



# USAID Alumni Association Annual General Meeting

## REPORT ON USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on Zoom Webinar

Oct. 30 and Nov. 6, 2020

This report provides USAID Alumni Association (UAA) members who were not able to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) with a brief summary of the presentations and discussions that marked two half-day gatherings. Note that you can see and hear the entire meeting on Youtube by clicking these links: [Part I](#) and [Part II](#). In addition you may review the 2020 Annual Progress report by clicking [here](#).

The 2020 AGM was comprised of 6 main sessions: On Oct. 30, (1) a discussion on climate change, and (2) a panel on implications of climate change on development. On Nov. 6, (1) A welcome and update on UAA activities from the UAA Co-Chairs, Nancy Tumavick and Anne Aarnes, (2) a presentation on expanding UAA horizons by Jim Bever, with comments by USAID Counselor Chris Milligan, (3) a panel on the UAA USAID mentoring program convened by Roberta Mahoney, Rose Rakas and Neil Levine, and (4) a presentation of annual UAA awards by Bette Cook. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 AGM was held as an all-virtual meeting, thus limiting the opportunity for members to interact directly but allowing participation from across the country and the world.

The following paragraphs will guide readers through the day's events. Click on the links to view the [meeting agenda](#) and the speakers' [bio-data](#).

### Discussion on Climate Change



Masood Ahmed



Kerri Ann Jones

Kerri Ann Jones organized her presentation around three major questions: (1) What is the current situation with respect to climate change? (2) What are the major issues that need to be addressed? and (3) What are the implications for development?

There is a greater sense of urgency associated with climate change now than in the past, with more people in the United State experiencing the adverse effects of climate-induced changes in their daily lives as well as being exposed to much more information on the increasing frequency and severity of major climate events elsewhere in the world. The discussions taking

place about the impact of climate change on human migration are adding to this sense of urgency. The key climate change numbers have not gotten better and progress within the global climate negotiations and toward the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) has also been less than stellar. The US withdrawal from the Paris Accords will formally take place on November 4, 2020. Making progress toward the SDGs is important because of their important inter-relationships with climate change. And progress on climate change and the SDGs is now being adversely affected by “the two elephants in the room” -- the global pandemic and the economic crisis. On the plus side, climate change-inducing emissions have also declined by 8% due to the pandemic and the slowdown in growth, developments that might also provide the climate change and development communities with learning opportunities. The inadequate commitment to address climate change at the national level in the United States is being offset to some extent by the increasing commitments from many in the business community and at sub-national and local levels.

Political will is needed, coupled with effective leadership, technical solutions and financing in order to develop an effective response to the climate change problem. Finding technical solutions is the easiest problem to deal with, with many of the technologies needed to transform key infrastructure and the major productive sectors, including in energy, agriculture and water, are already available. New advances are being made in our ability to monitor climate changes, using satellites and local sensors to improve coverage world-wide, and in technologies in key sectors, including improvements in water conservation, the development of more energy efficient industrial processes, and improvements in battery technologies. A key challenge will be how to scale up, and finding the resources needed to make progress on the climate agenda. The costs will be enormous, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Global Climate Change, as one example, estimating the needs to transform current energy systems at \$3 trillion annually. Political will is the biggest challenge, including in the United States. To address climate change successfully, political will and leadership that stays the course is essential at all levels and all sectors, public and private, NGOs and philanthropy, with these groups helping to mobilize policies, identify resources, and implement programs. Change is beginning to happen, with new leadership emerging from within the younger generation, and the financial sector and the NGO community remains steadfast in its support. Hopefully, the United States will join with the small group of countries that are truly committed to the climate change agenda that is beginning to coalesce.

Climate change has been on the development agenda for years, but the need to address it more effectively has increased in urgency as the climate change problem has become more urgent and the linkages between climate change and human development more striking. The development community is dynamic, but it is a distributive system. Others from international financial and technical organizations, the business community, NGOs and other civil society organizations are also involved, so governments cannot set the agenda on their own. The magnitude and complexity of climate change in combination with the traditional development agenda will require participants to make a stronger and overt commitment to improving

coordination and achieving some level of policy and program coherence. The development community in the United States also needs to step up to the plate to do more to influence global climate change policy and to proactively press for a “seat at the table,” along with the diplomatic and defense communities (the three “Ds”) as various negotiations proceed. The US development agencies also need to coordinate more closely among themselves and with other USG agencies involved with climate changes issues. And if a National Climate Council is created under a new administration, the development community should have a seat at the table. The presentation concluded with a series of questions related to role of the United States in the future as a global leader on climate change. China has already stepped into void that the United States left when it left the Paris Accord, and has begun to demonstrate real leadership by making a commitment to the achievement of a goal of 0 carbon emissions by 2050.

