



USAID Alumni Association

May 2021 Newsletter

Note from the UAA Board

We're pleased to announce that the Senate confirmed the nomination of Samantha Power as Administrator of USAID on April 28, 2021. Ambassador Power has assumed her duties as Administrator and member of the National Security Council following her ceremonial swearing in on May 3, 2021.

UAA has focused on several key areas last month.

- The dissemination to all UAA registrants of UAA's statement of intent on diversity and inclusion was an important initial step in addressing this top priority issue. See usaidalumni.org home page to review the statement.
- The election of two new members of the UAA Board of Directors is coming up soon. We urge UAA contributing members to consider nominating themselves for Board and committee positions, as proposed in the notice below.
- The Development Issues Committee hosted a briefing last month by USAID Policy, Planning and Learning Bureau staff to update all interested UAA members on USAID programming priorities. See the summary below and on the UAA website.
- UAA contacted USAID and State leadership about confusion among USAID employees concerning the availability of vaccinations for those traveling and serving overseas. USAID Acting Administrator Gloria Steele told us that staff will keep us up to date on progress in clarifying the process.

Calendar of Upcoming UAA Events

Tuesday, May 4, 2021, 12:00-1:00 p.m. UAA/DACOR Development Dialogue will host a virtual meeting with **"Mark Green in Conversation with George Ingram."** This is a unique opportunity to hear Ambassador Green, recently appointed President and CEO of the Wilson Center, comment on lessons learned from his three years (2017-2020) as USAID Administrator and offer his advice for the new Administration. Please [click here](#) to register. All those who register will be sent an email with information on how to join the virtual event.

Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 2:00-3:30 p.m. The **Development Issues Committee** will hold its next meeting via Zoom with former Mission Director **Charles North** as the guest discussion leader. Charles, who is currently the Deputy Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), will discuss the work of the GPE and the challenges to the education sector in developing countries in light of the coronavirus pandemic. A separate notice to all alumni will be sent out in early May with instructions on how to register for this discussion and how to participate in the Zoom meeting. Alumni are requested to **sign up for this event by COB on Monday, May 17.**

Sunday, May 23, 2021, 4:00-6:00 p.m. Join us for the annual **UAA Spring reception**, a casual late-afternoon gathering in a Zoom setting to help us “Spring Forward” from the coronavirus pandemic to celebrate Spring and beyond. Bring your partner or friend, or come by yourself, to join with other UAA members in the fun. Please **sign up to attend no later than Friday, May 14**, by [clicking here](#). Those who have registered for the reception will receive UAA instructions on how to join the Zoom meeting a few days before the May 23rd Spring reception.

Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 1:30-3:30 p.m. The **UAA Book Club** will hold a virtual meeting via Zoom at which **Bobbie van Haefen** will lead a discussion of *The Third Pillar: How Markets and the State Leave the Community Behind*, by Raghuram Rajan, Penguin Books, 2019 (393 pages, out in paperback at \$18.00). Please note that this meeting is open only to UAA contributing members who **register no later than May 24** by [clicking here](#). Those who register will receive information on how to join the virtual meeting.

SAVE THE DATES for UAA Social Events:

Saturday, September, 2021, date/time/location TBD. The UAA annual Summer Picnic will be held in the D.C. area or virtually via Zoom, depending on the coronavirus pandemic situation nearer the planned date. A hybrid picnic, held both in person and virtually, is also being considered. Stay tuned.

Friday, October 29, 2021, time TBD. The UAA Annual General Meeting will be held at the Center for Global Development in Washington D.C., if conditions permit. More details will be provided nearer the event.

***New!* on USAIDAlumni.org**

The **In Memoriam** page features 13 recent obituaries of USAID colleagues and spouses, including: **Elly Maria Tierney, George Theodore Eaton, Madeline Williams, John “Jack” Wellington MacDonald, Susan L. Eaton, Catherine Ann Balsis, Julius “Julio” Schlotthauer, Christine Zarr, Stephen Windsor Bergen, Evelyn “Burgess” Venezia, William L. Rodgers, Barry Riley, and Marilyn Elizabeth Wilkey Merritt.**

Articles: Under the Development Resources tab, we feature many articles published online in April, examples of which include:

