USAID Alumni Association
Annual General Meeting

REPORT ON THE USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The USAID Alumni Association (UAA)'s 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on October 31, 2025. UAA members participated both in-person and via Zoom Webinar. Those attending in-person enjoyed reconnecting with friends and former colleagues. The virtual connection enabled UAA members across the United States and in other countries to participate. The meeting was attended in-person by 101 members and 4 guests, and virtually by 204 members. This compares with 2024, when 74 members attended in person, and 37 virtually. The number of in-person attendees was significantly less than the number who registered to attend.

This report summarizes the presentations and discussions conducted during the meeting. A recording of the entire AGM can be viewed by **clicking here**. The following were the meeting's principal agenda items:

- Welcome by the Center for Global Development (CGD) Vice President Clemence Landers
- Keynote address by Former USAID Deputy Administrator Jim Kunder: What Comes Next: A revived USAID or Something Else?
- Panel on the Future of International Development Cooperation
- UAA Annual Report, including response to the crisis, election results, and special recognitions, by UAA Co-chair Roberta Mahoney
- Discussion of the Future of the UAA led by the UAA Board Co-chair Tony Chan

At the start of the AGM, Clemence Landers, welcomed the UAA members to the CGD. For a number of years, the CGD has hosted the AGM, without charge, and the UAA greatly appreciates the Center's generosity. As part of her welcome, Ms. Landers stated that everyone at CGD was shocked by the decision to close USAID, and they are fully aware of the difficult context for the former USAID staff. The problem is in fact cascading as other major international donors are reducing their programs, and the aid sector is under threat.

At CGD they are looking at the need to focus on what new forms of foreign assistance may be needed to confront the new challenges of the 21st century. CGD has relaunched its program focused on the United States and is looking for "blue sky" ideas for the way forward. They are also documenting the current crisis to have accurate information on the impact of the aid cuts, which is a crisis for humanity. In addition to the aid cuts, the imposition of tariffs is also creating great uncertainty, as well as proposals to tax remittances that people working in wealthy countries send to their families in poorer ones. CGD is looking for big ideas, and what US engagement should be in the future. She closed by again welcoming the UAA's return to CGD.

Keynote Address by Former USAID Deputy Administrator Jim Kunder

Jim Kunder

Former USAID Deputy Administrator Jim Kunder opened his presentation by acknowledging the expertise and dedication of the many former USAID officers in the audience. He noted that the title of his address was *"What Comes Next: A Revived USAID or Something Else?"*—and previewed his conclusion that the answer would indeed be *something else.*

Before outlining his vision for the future, Mr. Kunder reflected on the developments since January. He rejected the view that USAID's challenges stemmed from poor messaging, arguing instead that domestic political dynamics were to blame. He described USAID's demise as "stupid, obscene, unforgivable, and strategically self-neutralizing"—an outcome that history will condemn. He attributed responsibility to a small group with "the extreme ideologies of the robber barons of the 1890s," compounded by weak congressional leadership that tacitly supported the administration's approach.

Mr. Kunder emphasized that any new initiatives must be framed in **national security terms**. Over the past eighty years, he noted, the post-World War II consensus that built and sustained international institutions has eroded, leaving the global assistance system among the most fragile elements of that order. Most Americans neither know nor understand this system, while domestic politics dominate public discourse, leaving little room to discuss international needs. Although Democrats still recognize the value of foreign aid, he cautioned that it cannot be a central theme in their 2026 campaign.

He also highlighted deep divisions within the development community over how far organizations should go in accommodating the administration's directives in order to continue receiving funding from the Department of State. For many, the choice is stark—comply or risk losing their staff and operations altogether.

Turning to the question of *what comes next,* Mr. Kunder argued that the future will not bring a revival of USAID, but rather *something new*: an **independent, stand-alone foreign assistance agency** focused on national security. Audience members noted that national security has always been tied to development objectives. Mr. Kunder stressed the continued need for a central institutional voice for international development—a "seat at the table" within interagency decision-making. Maintaining that voice, he said, requires a dedicated development entity. The continued operation of the MCC and DFC shows that such an approach remains viable.

Mr. Kunder concluded with two immediate appeals. First, he urged alumni to **move beyond mourning USAID's loss** and focus on next steps. Second, he called for framing development arguments within the administration's themes of *a safer, stronger, and more prosperous United States,* to attract bipartisan, especially Republican, support. He noted that the midterm elections will be pivotal: a Republican sweep could close off opportunities, but if avoided, a viable path forward remains.

