

**REPORT ON
USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Oct. 26, 2018 – Center for Global Development
Washington, D.C.**

This report provides USAID Alumni Association (UAA) members who were not able to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) with a sense of the presentations and discussions that marked this day-long gathering. [Note that you can see and hear the entire meeting on YouTube.](#)

The 2018 AGM had four basic elements: 1) USAID's role in the United States government's response to fragile situations; 2) a conversation between John Norris, author of the UAA-sponsored history of USAID's 60 years of development experience, and Charles Kenny, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development (CGD); 3) member discussion about the UAA's future; and 4) remarks by USAID Assistant to the Administrator, Jim Richardson about USAID reform. USAID Administrator Mark Green also delivered brief remarks.



[The AGM: A Chance to Spend Time with Old Friends](#)

The meeting also provided the opportunity for friends and former colleagues to see each other and to meet elements of the younger generation of USAID staff who were invited to attend.

The following paragraphs will guide you through the day's events. Follow the links to the appropriate document.

Click on the links to view the [meeting agenda](#) and the [speakers' bio-data](#).

Conference Introduction. Masood Ahmed, President of the CGD, welcomed participants to the 2018 AGM and thanked the UAA for its work and partnership. UAA member participation improves the quality of CGD research through provision of their in-depth experience, thoughts about where development is going, and ideas on better ways to implement and measure programs. CGD hopes to find other ways to deepen and enrich its relationship with UAA, including through members' subscription to CGD newsletters and attendance at CGD's many events.

Co-Chair Introduction. The AGM provides a brief opportunity to bring members up-to-date on organizational developments. Co-Chair Chris Crowley announced that the UAA now has more than 1,000 registered members and 350 contributing members. Attendees were asked to help ensure that more former colleagues, including FSNs, are made aware of the UAA and its many activities. The UAA, of course, depends entirely on volunteers; members were encouraged to become more active participants in its various committees. Members were also urged to review and comment on the [UAA's report on 2018 activities and preliminary plans for 2019](#). In addition, [see a full summary of Chris's remarks](#).



Panel on USAID's Role in the United States Government's Response to Fragile Situations. This session featured speakers from the Department of Defense, Department of State, and USAID. [A full summary of the discussion can be found here](#). We urge you to read the whole document to better appreciate the richness of the discussion. Please also find recommended readings on fragility and Africa [here](#).

The session had four major takeaways: 1) Fragility needs, like gender, to be an essential element of analysis for USAID. Separating "fragile" from "non-fragile" states is arbitrary, as fragility is a continuum. 2) It is important to anticipate and seek to prevent the crises that emerge in fragile situations. Too often, high-level attention is attracted and funding becomes available only after crises occur. 3) The DOD's Africa Command, to which USAID staff have long been assigned as development advisors, has been a leader in interagency coordination, but all agencies need to improve. This need for improvement is particularly true in Washington, where authority is dispersed, whereas in the field the ambassador is the recognized leader to coordinate agency activities. 4) Civil society engagement is critical to crisis prevention and recovery, as is involving international actors, including new donors, in areas of common interest.

Conversation Between John Norris, Author of the UAA-Sponsored History of USAID's 60 Years of Development Experience, and Charles Kenny, Senior Fellow, CGD. In an interview with Charles Kenney, John Norris discussed his efforts to capture USAID's history, achievements, and lessons learned over the years. The book will provide a selective history that illustrates key policy successes and failures. It will describe how USAID has always worked in the shadows with little public support, often five minutes away from being eliminated or reorganized.



Norris's work will look at patterns in foreign assistance, including parallels between the language of the Alliance for Progress and that of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, though with distinct differences in expectations about how long it takes to achieve ambitious development goals. A review of the

history of U.S. foreign assistance shows that assistance can buy successful development outcomes, including economic reforms and governance improvements. Some USAID programs, such as the Green Revolution, family planning, and oral rehydration therapy, succeeded far beyond initial expectations.