Masood Ahmed, in his initial remarks, focused on the links between the climate change conversation and the development agenda, beginning with a discussion of Nick Stern’s “three doublings:” (1) of physical infrastructure in the next 15 years, (2) of the world’s economy in the next 20-25 years, and (3) of the number of people around the world living in cities in the next 40 years. These three big transitions, he argues, will shape the nature of our planet, the livability of our cities and the lives that we and our descendants live over the next century. This means that the actions that we take over the next ten years in terms of the kinds of cities that we shape and the quality of the infrastructure that we develop and its carbon content are really important decisions that require immediate action. Carbon emissions, which still come primarily from the industrialized nations, including China and a growing India, are currently having major adverse effects on the economies and quality of life in the poorest countries. But, the 50 poorest countries, although they account for 20 percent of the world’s population, are only contributing 1.6% of global emissions, an amount that can only have a negligible impact on the world as a whole. On the other hand, much of the future growth in infrastructure is expected to take place in the middle-income countries and the growth in urbanization in the low-income countries.

The differences among national players and the expected changes have stimulated an on-going debate in the development community on how best to use Official Development Assistance (ODA) resources in the future. Should the community be focusing more resources on reducing emissions, which can have a major, although indirect, impact on the quality of life in developing countries, or should it continue to focus development resources on the kinds of projects, in the health and education sectors, for example, that can have a direct impact? Is this an “either/or” issue or an issue of finding the right balance? Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and national development finance institutions, which are used to operating on a country-by-country basis, also need to take a broader view of climate change problems and to think and act more in the future in favor of “global public goods.” Although European entities and the World Bank, for example, are moving in this direction, the USG institutions in the current administration not focused upon climate change, nor global health insecurity, and their effects

globally and upon the American people. But as we move in this direction, Masood warns us, we also need to beware of global “one size fits all” imposed solutions.

The Q&A session was lively with many in the audience participating. A wide-range of issues were covered, including whether climate change could be viewed as a national security threat to America, the possibility of climate-induced threats to water availability leading to violent conflicts and the potential for such threats to leverage more action on climate change, the implications of the current administration’s policy choices long-term, whether there is a need for and importance of the United States reaching a consensus on a long-term strategic vision and commensurate actions on climate change, the effects of changes in agricultural and land-use policies on climate change, whether the development community should be advocating for positive actions to avert climate change, whether and to what extent more advocacy on the part of other players – local and regional institutions, businesses and civil society – can influence political will, and whether and how best to deal with climate deniers (both the uninformed as well as those that are ideological).

### **Panel Discussion on Implications of Climate Change for Development**

Robert Ichord moderated the wide-ranging panel discussion that looked at the macro and sectoral impacts of climate change on global development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Other panelists were Manish Bapna, Dennis Carroll, and Homi Kharas.



Homi Kharas began with a macro-level overview, noting that the combination of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic could cause a pessimistic outlook. He instead offered encouragement, in part because the global pandemic has brought a change in mind set. He gave four reasons for optimism:

- There is a growing recognition that climate change mitigation is key for the future.

- Advocates have long spoken about the need to invest trillions of dollars. Before the large COVID response bills, that number seemed unrealistically large. Trillions now seem reasonable and doable.
- Technology is now recognized as a key part of driving change. The rapid development of a COVID vaccine has made clearer the importance of technology in solving problems.
- The private sector is more engaged.

Dennis Carroll spoke about the close relationship between climate change and emerging zoonotic diseases. Thousands of these viruses exist, most in wild animal populations. Land use changes due to food production (including livestock) have been a big driver of climate change, disrupting the dynamic between wildlife and animals. He warned that we will see more and more spillovers from wildlife viruses. COVID should be a wake-up call.

