**Notes on Meeting with USAID/PPL**

**September 6, 2011**

**Participants**:

USAID Susan Reichle, Chris Milligan, Terry Brown (by phone)

UAA Curt Farrar, David Cohen, Jim Michel

**Subjects Discussed:**

The challenge for USAID’s policy reform agenda is to institutionalize throughout the Agency the changes that comprise USAID Forward. Toward that end, USAID leadership is consulting Mission Directors, working with State to reduce unnecessary reporting burdens, increasing internal expertise on the formulation of country strategy, project design, and monitoring and evaluation practices, and fostering an evidence-based approach to programming decisions.

In order to strengthen the Agency’s capacity to put the reforms broadly into practice and to manage effectively the entire project cycle, USAID is establishing a service center to match expertise with needs. The center will augment current in-house capacity (a relevant model being the OTI bullpen). Through the service center, a new contract will establish a roster of individuals who can provide both subject matter and geographic knowledge to Missions as well as skills in strategy formulation, program and project design, and evaluation. Assignments could be short-term (one to four weeks) or medium-term (up to three months) and could be on a one-time or recurring basis, as needed. The Agency also anticipates the evolution of mentoring and training relationships to result from such assignments. Experienced development practitioners among USAID alumni are likely to be an important source of experts for this talent bank.

USAID is also seeking to foster broad awareness of the importance of evaluation for a focus on results. One idea is to have an internal competition to identify and give recognition to high-quality evaluations. An alternative might be to recognize thoughtfully designed and managed Mission projects that define objectives and record data about baseline conditions and progress toward the objectives. These qualities will facilitate informative evaluations of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

In addition, USAID is seeking to develop new policies regarding the integration into USAID programming of several important themes. Experienced practitioners among USAID alumni might add value to Agency deliberations, including by sharing experience, conducting research and serving as sounding boards. Areas under consideration for policy development include:

* Science and technology;
* Youth;
* Gender;
* Donor engagement;
* Democracy and governance;
* Economic growth;
* Urbanization.

As work on the above-described activities proceeds, USAID may want to organize thematic conferences with broad participation. Conference papers and presentations might include contributions from development practitioners among the USAID alumni.

**Possible roles for UAA:**

* Alert UAA members to the opportunity to register interest in becoming listed in the roster of available experts to help Missions operationalize reforms and build capacity in “development tradecraft.” (A link to the application and a brief description are posted at [www.usaidalumni.org](http://www.usaidalumni.org).)
* Inform members of opportunities, as they arise, to contribute to USAID policy development by conducting research and analysis and sharing experiences on themes of current interest.
* Include in USAID AGM presentation an overview of the status to date of the USAID Forward reforms.

**Conclusion:**

On the whole, the meeting was productive and indicated a mutual interest to share information consistent with the responsibilities of USAID and UAA. Subject to legal or policy constraints that USAID may have, it would seem useful to schedule periodic consultations between USAID and UAA, perhaps on a quarterly basis, to identify specific opportunities for constructive collaboration.