LAC/ DAA Mileydi Guilarte's Participation in a Meeting with Meta
April 9, 2024, 1:30-2:30pm
Ronald Reagan Building (RRB) Meeting Room LAC Large Conference Room (5.09.040)
Google Meet

Context:

Meta's Director of Executive Branch Public Policy, Sandra Luff, reached out to you and LAC AA Marcela Escobari to request a meeting given that Íñigo Fernández, Meta's Public Policy Director for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean will be in Washington, D.C. this week. Meta requested a meeting "to provide an overview of our key workstreams, including an update on Meta initiatives in the region, how we are addressing the root cause of migration, and election integrity." (Tab 1) This meeting follows several engagements that LAC Bureau staff have had with Meta, and with Mr. Fernandez in particular, over the last three years. Per GC guidance, this meeting should not discuss specific Meta content or posts. If the conversation veers toward discussions about having specific posts or content removed, retained, posted, or promoted, USAID should redirect the conversation. USAID will mainly be in listening mode and use additional talking points to follow-up on information shared or questions posted by Meta. (Complete GC guidance in Tab 2)

Desired outcomes

- Listen to Meta's presentation of key workstreams, updates on initiatives in the region, how they are addressing the root causes of migration, and election integrity.
- Express appreciation for Meta and Mr. Fernandez' engagement with USAID's LAC Bureau and work with Central America Missions, including on election integrity, and under the interagency Voices initiative and Central America Forward (CAF).

Participant List and Run-of-Show

The meeting will be held in the Ronald Reagan Building (RRB) and will be conducted in English. As Meta requested the meeting, you will open the meeting, provide brief remarks, and then give them the floor to hear their remarks. In line with GC guidance, you will mainly be in listening mode, provide broad responses and turn to staff attending as needed, without committing to concrete actions or next steps. Vera Zakem will join the meeting in-person at 1:50pm ET due to previous meeting commitments. She may provide some remarks when she joins.

Participants

Meta

- Íñigo Fernández Baptista, Director of Public Policy for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean
- Brian Townsend, Public Policy Manager for South America

- Deborah Galindo, Public Policy Manager for Mexico, Central America & Caribbean
- Sandra Luff, Director of Executive Branch Public Policy
- Molly Montgomery, Director of Public Policy

USAID

- Mileydi Guilarte, LAC DAA
- Greg Howell, LAC SDAA
- Vera Zakem, Chief Digital Democracy and Rights Officer, DRG Bureau
- Martin McLaughlin, CAM Office Director
- Daniella Burgi-Palomino, DRG Specialist, LAC/RSD
- Cara Thanassi, DRG Specialist, LAC/RSD
- Chantal Agarwal, DRG Specialist, LAC/RSD
- Carrie Mitchell, DRG Team Lead, LAC/RSD
- Chris Cole, Deputy Director, LAC/RSD
- Chioma Ayogu, GC/DDE
- Alex Spevack, Economic Growth Offices, LAC/RSD
- Valeria Toledo, Program Analyst, LAC/FO
- Na-Yeon Park, Democracy Officer, LAC/CAM

Talking Points

Opening remarks

- Thank you, Sandy and Íñigo for reaching out and meeting with us.
- I understand Marcela already shared her transition news with you.
- With Marcela's departure, our colleague Michael Camilleri will serve as Acting LAC Assistant Administrator as of next week. I think you may know him from his time leading the Northern Triangle Taskforce.
- In my capacity as Deputy Assistant Administrator, I will continue to cover Central America and Mexico.
- Let me just say at the outset that we have been very pleased to engage with Meta over the last three years on issues related to Central America.
- I think the last time I saw you, Sandy, was in Denver, Colorado on the sidelines of the Cities Summit in April last year.
- Íñigo, thank you for all your engagement under the interagency Voices initiative, including your participation in events organized at previous iterations of the Central America Donors Forum and at our side event at

RightsCon in Costa Rica last year. I know civil society organizations greatly valued your remarks and willingness to engage in frank conversations.

