***UAA/USAID MENTORING PROGRAM***

**November, 2015**

Building on a successful pilot program, the USAID Alumni Association (UAA)/USAID Mentoring Program has been operational for three years. The program matches field-based officers with alumni mentors. In general, mentors and mentees speak (usually via Skype or phone) weekly for an hour or so. The prime purpose of the program is to provide mentees with professional and career guidance. At the outset of their participation in the Mentoring Program, mentors and mentees receive orientation training by USAID Learning Center staff.

The Program has expanded to include partnering arrangements with five USAID bureaus (AFR, E&E, GH, LAC, PPL). The launch of a fifth cohort in November/December, 2015 is in line with the programmatic objective to launch two new groups of matched pairs each year. UAA’s purpose in supporting the program is to contribute to the development of the next generation of Agency leaders. Successes to date correlate directly with a strong commitment to keep the program demand driven, having at its core the needs, objectives and specific requests of field based FSOs.

The Mentoring Program is the result of strong collaboration between the UAA, senior Agency leaders who have championed the program and Bureau staff who have made it happen. The Agency saw and capitalized on the opportunity to tap the collective wisdom of the USAID Alumni Association. The USAID Learning Center has provided invaluable support to the program with the design and conduct of orientation training for both mentors and mentees. Learning Center staff provides a critical link between bureau leaders and the UAA.

UAA’s Committee for USAID Strengthening takes the lead in the matching process, based on each individual request for such support. Program monitoring and resolution of issues that may arise is a function of close coordination with bureau coordinators and their leadership who are the program’s critical partners. Tracking surveys are scheduled at six month intervals, as a way to identify and resolve issues before they become problems.

**Indicators of successful mentor/mentee engagement are**: joint commitment to frequent communicationis especially critical to building trust and clarifying objectives that will guide the relationship; plans and schedules to achieve them must be driven by mentee needs in the areas of career development and professional support (the mentor is not considered to be a technical consultant, even though s/he may have substantive experience in the same backstop as the mentee); and successful completion of a six month mentoring relationship often leads to an extension that is mutually desired and agreed to by both mentor and mentee.