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Bridge-US June 2014

Connecting People - Building Bridges – Spreading Tolerance



As insecurity and massacre sustained this impoverished helpless nation, the sad and synchronized tragedies of brazen terrorist attacks on Karachi airport and killing of 24 Shia pilgrims in Taftan have surprised national and international community. The question is – What happened to the enormous amount of money, training and skilled provided to Pakistan by the international community to fight

against terrorism. Why terrorists are still intact despite of 9 known operations by the Pakistani security forces since 2007? Pakistan's armed forces and the civilians have paid the highest price in the war on terror. Soldiers have sacrificed their lives valiantly and civilians are left at the mercy of the suicide bombers helplessly, but the elected governments remained unable to put a policy in place against terrorism and protecting minorities.

Since 2009, The United States has provided more than \$3.3 billion in civilian assistance to Pakistan, including about \$1 billion in humanitarian response to conflict and floods.

While combating terrorists at the Karachi Airport, law enforcement personnel's were not equipped with the necessary equipment needed to face such intense disasters. No bullet proof jackets, gloves, extinguisher for chemical fire, generators, masks, and the leadership – there was chaos, death and helplessness. Workers of the local aid organizations were also working in similarly terrible situation with bare hands, no masks, shoes and communication devices.

How come very next day, terrorists again pounced on Air Port Security Force – ASF? The post disaster situation still witnessed flaws in the Air Port Security. Both the Federal and Provincial governments remained apathetically unmoved.

7 people burnt to death while their families were in wait. Who cleared the airport or the inside links to

terrorists intentionally let that happened to cause maximum harm to innocent civilian? The attack was carried out by Taliban or as the old saying goes a FOREIGN HAND, but the painful death is the certain and criminal negligence of the Federal and the Provincial governments. The responsible individuals must be charged with premeditated manslaughter to get to the terrorists who have infiltrated within security forces. The aftermaths have left everybody thinking about the safety of the nuclear installations and the possibilities of several carnages to come.

Police and education are the fundamentals of every society. Both the institutions are long infected with deep rooted corruption; bribery and nepotism are the levels of entry to those institutions. Now the mushroom growth of TV channels has levelled media with education and law enforcement. The irresponsible, inexperienced and over excited anchors were simultaneously creating panic and clamouring the judgements about the situation. Media entirely ignored the massacre of 25 Shiite the very same day. Many overseas Pakistani learnt about the attack on Shiite through foreign media. That was a clear exposure of media biased in dealing with minorities in Pakistan.

The USAID and donors to Pakistan should take this situation very seriously and make the incumbents accountable for the deaths of the civilian caused by the paucity of resources and criminal negligence and evaluate the situation thoroughly about the funds and resources given to the government and NGOs in Pakistan. Actions of the donors against incumbents would speak and make difference.

Sincerely
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Karachi Airport Attack and Balochistan Shia Attack

Press Statement

**Jen Psaki, Department Spokesperson, Office of the Spokesperson,
Washington, DC**

June 9, 2014

We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of Sunday's brazen attack on Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. We wish those who were injured a full and speedy recovery. The United States condemns this brutal attack and stands steadfast in its commitment to the people of Pakistan in their efforts to counter terrorism and build a peaceful future. We support Pakistan's efforts to bring all those involved in planning and executing this attack to justice.

Regrettably, the Pakistani people face violent assaults from numerous groups. On the same day as the airport attack, 30 Shia pilgrims were murdered in Balochistan, the latest innocent victims of sectarian

violence. The United States also sends its sincere condolences to those affected by this heinous attack and strongly condemns those responsible. Extremist violence against innocent Pakistani men, women, and children of any faith is an assault on universal human values. We encourage the government to take steps to protect and improve the lives of members of Pakistan's minorities and take concrete steps to promote tolerance and religious freedom.

U.S. NASA Engineer Inspires Pakistani Youth to Study Science and Technology: Islamabad | May 22, 2014

Zainab Nagin Ahmed-Cox, a U.S. National Aeronautical Space Administration (NASA) engineer who works on the Mars Curiosity Rover project, met with approximately 120 English Access Micro scholarship students on May 21 at National University of Modern Languages (NUML). The Access students presented their original science projects on space exploration. Their projects included star gazing and searching for new planets, a remote-controlled rover, and skits acting out how it would be to land on an unknown planet and begin to learn about its resources.

Nagin spoke to the students about how American NASA scientists and engineers work together with counterparts from around the world to prepare for and carry out space exploration programs. She encouraged Pakistani Access students to continue to excel in their studies and closed her remarks by reminding them that, "When we see planet Earth from space, there are no borders; there are no nations. We are all looking up at the same stars; we are all under the same sky; we are all one people. And space exploration is one of the ways that we can work together as part of the same team of men and women to solve problems on our planet."

The participating female and male students were from Access programs in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Muzaffarabad. The implementing partners of the three participating programs are NUML, READ Foundation, and Society of International Education. The Access Program is an after-school two-year intensive English language program for underprivileged teenagers sponsored by the United States in 87 countries around the world.

Modernizing Agriculture from the Ground Up: United States Supports Pakistan's Vegetable Farmers

Islamabad, May 15, 2014 – The United States, through its Agency for International Development (USAID), showcased the results of Pakistani farmers using new technology to grow high value off-season vegetables at its Vegetable Fair 2014 in Islamabad.

Acting Mission Director for USAID Pakistan Nancy Estes underscored the U.S. government's

commitment to develop Pakistan’s agricultural sector: “The produce we see here today marks the introduction of greenhouse technology in Pakistan on a large scale. USAID’s goal is to help farmers establish 1,200 high tunnels and to adopt modern farming practices. These initiatives will significantly transform vegetable farming, increase yields, create more jobs, and help farmers earn higher incomes.”

A large number of participants involved in the industry showcased Pakistani grown fruits and vegetables as well as related products and services at the fair. Vegetable Fair 2014 also connected farmers with packing specialists, marketing experts and exporters, helping them integrate into the global economy.

USAID’s Agribusiness Project, which organized the fair, works to improve produce quality and value, increase agriculture productivity, and remove constraints to agricultural production and marketing. Through the project, USAID also provides quality high yield seed, toolkits, low and high greenhouse tunnels, and technical assistance to Pakistani farmers. The tunnels enable farmers to produce off-season vegetables, greatly increasing land productivity and profitability.

The United States, through USAID, boosts Pakistan's agricultural productivity by introducing advanced farming technologies, services, and practices; building irrigation infrastructure; and introducing improved water management practices. Over the last 18 months, U.S assistance has helped create 9,000 new jobs in Pakistan’s agricultural sector and generate more than \$60 million in new Pakistani agriculture export orders. For more information about USAID's programs in Pakistan, please visit: <http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan>

Clarification for the Record

Islamabad | May 14, 2014:

Numerous media outlets have inaccurately attributed a statement made by a retired U.S. official to U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador James Dobbins. These attributions are incorrect and have no correlation with Ambassador Dobbins' or the U.S. government's views on U.S - Pakistan relations.

