Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad:

Strategic Plan FY2014-FY2018

Photo credits: *Cover (clockwise from top left): Graduate student Abed Mansour of the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University, photo by Tel Aviv University; Photo by University of the Valley of Guatemala; Photo by SEGA Girls School; American University of Armenia, photo by Suren Manvelyan; Payap University, photo by Brian Cognato; Word Cloud created with Wordle.net. Pg. 10: Photo by the American University of Beirut. Pg. 11: Photo by Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology. Pg. 13: Photo by The Christian Medical College in Vellore.*

Contents

Executive Summary **2**

I. Background **4**

A. ASHA's Legislative Mandate *4*

B. ASHA's History *5*

C. Public Diplomacy *7*

II. Results Framework **9**

III. Focus and Selectivity **12**

A. Sustainability *13*

B. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment *14*

C. Inclusive Civil Society and Science, Technology and Innovation *14*

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation **14**

V. ASHA and Its Partners **15**

VI. Outreach and Communications **17**

VII. Conclusion **18**

Executive Summary

Since the founding of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1961, the Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) has proudly contributed to the achievement of the Agency's goals as articulated in its recently adopted mission statement: "We partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity." This new, five-year strategy lays out a plan for ASHA to continue serving that mission effectively – building mutual understanding with the people of other countries through the demonstration of the ideas and practices of the United States in health and education.

Section 214 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
(Parts (a) and (b))

(a) The President is authorized to furnish assistance, on such terms and conditions as he may specify, to schools and libraries outside the United States founded or sponsored by United States citizens and serving as study and demonstration centers for ideas and practices of the United States.

(b) The President is authorized, notwithstanding the provisions of the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 (22 U.S.C. 1611 et seq.) to furnish assistance, on such terms and conditions as he may specify, to institutions referred to in sub-section (a) of this section, and to hospital centers for medical education and research outside the United States, founded or sponsored by United States citizens.

In doing so, it grounds ASHA's work in the program's unique legislative mandate, codified in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (Section 214). This mandate is ASHA's fundamental purpose, and identifies the distinct role that ASHA plays within USAID, enhancing relationships and developing health and education abroad through partnerships with local study and demonstration centers. This mandate has remained consistent throughout ASHA's history, and it animates all of the program's strategic decisions.

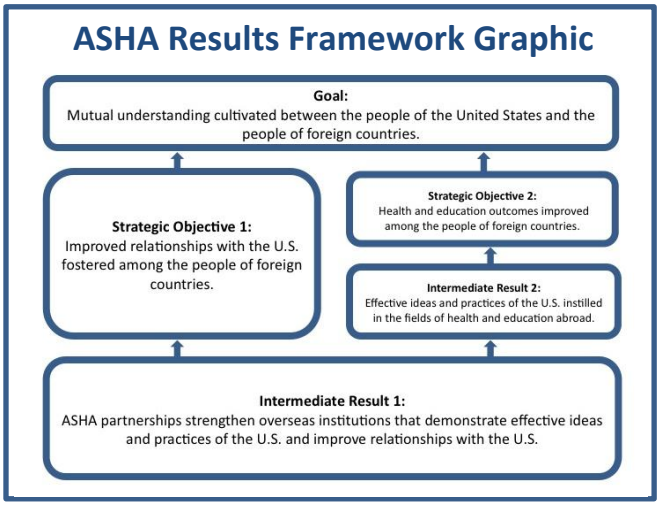
This strategy also updates ASHA's work for the challenges of the 21st Century. Since 1961, USAID has grown to become one of the world's foremost development agencies, combining technical expertise, continuous innovation, and a focus on results to help end extreme poverty. The world ASHA serves has become vitally interconnected, with people, money, and ideas crossing the globe at an unprecedented rate. The most coveted asset now for countries and businesses is well-educated global citizens, skilled at working across cultures and sectors. ASHA has also changed, going from a peak budget of $30 million in 1970 (approx. $180 million in today's dollars), to its current budget of approx. $20 million a year.

This strategy, ASHA's first since 2007, will enable the program to balance its character as part of USAID, its public diplomacy mandate, and the needs of today through four key principles:

1. **Refocusing on ASHA's public diplomacy mission and legislative mandate.**
   The ASHA program was first authorized in the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, which explicitly identified its objective as "to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." That is the purpose that ASHA is meant to achieve through the execution of its legislative mandate. Throughout ASHA's history, this purpose has been endorsed repeatedly, by leaders in both the executive and legislative branches of government. This strategy provides ASHA with a new results framework that identifies "mutual understanding" as the overall goal of the program. ASHA will focus its investments and operations to achieve that goal.

2. **Developing a framework to monitor and evaluate for results.**
   ASHA requires a streamlined, more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation, capturing its impact in public diplomacy and development. This strategy identifies specific indicators that ASHA will monitor to ensure alignment with its legislative mandate and a clear evaluation plan.

3. **Prioritizing sustainable institutions; gender equality and women's empowerment; inclusive civil society; and science, technology and innovation.** Focus has emerged as a cornerstone of sound practice in international development and public diplomacy today, both in the field generally and within USAID. This strategy includes three specific ways that ASHA will focus, while maintaining its overall inclusive approach to grant-making.



   - First, ASHA will prioritize partnering with **sustainable institutions**. "Sustainable" in this context translates into institutions that are embedded in wider community health and education systems. They have strong connections to civil society and civil society leaders, and they are capable of supporting their own operations, administration, and growth. ASHA funding leverages greater resources and complements partner work, allowing ASHA's relatively small investment to have a greater impact locally and regionally and, in some cases, to be part of a greater ripple effect that will benefit generations.
   - Second, ASHA will require the integration of **gender equality and women's empowerment** in all its awards and monitor and evaluate the program's impact on gender issues, particularly with regards to promoting women's education and leadership.
   - Finally, ASHA will highlight two themes of ideas and practices of the United States – "**inclusive civil society**" and "**science, technology and innovation**" – in its communications, monitoring and evaluation, and collaborations with other offices in USAID, due to their global popularity, demonstrated development potential, and representation within ASHA's portfolio. While ASHA will continue to fund projects promoting all "ideas and practices of the United States," these themes will help focus internal efforts and resources.

4. **"Partnerships" as the core of ASHA's work.**
   ASHA's legislative mandate comes to life through the work of its partners. Many of these organizations have long histories with the program and deep expertise serving as ambassadors of the United States abroad. At the same time, new partners bring new approaches and enable ASHA to adapt to a changing foreign policy landscape. Though an organization's relationship with ASHA may extend for only the 2-to-4 year term of a grant, ASHA will work with them collaboratively during that time by prioritizing a transparent awards process, partner-oriented grants management systems, consistent communication, and adding value beyond funding.

