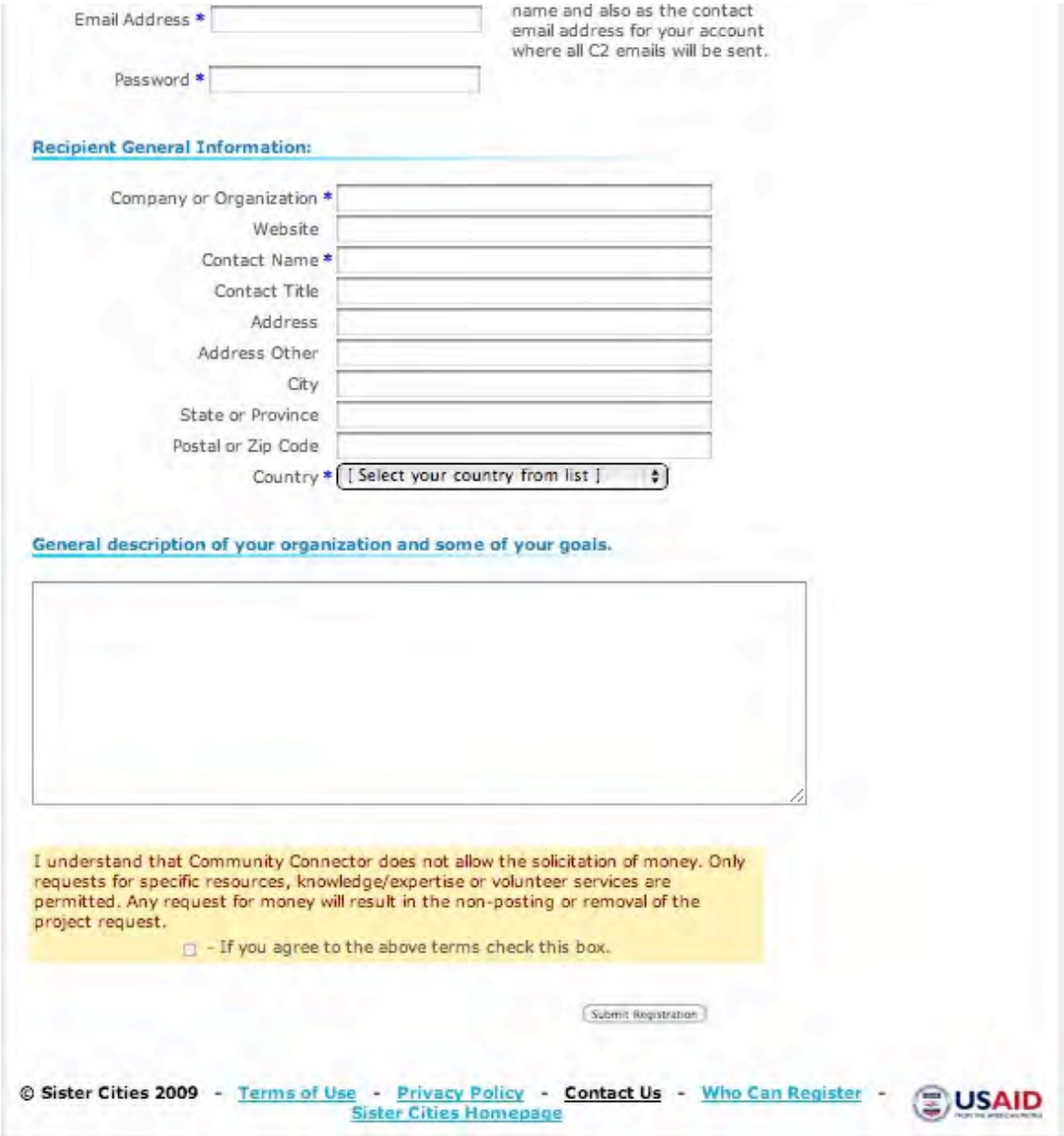
1) Design an easy to use online resource to match aid with communities in need
The design of C2 ensured that the website was easy to use, efficient, and allowed users to both post and search for requests for resources. The homepage (see screenshot) provides users with the option to read more about C2, register as a recipient or donor, search for projects, find out information on USAID mission activities, log in, or contact Sister Cities International.

http://www.sister-cities.org/c2

Users who click on "Register Project or Organization" are first prompted to choose between being a recipient or donor, after which they fill out a basic information page (see screenshots).



http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/register_Recipient.cfm



Email Address *

name and also as the contact email address for your account where all C2 emails will be sent.

Password *

Recipient General Information:

Company or Organization *
Website
Contact Name *
Contact Title
Address
Address Other
City
State or Province
Postal or Zip Code
Country * [Select your country from list]

General description of your organization and some of your goals.

I understand that Community Connector does not allow the solicitation of money. Only requests for specific resources, knowledge/expertise or volunteer services are permitted. Any request for money will result in the non-posting or removal of the project request.

- If you agree to the above terms check this box.

Submit Registration

© Sister Cities 2009 - Terms of Use - Privacy Policy - Contact Us - Who Can Register - Sister Cities Homepage