In a recent interview on Pakistan TV, Ambassador Dobbins stated, "I think the relationship has improved a lot from the difficult times in 2012. I see a positive trajectory. The Strategic Dialogue between the two countries has intensified and I think there will be continued progress in this regard. I think the prospects for U.S.-Pakistan relations are actually quite good."

Ambassador Dobbin's statement accurately reflects the views of the U.S. government and our strong

commitment to U.S. - Pakistan relations. The United States is deeply committed to strengthening the U.S.-Pakistan partnership to realize our shared vision of a more peaceful and prosperous Pakistan, as well as a more peaceful and prosperous region.

Congressional Delegation Meets with Senior Government Leaders about Women's Empowerment

Islamabad, May 14, 2014 – A U.S. Congressional delegation led by Martha Roby, U.S. Representative from Alabama and Member of the House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee, visited Pakistan May 12 - 14.

Other members of the delegation were Susan Davis, U.S. Representative from California and Member of the House Armed Services Committee; Cheri Bustos, U.S. Representative from Illinois and Member of the House Agriculture and Transportation Committees; and Renee Ellmers, U.S. Representative from North Carolina and Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The delegation met with Secretary of Defense Lt Gen (retd.) Asif Yasin Malik, Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry, Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif, and women parliamentarians to discuss a range of topics including women in the military, gender-based violence, and gender equality. The delegation reaffirmed the U.S. government's desire to work closely with the Government of Pakistan to improve women's rights and eliminate violence towards women.

Strengthening U.S.-Pakistan Military Ties U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Greenert Meets with PM Sharif and Top Military Officials

Islamabad, May 13, 2014 –Admiral Jonathan Greenert, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations departed Pakistan today after meeting with Prime Minister Sharif and top military officials in Islamabad and Karachi. Admiral Greenert and Prime Minister Sharif reaffirmed the importance of the U.S.-Pakistani security relationship to regional stability and agreed to continue to work together in order to build a stronger partnership and further common objectives.

While in Karachi, Admiral Greenert paid respect to Quaid-e-Azam at the Founders Tomb, met with soldiers at Pakistan Naval Station Rahbar, and visited the Navy Museum. He also met with Rear Admiral Syed Arifullah Hussaini, Commander of Coastal Areas, and Vice Admiral Khan Hasham Bin Siddique, Commander of the Pakistani Fleet.

Admiral Greenert concluded his visit here in the capital with discussions on a wide range of common security issues with Prime Minister Sharif, Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif, Air Chief Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt, and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Asif Sandila, along with other senior military

officials.

U.S. assistance to Pakistan continues to help build the counter-insurgency and counterterrorism capabilities of Pakistan's security forces, which are critical to countering violence in the western border regions. Since 2002, Pakistan has received more than \$16 billion of security assistance and reimbursements. Pakistan's determined effort to root out terrorism and militancy on its own territory is essential for creating a stable environment for promoting economic growth and prosperity.

Clarification for the Record

Islamabad, May 12, 2014

There have been numerous inaccurate or misleading statements in the media recently regarding United States funding for Pakistani media outlets. The United States Embassy provides funding and support to a broad range of Pakistani organizations, including media outlets to facilitate professional development and capacity building activities.

The U.S. government strongly supports vibrant, professional, and independent media in Pakistan as we do worldwide. U.S. government assistance supports Pakistan's media sector broadly, to include a range of print, broadcast, and radio formats. For example, the United States funds capacity building in the form of archiving capabilities, opportunities for journalists to develop their professional skills in the United States through exchange programs, and educational and training opportunities for journalists, editors, and producers.

These programs are not targeted to any one media group, are geared to supporting the community of journalists as a whole, and aid the efforts of journalists to pursue balanced reporting and accurate messaging on events in Pakistan and elsewhere. Suggestions to the contrary are inaccurate, and aim to mislead.

United States and Pakistan Sign Agreement to Rehabilitate Kalat-Quetta-Chaman Highway

Islamabad, May 12, 2014

USAID to provide USD 90 million for the Rehabilitation of this Important Trade Route

Today U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Richard Olson and Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry signed a project implementation agreement to complete the N-25 highway connecting Chaman to Kalat through Quetta, Balochistan. The agreement provides \$64 million to the Government

of Pakistan for this crucial infrastructure project, with an additional \$26 million to be allocated at a future date.

The rehabilitation of the highway will restore a major trade route between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states. The highway will also establish a vital link between Balochistan and the rest of Pakistan, reaching all the way to Karachi. It will help revitalize cities and communities along the highway, expand communication and transportation services, and improve access to basic health, education, and other social services.

“The United States is proud to partner with the Government of Pakistan in rebuilding essential infrastructure. When completed, this highway will become part of the growing legacy of partnership between our two nations, as it will serve the people of Pakistan for generations to come,” Ambassador Olson said at the signing.

Under the agreement, the United States, through USAID, will fund the construction of the remaining 111 kilometers needed to complete the 247 kilometer-long highway. Work on the project began in 2004, but was interrupted in 2010 because of security challenges in the area. The Pakistani National Highway Authority will be responsible for all construction and will work with stakeholders to ensure its completion.

The funding of the highway is one element of a comprehensive U.S. program in Pakistan to help restore essential public infrastructure in remote communities. To date, the United States has funded the construction and rehabilitation of nearly 900 kilometers of roads, including the four major trade routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the construction of 474 kilometers of roads in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

United States Empowers Future Teachers through University Scholarships

Islamabad, May 8, 2014 - Today the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded scholarships to 26 students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at the International Islamic University (IIU) in Islamabad as part of the \$165 million Pakistan Reading Project. The scholarships will pay for tuition and supplies as well as provide a stipend to recipients. The U.S. Government will provide more than 4,500 scholarships to aspiring teachers.

While addressing the students, USAID Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb said, "No matter how many schools or libraries we build or facilities we provide, none of it will matter until we invest in improving the quality of teachers. Keeping this in mind, I am pleased to note that the USAID funded Pakistan

Reading Project is working to do just that. The Project is another significant initiative of the U.S. Government in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan to improve the standard of basic education."

This is the first group of IIU students to receive scholarships from the Pakistan Reading Project - a \$165 million USAID program that will improve the reading skills of at least 2.5 million children to ensure that they are reading at or above grade level by 2019. The Project works closely with 28 Pakistani universities and 116 elementary teacher training colleges like IIU throughout Pakistan to improve the quality of teaching skills and curriculum.

The U.S. partnership with the Government of Pakistan supports the rehabilitation and construction of over 1,350 schools in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The United States is also establishing centers for advanced education studies at four Pakistani universities and expanding English skills for more than 5,000 low-income students. The United States has awarded more than 4,800 scholarships to university students to pursue higher education through the Pakistan-USAID Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program. For more information on the U.S. assistance for education in Pakistan, visit: <http://1.usa.gov/Mr1uR4> For high resolution picture, please see this link:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaid_pakistan/14156379743/in/set-72157644561719092/

South by Southwest Music Festival Joins Pakistan's First Ever Music Mela Conference

May 4, 2014

The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) and Foundation for Arts, Culture and Education (FACE) welcomed more than 1,000 attendees to the 2014 Music Mela Conference held May 2-4, 2014, in Islamabad. Noted musicians and U.S. exchange program alumni Arieb Azhar and Zeejah Fazli organized the festival, which is funded by U.S. Embassy Islamabad through an alumni grant.