Drawing on these principles, ASHA envisions this strategy serving as a basis for transparency and consistency through 2018. This document itself has been developed collaboratively, drawing on the input of peer offices within USAID, implementing partners, and legislators. These groups, heterogeneous themselves, do not always have consistent perspectives. However, ASHA has identified common ground where possible, and difficult tradeoffs are unavoidable given limited resources. Continued feedback from all of ASHA's stakeholders is welcome as ASHA continues to serve its legislative mandate, USAID's Mission, and the American people by supporting the demonstration of the ideas and practices of the United States.

I. Background

A. ASHA's Legislative Mandate

The Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) implements Section 214 of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended, supporting schools, libraries, and medical centers "founded or sponsored by United States citizens and serving as study and demonstration centers for ideas and practices of the United States."

A part of USAID since the Agency's creation in 1961, ASHA's initial legislative authorization was established 13 years earlier, in the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948. The Act identified its objective as "to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries."[1] Section 203 of the Smith-Mundt Act contains nearly the exact legislative language for ASHA that stands today:

ASHA's Legislative Mandate: Sec. 214 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2174)

§ 2174. American schools, libraries, and hospital centers abroad

(a) Assistance for schools and libraries

The President is authorized to furnish assistance, on such terms and conditions as he may specify, to schools and libraries outside the United States founded or sponsored by United States citizens and serving as study and demonstration centers for ideas and practices of the United States.

(b) Assistance for hospital centers

The President is authorized, notwithstanding the provisions of the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 [22 U.S.C. 1611 et seq.], to furnish assistance, on such terms and conditions as he may specify, to institutions referred to in subsection (a) of this section, and to hospital centers for medical education and research outside the United States, founded or sponsored by United States citizens.

> "The Secretary is authorized to provide for assistance to schools, libraries, and community centers abroad, founded or sponsored by citizens of the United States, and serving as demonstration centers for methods and practices employed in the United States…"

Though the program has been incorporated into USAID, its basic public diplomacy nature has remained consistent over time, recognized by both the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. Government. As written in a report from the Near East Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1971:"The primary purpose of section 214 [of the FAA]…is not to serve the educational and health needs of foreign countries but to demonstrate to the people of other countries, on a very selected basis, American ideas, practices, and technology in the fields of education and medicine."[2] This interpretation has been accepted within USAID, and, as recently as 2013, the House Committee on Appropriations noted the contributions of ASHA partners in "fostering a positive image of the United States that supports foreign policy goals."[3]

This mandate of promoting understanding of the United States abroad is the fundamental operating "mission" of the ASHA program, and serves as the basis for all strategic and operational decisions. ASHA and its partners contribute in valuable ways to the health and education of the communities they serve, but those improvements are rooted in a spirit of good-will, greater understanding, and a desire for better relationships between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

---

[1] U.S. Congress. US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948. (Original Text). http://www.state.gov/pdcommission/library/177362.htm.
[2] U.S. Congress. House Foreign Affairs Committee. Report No. 92-380. July 26, 1971 (pg. 15).
[3] U.S Congress. House Appropriations Committee. "H. Rept. 113-185 - STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2014." July 30, 2013. (Title III)

B. ASHA's History

ASHA's record of contributing to and building bridges with vibrant networks of civil society institutions extends through 25 U.S. Congresses and 17 Presidential administrations. It constitutes the ASHA program's greatest asset. This strategy draws on four specific trends from that history: ASHA's incorporation into USAID, its historical continuity, the value of partnering with sustainable institutions, and its ability to innovate to meet emerging needs.

Incorporation into USAID

The incorporation of ASHA into USAID at the Agency's founding constitutes a clear legislative and executive decision. Sister programs authorized in the Smith-Mundt Act, such as the Voice of America broadcast program, did not make the same transition. ASHA's inclusion in USAID reflects two important principles:

- **An affirmation that ASHA assistance contributes to a global development program.** Though ASHA's goals are best understood through the lens of public diplomacy, its method is enhancing the development of health and education sectors abroad. The "demonstration of ideas and practices" that ASHA enables contributes to the more prosperous, more stable world envisioned by President Kennedy when he first proposed establishing USAID in 1961. As he explained in his "Special Message to Congress on Foreign Aid," USAID and all the offices under its oversight aim to "make a historical demonstration that in the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth – in the southern half of the globe, as in the northern – that economic growth and political democracy can develop hand in hand."[4] USAID and ASHA continue that tradition today.
- **An imperative to coordinate ASHA's work within USAID and the U.S. State Department.** The *2010 U.S. State Department and USAID Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review* (QDDR) established "Focusing Our Investments" as a key priority for U.S. foreign assistance in the 21st century. Focus maximizes the impact of foreign assistance, and it requires ASHA to coordinate closely with USAID and the U.S. State Department's frontline experts in Missions and Embassies worldwide. ASHA's unique role at the intersection of public diplomacy and development can enhance the objectives of both through closer collaboration.

A Tradition of Continuity

ASHA's distinctive business model, with its focus on tangible construction and commodity assistance and public-private partnerships, is increasingly relevant in meeting the health and education needs of today's interconnected world. Over the years, it has provided almost $1 billion in assistance to approximately 300 organizations, building a network of sustainable civil society institutions that have survived and thrived throughout periods of war, political upheaval, revolution, and humanitarian crisis, while exposing a global audience to the best in the ideas and practices of the United States.

This business model has remained remarkably flexible and consistent over time. Though that continuity must be balanced with a need to innovate, several key components of ASHA's business model have proven reliably effective, including:

- Promoting partnerships, specifically through funding pairs of "U.S. organizations" and "overseas institutions."
- Targeting the fields of health and education through support to schools, hospitals, and libraries.[5]

---

[4]President John F. Kennedy. "Special Message to the Congress on Foreign Aid." March 22, 1961. Online by Gerhad Peters and John T. Woolley. *The American Presidency Project.* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8545

[5] "Community centers" had been removed from ASHA's formal legislative mandate by 1961. "Libraries" for ASHA's purposes are generally considered to have educational goals, leading to ASHA's traditional identification of "health" and "education" as its two targeted sectors.