- We've also appreciated your and Deborah's willingness to engage with our Missions in the region on capacity-building opportunities for civil society organizations, including around fact-checking, elections-related training in Guatemala, as well as on training for our own communications staff.
- I know we shared some feedback with you on the Guatemala training held last year. I'd be curious to hear about how you've adapted your training for CSOs since then.
- Other areas that we hear CSOs and independent media need support on is expanding their audience reach and countering information manipulation.
- We value your contributions towards the Vice President's Central America Forward initiative to create economic opportunity in northern Central America. Your commitment to train 250,000 youth, entrepreneurs and small business owners in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras by 2025 is admirable.
- We look forward to hearing about your current work in the region and specific issues you'd like to raise with us.
- I am joined by colleagues who cover democracy, rights, and governance, elections, and economic growth issues for the region.
- I understand that my colleague Vera Zakem will join the meeting in a few minutes.

Additional points to use only if needed to respond to Meta questions or for information-sharing purposes

Voices initiative, civic space

- Since the launch of the interagency Voices initiative in 2022, we have brought together civil society, donors, and the private sector together around the three Voices pillars-Promoting digital democracy and countering digital authoritarianism; promoting freedom of expression and strengthening independent media; and countering criminalization and providing protections for those who are targeted.

    - ASK: The next Central America Donors Forum will be in October in Antigua, Guatemala. Are you or your colleagues planning on attending?
- We remain concerned about the trends of digital repression and targeted attacks against civil society organizations, independent media outlets, and a range of democracy and anti-corruption activists.
    - ASK: Are you seeing similar trends in the region? How are you engaging with civil society organizations and independent media to address digital challenges?
- USAID is building the capacity of civil society organizations and independent media to counter information manipulation and build resilience to digital threats.
    - ASK: Thanks for sharing about how you are engaging with civil society organizations in the region. What new training and resources have you developed to assist CSOs, independent media outlets and journalists in these contexts, including any resources to expand their audience reach?

Elections

- Thanks for sharing your work on elections in the region.
- We are monitoring the upcoming elections in the region closely, including the Dominican Republic general elections on May 19th; Mexico's elections on June 2nd, and Venezuela' elections on July 28th.
    - ASK: With this year being the Year of Elections, how are you engaging with civil society organizations and independent media in the region around training and technical support so they are better equipped to combat election-related information manipulation and foreign malign influence?
- As USAID, we are closely tracking the elections in Mexico together with the interagency. We continue our work with CSOs and independent media on human rights, rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts. We are concerned that violence against journalists usually increases in an election year.

Central America Forward / Central America & Mexico Economic Growth

- Our Mission in Guatemala has been in conversations with the new government in Guatemala around creating a network of micro, small, and medium sized enterprise (MSME) innovation centers, especially as a way of jump-starting growth in rural areas.
- USAID has worked with private sector partners in Guatemala to provide free internet access in rural areas, with important knock-on effects on health, education, and economic growth.
    - ASK: Would there be interest in follow-up conversations to explore ways for Meta to engage in these important initiatives?
- Are you familiar with USAID's eTrade Alliance? It is a Global Development Alliance (GDA) between 13 leading private sector partners and USAID to enable MSMEs to export using ecommerce.
    - ASK: Would there be any interest in learning more about the eTrade Alliance and how Meta could support activities?
- USAID is investing in the economic development of Mexico's southern states and we participate with Ambassador Salazar in coordinating the USG agencies and the American Chamber of Commerce.
    - ASK: We would be happy to meet with Meta in Mexico to discuss how we can cooperate and multiply the impact of our work in southern Mexico.

Red Flags

If raised, harmful content moderation

- Meta-We have noticed a growing trend of inflammatory language posted on our platforms. What does USAID think should be done about it?
    - (Redirect) Thanks for raising this. Protecting civil society organizations and human rights defenders is a priority for us. We appreciate your attention to these issues and to your work with civil society organizations around digital repression.