Manish Bapna focused on the agriculture sector that is responsible for 24% of carbon emissions. He laid out the challenge of feeding the planet without destroying it. By 2050, the global population will be 10 billion; to feed them, calories will need to increase by 56%. We must meet the need without converting any more land into agriculture. He laid out the five ways to do so:

- Reduce demand, primarily through shifting diets and reducing loss and wastage.
- Increase productivity on existing land.
- Increase fish supply.
- Decrease greenhouse gas emissions, e.g., from livestock
- Restore natural ecosystems

Bob Ichord spoke briefly about the energy sector, reminding that the majority of emissions come from a relatively small number of countries. He noted the recent growth of renewable energy in India and China, as well as the significant investments in green recovery strategies in Europe. He highlighted the important efforts in the U.S. by states and cities.

The panelists spoke about the critical importance of water, including the difficulty of using regulations or mandatory reductions. Dennis Carroll suggested that much more could be done using big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to increase efficiencies. This could be a way to get around the politics of behavior change.

The discussion turned to investment and financing. Speakers urged that the IMF, World Bank, and other IFIs try to ensure that short-term COVID recovery funding is also used to address medium term challenges; they need to look for opportunities “to green” the recovery efforts. Panelists also noted the importance of these multilateral financial mechanisms in supporting transformation. Private investment alone is expensive, and that changes the economic solutions, often affecting “greenness.” Panelists did raise questions about growing debt levels in many countries, recognizing that it can be managed only through austerity or growth. Given

the negative effects of COVID on health systems to date, austerity or decreasing health investments will lead to a further deterioration of already weak health systems.

### UAA Co-Chair Report



Nancy Tumavick



Anne Aarnes

Co-chair Nancy Tumavick opened the business meeting and announced the results of this year's Board of Director's election. Anne Aarnes and Terry Brown have been confirmed in their second two-year term and will continue on the Board for this coming year, along with Margaret Neuse, Jim Bever, Chris Crowley, Carol Dabbs and Nancy Tumavick. Co-chair Anne Aarnes summarized highlights from 2020. A major achievement this year was the successful negotiation of a memorandum of understanding between UAA and USAID, spelling out four main areas for collaboration: (1) leadership and mentoring; (2) strategy, programs, and activities; (3) public outreach and communications; and (4) staff, operations and administration.

- In the Strengthening USAID Committee, the mentoring program is one of UAA's biggest success stories (see details under **Panel on the UAA Mentoring Program**).
- This year the Development Issues Committee, led by Steve Giddings and Jim Fox, continued to organize exceptional presentations and discussions on issues and trends in international development. Alex Shakow also provided masterful guidance to the Development Dialogues that UAA jointly sponsors with DACOR at DACOR House – or, now, virtually.
- Under the leadership of Membership Committee co-chairs Bette Cook and Tom Nicastro, the number of USAID alumni registered with UAA increased by 9%, and the number of full contributing members increased by 18%. The Membership Committee provides services for members, including the monthly newsletter, the annual Alumni Achievement awards, and UAA's major social events.
- UAA's Public Outreach committee is led by Beth Hogan and David McCloud, who worked to strengthen relationships with USAID and other organizations to identify opportunities for alumni to speak to outside groups about development assistance and USAID.
- The Outreach committee, along with the Membership committee, began working with groups of alumni in other parts of the U.S. to consider establishing UAA satellite hubs that can encourage both social and public outreach activities.
- The UAA-sponsored USAID History book is nearing completion, under Alex Shakow's management. The manuscript has been completed, reviewed and edited. Efforts are now underway to finalize an agreement with a publisher, and a publication date is likely sometime in 2021. The author of the book is John Norris and the title is The Enduring

Struggle: The history of the U.S. Agency for International Development and America's uneasy transformation of the world.

- The Finance Committee handles finances, contracting, tax submissions, insurance, curating the website and monitoring the mail. UAA treasurer Carol Dabbs and Terry Brown transformed UAA's financial systems, and Margaret Neuse and Tish Butler revamped the UAA website.
- The AGM committee and co-chairs, Nancy Pielemeier and Joy Riggs-Perla, created and managed the Annual General Meeting, which went virtual this year.
- Finally, Anne thanked Nancy Tumavick for her superb leadership as a co-chair of UAA.