- Focusing ASHA funds on the support of construction, renovation, and the purchase of durable commodities, which necessitates leveraging non-USAID resources.
- Insisting on independence from government control among benefitting institutions.
- Requiring that benefiting institutions are open to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, and other social categories.
- Enhancing education at the secondary level or higher, and supporting medical centers that also conduct education, training, and research.
- Maintaining the flexibility of ASHA's grant-making instruments.
- Having no restrictions on eligible partners based on prior experience with ASHA. ASHA will continue to engage all potential, previous, and current partners equitably.
- Relying on a competitive and inclusive awards process for the determination of new partners, posted publicly and open to all organizations that meet ASHA's basic eligibility criteria.

This strategy recognizes the value of these components in ASHA's business model, and does not propose any substantial changes to them.

Partnership and Leveraging Resources

*From FY10-FY12, ASHA's **$61.4M** in grants unlocked **$45.3M** in cost-share from partners, approx. $0.77 for each dollar invested. **Ninety-eight of 102** grants contained some element of cost-share.*

Engagement of non-traditional partners and leveraging private sector resources is a particular strength of ASHA's business model. In many ways, ASHA foreshadowed current development trends in public-private partnerships and sustainability. As ASHA grants are generally limited to the direct costs of construction, renovation, and commodities, they require significant human and financial investments by our partners, mostly from private funds which support program management, technical training, and operations. Overall, from FY10 through FY12, ASHA's $61.4 million in grants was matched by $45.3 million of cost-share by ASHA's partners, meaning that for every $1 that ASHA spends, it unlocks another $0.77 in funding from other sources.[6] Over that same span, only four of ASHA's 102 grants did not include any cost-share whatsoever. These figures do not include the greatest contributions of ASHA partners: all management and operational costs, critical human resource investments, teaching and training costs, vision and leadership.

This collaborative approach illustrates the potential of working with sustainable partners that can generate revenue independently and leverage ASHA's funds with other resources. Tapping into other sources of funding increases project commitment, the cost effectiveness of projects, mitigates the risk borne by USAID, ensures sustainability, and leads to richer programs, as diverse partners bring their own experiences and perspectives. This approach has been formally endorsed by USAID as a whole, with the emergence of "Partnerships" as a key element of the USAID Forward Reform agenda and Global Development Alliances (GDAs) as a new program model. ASHA will continue to make public-private partnerships a cornerstone of its work by prioritizing partnerships with sustainable institutions.

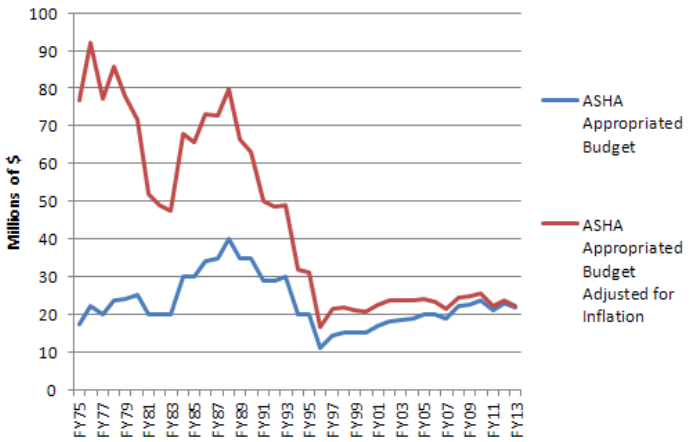
Program Innovation

We live in a constantly changing world. Since ASHA's last strategic plan in 2007, the U.S. has grappled with a global financial crisis, elected its first African-American President, wound down its commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq, "rebalanced" towards Asia, and launched one of the most ambitious reform efforts in the Agency's history through USAID Forward. ASHA must refine and adapt its work to fit today's strategic context, even as it maintains its core values.

[6] These statistics omit one outlying grant made in FY12 that included more than $37 million in cost-share.

In recent years, ASHA has instilled greater rigor in its award process, digitized its solicitation and grant-making process, and worked to harmonize its operations with those of the rest of USAID. It continues to engage diverse partners, some for only a brief time and some for decades. This process of growth and refinement is natural and necessary for a program to address the complexity inherent in public diplomacy and development.

The evolution of ASHA's budget decreases over the years highlights one specific opportunity for innovation today: greater focus. ASHA's budget peaked at $30 million in 1970, approx. $180 million in today's dollars. As recently as 1988, its budget was $40 million, equivalent to more than $80 million today. Since the late 1990s, however, the office's budget has remained generally within a range of about $20-$25 million. Such a reduction in resources requires greater programmatic focus to sustain impact. This strategy is intended to serve as a roadmap to ensure that greater focus in the near-term.



Source: ASHA Internal Records. Inflation adjustments based on data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

C. Public Diplomacy

ASHA is part of a long history of public diplomacy and humanitarianism in the United States. The simple power of giving concrete, physical assistance distinguishes ASHA from the rest of the U.S. Government's public diplomacy efforts.[7] The legacy of U.S. assistance in Indonesia following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which significantly improved Indonesians' views of the United States, testifies to the potential public diplomacy impact of serving basic human needs through tangible foreign assistance, such as commodities and construction. In today's global landscape, ASHA's model actually constitutes a more powerful tool for public diplomacy than ever before, owing to the emergence of three trends in the field.

Public Diplomacy's Increasing Relevance

ASHA supports the 2010 U.S. State Department/USAID *QDDR*'s embrace of public diplomacy as "an essential element of effective diplomacy" for the United States Government.[8] Its work is grounded in universal values that are intricately woven in the American tradition and based on lasting connections between the U.S. people, U.S. organizations, overseas institutions, and their beneficiaries. The ASHA program directly contributes to the realization of Goal #6 of the *QDDR*: "**Advance U.S. interests and universal values through public diplomacy and programs that connect the United States and Americans to the world.**"

[7] See *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues* by Kennon H. Nakamura and Matthew C. Weed of the Congressional Research Service for a comprehensive historical overview of public diplomacy in the United States.

[8] USAID and U.S. State Department. *Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review*. (Washington, DC: USAID and U.S. State Department, 2010) pg. 60.

Relationships and Collaboration

ASHA's focus on sustainable partnerships reflects the increasing recognition within public diplomacy of the importance of relationships and collaboration. ASHA works hand-in-hand with U.S.-based organizations that join with sustainable overseas institutions to deliver concrete health and education improvements. To quote two leading writers on public diplomacy, "…nothing creates a sense of trust and mutual respect as fully as meaningful collaboration."[9]

Resonant Ideas and Practices

While views of the United States in other countries vary widely, certain ideas and practices associated with the United States that are deeply embedded in ASHA's portfolio have particular potential to achieve public diplomacy gains. By focusing on these key themes internally, without limiting the ability of its partners to innovate, ASHA can maximize the impact of its funding. These themes are:

Inclusive Civil Society

A 2011 overview of world opinion surveys found that majorities all over the world favor freedom of expression; freedom of assembly; freedom of the media; and equality regardless of religion, gender, race, or ethnicity.[10] They strongly disapprove of discrimination, a belief echoed in ASHA's insistence that grantee organizations are open to all. The Pew Global Attitudes Project similarly found that publics in several Muslim countries embrace the institutions that underpin inclusive civil society, such as free speech and elected political leadership.[11] These norms also lead to better development outcomes in a range of sectors.[12] Of course, such ideas are not unique to the United States. The same Muslim publics studied by Pew expressed considerable skepticism of U.S. commitment to those ideas. That, however, only points to the need for the United States to continue to tangibly demonstrate its commitment to inclusive civil society abroad.