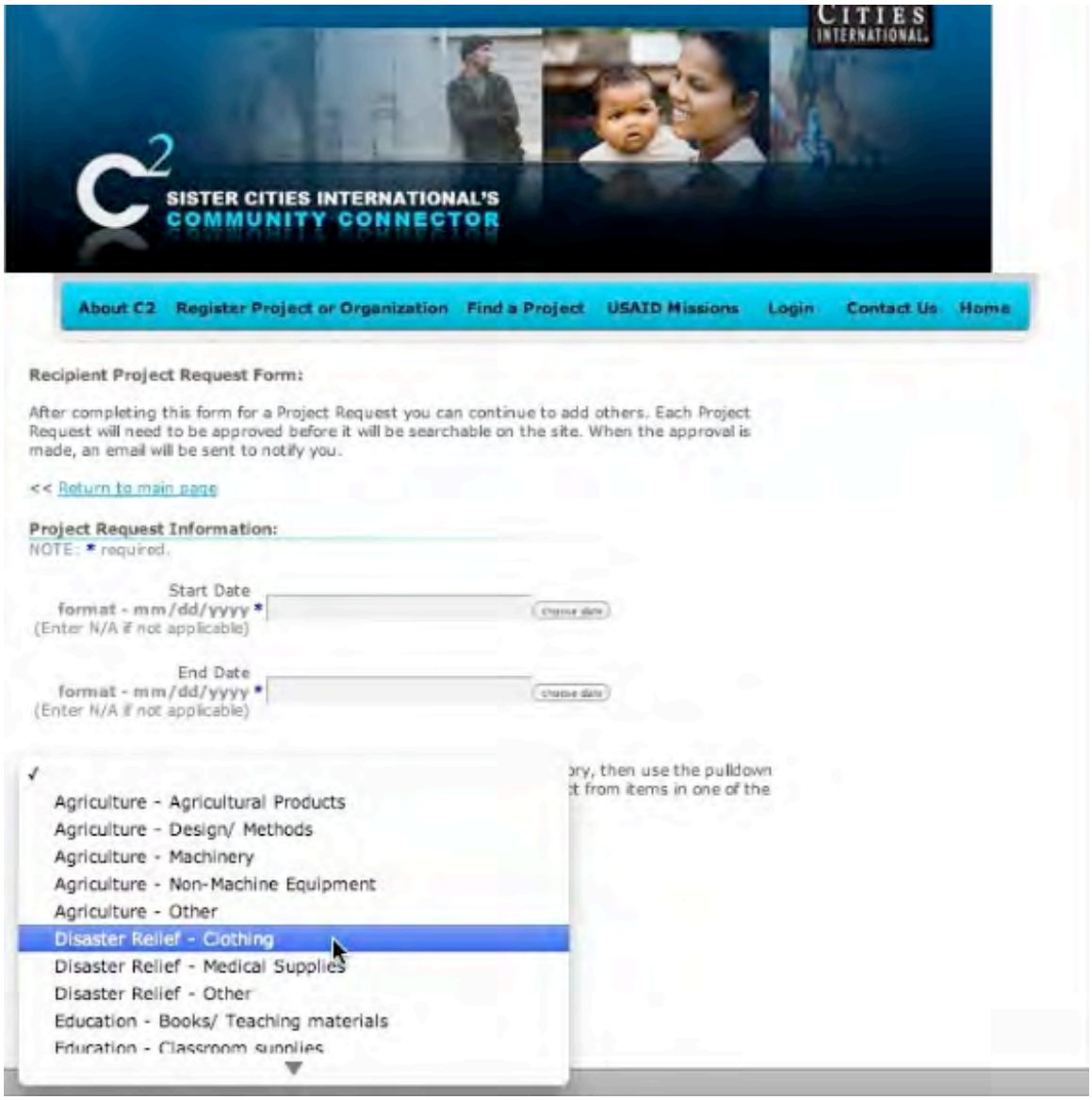
USAID

http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/register_Recipient.cfm

In order to make the process as quick and easy as possible, only email (which doubles as username), password, organization, contact name, and country are required. Registrants then describe their organization and its goals, which appears on every project request that is created by said organization. After initial registrants attempted to post project requests soliciting funds, Sister Cities International added a checkbox to indicate that registrants understood the terms of agreement, specifically, "I understand that Community Connector does not allow the solicitation of money. Only requests for specific resources, knowledge/expertise or volunteer services are permitted. Any request for money will result in the non-posting or removal of the project request." After a recipient registers, they may manage their account data or post a new project.

After choosing to post a new project, users are taken to a screen that allows them to list the beginning and end date (if applicable), the name of the project, a short description of

the project, and the resources needed (see screenshot). The "Project Needs" textbox was added to make it clearer what exactly the organizations were requesting, since initial requests often had the resources being solicited buried within the project description. Additionally, recipients must first choose whether they are requesting resources, knowledge/expertise, or volunteers. Under each of these categories additional sub-categories for agriculture, education, health, technology, etc. are listed, along with more specific areas within the subcategories.