Background

Meta is the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It also owns CrowdTangle, a research and analysis tool that pulls in content and data from across Meta's platforms.

According to the agency FAQs on Communications with Social Media Companies, on October 5, 2023, State issued updated guidance (23 STATE 108554) regarding communications with social media companies in light of the recent Fifth Circuit decision in *Missouri v. Biden*. As a result of the decision, which significantly narrowed the injunction, USAID is no longer prohibited from communicating with social media companies about content moderation in concert with State (or other parties). Prior to the meeting, LAC/RSD/DRG staff reached out to the office of the General Counsel (GC) to confirm our ability to take this meeting. General Counsel confirmed that we were able to and provided some guardrails and recommendations for the conversation from internal agency Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on communications with social media companies. If possible, USAID should stick to flagging general issues or trends or discussion of what Meta and USAID are doing programmatically or via policy to address those issues or trends and redirect or table anything that is potentially a landmine or complicated.

Different offices within USAID have interacted with Meta. For example, the Information, Technology and Research Hub as well as the DRG Bureau-Global Technology Trends (GTT) have met with Meta numerous times at a working level to discuss information integrity, resilience, and digital democracy issues. Vera Zakem, USAID's Chief Digital Democracy and Rights Officer, has also met with Meta for a variety of reasons corresponding to strengthening information integrity and resilience during her tenure at USAID. She was on a panel with Iñigo Fernández Baptista, Director of Public Policy for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, at Rights Con in 2023.

Engagement with Meta under the interagency Voices initiative

The CAM Office has engaged with Mr. Íñigo Fernández and Ms. Deborah Galindo on a variety of occasions. In response to an invitation from the Northern Triangle Task Force, Mr. Fernández participated as a panelist for a discussion under the interagency Voices initiative focused on closing civic space at the 2022 Central America Donors Forum (CADF). At CADF, he also engaged extensively with attendees. He was also invited to speak as a panelist on the "Advancing Digital Democracy" Panel II of the joint USAID-State Department closed-door side event at the RightsCon Summit in Costa Rica on June 5, 2023 "Voices: Promoting Digital Democracy & Countering Digital Authoritarianism in Central America." Responding to calls from partners for more regional and thematically focused discussions under the initiative, the event brought together over 70 stakeholders from civil society organizations (CSO), independent media, donors, the private sector, and implementing partners from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. As a part of this effort, USAID also supported close to thirty representatives from CSOs and independent media from Central America to attend the RightsCon Summit.

LAC CAM Mission engagement with Meta (Comms, elections integrity, CSO trainings)

The LAC Bureau and Missions have engaged with Meta on various occasions over the last two years. Under the directive of the LAC Bureau Tactical Plan, engagement in 2023 entailed having Meta connect certain CSO partners with the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN) so that they can have access to opportunities and resources to become IFCN-certified fact checkers. Meta also offered a series of training sessions to CSOs on its community standards and approach to combat information manipulation as well as tools to navigate its platforms. LAC Comms also organized two sessions with Meta in September and October 2023 for over a dozen Mission DOCs on Communications Digital Training and Speech and Integrity Training.

A full list of bilateral Mission engagements with Meta can be found in the Reference documents. Engagements have included dialogues between Meta and CSOs and awareness-raising, training and tools for building CSO resilience on information manipulation. Mr. Fernandez and Deborah Galindo have been responsive to Mission requests for information on Meta initiatives and training for CSOs in the Central America and Mexico region.