Illustrative Ideas and Practices of the U.S

ASHA's implementing partners have identified over 40 illustrative "ideas and practices" of the U.S. that their organizations are currently demonstrating abroad, summarized below. These ideas and practices speak to core parts of the American tradition valued worldwide.

Inclusiveness and Equality

- Equality of access to and quality of services regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or disability
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Plurality and inter-faith tolerance
- Belief in opportunity for all

Independence

- Free expression and discussion
- Independent enquiry, study and critical thinking
- Risk-taking
- Entrepreneurialism
- Individual empowerment

Civic Engagement

- Charity and volunteerism
- Community service
- Humanitarianism and generosity

Citizen-led Government

- Democracy and participatory governance
- Accountability
- Teamwork

Science and Technology

- Innovation
- Sharing knowledge and disseminating U.S. technology and best practices
- Environmental stewardship

Science, Technology and Innovation

Among 31 countries surveyed in 2012 and 2013, only four (India, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkey) did not have majorities that "admire the United States for its technological and scientific advances."[13] The

---

[9] Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault. "Moving From Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy." Annals of the *American Academy of Political and Social Science.* Vol. 616 (March 2008). pg. 10-30.

[10] Council on Foreign Relations. *Public Opinion on Global Issues.* "Chapter 8: World Opinion on Human Rights." (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011.) See: http://www.cfr.org/thinktank/iigg/pop/

[11] Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project. "Most Muslims Want Democracy, Personal Freedoms, and Islam in Political Life." July 10, 2013. See: http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/10/most-muslims-want-democracy-personal-freedoms-and-islam-in-political-life/

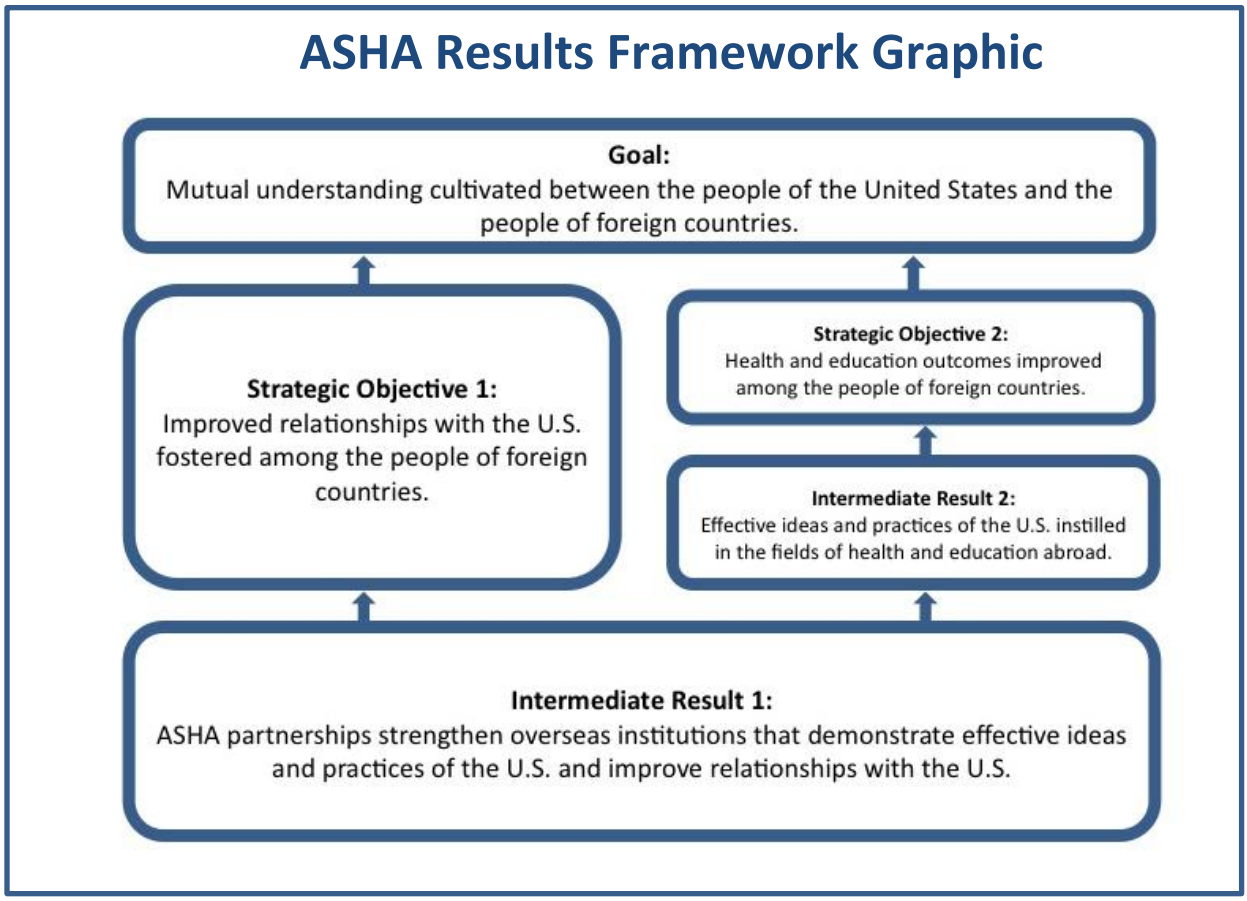
[12] USAID. *USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2013).

[13] See the Pew Global Attitudes Project's "Indicators Database." http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/

countries that "admired" the United States in this way stretched from Venezuela through Lebanon, Egypt, Nigeria, and China. The United States continues to maintain an unrivalled excellence in higher education and research. This recognition aligns with USAID's embrace of science, technology and innovation in the USAID Forward Agenda and U.S. Global Development Lab, allowing a synergy in "nation branding" between ASHA and the rest of USAID. The development potential of science, technology and innovation is, in a quite literal way, limitless. In the words of USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, "Fundamentally, that's what our work is about – designing, testing, and applying innovations in local communities to help end extreme poverty and its most devastating consequences."[14]

Recognizing the power of its tangible assets, leveraging its model's emphasis on collaboration and relationships, and drawing on its experience with key themes, ASHA can be a potent public diplomacy tool.