Citing global strategic realities, Mr. Kunder proposed the creation of a **U.S. Strategic Assistance Corporation**, a concept he believes could resonate with some Republican leaders.

He then outlined specific recommendations for the USAID Alumni Association (UAA):

1. **Advocate for maintaining USAID's legal standing and the Foreign Assistance Account.** USAID remains a Congressionally authorized entity. With Acting Administrator Russell Vought reportedly favoring elimination of USAID and the FAA, it is vital to preserve both for potential future renewal.
2. **Support documentation of foreign-assistance impacts.** UAA should contribute information to DEVEX's *AID Report*, which seeks to chronicle the damage caused by recent disruptions.
3. **Expand outreach efforts**—particularly in key states such as California and Florida—where members can help shape public and political understanding of development issues.
4. **Coordinate more effectively with peer organizations.** The community's efforts are too often fragmented; greater collaboration is needed, and the UAA—with its stature and convening power—can play a leadership role.
5. **Honor USAID's legacy.** In the spirit of Samuel Adams's efforts to preserve public memory of the Boston Massacre, UAA should lead an annual remembrance of the 100 fallen colleagues to keep alive the memory of USAID's contributions.

<u>Questions from the UAA members</u>:

1. At what point should we say, "This is too much?" Should we draw lines? How should we factor in MCC and DFC?
   Kunder: There is two-level approach. Yes, the D in DFC is for development. If DFC finances a railroad in south central Africa to access rare earths, then they should build stations along the route so farmers can get their produce to market. At State, the reality is that 700 USAID colleagues are now working there. We need to fight illegal handling of personnel transfers. We should also offer suggestions on food aid and engage on operational issues.
2. USAID always supported national security. How is national security defined and has it been redefined?

Kunder: In the 1960s, global literacy was at 43% and more recently it is at 87%. This contributes to stability and national security. I had to explain this to military friends working in Mali, who asked what USAID was doing funding an out of school youth program in a civil war zone. I responded that teenagers not attending school were prime recruits for extremist groups. I agree with Ambassador Mark Green, we did not do a good job of connecting those dots for the American people. But yes, USAID was always a national security organization, because development in other countries is a US national security interest.

3. I agree with emphasis on national security and Congressional disengagement. Congress earmarked 80% of USAID's budgets, so the accusation that USAID was a rogue agency is false.
   Kunder: I agree with your comment. But I find when Chris Milligan and I talk to Republican legislators, many are very reasonable and are on the fence, where they might be willing to support funding for development if they have a message that can convince their constituents.
4. You favor creation of a US Strategic Assistance Corporation. Would it be better to use the term development which is broader?
   Kunder: I'm not wedded to the name and was more interested in emphasizing the word strategic. There is a fairly broad feeling on the Hill that USAID programs were too diffuse and not aligned with national strategic objectives. I'd be happy with a US Strategic Development Corporation.

<u>Panel on the Future of International Development Cooperation</u>

Ndidi Okonkwo Nwunneli, Masood Ahmed, Charles Kenny, Andrew Herscowitz

Masood Ahmed, President Emeritus of the Center for Global Development, chaired the session. Panel members were **Andrew Herscowitz**, Chief Executive Officer of Mission 300 at the Rockefeller Foundation; **Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli**, Chief Executive Officer of the ONE Campaign; and **Charles Kenny**, Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Development.

The discussion was wide-ranging, touching on the balance between solidarity (a sense of shared humanity that goes beyond national interest to support human rights and social progress to reduce inequity) and sovereignty, as well as national security principles for foreign assistance; the roles of development finance institutions, private sector, philanthropy, and multilateral development banks; and host country government roles and accountability.

Masood Ahmed began by referencing Jim Kunder's keynote address and his call for a new U.S. Strategic Assistance Corporation and the need to explore more broadly what should come next with development cooperation. He asked what the focus of any new U.S. development cooperation organization should be? Should it be linked explicitly to national security interests? to shared solidarity principles? to other principles or rationales?

Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli noted that she has long been a fan of USAID and believes that there is no progress without solidarity. Nonetheless, the abrupt shuttering of USAID was a wake-up call to African leaders and made clear their need to lead and own their countries' development. Solidarity and sovereignty principles will be equally needed in future foreign assistance models. She also argued that more should be done to hold governments accountable. New assistance/cooperation models must transition to full accountability to host country governments. This will also mean that future U.S. cooperation cannot simply be focused on U.S. national security interests.

