ICMA International Blog Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in blogging on the Knowledge Network (KN). Below you will find some information and guidelines. Your blog posts will be featured on the International Team Blog: **International Dispatches**. Please contact Emily Elledge, eelledge@icma.org, if you have any questions.
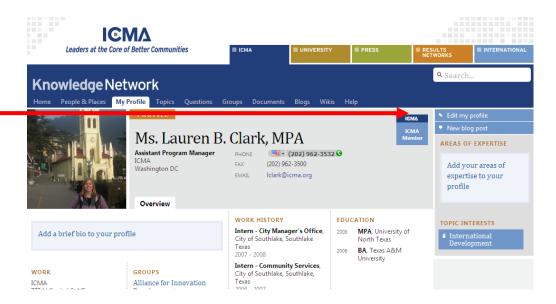
Blogs

A blog is a great tool to provide a personal account about a project or program. It is more than just an update; it is an opportunity to put a human face on the work that ICMA International, our members, and international affiliates are doing around the world. Some KN users, which include ICMA members, private sector employees, and academics, among others, may not realize the impact we have, the conditions we work in, and the effect our work has around the world. People get their information from all types of sources and through different media. Blogs are a medium to tell our story in an informal, personal, and engaging way.
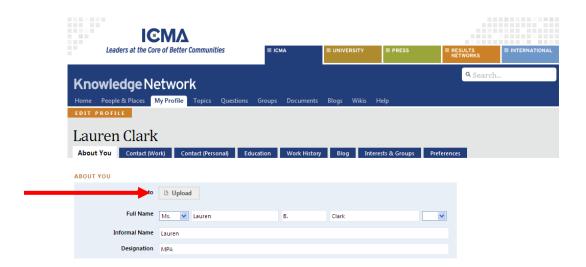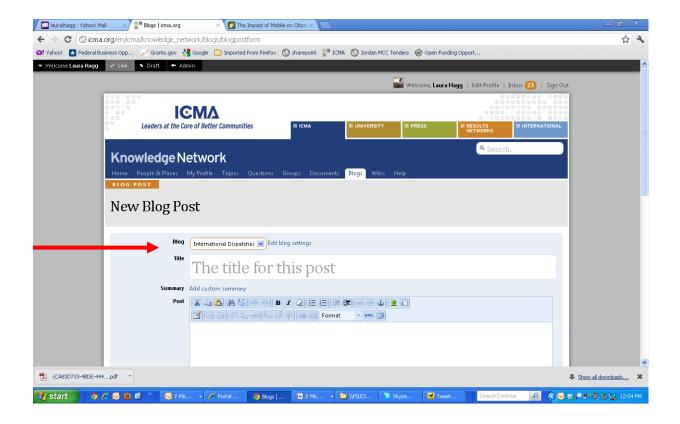

Before your first post:

- **Create a Knowledge Network profile – it only takes a few minutes.** Filling out your profile and indicating your topic interests and expertise is a great way to connect with ICMA members and other KN users. Your profile can include professional experience, areas of expertise, and more. Visit icma.org/kn to create an account and edit your profile.

- **Upload a photo to your Knowledge Network profile.** Please make sure your photograph includes a clear image of your face. A photo is important to help people connect with you and the work you do. It can be a photo of you from work or from traveling – it doesn't have to be an "office" photo. Have fun with it!

- **Create Your Blog.** When you're ready to post your blog, click on New Blog Post. When the window appears, click on "International Dispatches." Then add a title and either create your blog right on the screen or copy and paste from a Word document. Then add a photo. Most important, click on Topics so you can tag topics to your blog post. That way your post will appear with the topics it relates to, such as International Development, Water and Sanitation, and/or Climate Change. We recommend you do a spell check prior to posting. Next, click Publish and you're finished!

Tips for Writing a Successful Post

- *Length:* Blog posts can vary in length, but we recommend limiting blog posts to 250 - 300 words (just three short paragraphs). If you have a lot to say, consider breaking up your post into two or more entries.
- *Tone of voice:* Blog posts written in a conversational, informal style that incorporates personal narratives resonate most with readers. Keep your post lively, use the first person, and share your point of view with readers.
- *Context*: Be sure to introduce yourself and/or project or organization and how the work is connected to enhancing local government worldwide. This helps readers understand the context in which you are blogging.
- *Headline:* Blog readers love a catchy headline. Examples: "Soccer and Service Delivery: How one village improved its local team and its solid waste management" or "Citizen engagement: Lessons from Alabama are utilized in Afghanistan."
- *Blog examples.* Check out posts in the International Dispatches blog, USAID's Impact Blog; or UKAID's Department for International Development (DFID) for ideas and of course – some great stories!
- *Style:* Make your posts easy to scan with short paragraphs, by using subheads, or by incorporating bullet points.
- *Photos:* We encourage the use of photos in your blog posts. Don't forget, a picture is worth 1,000 words--or 250-300 words in this case! A blog entry can be as simple as one photo with a short caption.
- *Links:* Provide links to related resources including reports, publications, websites, and other blogs.

- *Be respectful:* We seek and encourage a diverse collection of opinions and viewpoints to encourage an active, thoughtful dialogue. Please be respectful of your colleagues. ICMA International will remove any materials deemed inappropriate.
- *Avoid politics.* We work in regions struggling to establish better public services for their citizens and to develop a more democratic form of government. Please avoid any comment on current or former government officials – we don't want our postings to jeopardize our work or the safety of people we work with.
- *Keep security in mind.* If you are working in a sensitive location (such as Iraq or Afghanistan), you may put people's lives in danger if you use their real names.
- *The "Mom" test.* Don't write anything you wouldn't want your Mom to read!

The ICMA International Team may edit posts to ensure they fit within style guidelines. We may make minor edits in language, length, and structure. If we have substantive suggestions or edits, we will discuss them with you.

Introductory Blog Post Ideas
For your first post, provide a brief introduction. Tell us about yourself, your work, and your project or program. Readers appreciate a sense of humor so consider sharing an anecdote or interesting insight. The questions below were developed to give your some ideas. Take a look and see if some may relate or spur a story!

1. What are the three most pressing issues facing you and your project today? What keeps you up at night?
2. What is the most delicious food you have tasted while working in your field location or while traveling abroad? What is the strangest food you have eaten?
3. If you could go back to any place you have worked or visited around the world, where would you go and why?
4. Why is blogging/social media important for international development?
5. Why are you passionate about good governance and service delivery? Why did you choose this field?
6. What have you been reading lately, any recommendations? (This includes books, magazines, essays, reports, websites, blogs, etc.)
7. What is an exciting project going on in democracy and governance that not many people know about?
8. What can you share with readers about your work internationally?