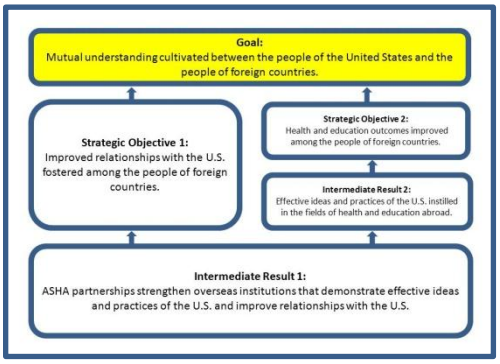
II. Results Framework



[14] Administrator Rajiv Shah. Remarks to the USAID Alumni Association Meeting. October 24, 2013.

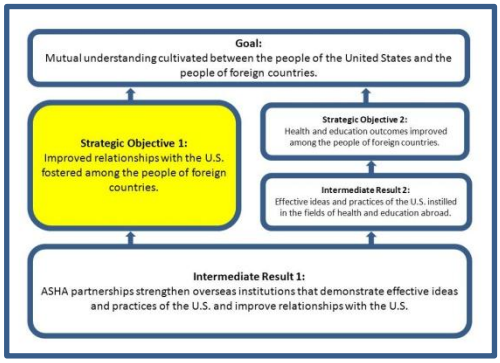
Goal:
Mutual understanding cultivated between the people of the United States and the people of foreign countries.

This goal embraces ASHA's heritage as a public diplomacy organization, echoing the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, and current U.S. Government policy, in line with the 2010 *QDDR*'s endorsement of public diplomacy as an "essential element" of effective diplomacy. In embracing "mutual" understanding, it also recognizes that ASHA is only one part of the U.S. Government's overall public diplomacy efforts. Finally, it identifies the primary way that ASHA will focus its work, by prioritizing building mutual understanding with the United States among audiences abroad. This goal will guide all of ASHA's work.



Strategic Objective 1:
Improved relationships with the United States fostered among the people of foreign countries.

This strategic objective: 1) identifies ASHA's contribution to the U.S. Government's overall public diplomacy strategy as building relationships with the U.S. among audiences abroad and 2) builds on modern developments in public diplomacy practice that suggest that understanding is a by-product of strong relationships. It recognizes that ASHA's work is a long-term endeavor and prioritizes more durable – if perhaps also more subtle – concepts such as *trust* and *engagement* over mere *awareness* and *favorability*. These foundational concepts are necessary but not sufficient if ASHA's hope is to cultivate deeper understanding. Similarly, a long-term endeavor requires partners committed to their communities in the long term, a primary motivation for the emphasis on supporting sustainable institutions in this strategy.

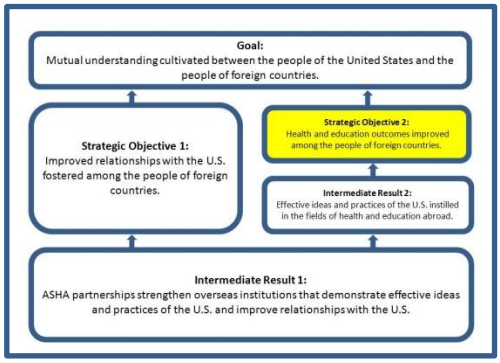


AUB engineering students in an ASHA-funded laboratory.

Education and Civil Society: The American University of Beirut

The American University of Beirut (AUB), one of ASHA's first partners, illustrates how a commitment to the ideas and practices of the United States combines with excellence in education for a region-wide impact. The school received its first ASHA grant in 1959, and has since produced more than two generations of leaders in fields ranging from medicine to business, governance to the arts. Its student body, approx. 16% of which comes from outside Lebanon, is steeped in an environment that celebrates a dynamic civil society, supported by initiatives such as the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, a regional hub for research on civic life in the Arab world. ASHA support for AUB in recent years has focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Students who graduate from these programs will go on to serve as leading doctors, engineers, scientists, and policy-makers throughout the Arabic-speaking world, creating a cadre of influential experts in a range of disciplines who understand the importance of tolerance, critical enquiry, open debate, and accountability in civil society.

Strategic Objective 2:
Health and education outcomes improved among the people of foreign countries.

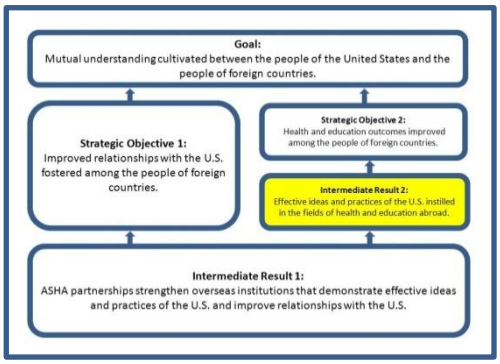


This strategic objective is based on an assumption that the United States can gain greater understanding by providing needed and tangible improvements to schools, libraries, and medical centers overseas. It aims to improve understanding by *improving lives*, in this case in the fields of health and education.[15] In doing so, it reconciles ASHA's development character with its public diplomacy mission.

"Health and education outcomes" can include at least two types of results: the direct services offered by ASHA partners (for example, the services provided to patients at an ASHA-funded hospital) and the larger "ripple effect" that ASHA-funded institutions can have in their community and society (for example, publishing original research, developing greener agricultural techniques, or training regional leaders). This latter type of result can raise the standard of practice in an entire field to achieve national and regional outcomes that go far beyond ASHA's small direct contribution.

ASHA will closely collaborate with two groups to give the concept of "health and education outcomes" operational specificity. First, ASHA will look to its implementing partners to design and propose projects they believe are necessary. Second, ASHA will engage relevant local and technical experts within USAID and outside of USAID, when appropriate, in the evaluation of proposals to assess their approach.

Intermediate Result 2:
Effective ideas and practices of the U.S. instilled in the fields of health and education abroad.



The location of this intermediate result, linked directly to SO 2, argues that effective ideas and practices of the United States will add value to local efforts in health and education. It also specifies how ASHA's work to enhance health and education outcomes differs slightly from that of USAID's development goals. Throughout its history, ASHA's partners have identified American ideas and practices that are most relevant to the needs of their communities and blended them with equally valuable local ideas and practices to create new ways of thinking and performing, while also respecting local societies. While working through local systems is valuable, ASHA's role is helping inject new ideas into the status quo, sparking innovation in the process.