"This festival is an opportunity for musicians, artists, promoters, students and music enthusiasts to celebrate Pakistani music and address some of the challenges facing our industry," said Arieb Azhar, a 2012 CenterStage exchange alumnus. "Our hope is the mela will provide a platform for musicians to work together for the enhancement of our musical heritage and industry."

Fifteen folk, fusion, rock, indie and qawwali bands from across Pakistan performed. The mela also included master classes, presentations and panel discussions with music industry luminaries. Performing artists included: Khumariyaan, Zeb & Haniya, Mekaal Hassan Band with Humaira Channa, Bukhshi Brothers, Usman Shakeel & Ali Hamdani, Masuma Anwar, Amna Mawaz and Feriyal Amal

Aslam, Malang Party, Poor Rich Boy, Qayaas, Taimur Khan & Natasha Humera Ejaz, Abbas Ali Khan, Mai Dhai, Imran Aziz Mian Band, Akhtar Chanal Zahri and Arieb Azhar.

Representatives from Coke Studios and Sachal Studio examined aspects of successful Pakistani music projects; Haroon Rashid discussed his advocacy work on intellectual property rights for musicians; and folklorist Uxi Mufti spoke on developing a music curriculum for schools and colleges. Todd Puckhaber, music festival booker for one of the United States' largest and most prestigious festivals, South by Southwest (SXSW), gave a workshop for Pakistani musicians on how to market themselves to the U.S. music industry and apply to festivals like SXSW.

“Music has the unique power to transcend boundaries, promote peace and cultivate mutual understanding,” said U.S. Embassy Counselor for Public Affairs Angela Aggeler. “We’re delighted that an exchange program like Center Stage has inspired Arieb and Zeejah to organize this conference, and thrilled to introduce the SXSW festival to Pakistan’s diverse range of musical traditions.”

For the complete schedule of workshops and presentations at Music Mela 2014, visit www.musicmela.org. Follow the mela on Twitter at hashtag #musicmela.

About Center Stage: Each year, the U.S. Department of State connects foreign musicians with American communities through the Center Stage exchange program, which sends bands on a month-long tour to the United States. In 2012, U.S. Embassy Islamabad sent four Pakistani bands on Center Stage tours, including: Noori, Zeb & Haniya, Danish Ali and Ali Gul Pir, and Arieb Azhar. For summer 2014, U.S. Embassy Islamabad will send two Pakistani bands on tour with Center Stage: Khumariyaan from Peshawar, and Poor Rich Boy from Lahore—both are featured performers at the 2014 Music Mela. Learn more: <http://centerstageus.org/>.

About PUAN: The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network is one of the largest U.S. alumni networks in the world. It consists of more than 13,000 students and professionals who have participated in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. Learn more: www.pakusalumninetwork.com.

About FACE: The Foundation for Arts, Culture and Education (FACE) aims to empower and educate people through arts and cultural interactions. FACE organizes public concerts, interactive performances with local and international musicians, workshops, master classes, jam sessions and visual productions. Learn more: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/FACE-Foundation-for-Arts-Culture-Education/600564396687716>.

About South by Southwest: SXSW is one of the largest and most prestigious music festivals in the United States. Now in its 28th year, SXSW consists of three industry conferences and festivals: original music, independent films, and emerging technologies. It showcases more than 2,300 acts from around

the globe on over 100 stages in Austin, Texas each year. Learn more: <http://sxsw.com/music/about>.

United States Marks World Press Freedom Day

Islamabad | May 2, 2014

The United States joins the international community in marking World Press Freedom Day on May 3. World Press Freedom Day is an annual occasion to recognize, honor, and underscore the essential role of independent media in fostering and protecting freedom of expression and democratic principles. The United States values freedom of the press as a key component of democratic governance. Democratic societies are not infallible, but they are accountable, and the exchange of ideas is the foundation for accountable governance. In the United States and in many places around the world, the press fosters active debate, provides investigative reporting, and serves as a forum to express different points of view, particularly on behalf of those who are marginalized in society.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental freedom enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United States remains firmly committed to promoting and protecting press freedom, and to supporting United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) dedication to freedom of expression across the globe.

As Ambassador Olson said recently, "a free media is a key ingredient of democracy, and allows for a healthy national discussion on shaping a peaceful future for the country." The United States commends journalists around the world for the important role they play in upholding democratic values and for their commitment to the free exchange of ideas.

U.S. Special Envoy to the OIC Discusses Interfaith Issues and Religious Tolerance during Islamabad Visit

April 30, 2014

U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Rashad Hussain is leading a delegation on a three-day visit to Pakistan. During his visit to Islamabad, Mr. Hussain met with Pakistani government, civil society, religious, interfaith, and political leaders to discuss U.S. engagement with Pakistan and the Muslim world as well as interfaith work among Pakistan's rich diversity of religious traditions. President Obama appointed Mr. Hussain Special Envoy to the OIC in February 2010. As U.S. Special Envoy, Mr. Hussain has been active in efforts to protect religious freedom, including initiatives to protect the rights of religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries.

Special Envoy Hussain also met with students at Islamabad's International Islamic University. He and

the students had a positive exchange of views about U.S. relations with the Muslim world and what, in fact, are common interests for both. Hussain said, "What we seek in our partnership with Pakistan is driven by values and goals that we share as Americans, Pakistanis, and people of different faiths -- access to education for boys and girls, progress in health and development, the end to violent extremism, and the protection of rights of all people."

In his meetings, Special Envoy Hussain shared his experience of working with America's rich tapestry of religious communities, including interfaith work with the Jewish community to address anti-Semitism, as well as his work within the Muslim community to address sectarian violence. In meetings with Pakistani madrassa leaders, Special Envoy Hussain stressed the need to address Pakistan's social issues via education, both religious and secular. They emphasized that the curriculum should spread messages of peace and tolerance.

Mr. Hussain's Profile

Mr. Hussain received his J.D. from Yale Law School. Upon graduation, he served as a law clerk to Damon J. Keith on the U.S. Court of Appeals. Mr. Hussain earned his Master's degrees in Public Administration (Kennedy School of Government) and Arabic and Islamic Studies from Harvard University. Upon his appointment, President Obama stated, "As an accomplished lawyer and a close trusted member of my White House staff, Rashad has played a key role in developing the partnerships I called for in Cairo, and as a Hafiz of the Quran, he is a respected member of the American Muslim community, and I thank him for carrying forward this important work."