Additionally, Norris will review some of the many reform initiatives at USAID over the years. He will also look at the ways foreign assistance is often under attack but, in the past two years, people on both sides of the aisle have joined to save it. The full summary may be found [here](#).

The final draft manuscript is expected to be completed by May 2019.



Remarks by Mark Green, USAID Administrator. Administrator Green spoke briefly before the session broke for lunch. He thanked members for their counsel and support during the past year and indicated his door will continue to be open to UAA input. He singled out the UAA mentoring program, stressing the important contribution it makes to USAID staff development. He also commented on the USAID Transformation, a topic explored in-depth in remarks by Jim Richardson. According to Green, the reforms are necessary if USAID is to remain the world's premier development agency; he needs UAA support to validate the reforms and get them adopted.



[Dave Eckerson Moderates a Lively Discussion on the Future of the UAA](#)

Members' Discussion, "Whither the UAA?" UAA member Dave Eckerson facilitated the session, which focused on two specific issues: 1) Whether UAA should maintain current membership criteria, but with the understanding that we will need to be more creative in recruiting new contributing members. This approach would retain the founders' essential principles, but could lead to stagnation. 2) Whether UAA should broaden membership eligibility to include implementing partner representatives (e.g. institutional contractors and grantees). The advantage of this approach is expansion of the potential membership pool—and potential future finances and organizational growth. On the negative side, this approach could change the organization's character and make it more difficult for UAA to play a mentoring or advisory role within USAID.

The discussion revolved around the following main issues: rationale or goal of membership growth, criteria for membership, reaching larger numbers of former USAID employees, increasing membership participation in UAA management and events, and UAA funding requirements.

The conversation shifted quickly to ways UAA can better engage membership. Most members attending the 2018 AGM did not support expanding membership criteria. Additional questions remain, notably: UAA can probably raise more money, but who will do the work? What can UAA do to make the organization more relevant? In addition, those present suggested UAA should go back to USAID to capture more potential members. Lastly, UAA should consider special project funding requests. The Executive Committee appreciates this input and will be considering all of the suggestions. See the full summary of the discussion [here](#).



The 2018-19 UAA Board

Board Election Results. The election of Anne Aarnes and Terry Brown to the Board for first terms was announced. They are succeeding Tish Butler and Barbara Seligman. Tish completed her second two-year term; Barbara did not seek reelection due to competing day job obligations.



Bette Cook With the Two Awardees

Annual Alumni Awards. Bette Cook, chair of the Awards Committee, announced that David Leibson and John Eriksson were this year's awardees. See the text of the presentations [here](#).



Discussion of USAID Reform With Jim Richardson, Assistant to the Administrator.

Richardson described USAID's transformation process as collaborative, drawing on staff's knowledge and experience, including more than 100 career foreign and civil service staff. USAID has taken a data-driven approach to help countries become self-reliant and better partners. Bilateral conversations use country road-maps to focus conversations on country commitment and country capacity. The roadmaps are necessary because, Richardson says, "At the end of the day, country needs will inevitably outstrip resource availability, so the High

Commitment/Low Capacity country profile will always be a better bet than a country with Low Commitment/High Capacity." USAID is also hoping better data will help it make a stronger case for allocating development resources, including earmarks, to the real needs in a country. Richardson also mentioned that Congressional Notifications regarding USAID's [proposed reorganization](#) are on hold. Regarding the new U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, consolidation of financing mechanisms should increase efficiency. However, just having an USAID representative on the Board will not be sufficient to deal with all the coordination problems Richardson expects to arise. USAID will want to make sure that the new financing mechanism focuses on core development finance problems. This means USAID and it will have to work together in Washington and the field, with USAID prioritizing wrap-around assistance to ensure projects given financing actually succeed. See the full summary of the discussion [here](#).

Attendance of 140 broken down as follows: UAA members - 114; speakers and guests - 17; USAID Young Professionals - 4; Center for Global Development staff - 5.