Charles Kenney agreed that solidarity principles will be key to any new foreign assistance/cooperation organization in the U.S. He cited the continued significant funding for global health programming as evidence of that need. He recommended building on that solidarity model and then expanding work into education and other related sectors. He also noted the important role that sovereign lending should play in any future model, e.g., lending to expand rare earth mining. He recommended that the U.S. initially build on solidarity feelings and then match it with more lending to support transactional aspects of development.

Andy Herscowitz argued that the former USAID Power Africa initiative offers a good model. It had two sets of measurable results: people served to help support those motivated by solidarity principles; and megawatts produced to appeal to those interested in long-term economic gains and investment opportunities for U.S. companies. He noted that the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is not using all its current authorities, and that it could be doing more in middle income countries and USAID graduate countries.

Mr. Ahmed countered that private sector investment has often been less than what the development community hoped for. He therefore asked whether there were other sources of finance? Can philanthropy do more? Ms. Nwuneli responded that philanthropy cannot fill the gap; she also again argued for the importance of holding governments to account regarding shared solidarity principles. Philanthropy can be a catalyst, especially as it increasingly focuses on innovation. She cited the important innovations brought about by the Gates foundation in agricultural research and health. She added that the diaspora is also important in providing resource flows. She also argued that the Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) need to do more to help on domestic resource mobilization as part of their lending programs. She further added that philanthropy needs to do more advocacy, especially in holding governments accountable.

Mr. Ahmed asked whether the multilateral development banks can do more? Can they also do more to mobilize private capital? Or, are the MDBs already trying to do too many things; do they need to focus more?

Mr. Kenney reminded the audience about the constraints in World Bank/IDA funding that is currently at 2018 levels. The World Bank is less constrained with its IBRD funds that are lent at near market rates. He believes there is room to do more with these IBRD funds that are lent at higher than IDA rates but are still less than the rates many countries are now paying to private sector lenders. He noted that the World Bank had made many improvements to speed up its lending process, but that these have now been negatively affected by pressure from the U.S. administration on Bank procurement procedures. He added that the MDBs have done a better job of focusing on client demand. Therefore, if donors want to push their own agendas, they will need to come up with their own resources to do so.

Mr. Herscowitz spoke briefly about the Rockefeller Foundation's Mission 300 Project that builds on, to some extent, the old USAID Development Credit Authority (DCA) model. He went on to discuss the disconnect between the ODA and DFI worlds, that each too often dismisses the other. He noted an important difference between the U.S. DFC and other country DFIs -- that the U.S. DFC is unique in not needing to generate a financial return to stay alive, that it gets an annual appropriation from the Congress. This enables it to focus more on development outcomes. Mission 300 is pushing the Bank to broaden its focus beyond Ahmedfinancial return expectations to also include development outcomes -- e.g., the 300 million people to get access to electricity. To do so, funds will be used to subsidize or reduce interest rates. This prompted input from Mr. Kenney and Mr. Ahmed about previous experiments to do this that suffered from "execution issues." Mr. Ahmed asked whether there might be a more fundamental problem with the approach. Mr. Herscowitz argued that if DFIs could gain 95 cents on the dollar, they could have much greater developmental impact. Mr. briefly noted comments by Africans on this approach and efforts to meet self-interest of both the lender and borrower. Ms. Nwuneli highlighted the importance of a new partnership with Africa that is linked to an agenda defined by Africans. She continues to see double standards. She argued for the importance of focus on sustainability and the need for African self-sufficiency in most areas by 2035. This will require reform to the global health and agricultural frameworks. Any new model needs to rely upon country-defined agendas.

The session then opened for questions and comments from the UAA membership. Comments included:

- concern about making a solidarity argument for global health and humanitarian programs overseas while they are being cut in the United States.
- the need for the new model to require greater expectations on what the country itself needs to do and the future role of governance assistance.
- the need for business stakeholders to have a role.
- what will expanded credit programs mean for the debt burden in development countries? Are we replicating the crisis of the 1980s? What about the impact of debt to China?
- a reminder that finance is simply a tool. Are there lessons from South Africa in the mid-1990s after the transition to a majority-led government. They had their own agenda, but potential lenders had different views. Any new paradigm cannot be led by finance.
- a reminder that USAID had done lending and credit guarantees for years. Should credit be a tool of any new assistance agency, or should that be only in the DFC?
- the need to discuss these same issues with other bilateral donors. How do we keep the notion of development alive? How to maintain linkages with other donors and the private sector after demise of USAID?