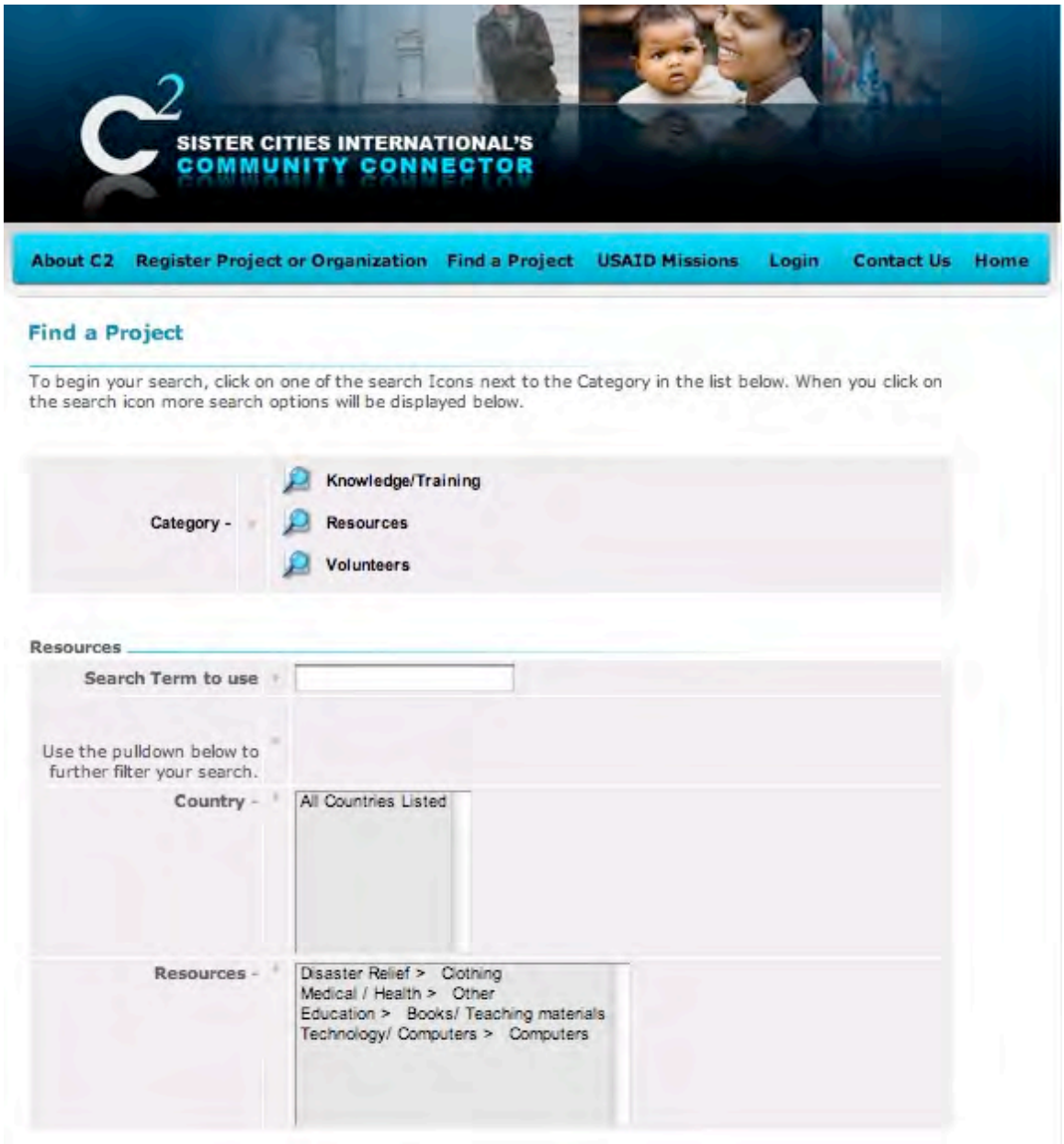


http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/connector/AddProject.cfm

This option allows C2 to categorize each project request to make it more 'searchable'. After creating a project profile, users can then add photographs as well.

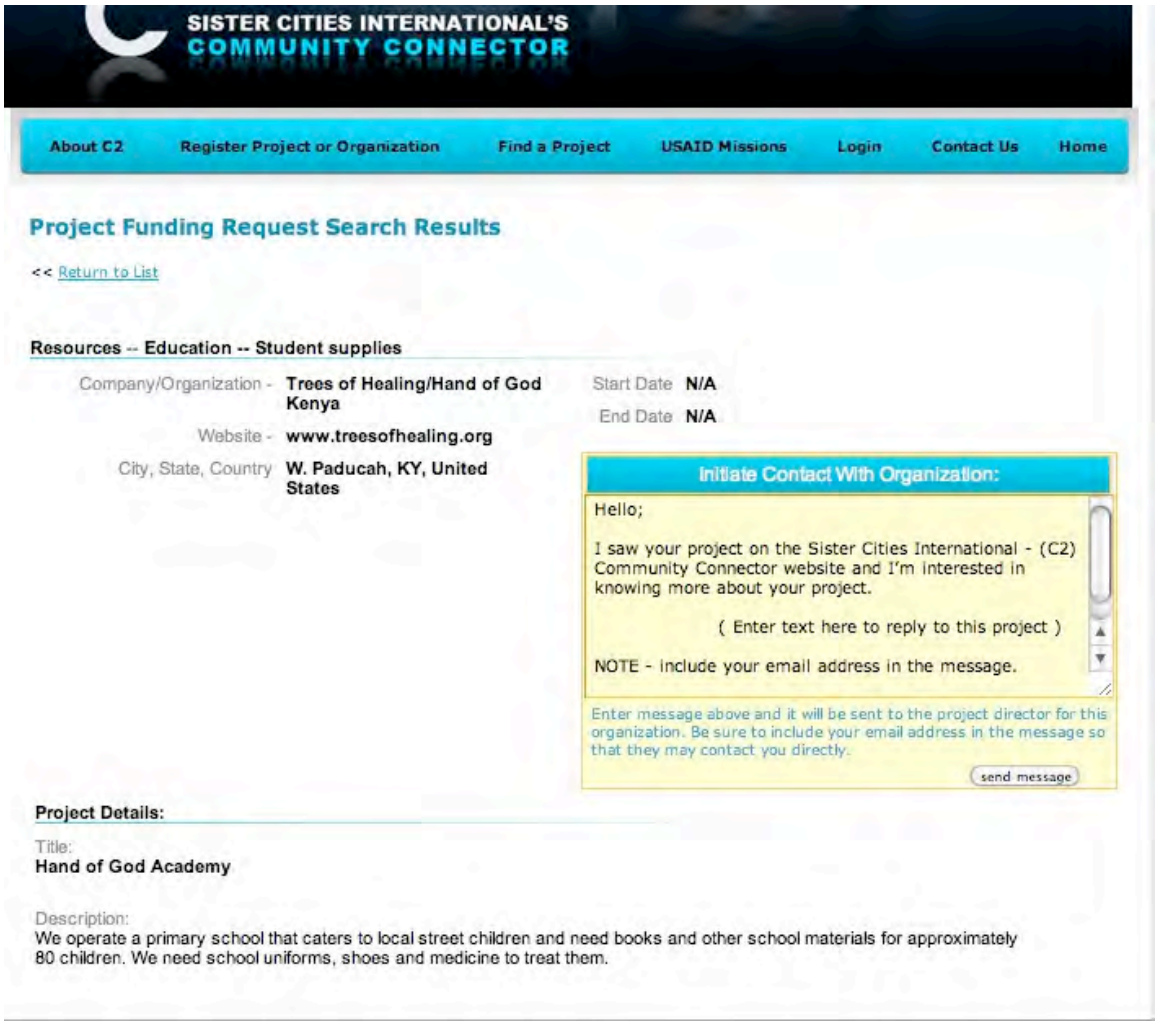
For individuals searching for a project to support, clicking on the "Find a Project" link brings users to a screen with similar drop-down menus allowing them to choose between resources, knowledge/expertise, and volunteers, and to narrow down their search further

according to country, type of aid being solicited, or keyword (see screenshot). Users can also leave search criteria blank to browse all of the project requests.



http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/findproject.cfm

If a potential donor decides to contact a recipient, he or she simply fills out the message text box in the upper corner of the project profile (see screenshot).



http://www.sister-cities.org/c2/FindProject_display.cfm?zProjID=46&zType=R

Users are prompted to enter email address so the recipient can contact them directly. This text box contact format was chosen for three reasons. First, providing the recipient's email address within the site would expose them to 'bots' or other unsolicited emails. Secondly, it allows Sister Cities International to track initial contacts between recipients and donors. Lastly, it was determined that an internal email/notification system (ie. where donors and recipients exchange messages within the C2 website and without other mail servers) was beyond the resources of the grant and would present somewhat of a burden to users, since they would have to log in to determine whether or not they had a message.