Prior to the Guatemalan elections, in March 2023, USAID LAC/DRG, DDI/DRG Center and USAID Guatemala/ Post had a call with Meta's Public Policy Team for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean to understand Meta's approach to the elections in Guatemala, share what the USG is doing, and to identify possible areas for coordination and collaboration. Meta shared information about their ongoing work in Guatemala ahead of the elections which includes working with the electoral authority and political parties and providing them with training on the best use of their platforms and Meta's transparency tools for ads, as well as partnering with experts, civil society, and journalists to mitigate misinformation during the electoral process. Meta offered Post/ Mission a version of their training for USG partners on ads transparency tools; best use of Meta platforms; and community standards. The training was held on May 31st in collaboration with the International Republican Institute (IRI). Feedback on the training was shared with Meta by USAID LAC in June 2023. (See tab 3 for email exchange) There was no further communication or update from Meta on how they incorporated the feedback into future training. Additional areas identified by USAID Guatemala for Meta engagement include addressing information manipulation, identifying and removing coyote and other scam accounts, prevention and response to fraud, trafficking in persons (TIP), human smuggling/ irregular migration, and improving coordination and activism related to extortion, child pornography, and online harassment.

LAC DAA Guilarte met with Sandra Luff and Catherine Eng of Meta at the Cities Summit in Denver, Colorado in April 2023. According to the trip report (reference doc) they discussed Meta's work on digital literacy, the interagency Voices initiative, and the broader relationship with Meta.

While not directly with USAID, Meta is supporting the USG efforts to bring greater development to Mexico's underdeveloped southern states. On August 30, 2023, Meta organized "MetaDay", an event in Villahermosa, Tabasco which highlighted results of various digitization initiatives, including the training of over 700 small businesses on the use of WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and other Meta tools to find customers and increase sales. Meta's training programs are in Spanish and in indigenous languages. This focus on accessibility allowed 300 members of indigenous communities in Mexico to benefit from their programs.

On elections, USAID Mexico has no specific elections programming. USAID does have support for journalist protection, as violence against journalists has increased in past electoral

periods. USAID will support an NGO network that monitors, provides security-oriented training for journalists, accompanies cases, and engages in advocacy. In Chiapas, USAID launched a specific protocol on human rights defender protection in the elections, but the federal GOM and other states are just relying on existing protection measures. USAID partner, the International Center for Journalists, will train journalists to provide high-quality electoral reporting in northern border states. USAID also partners with the National Protection Mechanism and some state-level protection mechanisms to provide effective protection to threatened journalists.While USAID/Mexico has no direct elections programming, it is closely monitoring the electoral landscape and how political transitions will affect programming. Activities will continue as planned in their implementation schedule. USAID is coordinating and communicating closely with State DRL who is supporting some small efforts with IRI around the elections.

Under the Citizens Empowered Activity (CEA) in El Salvador, Meta held a training for CSOs in early 2023 entitled "Boost Your Cause." The U.S. Embassy and USAID attended Meta's "Industry Day" in San Salvador in the fall 2023.

In Nicaragua, Meta's assistance has been strictly technical, case-by-case is where we've seen the most engagement. Given sensitivities due to the restricted operating context, USAID interactions have gone through the Digital Security IP who reaches out to Meta technical contacts directly and reports back to USAID. The Mission contacted Meta for assistance with 13 emergency cases (affecting almost 1M audience members), and Meta helped recover some accounts for a few key media outlets. For example, USAID's key media partner's FB account was hacked by bitcoin ransomware and was down for two weeks. After the outlet was forced into exile, Facebook is the primary channel for informing their audience of 300K Nicaraguans. Meta helped recover it quickly.

Engagement with Meta under Central America Forward (CAF)/ PCA/ Economic Growth issues

On March 25, 2024, VPOTUS announced $1 billion in new private sector commitments, including Meta's 3-year commitment to train 250,000 youth, entrepreneurs and small business owners in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras by July 2025. Additionally, Meta is supporting an initiative to help over 9,000 women from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras including women who lead small and medium-sized enterprises to establish their online presence, seize the opportunities afforded by immersive technologies such as augmented reality, access financial services, and expand their operations to international markets.

eTrade alliance (https://www.allianceforetradedevelopment.org/) is an alliance of private sector entities w/ USAID that works to facilitate cross border trade. Meta is committing to work with SMEs in the context of CAF. An opportunity for Meta engagement is around supporting SME innovation centers economically or with training. Meta's work in this space entails getting people to transact on their platforms. Meta has also worked on expanding access to the internet, in some cases offering people free access to Facebook.