- [Time to Rethink Development Assistance in the Sahel](#) (by American Diplomacy, Mark Wentling, May 2021)
- [Marcela Escobari to be USAID’s Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (Diplo pundit.com, April 27, 2021)
- [Biden Urges World Leaders to Keep Promises on Climate Following Summit](#) (VOA News, April 24, 2021)
- [Civil society should anchor Biden’s democracy agenda in Africa](#) (Brookings by Rebecca Rattner and Bjorn Whitmore, April 23, 2021);
- [Harris moves forward with new Central America strategy](#) (The Hill by Rafael Bernal, April 23, 2021);
- [Biden Administration Seeking \\$300 Million in Aid to Afghanistan](#) (VOA News, April 21, 2021;)
- [A global tax on corporations must consider developing nations](#) (The Hill by J. Brian Atwood, March 24, 2021)

Bibliography of USAID Authors: Surely in this covid-19 time, some of you have been completing your memoirs!! We have one new one for this newsletter: *It Ate One Hundred* by Bill Sugrue. Now in paperback, it is a series of stories drawn from Bill’s four and a half years in the Peace Corps in a small village in the Great Rift Valley in Southern Ethiopia. It describes the

challenges life deals the resourceful and tenacious farmers whose confidence in their ability to overcome adversity despite the forces arrayed against them is inspirational.

Bulletin Board: Among the Bulletin Board articles since the April newsletter, we feature the following:

- [Robert J. Berg's ADST Interview, Conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, August 15, 2012](#)
- [ADST Interview today with Ann Van Dusen: "1200 Monkeys Was the Least of It: a Case of Kickbacks and Sexual Harassment at USAID](#)
- [Peter Kimm at ADST: Raising the Standard of Living in Foreign Countries: USAID's Housing Guarantee Program](#), and
- [Joe Ryan's new post on "Development Assistance History."](#)

Job and Volunteer Opportunities: USAID/Afghanistan is interested in contracting with seasoned Program Officers for approximately six months or potentially longer. If interested, please contact Elizabeth Feary at efeary@usaid.gov or Ann Guardian AGuardian@usaid.gov.

UAA Seeks Expressions of Interest by Members in Collaborating with USAID on the Program Cycle and PPL Priorities

Following up on the USAID/PPL briefing for the UAA on April 14, UAA is soliciting the interest of UAA members in contributing, on a voluntary basis, their knowledge, expertise and perspectives to the USAID Bureau of Policy, Program and Learning in four areas of mutual interest, including direct assistance to USAID Missions. Expressions of interest in volunteering in one or more of the categories should be emailed to UAA Development Issues Committee Co-Chairs Stephen Giddings (sgiddings5@gmail.com) and Stephen Haykin (smhaykin@yahoo.com) by **May 14, 2021**. Please see the full announcement on the website by clicking [here](#).

UAA Board Election 2021: Request for Self-Nominations

There are two vacant positions on the UAA Board to be filled by vote of the membership prior to the 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October. The Board Nominations Committee is seeking to broaden the selection of candidates to fill these two vacancies by soliciting current members to consider self-nominating. The only firm nominating criterion is that you must be a 2021 contributing member of UAA as of the deadline for submission of expression of interest as a candidate for the Board. Candidates can have worked under any USAID hiring authority eligible for membership in UAA. For more details on Board nominations, please see additional information on the UAA website by clicking [here](#).

2021 UAA Awards Program

This year, the UAA will continue to recognize significant contributions by UAA members through its signature Alumni of the Year awards. Since the inception of the Awards Program in 2014, the UAA has recognized and celebrated new paths taken by USAID alumni to provide service to their communities and to make lasting contributions to others at home and abroad. For the Alumni of the Year awards, your help is requested in identifying individuals whose post-

USAID activities are truly exemplary and highlight the quality of our alumni community. We ask each of you to consider nominating (or self-nominating) a UAA member you know who is deserving of this recognition. The Awards Committee will accept nominations for Alumni of the Year, now until July 31, 2021. Send nominations electronically to: awards@usaidalumni.org. The award winners will be announced at the Annual General Meeting on October 29. The 2021 UAA Awards Program guidance is available on the UAA website. Please [click here](#) to view the guidance.