After a recipient fills out a project profile, it is sent to the C2 administrator before being posted to the website. If the organization has already been vetted, then the administrator checks the project profile to ensure that financial aid is not being solicited and that the profile meets basic standards for readability. Provided these two criteria are met, the

project is posted to the website. If the organization has not had prior approval to post project profiles, it is first vetted.

The first step in the vetting process is dependent on whether the organization is domestic or international. While C2 was originally designed with foreign NGOs in mind, upon initiation of the pilot stage we found that many of the organizations posting projects were domestic nonprofits that operated in Africa. If the organization is domestic, the C2 administrator checks Guidestar, a nonprofit which monitors 501(c)3 organizations as well as the IRS charity listings to ensure that it is a nonprofit in good standing. If the organization does not appear in either record, the administrator requests information on the organization's legal status (private, unorganized, etc.). Unfortunately, it was determined that private or unincorporated organizations should not be able to register as recipients due to either their for-profit status, or because of an inability to vet the trustworthiness of the organization.

If a non-U.S. organization attempts to register, they are first checked against USAID's list of registered non-U.S. PVOs. If they are not registered, the administrator will attempt to search foreign listings of registered NGOs and will contact the relevant USAID mission to inquire about the reputation of the NGO. The NGO will then be contacted and asked to provide documentation about their status, if possible, along with any other communications materials, reports, past programs that may help verify their status. The organization may also be asked for references at other respected nonprofits that may vouch for their credibility.

V. Analysis of reasons for success/otherwise

Community Connector was successfully designed and developed, and functionally speaking achieved all of its objectives. However, operationally speaking Community Connector did not achieve its goal of spurring a significant exchange of resources between nonprofits or civic and religious organizations in the U.S. and small NGOs abroad.

As a functional website Community Connector is successful in that it requires little technical expertise or effort to register an organization register projects and needs for the organizations, allows for the search of all projects by country, program area, or keyword, and has established a reliable vetting process. Success in these areas was due to careful coordination with the website production company, as well as multiple rounds of website edits to ensure functionality and minimize the effort required to produce and post information to the site.

The project was unsuccessful in spurring the exchange of aid for a variety of reasons. Limited participation by USAID missions resulted in far fewer recommended NGOs being guided to the site to post projects. Despite the simplicity of the site, limited and irregular access to the Internet resulted in African NGOs being unable to consistently upload information or explore other organizational and project profiles. This lack of posted projects made the site less attractive to potential donors and reduced the desire to return regularly to the site to explore additional projects. The difficulty of shipping

resources to Africa (particularly electronic equipment) also discouraged donors from participating.

VI. Knowing what you know now, would you undertake the project again?

(a) If so, why
(b) If not, why not; or
(c) If not, what changes would you make

Given the overall development process and results of C2, Sister Cities International would not undertake the project again unless certain criteria were met regarding the scope, format, and partnerships of the project design.

By including countries in Africa, funding limited the depth of outreach to possible partners and beneficiaries, and increased the complexity of providing detailed information that would be beneficial, such as customs and shipping information and available resources and partnerships. It would be more beneficial and successful if the program were to initially concentrate solely on one country or one region of Africa. Country specific information on shipping, other NGO programs, government programs, and resources could be more prominently featured on the website, and in-country NGOs would be more inclined to use the site with the knowledge that those using it are specifically interested in their respective country.

Sister Cities International would also have preferred more buy-in from USAID missions during proposal development regarding recruitment and vetting of NGOs and general promotion of the website. Of the 29 USAID missions contacted by Sister Cities International by phone or email, only three provided information regarding the most reliable shipping methods, and only two specifically welcomed inquiries by Sister Cities International regarding NGO validity. Two missions provided Sister Cities International with a list of possible NGOs that would be interested in C2 (Benin and Mali). More robust participation by USAID missions would lead to more registered projects and more valuable information which could be provided to participating organizations.

To strengthen a future project Sister Cities International would include more partnerships with larger NGOs operating on the ground in target countries during the initial development and implementation of C2. By enlisting the support and participation of NGOs that run programs or provide aid, such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Project C.U.R.E., Wheelchairs International, et al. C2 could capitalize on these organizations' mailing lists and existing relationships with smaller in-country NGOs to encourage them to utilize C2 and could provide further the larger NGOs with in-country linkages which would allow them to expand their own activities.

VII. What are the most important lessons Sister Cities has learned in undertaking this project?

Connectivity- C2 was designed with an easy to use interface, simple instructions, and required little other than access to an internet connection in order to utilize it. We also wanted to reduce the number of times registrants had to re-visit the site in order to check whether they had been contacted or not, and so the email function within the site was set

up to forward messages to the registrants' email addresses. Nevertheless, during the administration of other Africa-based programs that Sister Cities International was administering concurrently (the Safe Drinking Water Initiative, based in Nigeria and Ethiopia, and the African Urban Poverty Alleviation Program, occurring in Ghana, Liberia, Swaziland, Kenya, and Ethiopia) it became clear that basic internet capabilities were spotty at best, due either to a lack of IT facilities, inconsistent access even when facilities were available, and the relative high cost of utilizing internet cafes. This creates a high cost (in terms of time and finances) for potential users of C2, and limits regular use almost exclusively to urban areas with available IT facilities and electricity.

Outreach- Outreach was focused on connecting with small NGOs in Africa which would benefit from increased access to resources. However, it has become apparent that there are also many small U.S., European, and other NGOs doing work in Africa that would benefit from increased access to resources. In addition, these NGOs would more likely have regular Internet access to take full advantage of the site.

Staffing- C2 was designed and developed to minimize the necessary staff time to vet organizations, maintain the site, and perform alterations. However, additional staffing would allow for constant updates and peripheral changes to the site (daily tips or news articles, more frequent "featured projects," updated links to other sites) would encourage more repeat visits to the site, and would allow for more time dedicated to outreach to new organizations and more interaction with those who registered on the site.

VIII. How is Sister Cities making use of these lessons?

Sister Cities International is applying the lessons learned in C2 to its current programs in Africa as well as its general use of internet technology. The lessons will be most useful to the African Urban Poverty Alleviation Program, a $7.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to do water, sanitation, and health projects in 25 African cities through our local programs. In its direction of the program, Sister Cities International has planned on limited and sporadic internet access among its African partners, and has instructed local programs to identify in-country program managers who have more regular access to the Internet to serve as contact points for reporting and program monitoring. Local programs will establish a regular schedule for reporting rather than relying on program managers to maintain daily internet contact (as one would in the U.S.). In places where internet access is only available in cafes, programs will also be urged to budget for regular usage. In the Safe Drinking Water Initiative, a pilot program sponsored by Procter & Gamble where water purification product is distributed to at-risk communities in two cities in Nigeria and one in Ethiopia, this same lesson is being applied.