### **Presentation on Expanding UAA Horizons**

**UAA Advocacy.** The most challenging new world for UAA to explore and pursue will likely be that of Public Advocacy on issues of concern to us as professionals in the field of international development and US foreign policy, including most prominently as they relate to the role of USAID and its officers. Although this challenge for UAA is not new, the genesis of this initiative arose this time last year, when due to the controversy regarding USG aid to Ukraine and the treatment of fellow Foreign Affairs professionals by the Executive Branch and some Members of Congress, we in UAA Executive Committee and the Board felt that we needed to examine whether and how to support our fellow Foreign Affairs professionals. Experience over the past year has shown that hundreds of USAID Alumni do care still what happens in the world of foreign assistance and how our fellow Foreign Affairs professionals are treated.

The new Public Advocacy Policy is to provide a flexible framework for Board decision-making on UAA engagement in public advocacy. It identifies the kinds of issues that the Board may deem sufficiently important to consider taking a public position and the means to address them; establishes procedures under which particular issues may be identified, presented to, and decided by the Board; describes the roles of the Board, the Executive Committee, and UAA Alumni in Board decisions on UAA public advocacy, consistent with the need to develop and present clear, consistent and timely positions; and identifies key constraints, including but not limited to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This new Public Advocacy Policy, recently approved by the UAA Board, was drafted in June and went through an exhaustive redrafting and review process by the 20 or so members of our Executive Committee, including an ad hoc team of Executive Committee members, as well as by a distinguished and diverse group of another 15 senior USAID retirees. The new Policy is now on our UAA website.

**Comments by USAID Counselor Chris Milligan.** This year has been a challenge for all of USAID, both overseas and at headquarters. Implementation the "journey to self-reliance" has continued, started by former administrator Mark Green and maintained by Acting Administrator John Barsa. With Congress' support, USAID launched major new hiring program for foreign service officers which is



Chris Milligan

progressing well even though targets have not been met. Due to the risk of Covid-19, USAID brought back over about 500 overseas foreign service officers (and their dependents) home. For up to six months, they continued to operate remotely which posed new challenges and adjustments in work procedures. Most are now are back at their posts. Although most staff in USAID/W were operating remotely as well, USAID was still been able to process the agency's business: annual obligations, personnel evaluations, FSO promotions, and overseas post transfers and rotation assignments. USAID is now preparing the Agency's transition plan, to be used by the administration of whichever candidate is elected president.

We've also made historic progress with the USAID alumni association. We negotiated and signed early this summer the first ever multi-purpose Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UAA. Its major themes feature cooperation on: i) leadership, ii) strategy, iii) public outreach, and iv) operations. We are now ready to begin implementing these major themes of the MOU for the coming year and beyond. Progress will be monitored jointly at the level of Assistant Administrators and Senior Deputy Assistant Administrators.

The mentoring program is the oldest success story of our mutual cooperation with UAA. Now entering into its 10<sup>th</sup> cohort group, it has grown from an initial handful of mentors and mentees to now over 90 FSOs seeking the wisdom of alumni mentors. USAID has deployed considerable resources to support this mentoring program with UAA, including designated an overall agency coordinator, a coordinator for our senior leadership group, and a coordinator for each geographic bureau. This USAID team informs USAID's overseas missions about the program, helps make good matches, and manages the program. Our level of effort reflects how much we value this program. Milligan urged UAA members to seriously consider serving as a mentor.

### **Panel on the UAA Mentoring Program**

Roberta Mahoney, co-chair of the UAA committee responsible for the mentoring program, gave brief introductory remarks, highlighting the history of the program and the recent increased demand for mentors and consequent need for additional UAA volunteer mentors.



To date, nearly 300 FSOs have been mentored. The program has most recently expanded to include Payne Fellows (more on this below) and new Deputy and Mission Directors. Mentors have come from every backstop and every grade level; all are volunteers. While a few have

formalized training as coaches, most do not. Instead, we have relied on annual training sessions by former USAID officer and certified professional counselor, Neil Levine, to provide mentors with the needed tools. The mentor training program for the upcoming 100+ cohort of mentees will be conducted in December.

Neil Levine then took over as moderator of the session, showing a short video of current mentors – all of whom spoke about why they became mentors and what they were getting out of the experience. They concluded with one word: that it is FUN.