A patient in surgery at the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Nepal.

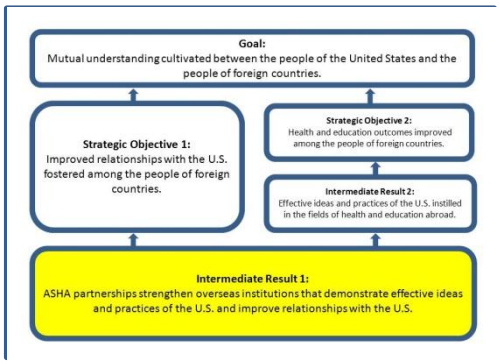
Health and Innovation: The Himalayan Cataract Project

The work of the Himalayan Cataract Project illustrates the potential for impact when American expertise combines with local ingenuity. The organization was born out a friendship between Dr. Geoff Tabin, an American, and Dr. Sanduk Ruit, a Nepali, based on their shared vision of ending preventable and curable blindness around the world. Its signature innovation is a system developed by Dr. Ruit to allow for high-volume, low-cost cataract surgery in extremely resource-poor environments. Working in close partnership with the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Nepal, HCP has trained doctors all over the world and treats over 12,000 patients each year. ASHA has provided $6,000,000 to HCP over the last ten years, helping the organization scale its impact worldwide and establish a new training center in Ghana that helps restore sight to more than 1,300 patients annually.

[15] Libraries in ASHA's context generally serve one of these two purposes.

ASHA will continue to ask its partners to choose the ideas and practices most needed for their own communities, refraining from identifying specific ideas and practices for selection in its annual solicitation. This flexible approach has allowed the office's work to stay relevant across generations and continents. Internally, ASHA will focus on two general themes of ideas and practices, "inclusive civil society" and "science, technology, and innovation" (see, "Focus and Sustainability" below), but not at the cost of limiting the freedom of its partners to innovate. This demand-driven approach will allow ASHA to remain sensitive to local context and changes in the perception of the United States abroad.

Intermediate Result 1:
ASHA partnerships strengthen overseas institutions that demonstrate effective ideas and practices of the United States and improve relationships with the United States.



The distinctive feature of the results framework proposed here is the centrality of IR 1, which contributes directly to both SO 1, "Improved relationships with the United States fostered among the people of foreign countries," and SO 2, "Health and education outcomes improved among the people of foreign countries." Its dual nature reflects the fact that ASHA cannot achieve the impact it seeks if it pursues either of its Strategic Objectives independently. Improved relationships require trust, which the United States can build by helping individuals and communities improve their lives. At the same time, a relationship that allows beneficiaries to understand the United States' contributions and motivations greatly enhances the public diplomacy value of health and education efforts. ASHA's challenge is finding the overseas institutions that combine both of these elements in their work, and partnering with them to strengthen their impact.

The use of the word "partnerships" in this IR also indicates ASHA's emphasis on engaging with partners more deeply and working with institutions that can contribute their own resources to projects. The nature of these relationships is discussed in depth in "ASHA and Its Partners" (pg. 16). An important implication of this change is the high bar of selectivity a deeper relationship entails. The ability to both demonstrate effective ideas and practices of the United States and serve as an ambassador for the United States is a *prerequisite* of ASHA support, not only an outcome of ASHA support. Organizational capacity and the demonstrated ability or potential to carry out ASHA's legislative mandate over the long term will continue to be a priority in ASHA's annual selection criteria.

III. Focus and Selectivity

While this results framework is consistent with ASHA's heritage, greater focus is needed to allow ASHA to maintain its effectiveness. As discussed in Presidential Policy Directive 6 on Global Development, "The United States cannot do all things, do them well, and do them everywhere. Instead, the U.S. must focus its efforts in order to maximize long-term impact."[16] As one small component of the U.S. Government's public diplomacy efforts and a steward of limited funds, ASHA must balance budget and program constraints. This strategy will focus ASHA grants in four ways: 1) embracing ASHA's legislative mandate and public diplomacy objectives; 2) prioritizing sustainability within its grant selection criteria; 3) requiring the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in its work; and 4) emphasizing inclusive civil society and science, technology, and innovation.

[16] For more information on PPD-6, see: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/fact-sheet-us-global-development-policy

A. ASHA's Legislative Mandate

The Results Framework discussed above is the primary tool that ASHA will use to focus its investments, particularly in pursuit of the achievement of its stated goal: "Mutual understanding cultivated between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." This guiding purpose will continue to be the program's first priority. ASHA's original authorization was explicit about the program's objectives, and this strategy represents a recommitment to its legislative mandate and that original vision. See pgs. 9-12 for an in-depth discussion of how ASHA's investments can lead to enhanced mutual understanding through the support of study and demonstration centers of the ideas and practices of the United States.

B. Sustainability

This strategy makes explicit a theme that has been implicit in ASHA's work for decades: building sustainable institutions that serve as "study and demonstration centers" for American ideas and practices. "Sustainability" here is defined differently than it is in much of USAID's development work. Whereas "sustainability" in many cases means shepherding organizations through a process of graduation from continued and indefinite USAID assistance, for ASHA it means partnering with institutions that are embedded in local health and education systems and have a wider social impact beyond ASHA's direct contribution. ASHA funds complement their work, adding to sustainable civil society institutions. Nascent and growing organizations will remain eligible for ASHA support, but they must be able to show their potential to achieve this sustainability. The commodities and capital improvement projects ASHA funds are durable; so too must be the institutions that house them.

> *Whereas "**sustainability**" in many cases means shepherding organizations through a process of graduation from the need for aid, for ASHA it means partnering with institutions that are embedded in their local health and education systems and have a social impact beyond ASHA's direct contribution.*

ASHA has long evaluated the grant applications it receives for sustainability. However, whereas in the past this often focused narrowly on an organization's ability to correctly use and maintain the commodities and facilities that ASHA funds, this strategy expands sustainability to include evidence of broader systemic and institutional sustainability. A more critical review of sustainability will help focus ASHA support to those institutions and organizations that are currently impacting --or have the potential to impact-- positive change, diplomacy, health, and education in their communities, societies, and regions outside of an ASHA partnership. It also includes overall organizational health, including an organization's ability to raise funds and thrive without ASHA support.

Launching the sewage treatment plan at CMC Vellore's College of Nursing.