Sister Cities International is also encouraging new sister city partnerships between U.S. and African cities. In preparing U.S. members, Sister Cities International will inform them not to expect regular email communication or to plan for more structured communication protocols (designated contacts with regular internet access, monthly calls, use of software/programs that do not rely on most recent operating systems or technology). Programs will also be encouraged to seek U.S. based NGOs doing work in their sister cities (or potential sister cities) to gain more insight into ways of collaborating

with in-country partners and augmenting their efforts through collaborative projects and sharing of resources.

In order to increase its web presence, and to encourage repeat visits, Sister Cities International has also restructured its online communications. Regular updates to its website and online information on programs has been made a part of individual staff work plans and performance reviews to encourage the continual posting of new material. In addition, Sister Cities International has established a Facebook Fan Page which will allow for the consolidation of news and other media such as photos from local programs in order to expand Sister Cities International's web presence and maximize the amount of 'new' information on sister cities that reaches the public.

IX. What has been/will be done to carry the project forward after the end of USAID funding?

By designing a vetting system that does not require a significant amount of time, Sister Cities International will be able to administer the C2 website without adding further staff or seeking further funding. Maintenance of the site will continue as part of Sister Cities International's organizational website. Most updates apart from project profiles would be text editing or other minor changes. Sister Cities International's negotiated deal with the web designer of C2 allows for no-cost changes to the site.

In addition, Sister Cities International plans to continue outreach to non-Africa based nonprofits which may more easily utilize C2 because of greater internet connectivity as well as lower costs for shipping items. Sister Cities International will again solicit information from USAID missions, and will capitalize on more readily available and reliable listings of nonprofits for outreach. Sister Cities International will also explore and promote more use of C2 for networking and information exchange, since this is a no-cost way of utilizing C2 for nonprofits. The tool will be promoted as part of the African Urban Poverty Alleviation Program to highlight sister city activities in Africa and to allow for the solicitation of further resources.

Sister Cities International- C2 Objective Matrix FINAL REPORT

Evaluation Objective(s)	Output/Outcome	Indicator(s)
Design a easy to use online resource to match aid with communities in need	A tool for U.S. individuals and organizations who are seeking to provide humanitarian assistance, to learn about the needs of people in different parts of the world, to search and match projects/organizations abroad that may fit their criteria, to utilize the communications/contact tools to reach out and initiate assistance	Survey of users for usability, ease of search, etc.
		- A survey was developed to judge usability and provide feeback on the design of C2. However, due to the limited number of registered users, there was not A statistically significant number to survey.
		Web Statistics such as number of visitors and number of new registrants
		- Sister Cities International recorded 270,418 impressions from January 2009 through September 2009.
		Qualitative feedback from SCI members and users
		- Sister Cities International solicited feeback from members during the 2009 Annual Conference, and determined that C2 met the desired criteria for ease of use and functionality.
Create a resource for international communities to identify the needs of their community	Variety of projects added to C2 by international communities.	Ease of submitting and editing projects on the site.
		- Submitting and editing projects on the site requires no technical programming ability or HTML expertise. Projects can be easily added or edited from the registrant's login page, and a variety of programmatic areas can be chosen from a drop down menu to allow for the project to be easily found by other users.

Sister Cities International- C2 Objective Matrix FINAL REPORT

Evaluation Objective(s)	Output/Outcome	Indicator(s)
Accurately and efficiently vet and verify organizations requesting support	Organizations accepted to C2 are reliable and credible organizations.	The amount of time and resources to vet organizations.
		- The length of the vetting process is somewhat dependent on how much supporting documentation (if any) is required. Sister Cities International has developed internal protocols for use of public resources such as Guidestar, the IRS website of charitable organizations, USAID's Volag report, and others to minimize the resources necessary for the vetting process. After an organization has been vetted, additional project requests can be added quickly, provided the project complies with C2's policy of not soliciting financial aid.
		Third party assessment of the credibility of the organizations accepted to C2.
		- All organizations were verified by 3rd parties during vetting process
Pilot the project from search through delivery of aid to communities in South Africa	Deliver identified needed resources to communities in South Africa through the USAID mission and the sister city network	Successful delivery of resources to S. Africa
		- Aid was successfully delivered to the nonprofits Ithemba Foundation and Tomorrow's Trust in South Africa during Sister Cities International's Partnership and Peace Tour.

Work Plan	Year 1												Results
	Ju	Au	Se	Oct	No	De	Ja	Fe	Ma	Ap	Ma	Ju	
Develop and design the website													
Create a detailed database work plan with programmers specifying search & results pages and database structure and fields	X												Yes. Specifications for types of aid (physical, expertise, volunteer), as well as categories within these types were provided in the bid solicitation, along with required email functionality, search capabilities, and general structure. All registered information can be accessed within the site's database.
Develop and refine detailed requirements and functionality for website	X												Yes. After the website development company was chosen SCI provided them with edits to their initial design of site layout, and provided additional edits after the development of the user registration system, project registration page, and search function. After their development SCI enlisted the service of an experienced software tester to find and correct any bugs or other flaws in the site's services.
Determine reporting functionality	X												Yes. The site was developed so that all registrant information was stored in a secure database to facilitate reporting. In addition, SCI receives a notification when a message is sent using the sites anonymous mail system.

Computer Programming per specification in the database work plan		X	X										Yes. See notes on work plan above.
Create specific admin areas and user areas		X	X										Yes, there is a password protected adminstrative area to review potential projects before they are posted.
Design the layout and graphics for each page		X	X										Yes. Graphics and layout were provided to the design company and incorporated into the site.
Test all technology functionality			X	X									Yes. Sister Cities International secured the services of an experienced software tester to identify glitches or gaps in functionality.
Troubleshoot all errors or bugs in the system			X	X									Yes. See above.
Maintenance and site back-up		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Yes. As part of their agreement with Sister Cities International, the development company provides site back-up and maintenance on request.
Set-up Internal SCI Process													
SCI Program Coordinator trained	X	X											Yes. The Program Coordinator was briefed on the program parameters and objectives before the project was undertaken.
SCI organization and project vetting SOP outlined	X												Yes. All organizations are checked against Guidestar, IRS listings, USAID's Volag, and if an organization is not listed in either of these SCI solicits information (including documentation) from them that would confirm their activities or attempt to contact third parties who might testify as to the organization's status.

