

# TWITTER

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## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT BRIEFS

These briefs are written to support USAID and partners with Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) throughout the Program Cycle. They utilize experience from the KDMD project to share good practices, how-tos, and lessons learned about concepts and activities related to knowledge management and learning.



The USAID Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development (KDMD) project designs and implements state-of-the-art knowledge management (KM), learning, and collaboration tools and approaches and promotes collaboration among practitioners to speed innovation and adoption. KDMD seeks to maximize the impact of USAID's knowledge and learning investments, and implements strategies and processes to coordinate learning and knowledge sharing across the full range of investments and activities for our USAID programs.



## ABOUT TWITTER

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### What is Twitter?

Twitter is a form of online communication known as micro-blogging, which allows users to engage and interact with a diverse audience through short messages. Posts on Twitter are known as *tweets* and are restricted to 140 characters or less. In addition to posting tweets, users can also follow and view updates from others, post public replies (also known as *mentions*), or send private direct messages. What makes Twitter a truly dynamic platform is the ability to tag topics and keywords through the use of *hashtags* (a keyword with a “#” symbol, such as “#poverty”). Hashtags enable users to easily locate topic-based discussions and engage with others working in similar fields.

### Why use Twitter?

For international development practitioners, there is immense value in using Twitter on a regular basis. Through Twitter, development practitioners can:

- Build an online presence and increase the visibility of their work
- Build relationships with implementing partners and beneficiaries
- Foster dialogue on development topics
- Reach an audience beyond the international development community
- Utilize additional channels for knowledge sharing

### SEPTEMBER 2013

This document was produced for review by the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development (KDMD) project, implemented by the QED Group, LLC. The views and opinions expressed by the participants in the discussion and in this report were their own and may not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.



## Who uses Twitter?

Despite what you may think, there is more to Twitter than just Justin Bieber fanatics. In July 2012, Twitter had 517 million total users, with approximately 142 million of those users in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Most accounts and tweets now come from outside of the United States. The top tweeting city? Jakarta, Indonesia. Explore this [TechCrunch article](#) for a graph of countries with the highest number of Twitter accounts. The numbers may surprise you.

A quick look at several development organizations reveals a sizeable community interested in discussing topics relevant to USAID:

<b>@USAID:</b> 230,000+ followers	<b>@Oxfam:</b> 360,000+ followers	<b>@WorldBank:</b> 346,000+ followers
<b>@WFP:</b> 395,000+ followers	<b>@WHO:</b> 728,000+ followers	<b>@CARE:</b> 517,000+ followers <sup>2</sup>

## How-Tos

### How do I create an account?

Ready to get started? Visit [Twitter.com](#) and sign up for an account. Setting up an account is free and the process only takes a few minutes. An Internet connection (even sporadic) is ideal, but you can also create an account and send tweets via SMS.

<sup>1</sup> [Analyst: Twitter Passed 500M Users In June 2012, 140M Of Them In US; Jakarta ‘Biggest Tweeting’ City,” TechCrunch.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Twitter follower information collected on April 17, 2013.

## What do tweets look like?

The graphic below provides information about some typical components of a tweet:

#hashtag to mark keywords/topics

Link for more information (shortened using bit.ly)

USAID @USAID  
The #HungerGames is fiction. But 1 billion people suffering from #hunger & #poverty is a fact we can't ignore [bit.ly/GMbPhF]

Mark Feierstein @MarkFeierstein  
What Qs do you have on #citizensecurity? @USAID @WorldBankLAC @Marcomidence answer live from #Honduras 3/29 10:30cst go.usa.gov/EgR  
[t1 Retweeted by USAID]

Retweet (RT) to repost another user's tweet

@reply/mention to link to other users

## What are the components of a tweet?

**Hashtags:** By using “#” in front of keywords, you create searchable terms and topics. Writing about food security? Use the hashtag #foodsecurity. Hashtags have no spaces and should be relatively short, so terms like food security become #foodsecurity, and knowledge management becomes #km. Why use hashtags? They exponentially expand the reach of your tweets because your tweets will appear when users search Twitter for various topics. Explore the results of a Twitter search for [#foodsecurity](#).

**Mentions/@replies:** An advantage of Twitter’s platform is the ability to connect with other users. Using “@” in front of a username will alert a user that they have been mentioned. Why use mentions? If @USAID re-tweets or replies to your tweet, the agency’s 230,000+ followers may see your account.