Sustainability in Action: Vellore Christian Medical College

The work of the Christian Medical College in Vellore (CMC Vellore), near Chennai, India, illustrates how ASHA partnerships can contribute to more sustainable institutions and communities. Clean water is a perennial need locally, as pollution has rendered river water unusable and depleted groundwater. In response, CMC Vellore combined two ASHA grants separated by more than 10 years to develop an integrated water treatment system that saves 160,000 liters of water daily. One plant, located on the campus of CMC Vellore's hospital and funded by ASHA in 1994, turns unusable "black water" into "gray water," suitable for functions like flushing toilets and watering plants. A second, more advanced plant at its College of Nursing, nearly a half-mile away and funded by ASHA in 2006, turns "gray water" into clean water, fit for human consumption, although Vellore uses it only for cooling and laundry. Working with local authorities, CMC Vellore laid pipes between the two sites, allowing water to cycle seamlessly from use to re-use. Local governments and other ASHA partners have approached CMC Vellore to discuss replication of this innovative approach for wastewater management in other contexts.

C. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Widely valued in the United States and emphasized at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, gender equality and women's empowerment is a powerful "idea and practice of the United States" itself, meriting particular attention in ASHA's work. Practically speaking, many of the projects ASHA funds support greater gender equality. Some do so directly, such as the SEGA Girls School, which provides high-quality secondary education to at-risk girls in Tanzania. Others do so indirectly, such as Bethlehem University, a co-educational school that has produced several prominent Palestinian women graduates, like Vera Baboun, Bethlehem's first female mayor.

To maintain and expand contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment, ASHA will continue to assess how proposed projects further gender issues during its evaluation process; monitor the extent to which its projects contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, with a particular focus on women's leadership; and help its implementing partners better understand the intersection of their work and gender issues.

Focus: What It Means In Practice

- ASHA will continue to make grants via an annual, competitive awards process with a solicitation such as an Annual Program Statement, posted publicly on grants.gov.
- The evaluation criteria for each year's competition will be spelled out in that solicitation, as it has been in prior years. Clear, objective evaluation criteria are key to a successful competition process.
- The priorities in this strategy will inform those evaluation criteria and their relative weights. For example, ASHA will ask applicants to explain how they achieve the objectives of ASHA's legislative mandate and to demonstrate their sustainability.
- Other elements, such as an organization's technical capacity and a project's cost effectiveness, will continue to be included, but priority elements will drive scoring.
- ASHA will continue to evaluate how every application contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment, as per Agency policy.
- The two themes of "inclusive civil society" and "science, technology, and innovation" are primarily designed to help ASHA focus internally. As such, they may not be emphasized in evaluation criteria.
- These plans are subject to change, and, as always, the elements set forth in a particular solicitation are the controlling parameters for each award cycle.

D. Inclusive Civil Society and Science, Technology and Innovation

"Inclusive civil society" and "science, technology, and innovation" merit special consideration as themes of ideas and practices for ASHA to promote. Both are generally popular across the globe, represent a significant portion of ASHA's historical and current portfolios, and are proven tools for individual and community development. They are also core competencies for USAID and ASHA's home bureau, the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). ASHA can leverage this opportunity by highlighting these ideas and practices in communications, monitoring and evaluation, and, where possible, connecting with other Agency initiatives.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

ASHA will use a simple, intuitive approach to monitoring and evaluation, relying on three primary elements:

1. **Quantitative tracking of project outputs to measure actual grant performance.**
   At the IR levels, ASHA will require grantees to report on key projects outputs, such as commodities purchased, facilities renovated, and project beneficiaries. Though partners can choose to report on custom outputs, required indicators will be standardized to the greatest extent possible to allow for aggregation. Person-level outputs will be disaggregated via sex and other relevant groupings, such as disability status. Illustrative indicators are listed on the following page.

2. **Qualitative tracking of project outcomes to address improved perceptions and understanding of the United States.**
   At the SO and Goal levels, ASHA will ask grantees to articulate progress towards project outcomes and program impact more broadly, through qualitative, narrative questions. ASHA will seek to capture impact and the ripple effect of grants through critical questions or information requests in reports, success stories, videos or other innovative communications. Grantees will be required to respond to those they deem relevant and may include other interesting program results and effects. Illustrative questions include:

   - How has the overseas institution changed as a result of this grant? Describe any new capabilities, new audiences it serves, or other outside funding it has leveraged because of the ASHA grant.
   - How has the project contributed to a positive image of the United States and/or enhanced understanding of the United States in the host country?
   - Has the project introduced any new or innovative ideas locally or regionally, and how have they been effectively diffused or scaled up?
   - Has the project helped strengthen local civil society institutions or improved community resilience?

3. **A possible targeted evaluation of ASHA's impact.**
   ASHA will explore funding an independent evaluation of a small sampling of its work. The evaluation would be modest in scope and assess how study and demonstration of the ideas and practices of the United States can influence others' perception and understanding of the United States.

Illustrative Performance Indicators for ASHA

- # of grants completed on time/ on budget
- # of benefitting institutions, regions, and audiences
- # of users of ASHA-funded commodities
- # of improved systems resulting from ASHA-funded commodities
- Amount cost share and amount of funding leveraged by partners due to ASHA funding
- # of public events (ribbon-cuttings, commodity deliveries, etc.) related to ASHA-funded projects
- % complete and verified activities in Branding Strategy/Marking Plans
- # of initiatives increasing access to health or education services for marginalized groups, and # of individuals benefitting from those initiatives
- # of initiatives promoting science, technology, and innovation, and the # of individuals benefiting from those initiatives
- # of initiatives supporting women's leadership, and the # of individuals benefitting from those initiatives

As recommended by ADS 203,[17] ASHA will develop a more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy in the 4-6 mos. following adoption of this strategy.

V. ASHA and Its Partners

This strategy explicitly highlights the role of ASHA as a "partner" to its benefitting organizations, a more active and collaborative role than "funder." While ASHA remains accountable first to U.S. citizens as a steward of public funds, it serves them best through the execution of its legislative mandate, which in turn comes to life through the work of its partners.

This focus on partnership as a way of doing business should not be construed to indicate that receiving one grant from ASHA entitles an organization to a relationship that extends beyond the formal term of its award. ASHA's partnerships are a direct function of its annual competitive awards process. Rather, it

[17] USAID. *ADS 203: Assessing and Learning.* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2012). Pg. 25.

refers to the way in which ASHA will engage organizations during the term of their engagement, however long that engagement lasts.