The panelists then offered their final remarks. Ms. Nwuneli argued for the need to change the narrative on Africa. Corruption is global; it is not solely an Africa issue. We need to be more nuanced in talking about Africa. That lack of nuance has already led to much higher interest rates from private banks to African borrowers. She again noted the importance of investing in sustainability and recommended that the UAA be a co-creator with ONE and other like-minded groups. Mr. Herscowitz spoke about the host country ownership principles built into Mission 300 -- countries develop the compacts, including definition of needed reforms. The IDA funds are highly concessional and help to bring down the cost of lending by partners. The most powerful thing we can do is help to bring down the cost of borrowing. Mr. Kenney agreed with the need for more direct work with governments, noting that the Administration's new Global Health Strategy does call for this. He added that the Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is arguing that it cannot do more in low-income countries, that it needs authority to work in middle income countries. This will mean the need for mechanisms to work in non-MCC countries.

UAA Annual Report, Co-Chair Roberta Mahoney (including response to the crisis, election results, and recognition of supporting individuals and organizations)

Roberta Mahoney

UAA Board Co-Chair Roberta Mahoney summarized the contents of the Annual Report beginning with the activities initiated as the result of the termination of USAID. Many of the activities outlined in the 2024/2025 Implementation Plan continued as usual from October 1 to mid-January but were disrupted with the assault on foreign aid. UAA members pivoted their attention to the new circumstances. Roberta noted that the UAA often worked with a wide range of other partners on activities aimed at dealing with the crisis.

Among the activities Roberta summarized were:

- **Internal and External Communications and Media Outreach**: Interviews on broadcast news shows, letters to the Secretary of State and other officials, letters to editors, speeches, updating the website with information on full range of efforts, direct communications with registrants, making calls and social media posts.
- **Legislative and Judicial Actions**: Developing and maintaining a legislation tracker, a lawsuit tracker, and undertaking Congressional outreach efforts; a member recently established a legal defense fund. UAA staff collaborated on planning Congressional briefings for Committee Members and Staff in collaboration with AID-on-the-Hill (AOTH).
- **Support for Displaced Staff**: developed resource materials, provided relocation assistance, met and greeted returning USAID staff, provided landing support, established a financial support fund (highlighted below), established an FSN support effort, expanded membership efforts among displaced staff, established additional regional chapters, expanded social activities, launched listening and mentoring sessions with new members and dismissed employees, and secured swag, books, and awards from destruction as USAID was evicted from the RRB.
- **Program Thanking USAID Staff:** Two highly moving live webinars were landmark events during the painful USAID shutdown period. They were organized by the AID Transition Alliance (ATA), in collaboration with UAA, on June 30, 2025. The events paid tribute to all USAID staff and implementing partners who had dedicated their careers to development assistance. All living former USAID Administrators spoke, as well as a wide range USAID foreign service, civil service, FSNs, and implementing partners to honor their colleagues. Former U.S. presidents Obama and Bush both spoke via video, as well as two Nobel Peace Prize laureates: former President of Liberia, Johnson Sirleaf, and former President of Colombia, Juan Manual Santos. They thanked USAID for the enduring impact it has had in bringing peace to their countries. Lead singer for U2, Bono, sent a very moving video message honoring USAID for its contributions and legacy.

Roberta highlighted the **USAID Staff Financial Support Fund** as an example of assistance to staff who were involuntarily separated or took early retirement from a USAID position after January 20, 2025. Anyone who was in one of the following employment categories is eligible to apply for up to a $2000 grant: GS, FS, FSL, USPSC, RSSA, PASA, AD, Schedule C, or Fellow position; or former FSN released from USAID-related employment after January 20, 2025, and with SIV residence in the USA for 1 year or less. To date, over $340,000 in donations and 260 applications for grants were generated. Approved grants total 150 and there is a waitlist of about 70 eligible applications. With a targeted fund size of $500,000, the UAA is actively soliciting additional donations so that we can continue to provide support to our former USAID colleagues.

Roberta also mentioned the need, given the destruction of USAID, to modify the previous highly popular mentorship program to provide professional support that may be needed by recently terminated staff.

Tony Pryor, Board member, then talked briefly about the knowledge preservation and management activities currently underway. USAID's legacy includes research, data, photos, human interest stories, and collective expertise accumulated over the last six decades of the Agency's work. Recognizing the urgent need to locate, preserve, and share these resources, the UAA teamed up with the Aid Transition Alliance (AtA) to collect materials to create a free, searchable database. To date, we have collected 145,393 resources and received individual interview requests from 140 former staff.