United States Works to Improve Pakistan's Financial Sector

Islamabad, April 29, 2014

The results of a first of its kind financial study for Pakistan, Consumer Protection and Financial Literacy (CPFL), was funded and released by the U.S. government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank at a one-day workshop in Islamabad. More than 220 leaders and professionals from the financial sector deliberated on the study's key findings and the next steps to improve the country's policy and regulatory environment. A primary objective of the study was to increase Pakistani consumers' financial knowledge and explain to them how to responsibly access needed financial services.

Speaking at the launch, USAID Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb said, "USAID believes that financial literacy is critical to ensure that consumers are able to make smart financial decisions. Strong financial

consumer protection empowers the public to demand improved transparency and efficiency in the financial sector and at the same time play an important role in ensuring sensible growth. Robust consumer protection, transparency and efficiency in the financial sector also build public confidence, thus encouraging positive financial activity that will stimulate economic growth, and also grow Pakistan's credit markets."

The CPFL study produced six key findings and recommendation, including the need to improve coordination of consumer protection among all stakeholders; fortify Pakistan's Security Exchange Commission and disclosure; strengthen dispute resolution for consumers; and develop an integrated financial education strategy. The World Bank conducted the CPFL study for USAID.

The workshop was organized through USAID Training for Pakistan, a \$33.9 million four year project which provides training and exchange programs to more than 6,000 Pakistanis.

For more details regarding economic growth and agriculture sector, please visit the URL:

1.usa.gov/1dKTncZ

Deosai Film Premiere - U.S. Supports Wildlife Conservation in Pakistan

Islamabad, April 25, 2014 - In celebration of Earth Day 2014, Walkabout Films' documentary, Deosai - The Last Sanctuary, about endangered Himalayan brown bears living on the Deosai plateau premiered on April 24 at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad. U.S. Ambassador Richard Olson and Pakistani natural history film maker Nisar Malik delivered remarks at the film's opening. The U.S. Embassy's Ambassador's Fund provided support for this project. Ambassador Olson noted the film well fit his new vision for the Fund, which now supports wildlife conservation projects, in addition to the focus areas of water, sanitation and hygiene; women's issues; entrepreneurship; and cultural preservation.

Ambassador Olson expressed admiration for the immense tourism potential of Pakistan's wildlife and natural beauty. "I look forward to the day when people from around the world flock to Pakistan to hike over the Hispar La, rally in the Cholistan Desert, admire the massive sea cliffs of Gwadar, or simply enjoy bird-watching at Rawal Lake," Ambassador Olson said.

Nisar Malik noted that "Pakistan is rich in natural history. Walkabout Films is pleased that the Ambassador's Fund supported us with the "Give Back Project" that allows us to create awareness through visual education. This resource will soon be available to educators globally for free via the internet." Walkabout Film's new "Give Back" project follows the best practice of engaging members of local communities in conservation efforts.

Building on 20 years of journalistic experience with film crews in some of the most remote areas of Pakistan, Nisar Malik started Walkabout Films in 2004 and was instrumental in filming snow leopards for Sir David Attenborough's Planet Earth series in 2004. He then hosted the award winning Snow Leopard - Beyond the Myth. Since then, Walkabout Films has become one of the leading nature and wildlife filmmakers in the South Asian region. The Walkabout Films team has completed projects for National Geographic, Adventure One, the BBC Natural History Unit, Channel 4, Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel. Nisar has also been awarded the President of Pakistan's Pride of Performance award for his service in conserving Pakistan's natural heritage.

The U.S. Ambassador's Fund supports small scale, high impact initiatives designed by Pakistan's grassroots organizations and community groups. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) manages the Fund and the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) works closely with grassroots organizations to support activities for up to one year in duration.

United States forms a Cultural Bridge with Pakistan through the Lincoln Corner at University of AJK

April 24, 2014

Islamabad, April 24, 2014 - U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Counselor Angela Aggeler and University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Vice Chancellor Prof. Syed Dilnawaz Ahmad Gardezi signed a three-year agreement to continue their partnership with the Lincoln Corner Muzaffarabad, today in Islamabad. Lincoln Corners are multipurpose resource centers which provide information about U.S. culture and educational opportunities for study in the United States. Under the agreement, the United States will continue providing books, magazines, internet service, multimedia equipment and online academic databases to Lincoln Corner Muzaffarabad, located at the University of AJK.

Aggeler said, "We are thrilled to continue our long-term partnership with the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The Lincoln Corner in Muzaffarabad is a wonderful resource for both students and faculty at the University."

In addition to being public libraries, Lincoln Corners serve as venues for public speakers and educational events. Since its creation in 2005, the Lincoln Corners program in Pakistan has hosted hundreds of speakers for professional, academic and civic groups on topics of interest to both the United States and Pakistan. There are 16 Lincoln Corners in Pakistan.

U.S. and Pakistan Celebrate Dr. Norman E. Borlaug and 50 years of Agriculture Partnership

Islamabad | April 23, 2014

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT), Pakistani research partners, and the daughter of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, Jeannie Borlaug Laube, celebrated Dr. Norman E. Borlaug's 100th birthday and 50 years of U.S.-Pakistan partnership in agriculture today. Dr. Borlaug, known as the father of the "Green Revolution," is credited with feeding billions of people thanks to his efforts to revolutionize agriculture around the world. An event held today at the Marriott Hotel to celebrate Dr. Borlaug's contribution to Pakistan was part of a weeklong celebration highlighting Dr. Borlaug's work and the U.S.-Pakistan agricultural partnership.

Dr. Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his work in agriculture, first came to Pakistan in 1963 and visited the country many times over the next five decades. His work with Dr. Muhammad Manzur Bajwa and other Pakistani scientists to breed high productivity wheat varieties increased wheat yields by 25 percent between 1961 and 1969. Dr. Borlaug, along with USDA, CIMMYT, Pakistani partners, and scientists around the world brought the "Green Revolution" to Pakistan. The Green Revolution radically increased agricultural yields by introducing farmers around the world to new crop varieties, innovative ways of planting, efficient use of fertilizers, and new technologies for irrigation.

During today's event, the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Richard Olson, thanked President Mamnoon Hussain for his participation and encouraged attendees to seek opportunities to continue Dr. Borlaug's legacy and to secure future food supplies. In his remarks, he also emphasized the importance of government and business working together, saying "A strong public-private dialogue and partnership in this sector can ensure that farmers have the highest quality seeds, supplies, and infrastructure; and that consumers have world class products at fair prices."

Dr. Borlaug's work in the 1960s set the stage for 50 more years of agricultural collaboration between the United States and Pakistan. Today, the United States actively supports agricultural development in Pakistan through USDA and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) projects. This support helps increase farmer incomes and improves livelihoods by fighting wheat and cotton diseases, efficiently utilizing and conserving water on farms, enhancing dairy production through better management and control of Foot and Mouth Disease, and fighting sheep and goat diseases.

The United States continues to partner with Pakistani counterparts to address food security issues in Pakistan, combat plant and animal diseases, and to educate scientists and professionals to ensure continued advancement in the agricultural sector.