SCI identify organizations with a process for "due diligence"	X												Yes. See above.
SCI meet with organizations with an established "due diligence" process (i.e. Global Giving, Shuttle Worth Foundation, Guidestar.org (international), Keystone Reporting, USAID PVC Registration, OFDA	X	X											Yes. Sister Cities International contacted Global Giving about their vetting process, and explored Guidestar and USAID resources to inform its vetting process.
Meet with Ocean Freight Commodities Program to determine synergy and collaboration	X	X											Yes. Sister Cities International spoke with Dana Alzouma of OFCP about a possible partnership. Sister Cities International also explored other public shipping options such as the Denton Program, the Funded Transportation Program, Small and Medium Transportation Program, and Transform.
Survey similar database programs and their criteria for NGO involvement. Create an analysis and overview of these programs		X											Yes. Sister Cities International explored Guidestar, Shuttleworth Foundation, Razoo, and Global Giving.
Documented criteria NGOs must meet to be accepted into C2		X	X										Yes. All organizations must be 501(c)3 nonprofits (or the equivalent for their respective country), or must provide documentation confirming their status as an organization dedicated to providing education, humanitarian relief, or other services on a not-for-profit basis.
SCI and USAID develop SOP for mission involvement	X	X	X										SCI contacted 30 African missions, but received limited responses from them regarding their involvement in C2.

Identify sources and recruit potential aid providers (associations, networks, faith-based organizations)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Yes. Sister Cities International contacted an array of faith-based and humanitarian organizations, as well as associations representing nonprofits or civic groups whose members might be interested in Community Connector.
Develop marketing strategy for in-country NGOs and users of C2		X	X	X									Yes. Sister Cities International determined that the most effecti ve means of outreach would be through associations since this would maximize the number of organizations that were informed and also capitalize on pre-existing relationships to encourage participation
Develop a strategy of cross-promoting similar database programs, link to each other		X	X	X									Yes. Organizations that wished to solicit direct funding were guided to sites such as Global Giving and Razoo which could facilitate this type of aid.
Booklets/marketing materials created for recruitment in-country NGOs and volunteers		X	X	X									Yes. Sister Cities International developed flyers, press releases, and informational emails to use in recruitment
Coordinate all country level-South Africa Activities (outlined below)		X	X	X	X	X							Yes.
Develop an impact-assessment plan		X	X	X									Yes, although implementation of assessment was not initiated due to the low number of registrants
Begin accepting profiles from other countries						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Yes.
Profile vetting & project submission						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Yes.

Evaluation: Random sampling of users to maintain quality											X		Yes. A survey was developed, although the number of registrants was too low to get a reliable statistical sample.
Implement impact-assessment evaluation				X	X								See above.
Sustainability plan											X	X	Yes. Sister Cities International planned C2 to require minimal upkeep and staff time to encourage its sustainability beyond the funding period.
Country Level Activities-South Africa Pilot													
Coordinate with USAID mission	X	X	X	X	X								Yes. Sister Cities International coordinated with the USAID mission.
Contact leaders of sister cities with counterparts in South Africa		X	X										Yes. Sister Cities International coordinated with local contacts in Beaufort, Durban, George, Grahamstown, Johannesburg, King Shaka District, King William's Town, Lawaaikamp, Lesedi, Mathopestad, Nelson Mandela Municpality, Oukasie, Pietermaritzburg, Royal Bafokeng Nationa, Tshwane Municipality, and uMhlathuze.
South African NGOs submit profile & project description			X	X									Yes.
Profiles & projects vetted and accepted to C2			X	X									Yes.
Minimum of 10 NGOs accepted with requirements met				X									We had 6 that met all the requirements.
SCI Selection of Project for Pilot Distribution			X	X									Yes.

SCI Partnership & Peace participants secure aid				X									Yes.
SCI Partnership & Peace participants deliver aid				X									Yes.
Selected NGO submits a results profile for project					X								NGO opted not to provide a results profile.
Impact Assessment of the aid delivery				X	X								Assessment was completed by staff in person.
Evaluation of usability from NGO perspective					X								Yes. C2 was determined to be very user friendly in terms of time required and complexity of posting.
Evaluation of usability of C2 and the delivery of aid experience from aid providers					X	X							Project was implemented during testing phase, so South African pilot providers were not able to participate in this at the time of the dleivery.
Reporting													
Semi Annual Performance Reports Submitted						X							Sister Cities International was informed by its CTO that a midterm report was not required.
Projects Fulfilled reports submitted												X	In Progress.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 20, 2008

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USAID ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM, COMMUNITY CONNECTOR
Henrietta Fore, USAID Administrator and Senator Sam Brownback (R-MO)

WASHINGTON, DC –USAID Administrator, Henrietta Fore, announced at the Sister Cities International 52nd Annual Conference, on July 18th 2008, in Kansas City, MO a new program that will promote and enhance partnerships with faith and community-based NGOs.

USAID, together with Sister Cities International, will launch Community Connector, a web-based platform to twin U.S.-based organizations, including NGOs, communities of faith, and others, with their counterparts abroad. Most importantly, these relationships will enable each organization to exchange with their counterpart specifically and accurately. Knowing specific community needs and meeting those will be the keys to Community Connector.

"I envision this twinning to facilitate cultural exchange, economic growth, public private partnerships, and ultimately, through these relationships, sustainable development," said Henrietta Fore, USAID Administrator. "Relationships on an individual level and on an organizational level will lead to knowledge and resource sharing."

Through Community Connector linkages, a U.S. synagogue could share crucial seed-growing information with a church or mosque in Benin. A Guatemalan-based NGO, twinned with a U.S.-based church could distribute refurbished cell phones to micro-finance clients in rural Guatemalan villages.

Senator Brownback (R-MO), whose commitment to linking communities across the world together helped launch this proposal, shared his vision with delegates that had gathered at the Sister Cities International Conference.

"This partnership between USAID and Sister Cities International is entirely unprecedented and opens the door to unlimited opportunities and future collaboration," said Senator Brownback. "I believe Community Connector will be a tremendous resource for organizations seeking to combat global poverty and assist those in need. I have long believed that peer-to-peer interaction is one of the most effective ways to change the world."