**Retweets:** Like what someone else tweeted? A great way to get started on Twitter is to retweet or repost an update from another user. Twitter.com has a simple retweet button, or you can use “RT” in front of the original tweet.



**Short URLs:** Many tweets include links to articles or resources since there is only so much you can say in 140 characters. Twitter automatically shortens links to fit within 140 characters, but if you want to track how many users click on your links, try using a link shortener like [bit.ly](http://bit.ly).

### Where can I learn more?

The USAID [Agrilinks](#) knowledge sharing platform, managed by the Bureau for Food Security, has developed recorded Twitter trainings for USAID staff and implementing partners. These 20-minute recordings make it easy to learn more about Twitter.

- [Twitter 101](#): Want to learn the Twitter basics? Still not really sure what a *#hashtag* or *@reply* is? Watch this 20-minute Twitter 101 training to get up to speed.
- [Twitter 102](#): Have the basics down and want to dig deeper? Watch this 20-minute training to learn how to navigate Twitter.com, follow a Twitter chat, and use advanced Twitter management tools such as [HootSuite](#) and [Tweetdeck](#).

## GOOD PRACTICES

Before you get started, check with the communications department for your organization. They can help you to understand any if there are any restrictions or special requirements for using Twitter to communicate about your work.

### Style/Tone

When tweeting, keep it professional – don't post anything you wouldn't want Administrator Shah to see. At the same time, try to be casual and

conversational since social media is meant to be an informal space for personalized content. Also, don't forget to add in your own personality – a little character and creativity goes along way. Just like other content on the web, engaging, interesting, and unique content ultimately gets more attention from users.

**@NavyNews:** U want it up your nose or poked in your arm? <http://ow.ly/2FGz6> Hey - beats alt of being bed ridden & hazard to family & friends!



### Content

The possibilities are endless, but here are several suggestions for getting started:

- **Research and news:** Read an interesting article or report? Highlight a key point and share the link.
- **Conferences and events:** Attending a conference or online webinar? Many events have designated hashtags to track discussion surrounding the event. This allows attendees to share and view live comments from participants or host organizations. This is also a great opportunity to find users with similar interests.
- **Field updates:** In the field? Provide regular updates on site visits or project activities. Pictures are encouraged.
- **Project updates:** Starting a new activity? Let people know what you are working on or what your goals are. Met a project milestone? Don't be afraid to highlight your successes. Finalize a report on your work? Share the knowledge.



## Engagement

As you tweet, remember that this tool is about engagement. Twitter is a two-way platform, and tweets should not turn into press releases. Here are some ways to engage:

- **Reply and repost:** Did you like what a user posted? @Reply and let them know.
- **Ask questions:** Did you read a blog post but have follow up questions? Ask the organization or author via Twitter.
- **Join events:** See a conference or event hashtag? Join in the conversation.
- **Ask for input:** Working on a project and need help finding resources? Ask Twitter users for input.

## Logistics and Time

Making the most of Twitter requires frequent activity, but it may take time to get in the habit of tweeting. Plan to spend 10-15 minutes here and there, rather than one long session. It takes time to learn Twitter-speak, so allow time for experimentation and exploration when you are first starting out.

Set a calendar reminder for every other day at lunchtime and use this time to post a tweet, browse relevant hashtags, or check out your favorite accounts. If you watch the Twitter trainings above, you'll learn how to easily create Twitter lists to keep your favorite users organized.

### Examples

[USAID Twitter page](#)

[List of USAID Offices and Bureaus on Twitter](#)

[List of USAID Missions on Twitter](#)  
(There are 54!)

USAID KMD Project Twitter accounts: [Agrilinks](#), [USAID Learning Lab](#), and [Microlinks](#)

### Resources

[Twitter 101 & 102 Trainings – USAID Agrilinks](#)

[Twitter Glossary – Twitter.com](#)

[Twitter Guidebook – Mashable](#)

[12 Commandments for Government Employees on Twitter – GovTwit/GovLoop](#)

[The Social Media Experiment in Government: Elements of Excellence – GovLoop](#)

[Microblogging – HowTo.gov](#)

[Twitter Best Practices – HowTo.gov](#)