United States Condemns Attack on Journalists in Pakistan

Washington, April 19, 2014

The United States condemns the vicious attack on television journalist Hamid Mir in Karachi today, the latest in a series of worrisome attacks on journalists in Pakistan. Freedom of the press, including ensuring that journalists can safely carry out their vital mission, is of paramount importance to freedom of expression and to the healthy functioning of any democracy. As Ambassador Olson powerfully said just recently, attacks like these should be a wake-up call to all who value democracy in Pakistan. We wish Hamid Mir a speedy recovery, and urge the Government of Pakistan to bring all those responsible for these attacks on the media to justice.

U.S. Embassy Hosts Hands-on “Online Journalism Resources” Training

Islamabad | April 17, 2014

The United States Embassy hosted a training session for working journalists, including reporters and sub-editors, to provide current information on free, U.S.-based information resources and databases available for enriching their professional expertise today in Islamabad. U.S. Embassy Spokesperson Meghan Gregonis welcomed the participants and underscored the value of the wealth of online resources available that can help journalists hone their reporting skills and do their jobs with professional finesse. She also emphasized the importance of fair and accurate reporting.

During the training session, journalists were given an extensive tour of online database repositories helpful for researching background information and setting global issues in proper context. Participants were able to explore eLibraryUSA, a free-of-cost resource offered by the U.S. Department of State to students, journalists, teachers, librarians, and researchers in Pakistan and other select countries. This resource allows users to access thousands of books, journals, newspapers, reports, and documentaries. The workshop also covered essential U.S. government websites that provide official information on foreign policy and related issues and included a discussion of journalism ethics. The session was conducted by the U.S. Embassy’s Information Resource Center, which is a resource available to journalists, academics, and others interested in learning more about the United States or accessing U.S. reference materials.

In closing the session, Embassy Spokesperson Meghan Gregonis encouraged the journalists to take full advantage of the free resources available to enrich their reporting. She said, “The resources available help journalists to rely on multiple sources, verify facts and figures, and double check the authenticity of their reports as they bring important news stories to the people of Pakistan.”

The Information Resource Center, in addition to providing research services, also manages the Lincoln Corner program which allows the Pakistani public to access information about American culture, values, government, and society. Lincoln Corners bring resources like online databases and other

reference materials including books, magazines, and informative videos to people throughout Pakistan.

United States Demonstrates Support for Pakistan's Economic Growth and Regional Integration

Islamabad, April 16, 2014 – The United States demonstrated its support for Pakistan's economic growth at the Central Asian Business Opportunities Conference held in Islamabad from April 14- 16. Significant outcomes of the Conference included the signing of six Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian businesses to promote regional trade and investment as a means to facilitate regional economic growth. The conference was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and co-hosted by Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce and the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI).

More than 250 private and public sector participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan came together to seek new business opportunities and pursue greater regional coordination of trade and investment. The focus of the Conference was on agricultural products, textiles, leather, pharmaceuticals, and construction. The private sector also announced plans for increased intra-regional participation in trade fairs.

Addressing the importance of the conference in assisting businesses across Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan deepen economic and trade relations, USAID's Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb said, "This Conference was another significant example of the United States' efforts to enhance regional trade and economic integration, both within and outside the region."

The five Central Asian Republics, together with Afghanistan and Pakistan, have a market population of 289 million and a GDP of USD 594 billion. However, physical and other barriers to trade and investment prevent the region from realizing its economic potential. Addressing the closing session, the President of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Zubair Motiwala acknowledged the achievements of the conference by saying, "Making regional trade successful is in the interest of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Opening doors for trade in the region will benefit traders in all Central Asian countries resulting in economic growth in the whole region."

The United States strongly supports Pakistan's focus on expanding regional trade. The United States has funded the construction and rehabilitation of more than 900 kilometers of roads and highways in Pakistan, including the four major trade routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The United States also supports the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, regional business networking events,

the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline, and the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) regional power transmission project.

For more information about USAID's programs in Pakistan, please visit:

<http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan>

U.S. and Intel Pakistan Support Education and Women's Economic Empowerment

Islamabad | April 10, 2014

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Punjab Provincial Director Jeffrey Bakken and Intel Pakistan Country Manager Naveed Siraj signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today on the use of technology to support education and women's economic empowerment in Pakistan. Education programs outlined in the MOU include digital curriculum development, content management systems and solutions, and modeling of classroom information technology and computer usage models such as mobile computing and "computers on wheels." Women's economic empowerment activities will focus on supporting entrepreneurship, workforce skills development training, and computer literacy programs.

"It gives me great pleasure to embark on a partnership with Intel, which will explore ways to accelerate development using cutting-edge technology," said Bakken at the signing ceremony. Siraj expressed appreciation for the collective efforts of the two organizations. "Intel's engagement with USAID will ensure broader digital inclusion of rural communities and greater economic opportunities for our youth who can utilize newly acquired information technology skills to transform their lives," he said. The MOU with Intel Pakistan builds on eight years of successful worldwide collaboration between USAID and Intel International. The more than twenty partnerships resulting from this global alliance have trained teachers on how to effectively use technology in their classrooms, provided needed technology to schools, and improved connectivity and digital content for youth around the world. In signing this MOU, Pakistan joins this global community and demonstrates its strong commitment to the future prosperity of the nation's women and youth.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, is partnering with Pakistan to help millions of children and young people gain education skills to help advance their success. The United States assists Pakistan in its efforts to enhance student enrolment in schools and early-grade reading. Together with teacher training, these efforts will empower 3.2 million Pakistani children with the ability to read at or above grade level by 2018. For more information about USAID's contribution to the education sector in Pakistan, please visit: <http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/education>

Ambassador Olson Meets With Visiting U.S. Journalists, Calls for Greater Protection of Journalists in Pakistan

April 8, 2014

Ambassador Richard Olson met with a group of nine American journalists from the East-West Center's Pakistan-U.S. Journalists Exchange program. The Ambassador discussed issues of press freedom and dangers to journalists in Pakistan.

In his remarks to the group, Ambassador Olson said, "We are alarmed and deplore the increased attacks on journalists in Pakistan. The most recent attack against one of Pakistan's most well regarded journalists, who has been a staunch defender of fundamental democratic freedoms including freedom of the press here, should be a wake-up call to all who value democracy in this country. A free media is a key ingredient of democracy, and allows for a healthy national discussion on shaping a peaceful future for the country. Everyone must do more to defend these courageous voices against those who seek to silence them."

This U.S. Embassy-sponsored journalist exchange program is designed to increase and deepen public understanding of the two countries and their relationship. The journalists are meeting with Pakistani government officials, media, and representatives from the private sector and non-government organizations in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore.

U.S. Improves IESCO's ability to Reduce Unscheduled Loadshedding

Islamabad, April 03, 2014 – Marking a milestone in U.S. support of Pakistan's energy sector, Nancy Estes, Acting Mission Director for United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Yousaf Awan, Chief Executive Officer of the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), inaugurated the Power Distribution Control Center (PDCC) at IESCO today.