Development Dialogue



Bob Gersony



Rick Barton

The **UAA/DACOR Development Dialogue** virtual meeting on Thursday, April 8, 2021, featured **"Bob Gersony in Conversation with Ambassador Rick Barton."** **Gersony** regaled his record-setting audience of nearly 200 USAID and State alumni with fascinating reflections on his many decades of contract work on the front lines around the world. He also used this unique opportunity to express by name his deep gratitude to many of the individuals with whom he worked. Bob is the subject of a just-published book by best-selling author Robert Kaplan entitled ***The Good American – The Epic Life of the U.S. Government's Greatest Humanitarian***. **Ambassador Rick Barton** began the session by asking Bob a number of important questions about key aspects of his career, after which Bob responded to many audience questions and comments for the remainder of the special 90-minute program. To view the video of the entire session please click [here](#).

UAA Development Issues Committee



On Wednesday, April 14th, the **UAA Development Issues Committee** hosted a highly informational virtual briefing for UAA members by the leaders of **USAID's Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL)**. **Michele Sumilas**, the Assistant to the Administrator for PPL, introduced the PPL leadership team: **Joshua Kaufman** (Director of Policy), **Kathryn Stevens** (Director of Strategic Plans and Policy), **Aye Aye Thwin** (Director of Learning, Evaluation and Research); and **Courtney Maloney** (Deputy Director of the Program Office). Michele and her office leads highlighted the importance of Samantha Power's new USAID leadership; the inclusion of USAID in the National Security Council; Gayle Smith's appointment as State Department lead for the international covid-19 response, and Gloria Steele's leadership role as Acting Administrator. The UAA participants actively engaged with Michele and the office directors, and UAA **Committee Co-Chair Steve Giddings** noted the possibility of UAA members volunteering their services to collaborate with PPL and other USAID units throughout the program cycle. A more complete summary of the briefing may be viewed on the UAA website by clicking [here](#) and the USAID slide presentations are available [here](#).

USAID Book Club

The **UAA Book Club** held a virtual meeting with 14 participants on April 21, 2021. **Richard Blue** led a discussion of ***The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again***, by Robert D. Putnam with Shaylyn Romney Garrett. To see an issues paper and reviews of the book, please visit the UAA website by [clicking here](#).

Alumni Profile: Harriett Destler

Is Harriett Destler retired? After 60 years of working in development for the Peace Corps, USAID, and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the answer is "probably yes." As her husband once noted, "If they leave the plane door open, she is on it."

Throughout her career Harriett has had the good fortune to be



Harriett and Mac Destler with Tempest

present at the creation of major development programs as well as the methodology of designing, implementing and evaluating programs. In 1961, just after she graduated from college, she came to Washington to work for Bill Moyers to recruit Peace Corps Volunteers. Since there were few PC Volunteers in the field, her accounts of what it was like to be a volunteer were original.

Harriett went on to serve on the Peace Corps staff in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), where she became acutely aware of the special needs of women. So, on her return, she went to work for USAID in the newly formed Office of Population. There, among other things, she helped design the first family planning programs in Africa. She left the Office of Population to help develop USAID's global guidance in planning and evaluation. She co-authored USAID's country-level strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Her dual interest in health and in program design and evaluation provided her an opportunity to work globally, although mostly based in Washington. At last count, she had worked in 65 countries, most multiple times. While serving in USAID, she was awarded the prestigious George C. Marshall award. She then served a stint for MCC on chronic disease in Mongolia.

Harriett is a tireless traveler. Her most recent trip was an anniversary present for her husband. She didn't reveal their destination of Cambodia and Laos until they were on the plane to Bangkok. At home in Virginia, Harriett has enjoyed serving on the Great Falls Historical Society Board. Great Falls has a long history dating back to when the native Americans hunted on the banks of the Potomac to the creation of the Nike Missile site. She trained a German Shepherd dog, Muddy Creek Tempest, to become a nationally certified therapy dog, and they visit nursing homes.

And, finally, she and Mac hope you will stop in for a drink at their turn of the century, Sears and Roebuck farmhouse next to Great Falls National Park or their mountain cabin in Evergreen, Colorado where they spend their summers.

Newsletter Schedule

The next UAA newsletter will be sent on June 7, and subsequent issues will be published on the first Monday of each month or early that week if Monday is a holiday. We hope you enjoy receiving this news of your fellow alumni activities. If you have information you would like to share, your contributions

are welcomed. Please send the information, along with a captioned picture of the event, date, and people shown, to office@usaidalumni.org.

Make Your 2021 UAA Membership Contribution
USAID Alumni Association

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