Sister Cities International is a citizen diplomacy network creating and strengthening partnerships between the U.S. and communities abroad. Begun in 1956 after a White House summit where U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower called for people-to-people exchanges, sister city partnerships are tailored to local interests and increase global cooperation at the grassroots level. Sister Cities International promotes peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation by focusing on sustainable and economic development, youth and education, arts and culture, and humanitarian assistance programs.

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What is Community Connector?

Sister Cities International's Community Connector is a web portal funded in part by USAID that provides a link between donors and recipients of resources and expertise.

How does it work?

NGOs, charitable organizations, or civic groups create a profile of their organization on the portal, along with profiles describing their projects and the resources or professional knowledge desired. Groups cannot solicit financial aid. For example, a school may need books or educational supplies; a clinic may need medical equipment or supplies, a teacher may need help developing a curriculum, or a charitable organization may need help with a website to promote awareness and programs. Potential donors can search the site according to the type of aid desired, the type of organization, or geographic location. If they wish to donate, they can contact the recipient group through the portal and begin to arrange for the donation.

Who can participate?

NGOs, charitable organizations, or civic groups in good standing are eligible to be recipients following a vetting process. Donors may be individuals or organizations.

When will Community Connector be available?

Community Connector will begin its pilot phase in South Africa in early 2009. After the pilot stage, it will be available to nonprofits worldwide.

How can my organization get involved?

C2 is expected to go live in early 2009. If you would like your organization to be profiled on Community Connector or would like more information please email Adam Kaplan at akaplan@sister-cities.org or visit Sister Cities International at www.sister-cities.org.

Why was Community Connector developed?

Community Connector is aimed at smaller nonprofits that do not have the resources or connections to find the aid that they need. We hope that by allowing organizations to specify the exact type of aid that they are seeking, it will allow for more efficient distribution of resources.

What is Sister Cities International?

Sister Cities International is a global citizen diplomacy network with over a half century of history. Sister Cities International has nearly 700 U.S. cities partnered with more than 2,300 communities in 135 countries. Members include elected officials and citizen leaders who work to promote world peace and cultural understanding through economic and sustainable development programs, youth and education projects, and humanitarian assistance.

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

A Global Citizen Diplomacy Network

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL

C2

SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

Community Connector (C2) is an online database developed to link U.S.-based organizations and communities with smaller nonprofits, civic organizations, and faith-based groups abroad in need of physical resources, services, or expertise.

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Sister Cities International developed C2 to allow for a more efficient distribution of material aid and expertise worldwide. C2 cannot be used to solicit or provide financial aid.

Using C2, potential recipients of aid can:
- Post a profile of their organization
- Post project requests that identify their project is and what type of aid they seek
- Be contacted by potential donors of aid

Using C2, potential donors of aid can:
- Search the database for organizations and projects based on type of: project, aid requested, or geographic location
- Contact potential recipients of aid to offer resources, knowledge, or volunteers
- Create an organizational profile and track donations of aid

[Front and back of Flyer distributed to all Sister Cities International Conference attendees]

Community Connector SOPs

Vetting an Organization

1. Check Guidestar website for listing of organization
2. Check IRS website for organization (http://www.irs.gov/app/pub-78/)
3. Check Volag 08 Report
4. Call USAID mission and request information on verifying NGOS:
    a. What certification does the country offer?
    b. What databases of NGOs, civic groups, or religious groups are available?
    c. Have the staff ever heard of the organization?
    d. Record all information in country database
5. Request backup documentation from organization based on #4
6. If organization is a non-registered charitable organization but does not have proper documentation, or if the country doesn't have a good measure of nonprofit status, then request 2 references from documented nonprofits
7. All applicant organizations should be either vetted or contacted within one week of their application.
8. All information should be documented in the organization spreadsheet.

Vetting a Project Request

1. Does the project request money?
    a. No- Proceed
    b. Yes- email reminding them of policy of not soliciting funds and request that they rewrite their request
2. Does the project request specific aid?
    a. Yes- Proceed
    b. No- email requesting more specific information on what they are seeking
3. Is the project description a reasonable length?
    a. Yes- Proceed
    b. No- email requesting shortened length, and if possible recommendations on what to cut
4. Is the project description in comprehensible English?
    a. Yes- Proceed
    b. No- email with suggested changes to text

Community Connector Terms and Conditions of Usage

Terms of Use

Community Connector is a Web site that provides individuals with opportunities to donate money to charity and then track their giving online.

By using the Community Connector Web site, you accept and agree to be bound by the following Terms of Use (aka "Terms of Service"). Nothing in these Terms should be construed to confer any rights to third party beneficiaries.

Changes to the Terms of Service

We reserve the right to modify or terminate the Community Connector service for any reason, and without notice, without liability to you, any other Member or any third party. We also reserve the right to modify these Terms of Service from time to time without notice. You are responsible for regularly reviewing these Terms of Service so that you will be apprised of any changes.

Eligibility and Registration

As part of the registration process, you will be asked to select a username and password and you will be responsible for all activities occurring under your username and for keeping your password secure. We may refuse to grant you a username that impersonates someone else, or may be protected by trademark or proprietary rights law, or is vulgar, offensive or otherwise inappropriate, as determined by us in our sole discretion.

This site is intended solely for individuals 13 years of age or older. Any use or access of the site from users under 13 is strictly prohibited. Community Connector reserves to right to terminate the membership of any such users and remove any content they may have contributed on the site.

Appropriate conduct and content; Personal Use Only

The Community Connector service is made available for your personal, non-commercial use only. Individuals, businesses, organizations or other legal entities may not use the Community Connector service for any commercial purpose without the express written consent of Community Connector.

You may not use the Community Connector service for any illegal or unauthorized purpose. International users agree to comply with all local rules regarding online conduct and acceptable content, including laws regulating the export of data from the United States or your country of residence. You are solely responsible for your conduct and any data, text, information, photos, links and other content (“materials”) that you submit, post, and display on the Community Connector service.

We may, but shall have no obligation to, remove materials that we determine in our sole discretion are unlawful, fraudulent, threatening, libelous, defamatory, obscene or otherwise objectionable, or infringes or violates any party's intellectual property or other proprietary rights or these Terms of Service.