The PDCC, built with assistance from USAID, enables IESCO to monitor the flow of power in real time, allowing technicians to reduce unplanned loadshedding in the region. "This control center is enabling IESCO to monitor the electrical power flow throughout the region by interpreting and displaying data from more than 1,000 meters installed throughout each of their 79 grid stations. This system provides accurate information to both IESCO and the National Power Control Center to so that they can compare actual loads against established targets in real time," said Estes. She added, "The United States and Pakistan are working together to help Pakistan meet growing energy demands and implement the necessary reforms to improve efficiency of the energy sector to accelerate economic growth. These efforts include improving the electricity distribution grid. The United States

Government is working with all ten of Pakistan's public power distribution companies to improve their operations, reduce financial and power losses, and ultimately to ensure that consumers have a more reliable electricity supply."

The PDCC is part of the National Power Control Center (NPCC) which received similar USAID assistance to address energy shortages on the national level. By installing over 9,000 smart meters in 741 grid stations in all ten government owned distribution companies, USAID's Power Distribution Program (PDP) assists the Distribution Companies (DISCOs) and the NPCC in managing the flow of electricity, significantly reducing unscheduled load shedding.

These efforts are part of a broad U.S. government energy sector assistance program for Pakistan that aims to increase the country's electricity output to benefit more than 16 million people. The projected goal is the addition of 1400 megawatts to Pakistan's national power grid by the end of 2014. As part of the assistance program, USAID has funded renovations at Tarbela, Jamshoro, Mangla, Guddu, and Muzaffargarh power plants, aided the completion of Gomal Zam and Satpara dams, and helped improve power distribution throughout Pakistan. These efforts have already added more than 1000 megawatts of power to Pakistan's power system.

Social Media Summit Unites Journalists, Bloggers, Activists, and Social Media Experts from Across Pakistan

March 29, 2014 | Islamabad

The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) and the Progressive Youth Forum (PYF) welcomed more than 300 attendees to the 2014 Social Media Summit held March 29-30, 2014, in Islamabad. Abdullah Dayo, a U.S. exchange program alumnus, social media activist, and general secretary of PYF, organized the summit, which is funded by a small grant from the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN). U.S. Ambassador Richard Olson greeted the summit attendees during the March 29 opening session.

"You have an extraordinary capacity to make a positive impact in your communities and your country—and social media is a powerful platform for your voices to be heard," said Ambassador Olson, before taking a "selfie" photo with the attendees, which he then tweeted from the U.S. Embassy's twitter account @usembislamabad.

The theme for the two day summit is "Social Media for Social Change." Attendees, including journalists, bloggers, social activists, students, and U.S. exchange alumni will share their experiences and exchange ideas on a range of topics. Panel sessions will focus on social media for youth activism, peace promotion, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, digital storytelling, and the impact of

social media on the changing landscape of journalism.

Speakers include noted journalists, social media and civil society experts, and entrepreneurs. The summit, which also includes Skype sessions with international social media experts, will culminate in a group exercise: a debate on the future of social media in Pakistan.

Learn more about the Summit at <https://www.facebook.com/socialmediasummit2014>. Follow the Summit on Twitter via hashtag #SMS14.

About PYF: The Progressive Youth Forum's goals are to provide a platform for youth to advocate for democratic values, to develop youth leadership capabilities, and to mobilize youth for peace-building initiatives in Pakistan. Learn more at <http://pyfpakistan.org/>.

About PUAN: The Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network is one of the largest U.S. alumni networks in the world. It consists of more than 13,000 students and professionals who have participated in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. Learn more at www.pakusalumninetwork.com.

United States Helps Strengthen Pakistan's Civil Society Organizations

Islamabad | March 27, 2014

The United States funded a report designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Pakistan's civil society organizations. The study will help enable members of Pakistan's civil society organizations be more effective advocates in Pakistan's development.

"The focus of this program is to strengthen local institutions and organizations to help achieve sustainable development. The United States, through its Agency for International Development (USAID), is assisting Pakistani community service organizations to build their capacity," said USAID Acting Mission Director Nancy Estes while addressing community leaders. She added that, "The work being done by these organizations are critical to help ensure Pakistan's sustainable development to benefit all Pakistanis."

According to the report, more than half of the organizations are currently operating without written policies or procedures. But research funded by USAID and completed by the Assessment and Strengthening Program-Associates in Development will help civil society organizations improve their financial and managerial efficiency.

Through the continued cooperation of the Government of Pakistan, the United States through USAID supports Pakistan's economic growth, health, energy and education. For more information, see

www.usaid.gov/pakistan.

For photos of this event: https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaid_pakistan/sets/72157642991766845/

United States Helps Pakistan Fight Tuberculosis

March 25, 2014

In recognition of World Tuberculosis Day, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Acting Mission Director Nancy Estes presented the 2010-11 Pakistan Tuberculosis (TB) Prevalence Survey in an event at the Pakistan National Council of Arts. This is the first survey of its kind since 1987.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that usually infects the lungs, and is spread from person to person through the air.

This newest survey estimates TB is present in 348 out of 100,000 people, double the rate from 1987.

Estes said, "TB prevalence at this level signifies that we must double our efforts to effectively combat TB in Pakistan."

Minister of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination Saira Afzal Tarar received the report from Estes and said, "World TB Day underscores the world's commitment to control and eradicate the disease. Pakistan and the international community must work together to fight TB, if we want to eradicate it."

The governments of Pakistan and the United States, the World Health Organization, the Global Fund and others financially support Pakistan's national tuberculosis eradication program. Through this partnership, 1,500 laboratories and 5,000 treatment sites providing free diagnosis and treatment services have been established in Pakistan.

U.S. investments in Pakistan's health sector saves lives, helps develop a healthy workforce, and increases prosperity and human development. To find out more about what the United States does to support Pakistan's health sector, go to www.usaid.gov/pakistan/health.

U.S.-Pakistan Trade Mission Seeks Investment Opportunities in Pakistan

March 20, 2014

A U.S.-Pakistan Business Council (USPBC) delegation led by Chairman Miles Young visited Pakistan

March 16-20 for a series of public and private sector meetings aimed at increasing trade between the United States and Pakistan, and fostering U.S. corporate investment in Pakistan. The delegation met with high level officials, including Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Commerce Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan. Accompanied by USPBC President Esperanza Jelalian, the delegation held productive meetings in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi.

Washington D.C.-based USPBC is an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Its members include small, medium, and multinational companies that export to or invest in Pakistan. The Chamber has maintained an ongoing and active role in promoting private sector engagement in Pakistan and works closely with the American Business Forum in Lahore and the American Business Council in Karachi. This is the USPBC's sixth trade mission to Pakistan, and the first visit since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was elected. USPBC members stressed that U.S. companies are eager to work with both countries to deepen U.S. private sector engagement in Pakistan during their meetings.

Carolyn Brehm, Vice President of Government Relations for Procter & Gamble, said that Pakistan has made remarkable progress in a short time and that her company is expanding its business by making additional investments in Pakistan. She said that Procter & Gamble sees great potential in the huge Pakistani market.