Tony Pryor

Special Recognitions

UAA Co-Chair Roberta Mahoney explained that, at each AGM since 2014, UAA has presented an Annual Award to two UAA members — one for work helping people in the U.S. and one for work helping people in other countries — to recognize their outstanding contributions. But this year, in the wake of the destruction of USAID and the abrupt termination of USAID personnel at home and abroad, so many UAA members have made (and continue to make) outstanding contributions that it did not seem appropriate to single out only two for recognition. This year, instead of awards to individuals, UAA is awarding special recognition to the many UAA members who responded to the crisis at USAID and, among other things:

- Engaged on broadcast and social media, published essays and op-eds, and wrote letters to USG officials, defending USAID and the indispensable role of foreign aid, and challenging the gross mistreatment of USAID personnel.
- Supported terminated USAID employees directly by, among other things: designing, organizing and implementing a USAID Staff Financial Support Fund (which has already provided more than $300,000 in grants to eligible USAID employees); greeting USAID

personnel returning from abroad in person at the airport; and assisting returning USAID personnel with relocation and adjustment.

- Joined with terminated USAID employees and others to help organize and finance litigation challenging those terminations.

In light of these and other truly outstanding contributions, UAA hereby recognizes, and offers its deepest thanks, to the many UAA members who responded to the crisis at USAID for their extraordinary initiative, creativity and empathy.

Discussion of the Future of UAA led by UAA Board Co-chair Tony Chan

Tony Chan

Board Co-chair Tony Chan summarized the process the UAA is undertaking to solicit input from members on new directions proposed for the organization. The UAA board is conducting listening sessions and will conduct a survey of members to solicit input on the way forward, including how to delete, amend or leave unchanged the four current purposes of the association; whether to revise or expand membership eligibility criteria; how to ensure the uniqueness of the organization so it does not overlap with similar organizations; how to include and involve FSNs; how to structure committees that depend on volunteers; how to improve the UAA online presence; how to enable/formalize regional UAA U.S. branches; whether to create an affiliated 501(c) (4) for lobbying/policy advocacy; and to review funding scenarios. Chan invited input from attendees.

Comments from Attendees

There were numerous comments in support of widening the criteria for membership in the UAA. In particular, there was general support for extending membership to institutional service contractors (generally defined as anyone who had been issued a USAID.gov address). In addition, there was a suggestion that membership be further broadened, possibly to include alumni of implementing partners or others.

Another suggestion that was widely supported was the importance of developing partnerships with other organizations, such as USGLC, the Aid Transition Alliance, and AID on the Hill. USGLC is interested in engaging UAA at the grass roots level. AID on the Hill wants to partner on advocacy with Congress. Several members warned of the importance of defining the organization's core mission, noting that UAA should not try to do everything but should link to other groups.

It was noted that this is the moment to expand UAA's regional presence, given the large number of recently terminated USAID employees resettling around the country. Participants promoted the strengthening and expansion of regional groups and activities nationally. There are many USAID alumni engaged in teaching about global development in the DC area and around the country, and attendees noted the continuing interest in international development among university students. One commentor suggested that UAA take on mentoring students. Others mentioned the possibility of recruiting university students as interns. Several members encouraged further development and promulgation of slide decks for outreach presentations and syllabi for teaching.

Many commentors were in favor of finding ways to engage and educate Congress and the general public on the importance of US involvement in sustainable development. It was pointed out that Congressional engagement and education is permitted for 501 (c) (3) organizations, but lobbying on a specific bill is not.

The need for a more robust online presence was noted, as well as the need for more volunteers and staff to develop and maintain these vehicles.

Many funding issues were noted. Members were asked to contribute to the existing UAA support fund for transitioning former USAID employees, and it was noted that the organization is not currently set up to fund-raise and to write grant proposals. It was also noted that 501 (c) (4) organizations cannot be supported by foundations, that foundations look at membership levels in making funding decisions, and that the future possibility of hiring staff depends on increased funding. It was also noted that decisions on organizational structure need to take into account that the recent increase in membership is largely due to recently terminated staff joining the association (at a reduced rate). How to maintain or expand membership should be a key consideration in the strategic planning process that is now beginning.

Introduction of the new Board

Tony Chan then announced that the members elected to be on the UAA Board are Jeanne Briggs, Alicia Dinerstein, Steve Haykin, and Christine Sheckler. Ms. Dinerstein was not present when the photo of the new Board was taken.

New UAA Board: Jeanne Briggs, Tony Pryor, Tony Chan, Chris Milligan, Christine Sheckler, Steve Haykin