Because Community Connector is a public site, anything that may be deemed obscene by Community Connector will be removed or edited with or without your notice. The Community Connector service is a serious site focused on global issues and their potential solutions. All members agree to interact in a purposeful manner and avoid engaging in any conduct that: 1. Violates or infringes the rights of others including, without limitation, patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright, publicity or other proprietary rights. 2. Is unlawful, threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, libelous, deceptive, fraudulent, invasive of another's privacy, tortious, or contains explicit or graphic descriptions, or accounts of, sexual acts. 3. Victimizes, harasses, degrades, or intimidates an individual or group of individuals on the basis of religion, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, or disability. 4. Impersonates any person, business or entity, including Community Connector and its employees and agents. 5. Encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offense, or that gives rise to civil liability. 6. Violates these terms of use, guidelines or any policy posted on Community Connector. 7. Interferes with the use of Community Connector by others.

Other examples of illegal or unauthorized uses include, but are not limited to:

Modifying, adapting, translating, or reverse engineering any portion of the Community Connector service; using any robot, spider, site search/retrieval application, or other device to retrieve or index any portion or the Community Connector service; collecting any information about other members (including usernames and/or email addresses) for unauthorized purposes; reformatting or framing any portion of the Web pages or site images that are part of the Community Connector service; creating user accounts by automated means or under false or fraudulent pretenses; creating or transmitting unwanted electronic communications such as "spam," or chain letters to other members or otherwise interfering with other member's enjoyment of the service; submitting materials of any third party without such third party's prior written consent; directing any user (for example, by linking) to any materials of any third party without such third party's prior written consent; submitting materials that falsely express or imply that such materials are sponsored or endorsed by Community Connector; submitting materials that infringe, misappropriate or violate the intellectual property, publicity, privacy or other proprietary rights of any party; transmitting any viruses, worms, defects, Trojan horses or other items of a destructive nature; submitting materials that are unlawful or promote or encourage illegal activity; or submitting false or misleading information.

While Community Connector prohibits such conduct and content on its site, you understand and agree that you nonetheless may be exposed to such materials and that you use the Community Connector service at your own risk.

Links to Other Websites and Content:

Community Connector may include links to third party Web sites. Some of these sites may contain materials that are objectionable, unlawful, or inaccurate. These links do not mean that we endorse these third party sites or services. You acknowledge and agree that we are not responsible or liable for any content or other materials on these third party sites. Any dealings that you have with advertisers found on Community Connector are between you and the advertiser and you acknowledge and agree that Community Connector is not liable for any loss or claim you may have against an advertiser.

Community Connector's Proprietary Rights

By submitting, posting or displaying any materials on or through the Community Connector service, you automatically grant to us a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free, right to publicly display or re-display such materials in other formats not simply limited to Web sites.

Except as expressly authorized by Community Connector, you may not copy, modify, publish, transmit, distribute, perform, display or sell any of Community Connector's proprietary information which includes the sum of all postings and photos to the site. The Community Connector logo, and tagline are trademarks of Community Connector.

Disclaimer of Warranties

Community Connector disclaims any and all responsibility or liability for the accuracy, content, completeness, legality, reliability, or operability or availability of information or materials displayed on the Community Connector service. Community Connector disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for the conduct of any member.

The Community Connector service, and all materials, information (including, without limitation, any information or materials obtained or accessed through the Community Connector services), products and services included therein are provided "as is," with no warranties whatsoever. Community Connector expressly disclaims to the fullest extent permitted by law all express, implied, and statutory warranties, including, without limitation, the warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, and non-infringement of proprietary rights. Some states do not allow the exclusion or limitation of implied warranties, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you.

You agree that your use of the Community Connector service is entirely at your own risk.

Hold Harmless and Indemnity

You agree to hold harmless and indemnify Community Connector from and against any third party claim arising from or in any way related to your use of the Community Connector service, including any liability or expense arising from all claims, losses, damages (actual and consequential), suits, judgments, litigation costs and attorneys' fees, of every kind and nature.

Limitation of Liability

Under no circumstances will Community Connector be liable to you for any indirect, incidental, consequential, special or exemplary damages arising out of or in connection with use of the Community Connector service, whether or not Community Connector has been advised of the possibility of such damages. Such limitation of liability shall apply (i) whether the damages arise from use or misuse of and reliance on the Community Connector service, from inability to use the Community Connector service, or from the interruption, suspension, or termination of the Community Connector service (including such damages incurred by third parties), and (ii) notwithstanding any failure of essential purpose of any limited remedy and to the fullest extent permitted by law. Some states do not allow the exclusion or limitation of incidental or consequential damages, so the above limitation and exclusions may not apply to you. Under no circumstances shall Community Connector be liable to you for any amount exceeding one dollar ($1.00).

Term and Termination

These Terms of Service will apply to your use of the Community Connector service. We may terminate your membership immediately at any time, for any reason. Once your membership terminates, you will have no right to use the Community Connector service. Our proprietary rights, disclaimer of warranties, indemnities, limitations of liability and miscellaneous provisions shall survive any termination of your membership.

Notices

Community Connector may provide you with notices regarding the Community Connector service or these Terms of Service by regular mail, email, or postings to this Web site.

Miscellaneous Provisions

These Terms of Service will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the District of Columbia, without giving effect to its conflict of laws provisions or your actual state or country of residence. The parties agree to submit to the personal and exclusive jurisdiction of the courts located in Washington, D.C. If for any reason a court of competent jurisdiction finds any provision or portion of the Terms of Service to be unenforceable, the remainder of the Terms of Service will continue in full force and effect. You shall not assign these Terms of Service or assign any rights or delegate any obligations hereunder, in whole or in part, whether voluntarily or by operation of law, without our prior written consent. Any such purported assignment or delegation will be null and void and of no force or effect.

Without limiting the foregoing, under no circumstances shall Community Connector be held liable for any delay or failure in performance resulting directly or indirectly from acts of nature, forces, or causes beyond its reasonable control, including, without limitation, Internet failures, computer equipment failures, telecommunication equipment failures, other equipment failures, electrical power failures, strikes, labor disputes, riots, insurrections, civil disturbances, shortages of labor or materials, fires, floods, storms,

explosions, acts of God, war, governmental actions, orders of domestic or foreign courts or tribunals, non-performance of third parties, or loss of or fluctuations in heat, light, or air conditioning.

These Terms of Service constitute the entire agreement between you and Community Connector with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes and replaces all prior or contemporaneous understandings or agreements, written or oral, regarding such subject matter. Any waiver of any provision of the Terms of Service by a party will be effective only if in writing and signed by a party.