Neil then introduced David Cohen and Monica Smith who were the first mentor-mentee pair when UAA and the Europe & Eurasia Bureau began the pilot program some years ago. David and Monica have continued the mentor-mentee relationship over these many years. Monica highlighted that she has continued to look for the opportunity to discuss management and strategic issues, that she already has the technical networks she needs to do her job. She looks to David to discuss leadership, personnel, career, and broader management issues. She does not look to him to solve problems, but to ask her the kinds of questions that cause her to step back and think differently about potential solutions. She values the different perspectives he provides.

Denise Rollins spoke about her four years in the mentoring program, primarily through her involvement with the Payne Fellows program. This program funds graduate study for ten students per year; they then graduate into FSO positions at USAID. Denise is currently mentoring two Payne Fellows. Many of these Fellows are first-generation immigrants, so mentoring is very much focused on helping them find their voices as they transition from sometimes very traditional cultural environments to take on professional roles.

Jim Bever, Frank Young, Alexi Panehal, and Miles Toder then spoke about their mentoring experiences. Jim noted the value of helping first-time Deputy Mission Directors to manage the complexity of inter-agency and embassy relations, to improve their abilities to set priorities, to work more effectively with FSNs, and to manage work-life balance. Frank noted that the current new Deputy Mission Directors have less experience than in earlier years, that they welcome the opportunity to share ideas with the UAA mentors. Alexi highlighted how much she appreciates the opportunity to stay connected with USAID, even while sitting far from Washington, DC. She applauded the effective matching that is done – and that mentoring is very rewarding. Miles noted the value of alumni experiences, that our experience is still relevant, especially this past year when accountability institutions in so many countries have eroded, and USAID staff are eager to discuss different approaches to handle these changes.

The Associate Assistant Administrator for USAID/HCTM, Rory Donohoe, expressed his strong appreciation for the UAA mentoring program. He spoke about the difficulties of this past year and the challenges new Mission Directors and Deputies have faced in leading virtually – some have not seen their embassy counterparts in person since February. The UAA mentoring program provides a great support to many of these officers. It also reminds current employees

that USAID does represent a broader “community;” they are not alone. USAID has hired 67 new FSOs this year; they hope to hire hundreds more in the coming year. He noted three priorities for the coming year:

- to increase access of USAID staff to the UAA and other mentoring and coaching programs within USAID; a variety of support mechanisms exist, and they want more employees to take advantage of them;
- to promote cultural changes that will encourage people to ask for help when it is needed, especially in managing remote work; and
- to keep everyone updated on operational changes, such as in the assignment and promotion processes. He noted the need for USAID to make sure mentors are aware of these changes – and also aware of other resources USAID has for staff.

Rose Rakas concluded the session by noting the strong investment USAID has made in supporting the UAA mentoring program – from the highest levels of the agency and HCTM to the bureau coordinators who provide information to the missions about the program, field the employee requests to participate, and then work with UAA to match the mentees and mentors. Their active support for the program has led to the current major increase in demand from officers in the field. The challenge is now for the UAA to increase the number of mentors. Interested alumni should go to the website to get information on how to sign up.

### **Presentation of UAA Awards**

Every year since the inception of the Alumni of the Year awards program in 2014, the USAID Alumni Association has recognized and celebrated USAID alumni who have chosen new paths to provide services to their communities and make lasting contributions to others, both at home and abroad. This year’s winners are **Paul White** for international service and **David Cohen** for domestic service.



David Cohen



Bette Cook



Paul White

**Paul** was granted the Alumnus of the Year award based on his sustained and passionate leadership role in expanding and strengthening Toastmasters International’s presence in South East Asia and in developing bilingual programs in the United States over more than 15 years. To learn more about Paul’s long and distinguished international development career, his profile can be found on the UAA website, and his oral history is available on the ADST website.

**David’s** work on the UAA Mentoring Program was discussed earlier. David has dedicated the past 11 years of his retirement to building and improving the USAID Alumni Association, both as

an active member of the Executive Committee and as the wizard of the website. He is recognized for launching and building the successful UAA Mentoring Program; and for undertaking a full remake of the nascent Association's website, enabling the UAA to grow exponentially, expand its reach across our nation of USAID retirees, and build a visual, computer-based link between the UAA and its members. His profile will be available on the UAA website, and his oral history is available on the ADST website.