The delegation includes Miles Young of Ogilvy & Mather, Carolyn Brehm of Procter & Gamble, Najeeb Ghauri of Netsol Technologies, Ashraf Qazi of the Pakistan American Investment Group, David Wilhelm and Fazli Qadir of Hecate Energy, Taher Khan of Interflow, and Kamran Qamar of Cargill.

United States Helps Save the Lives of Electricity Linemen

March 19, 2014

The United States government is helping to save the lives of thousands of linemen who work for Pakistan's electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) through a safety training program. The most recent batch of graduate trainees was presented with certificates of completion at a ceremony in Islamabad today. The trainings are conducted under a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

"Effective operations and maintenance of the distribution network depends heavily on linemen," said Michael Curtis, Director of USAID's Energy Office. "However, historically in Pakistan, over 100 experienced linemen lose their lives and the same numbers of linemen are severely disabled every year," Curtis added. To help save lives and improve safety, the United States, through USAID, developed training programs for DISCO linemen, staff, and senior management. The sessions are designed to instill a culture of safety and by so doing reduce deaths, which represent an irreplaceable

loss to families and also cause significant losses to distribution companies. "The U.S. government will continue to support Pakistan to bring improvements in the electricity distribution network to improve availability and reliability for consumers," said Curtis.

USAID has trained over 2,000 linemen in this program and has helped DISCOs offer these trainings to another 9,000 linemen. USAID also provided training to 150 DISCO officials who will be implementing the safety programs in Pakistani DISCOs. The program helps government-owned electric power distribution companies to improve their performance, reduce losses, increase revenues, and enhance customer service.

These efforts are part of a broad U.S. government energy sector assistance program for Pakistan that aims to increase its electricity output to benefit about 16 million people throughout the country by 2014. As part of the U.S. government energy sector assistance program, USAID has funded renovations at Tarbela, Jamshoro, Mangla, Guddu, and Muzafargharh power plants, aided the completion of Gomal Zam and Satpara dams, and helped improve power distribution throughout Pakistan. By the end of 2014, these efforts are expected to add a cumulative total of 1400 megawatts to Pakistan's national power grid.

U.S. Supported Wheat Productivity Enhancement Project Brings New Wheat Planters to Pakistan

Islamabad | March 17, 2014

The U.S.-Pakistan Wheat Productivity Enhancement Project (WPEP) today brought together wheat researchers from the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to celebrate progress in the global fight against wheat diseases. At the event, USDA Agricultural Counselor in Pakistan Clay Hamilton, CIMMYT country representative Mohammad Imtiaz, and Secretary of the Ministry of Food Security and Research Seerat Asghar presented eleven new wheat planters to WPEP partners. These planters, accompanied by other upgrades, will allow WPEP's provincial partner institutions to accelerate research and produce higher yielding wheat varieties for Pakistan.

One of highest priorities of the WPEP program is to introduce disease resistant wheat varieties into Pakistan. The 'UG99' wheat rust disease poses the greatest threat to Pakistan's wheat crop. While 'UG99' has not yet reached Pakistan, the development of resistant varieties and their availability to farmers is critical to ensuring that Pakistan's wheat crop is safe. Toward this end, WPEP has successfully introduced two new UG99-resistant wheat varieties: 'NARC 2011' and 'Pak-13.'

A visiting USDA wheat scientist has been working with Pakistani and CIMMYT colleagues for the past

five days. These wheat experts have evaluated new, high-yielding wheat varieties for resistance to disease and environmental adaptability. The best of these varieties will be passed on to farmers in Pakistan. In his remarks at the opening ceremony, USDA Agriculture Counselor in Pakistan Clay Hamilton said: "Today's event is one more example in a longstanding series of successful scientific collaborations between the United States and Pakistan in agriculture. This is a prime example of collaboration between governments and research institutes that are so critical. In fact, this year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Dr. Norman Borlaug beginning work in Pakistan to improve wheat productivity."

Secretary Asghar shared Hamilton's sentiments stating, "We have been the recipients of knowledge and equipment from the United States. Keeping pace with wheat requirements is very important for us. This is not a machine – it is a technology that has been transferred to us."

The five-year WPEP project focuses on monitoring wheat diseases, developing and introducing disease resistant varieties, upgrading infrastructure, fostering scientific exchanges between Pakistan and the United States, and teaching farmers new agronomic techniques.

U.S. Showcases Agricultural Partnership: Dawn Agri Expo

Lahore | March 13, 2014

The United States has showcased its long-standing support for Pakistan's agriculture sector with a pavilion at the Dawn Sarsabz Agri Expo. The U.S. pavilion highlights initiatives that are helping modernize the agriculture sector, improve value chains and market access, increase yields and income for farmers, and ensure the sector's sustainability. The two-day exhibition in Lahore, inaugurated today, is open to the public.

The Expo's U.S. Pavilion features a number of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance programs that help build Pakistan's export capacity, especially in the areas of small- and medium-sized agri-businesses and agricultural producers. The U.S. Pavilion also represents trade promotion programs administered by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce.

Supporting economic growth and agriculture sector development are top U.S. priorities in Pakistan. USAID agriculture programs are helping to increase employment and incomes for an estimated 1.1 million rural families, representing approximately 7.5 million Pakistanis, by 2018. USAID programs help boost Pakistan's agricultural productivity by introducing advanced farming technologies, services, and practices; building additional irrigation infrastructure; and introducing improved water management practices. The United States has provided funding for irrigation systems that serve more than 370,000 acres of farmland in Pakistan; these systems have increased the incomes of more than 800,000

farmers, with the goal of irrigating a total of one million acres by 2016. USAID also helps Pakistan's agribusinesses access financing, form partnerships, and tap into more lucrative markets. These programs are helping Pakistani farmers to leverage new private sector agriculture investments. They have created 9,000 new jobs and assisted in obtaining more than \$60 million in new agriculture product export orders.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has partnered with the Government of Pakistan, U.S. land grant universities, and international partners to help increase agricultural productivity in Pakistan; build institutional capacities to better regulate animal and plant health and food safety issues; and strengthen institutional research capabilities and U.S.-Pakistani scientific collaboration.

USDA programs promote the adoption of new agricultural practices and technologies, and foster collaboration in the areas of animal disease control, aquaculture, cotton diseases, crop estimation forecasting, watershed management and irrigation technology, improvement of soil fertility, and wheat diseases, among others. Through USDA, the United States is also working with Pakistan to vaccinate more than 500,000 cattle, buffalo, and yaks; implement livestock disease surveillance systems; and develop a strain of cotton resistant to the curl leaf virus, which could devastate crops in Pakistan and globally if not addressed.