Reference:

- LAC/ RSD BCL DAA Guilarte's Meeting with Sandra Luff, Cities Summit, April 2023 and Trip Report
- DRG Bureau, Draft: USAID Meta Engagement, September 2023

Attachments:

Tab 1 - Meta Meeting email request and Íñigo Fernández, Meta's Public Policy Director for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean biography

Tab 2 - GC Guidance provided in advance of Meta meeting

Tab 3 - June 2023 Email sent to Inigo Fernandez with feedback on Meta Guatemala training & response

Drafter: LAC/RSD/DRG Daniella Burgi-Palomino, dburgipalomino@usaid.gov
Approved:

Clearances	**Clearance Status**	**Date**
DRG/VZakem	Info	
GC/DDE: TMiller	Clear	4/5/2024
LAC/CAM: MMcLaughlin	Clear	4/5/2024
LAC/CAM: MSamras	Clear	4/8/2024
LAC/Comms: CMilko	Clear	4/3/2024
LAC/RSD: CCole	Clear	4/05/2024

Tab 1

Email sent by Sandra Luff on March 19th

Dear Marcela & Mileydi,

I hope you've been well since we last spoke! Great to be in touch again. I wanted to reach out and share that Íñigo Fernández, Meta's Public Policy Director for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (bio below), will be in Washington, D.C. in early April.

We'd like to request a meeting with you or your teams to provide an overview of our key workstreams, including an update on Meta initiatives in the region, how we are addressing the root cause of migration, and election integrity. We'd also be happy to conduct this meeting at your office or host at our Meta office. Íñigo is currently *available Tuesday April 9, 10am – 3pm.* If this is an inconvenient timeframe, please let us know what works for your team and we'll do our best to accommodate.

Many thanks for your consideration & please let us know with whom we should be in touch regarding logistics.

Best,
Sandy



Íñigo Fernández Baptista, Director of Public Policy for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean

- Íñigo serves as the Director of Public Policy for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. His primary focus is on topics related to the internet, while he passionately drives the company's mission: “to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together."
- With a rich experience spanning over 12 years in both the Judicial and Executive branches of the Mexican federal government, Íñigo played pivotal roles in the formulation and implementation of diverse public policies. He boasts a law degree from the Ibero-American University, Mexico City, and a master's in Comparative Politics from the London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Recognized as an international speaker, Íñigo is an Associate Professor of Law and Technology at the Ibero-American University and has taught at other Mexican universities. His contributions extend to various articles published in collective works, peer-reviewed journals, and niche magazines.
- Furthermore, Íñigo serves as a national board member for both the International Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber of Commerce in their Mexico chapters. Notably, he chairs the Government Relations Commission at the International Chamber of Commerce's Mexico Chapter.

Tab 2
Guidance from GC

Thank you for your patience. My understanding from your email is that Meta sent an email to your leadership, Marcela Escobari and Mileydi Guilarte, requesting that they meet with Meta’s Public Policy Director for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean while he is in DC in early April to provide an overview of their key workstreams, including an update on Meta initiatives in the region, how they are addressing the root cause of migration, and election integrity. I think it would be fine for USAID to take this meeting.

I would recommend a couple general guardrails: Prep talking points or a briefer. If no such documents are prepared I recommend flagging one key landmine for your principals. If the

conversation veers toward discussions about having specific posts or content removed, retained, posted, or promoted, redirect. If possible, stick to flagging general issues or trends or discussion of what Meta and USAID are doing programmatically or via policy to address those issues or trends and redirect or table anything that is potentially a landmine or complicated. The applicable FAQ from the Guidance is Q#16.

Some additional detail regarding the guardrails included below.