Specifically, ASHA will embrace four pillars in its approach to partnership:

- **A Transparent and Simplified Award Competition Process:** ASHA has significantly simplified its Annual Program Statement (APS) to reduce applicant burden. For example, it has drastically reduced the requirements for eligibility for an ASHA award, allowing more organizations to compete. ASHA will continue to make this process more user-friendly. Of particular importance is providing clear evaluation criteria. In FY13 and FY14, ASHA posted its APS online for comment by all interested stakeholders. It will continue to do so to enhance transparency throughout the process. Additional adjustments to assist partners, both new and old, in navigating ASHA's awards process include providing robust debriefs and continuing to streamline APS requirements.
- **Partner-Oriented Grant Management:** Working with the U.S. Government is a challenge for any organization, and this is true for many ASHA partners. Even organizations that have worked with USAID and ASHA extensively in the past can find it difficult to navigate the Agency's new initiatives, changing policies, and evolving priorities. ASHA will develop supplementary tools and training to assist these partners, including web-based training, to help them understand how ASHA operates, how it implements USAID's policy requirements, and how they can engage the Agency at large. It will simplify processes under its own control (for example, its "substantial involvement" requirements), and, to the greatest extent possible, conduct regular site visits to assess partner progress and learn their priorities, needs, and concerns.
- **Two-Way, Transparent and Predictable Communication:** As part of this strategy, ASHA is reviewing all of its communications activities to ensure that key audiences receive the information they need in a clear and consistent manner, including ASHA's implementing partners. (See "Outreach and Communications," below.) The program's rapid modernization in the past 3-5 years has led to confusion among some partners that have worked with ASHA in the past and a potentially higher barrier for those new to the program. ASHA will address this uncertainty by striving to provide timely responses to its partners' queries, establishing a consistent communication calendar, and providing guidelines for the information ASHA requests.
- **Value-Added:** ASHA's partnerships strengthen institutions that have demonstrated their ability to achieve ASHA's legislative mandate. By using its abilities to convene other stakeholders to interact with these partners and facilitate conversation amongst partners, ASHA can further amplify their impact – whether they are well developed, established institutions or emerging study and demonstration centers.
    - **Connecting to Opportunities:** ASHA will seek to help partners identify opportunities where they can participate in other USAID and U.S. Government activities. This includes exposing them to new initiatives of USAID, such as those housed within the new U.S. Global Development Lab, or helping them leverage the resources and communication assets of Missions and Embassies abroad. The capabilities and experience of ASHA's

On Construction and Renovation

ASHA's flexibility in funding construction and renovation projects constitutes a unique grant-making asset. Its in-house engineering expertise enables it to conduct the necessary due diligence to support these functions. Using these tools, ASHA can contribute efficiently to the development of physical, visible structures for medical and educational institutions abroad. This in turn creates high-impact opportunities for public diplomacy for the U.S. Government in the field as ASHA projects complement the work of USAID Missions and Embassies. While ASHA's approach to construction and renovation differs from that of the rest of USAID in important ways, it shares the same responsibilities for sound, sustainable construction and renovation management.

implementers makes these collaborations a win-win: increasing the impact of ASHA partners and providing the U.S. Government with capable collaborators.

- **Facilitating Knowledge-Sharing:** Through its annual conference, outreach, and the development of an interactive forum, ASHA will actively support the exchange of ideas and practices amongst its partners. While newer partners will benefit from the knowledge of those who know ASHA well, traditional partners will develop a global network of collaborators and a source of new ideas.

VI. Outreach and Communications

A core objective of this plan is to increase and improve communication with ASHA's stakeholders. ASHA anticipates proactively engaging four audiences in particular to enhance the achievement of its legislative mandate:

- **ASHA will facilitate the engagement of overseas audiences by its implementing partners.** While branding and marking are required of all USAID-funded programs, communication with overseas audiences is particularly important to ASHA's work, given its emphasis on public diplomacy. ASHA will work with its implementing partners to ensure that its support is communicated to beneficiaries in ways that are appropriate for local context and contribute to improved relationships with the United States. By identifying and sharing best practices, offering partners concrete suggestions for improvement, and diligent monitoring, ASHA can ensure that overseas publics recognize the contributions of the American people to local institutions.
- **ASHA will systematically collaborate with internal audiences, in particular USAID Mission and U.S. State Department Embassies, to monitor project performance and identify public diplomacy and USG outreach opportunities.** ASHA has enlisted USAID Mission staff and Embassy Public Affairs Officers (PAO) to provide past performance information relevant to potential partners, enhance programmatic alignment, identify press and public diplomacy opportunities, and assist ASHA in monitoring and oversight of activities. ASHA will also work closely with USAID pillar and regional bureaus to raise the program's profile and develop advocates and linkages within the Agency.
- **ASHA will provide greater clarity and consistency to its implementing partners, and support them in their communication efforts with overseas audiences.** These partners have a special role in ASHA's work as the "last mile" of project implementation, directly communicating with the overseas audiences that ASHA aims to influence. In recognition of this critical role, ASHA will develop a consistent communication schedule and expectations and provide partners with easy tools and templates to communicate their success. It will work closely with partners to ensure they are enhancing mutual understanding overseas through tools such as their required branding strategies and marking plans.
- **ASHA will communicate results and seek guidance from the American public, its most important stakeholder.** ASHA will engage the American public directly, using tools such as social media and ASHA's website to communicate the results of their investment in foreign assistance generally and ASHA specifically. ASHA will also engage them via their elected representatives in the U.S. Congress, collaborating with legislators to ensure that ASHA serves its legislative mandate as effectively and efficiently as possible.

VII. Conclusion

The architects of the ASHA program could hardly have foreseen a world where global communication would be near instantaneous, where electoral democracy had surpassed all its ideological competitors on the global stage, or where private foreign capital flows dwarf the direct assistance of the U.S. Government. In creating a program that allowed for the demonstration of the best in the ideas and practices of the United States, however, they created a durable legacy that has adapted and remained relevant. USAID and ASHA are trustees of this legacy, just as they are the trustees of the American people. This strategy will enable the office to continue to honor these two trusts – its responsibility to the American people most of all – by focusing its resources, holding itself accountable for results, and communicating transparently and consistently with stakeholders.

This strategy is a foundation for consistency, but it is not immutable. ASHA recognizes that its context will continue to change and that it will learn as it implements this strategy. ASHA will continue to monitor the extent to which all elements of this strategy help or hinder its achievement of its legislative mandate, and it welcomes the input of all stakeholders – current and potential partners, colleagues in foreign assistance or public diplomacy, legislators, the American public, and the overseas publics it hopes to engage – in this ongoing effort. The free and open exchange of ideas is itself an important practice of the United States, and in publishing this strategy, ASHA hopes it can begin a robust conversation on how the office can best cultivate mutual understanding with the people of other nations today.