For more information about USAID's programs in Pakistan, please visit:

<http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan>

60 Second International Film Festival Features U.S. Film Directors

March 9, 2014

U.S. film directors Ted Braun and Marilyn Agrelo delivered keynote speeches at the 60 Second International Film Festival (www.60siff.com), held March 8 at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad. Braun and Agrelo are visiting Pakistan with the U.S. State Department's American Film Showcase (AFS), a touring program that brings U.S. documentaries and film experts to audiences around the world. Their tour is organized in partnership with University of Southern California's (USC) Film School.

Braun and Agrelo praised the festival's efforts in building filmmaking capacity among Pakistan's youth. They also spoke about the power of film to raise awareness of social issues and create social change. "Across the whole range of cinematic arts, filmmakers can bring to life the dreams and struggles of everyday people, engage the pressing questions of our times, and stir audiences to act," Braun said.

During their visit to Pakistan, Braun and Agrelo will lead workshops for emerging filmmakers, hold roundtable discussions of the U.S. film industry with film professionals, and host screenings of the

American documentary film *Side by Side*. The documentary draws on in-depth interviews with Hollywood masters, such as James Cameron, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Soderbergh to explore how new digital technology is revolutionizing filmmaking. "Without this new digital technology, a competition like the 60 Seconds Film Festival would not be possible, so it is fitting that we are discussing this film tonight," Agrelo said.

"We're thrilled to support Pakistan's film industry by bringing the American Film Showcase program to Pakistan, and by creating institutional linkages between the U.S. and Pakistani film industries, professionals, and teachers," said U.S. Embassy Cultural Attaché Robert Raines.

Ted Braun is a writer/director whose critically-acclaimed feature film *Darfur Now* was named one of 2007's top five documentaries by the National Board of Review. International Documentary Association awarded Braun their prize as the Emerging Filmmaker of the Year in 2007. *Movie Maker Magazine* named him one of 25 filmmakers whose work has changed the world. He is an Associate Professor in Screenwriting at USC. More information: <http://americanfilmshowcase.usc.edu/braun/>.

Marilyn Agrelo is a film director who made her debut with the documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*, about a dance education program in New York City's public schools. The film is in pre-production for its Broadway debut. Marilyn's 2009 feature film, *An Invisible Sign*, was released by IFC Films. She has directed episodes of the Emmy-winning children's series *The Electric Company* for Sesame Workshop and is currently at work on a documentary feature about women in Afghanistan. More information: <http://americanfilmshowcase.usc.edu/agrelo/>.

United States and WAPDA Sign Agreement to Rehabilitate Mangla Dam

March 7, 2014

Today the United States and Pakistan signed a \$72 million project implementation agreement to refurbish and upgrade the Mangla dam located in the Mirpur district of Azad Kashmir. The rehabilitation will improve the operating capacity of the hydroelectric plant at Mangala dam by 90 megawatts (MW), enough electricity for about 200,000 Pakistani households. A total amount of \$150 million is slated for the project, with \$72 million allotted for this initial phase.

USAID Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb and the chairman of Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), Syed Raghیب Abbas Shah signed the agreement this evening at the offices of Advanced Engineering Associates International (AEAI), the project's implementing partner.

"The work at Mangla builds upon efforts begun by the U.S. in the 1960s, when the U.S. government funded the construction of Mangla dam. The United States understands that Pakistan is facing an

energy crisis and we are committed to doing our part to alleviate it," Gottlieb said.

Under the agreement, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will fund the refurbishment of two generators and the modernization of ancillary equipment of the power house at the dam. The new equipment will improve the reliability and efficacy of the Mangla dam for the next 40 years.

"WAPDA has also initiated an upgrade of the Mangla power house to enhance its generation capacity from the existing 1000 MW to 1310 MW," said WAPDA Chairman Raghieb Shah. According to Shah, the project is part of the Federal Government's strategy to add low-cost electricity to the national grid to mitigate power shortages in the country.

The funding of the Mangla dam rehabilitation is one element of a comprehensive U.S. energy assistance program in Pakistan, which includes renovating the power plant at the Tarbela Dam, upgrading the Guddu, Jamshoro, and Muzaffargarh thermal power plants, and completing the construction of Satpara and Gomal Zam dams. In total, United States energy programs have added 1088 MW to Pakistan's electrical power systems benefiting over 11 million Pakistanis.

U.S. Recognizes the Brave Women of FATA and KP Province for International Women's Day

Islamabad, March 7, 2014

The United States government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), recognizes the bravery and determination of the women of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) who have endured loss, but are determined to resume a normal life for themselves and their families. Through the USAID funded Conflict Victims Support Program, families and child survivors of conflict in KP and FATA receive economic, social, and medical assistance, as well as scholarships. The vast majority of these survivors lost male family members, most often the main breadwinner, to violence and insecurity. It is especially fitting that these brave women are recognized today, International Women's Day.

USAID Mission Director, Gregory Gottlieb, recognizes the bravery and determination of these women and celebrates their successes. These women, through the USAID Conflict Support Program, receive vocational training to improve their income earning ability thereby enabling them to provide financial support for their families after losing male family members. The scholarships provided to children enable them to continue their education.

“We suffered an emotional and financial blow, and I had to quit school when my father died in a bomb blast four years ago,” said Laiqa, a 13-year old girl. “The USAID scholarship enabled me to resume my education. I would like to become a doctor to help others.” Laiqa’s mother operates a small grocery store, made possible by a grant provided by USAID.

“I am grateful to USAID for helping me to support my family after losing my husband,” said Nafeesa, who started a beauty parlor with financial support from USAID. “I recently was able to expand my business by adding a garment store.”

“Women play an integral part in the development of a society, and I am sure that you will leave a legacy of hard work and bravery that your children will be proud of. The people of the United States will continue promoting stability and prosperity throughout the FATA region and KP Province,” said USAID Mission Director Gottlieb.

USAID’s three-year, \$25 million Conflict Victims Support Program is part of the comprehensive U.S. assistance program in Pakistan, which helps ensure increased opportunity for women’s participation in the labor force; the expansion of girls’ access to quality basic education; improvement in maternal and child health; and the promotion of women’s political, economic, and social rights. To date, 6,800 Pakistani families have benefitted from this program. The Conflict Victims Support Program has also improved the emergency response capabilities of six hospitals and trained 1,095 community members and medics to better respond to mass emergencies.

Ambassador Olson Extends Condolences to Families of Terror Attack at Islamabad District Court Complex in F-8 Market

March 4, 2014

On behalf of the American people, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Richard G. Olson extends deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the despicable act of terrorism that took place at Islamabad’s District Court Complex in the F-8 sector on March 3. The Ambassador wishes those who were injured a full and speedy recovery. We strongly condemn this brutal act.

With this attack on innocent civilians, terrorists continue to demonstrate blatant disregard for life. The United States remains steadfast in its commitment to the people of Pakistan in their efforts to counter terrorism and build a peaceful future.

We stand ready to provide any appropriate aid to assist authorities in investigating this tragic attack.

Bridge-US is nonpartisan and an effort to share and publish news of diversity, harmony and mutual understanding to bridge between nations and inform people directly about how humanitarian aid is positively changing lives in Pakistan.

Dedicated to



Daniel Pearl

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