- Given the sensitivities in this space, the fact that Meta is setting the agenda, and the fact that this discussion is taking place at the leadership rather than working level, I recommend that USAID be in listening mode where possible, avoid making any firm commitments and that any action items or next steps be determined at a fairly high level so there is an opportunity for USAID SMEs to review and discuss first.
- Talk about general issue areas/pain points or trends is ok (e.g., "Meta has noticed there is a rise in threats against politicians, especially women, in country x during election time. Meta did x in the past and is planning to do y in the future. If USAID has expertise it can share on country conditions and trends on these issues it would be helpful.").
- If your leadership prefers for concrete deliverables/decisions to come out of the meeting, then I strongly recommend additional prep on the front end, such as talking points or briefers.
- Redirect or table any conversations about specific content moderation requests (e.g., "Group x posted inflammatory language. What does USAID think should be done about it?").
- If talking points, briefers or other prep documents will be prepared for the principals in advance of this meeting I recommend sharing them with GC and RLO for awareness and a quick check for any potential landmines.

Sent from Tatia Miller on Friday, April 5, 2024

I am glad to see the reference to the internal agency Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on communications with social media companies that our GC subject matter expert, Chioma Ayogu wrote. These guidelines continue to be particularly important because Congress still seems very focused on the "misinformation" issue. Congress added additional language in the FY 24 Aprops Section 7074 provision that additionally limit how the Agency can interact with social media companies on the topic of misinformation (please see yellow highlight).

SEC. 7074. (a) Funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act for programs to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation, and for related purposes, may only be made available for the purpose of countering such efforts by foreign state and non-state actors abroad [...]

I realize that the meeting on Tues is with the Public Policy Director for Meta in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, However I just wanted to take the opportunity to make sure all of our USAID participants in the meeting are aware of this increasingly sensitive issue. Just in case the question arises of USAID talking to social media companies in the US, USAID should be very careful to document how such activities are intended to counter disinformation abroad.

Tab 3 -

Sent from Cara Thanassi to Inigo Fernandez on June 28, 2023

Hi Íñigo and Deborah,

I hope this finds you both well. I am writing as I was just in Guatemala and received some feedback about the recent training that you supported in collaboration with the International Republican Institute. I thought it would be helpful to share the feedback with you to inform future efforts you may be undertaking in collaboration with USAID, implementing partners and other stakeholders.

Broadly:

- Participants found that the content was too basic. Given the professional level of the audience, the participants were hoping to understand ways to leverage Facebook for their investigations and observations, as well as tools to address digital intimidation.

- Participants would have liked a greater focus on combating mis- and dis-information.

- Participants appreciated the forum for sharing experiences and concerns related to harassment issues.

Considering this, for the future you may want to consider:

- Setting up planning calls with the partner organization to have an understanding of the unique interests and needs of any given audience.

- Employing a pre-training survey. This would enable trainers to have a better understanding of the participants, their existing knowledge base, and particular concerns to inform a more tailored training.

- For USAID, we also have a practice of employing a post-training survey which allows for ongoing refinement of any presentation or materials.

I hope this feedback is helpful/constructive. I do want to reiterate our appreciation for the excellent and ongoing collaboration with you and your colleagues. In fact, just today we heard from the Institute for War and Peace Reporting about how helpful it was to count on your participation at RightsCon, Íñigo.

Please don't hesitate to reach out as we continue this work!

Best,

Cara

Response from Meta-June 29, 2023

Hi Cara,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am writing to express our profound appreciation for the constructive feedback and thoughtful recommendations that you have generously provided. Your insights and suggestions are indispensable to us, and we truly value the time and effort you invested in sharing your perspectives.

The detailed recommendations you proposed were particularly enlightening. They have given us new dimensions to consider and have undoubtedly paved the way for enhancements in future training programs. We are grateful for your expertise and commitment to helping us improve. I believe that your recommendation on partner alignment before designing future training programs will be particularly helpful moving forward.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your ongoing partnership. Your continuous support and collaboration are invaluable to us. We are looking forward to our continued work together.

Regards,

Íñigo Fernández Baptista (he/him/his)
Director | Public Policy for México, Central America, and the Caribbean
[redacted]