

All of us who are gathered here today to inaugurate USAID's new offices share a common bond.

Government authorities, representatives of civil society, colleagues of the international community, partners and colleagues -- past and present -- of USAID, we are united in our commitment to Guatemala's development. Collectively we have chosen many paths, but a single destiny -- to create the conditions necessary improve the quality of life for all Guatemalans.

Over the years, USAID has touched the lives of countless people and they, in turn, have given back to improving the lives of Guatemalan's. Wendy Duflon, USAID's Communications Specialist, came here as a

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

young child, when her father helped to launch USAID's Central American Regional development assistance program under the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s. She now continues to honor the commitment her father made –to contribute to Guatemala's development. As a small girl in rural Quiché, Otilia Lux de Cotí was determined to go to school despite the fact that she had no shoes and that most Mayan girls did not attend school. She chose the brave path to overcome barriers and open opportunities for rural, indigenous girls. This path took her beyond her own schooling to become leader of the Girls' Education component of the USAID Basic Education Strengthening Project in the 1990's, to

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

serve on the Historical Truth Commission, and later as Guatemala's Minister of Culture. In the 1960s, the Alliance for Progress offered a young man, Rafael Espada, the opportunity to study in the United States. After a distinguished career in cardiac medicine and surgery in the United States, he returned to Guatemala committed to reshaping his country's future. He has chosen a path of national leadership.

We are gathered here today to celebrate the joy of our new office building, to invite you into our new home and to rededicate ourselves to our central mission –helping Guatemalans to construct a more democratic, secure, prosperous and socially

responsible society. The foundations of this building were laid scarcely a year ago. However, the foundations of our bilateral development cooperation are deep and broad. In 1942 President Roosevelt launched the “Good Neighbor Policy” appealing to neighbors in Latin America for their help during the difficult war years and pledging US assistance in return. To carry out this mandate, the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (IIAA) was created and a “field party” was sent to Guatemala to establish a cooperative assistance arrangement, known as a “servicio”, with the Guatemalan health authorities. Similar arrangements or “servicios” followed in agriculture and education, each dedicated to helping

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

the national government to build the basic development institutions of the day with support for bricks and mortar, training and technical assistance. Then, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy restructured and reformed foreign assistance, creating the Agency for International Development, AID, for the explicit purpose of promoting long-term, sustainable development assistance. He then launched the Alliance for Progress, embracing an ambitious regional development partnership in the Americas and charged AID with fulfilling its development promise.

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

In the ensuing years, AID has been a partner, supporting relief, reform, innovation and institution building. In 1976, USAID responded to the havoc wreaked by the disastrous earthquake, helping to hospitalize, feed, and shelter the innumerable victims and later to rebuild their bridges, homes, schools, and lives. In the early '80's USAID began to help small farmers to diversify their production from corn and beans to high value horticultural crops that has given birth to a promising industry for the rural poor. At the height of the violence and civil conflict, USAID helped to establish the Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos, Guatemala's first human rights organization. Support for the Peace Accords helped

April 17, 2008

to incorporate more than 3,000 ex-combatants into productive society, launch an ambitious bilingual-intercultural education program for primary schools, and provide university scholarships for over 2,000 indigenous youth.

Much has changed since American bilateral assistance commenced more than 60 years ago – our understanding of the conditions and practice of development is constantly evolving. We understand more clearly the central role and primary responsibility of Guatemalans' for their own development, of the importance of working with a broad range of actors –national and local government, civil society and the private sector, and

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

the value of collaborating with other members of the international community.

The building that we dedicate today is a tangible symbol of our continuing and long-term commitment to Guatemala and its future.

Our current program seeks to help the public and private sectors strengthen democratic practices and values, promote broad-based economic growth and address poverty, sustainably manage Guatemala's rich natural resources, and help to improve

Guatemalans' access to quality education and health services while improving food security for those who are most vulnerable.

April 17, 2008

We are proud of our efforts to support educational reforms focused on preparing today's children with the skills they will need to lead more productive lives and contribute to their country's development. We are proud of our work with judicial institutions, enabling them to fashion reforms like the 24 hour courts that have significantly improved the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's capacity to prosecute crime. We are proud of our work with communities, churches, civil society and the private sector to create healthy and safe alternatives to life on the street for urban youth and to create opportunities for ex-gang members to rejoin society through gainful employment.

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

Standing before us is the “concrete” symbol of the United States’ long-term commitment to working together to foster Guatemala’s sustainable development and to forging the conditions of a better life and a brighter future for this generation and those to come. May we all, individually and collectively, use our hands, hearts and minds to construct a more prosperous, inclusive, secure, just and fair society.

The symbol of our commitment to a partnership of development is our logo – at the center -- shaking hands. I invite all of you present to declare your commitment to working together to advance Guatemala’s development by shaking the hand of

Building Inauguration Speech

April 17, 2008

those next to you – a handshake symbolizing our  
collective commit to creating a better Guatemala.

Viva Guatemala!