



January 2026 Newsletter

Note from the UAA Board

Welcome to 2026!

The year 2025 will be remembered as a defining moment. Those who have served USAID are no strangers to complexity or challenge, yet this past year tested us in ways few could have anticipated. And still, it revealed something powerful: the depth of our shared values and the strength of our community.

When circumstances demanded it, we came together—more connected, more determined, and more unified than ever before. Our association grew, welcoming new members and energizing our regional chapters. Through gatherings both large and small, we affirmed that our community endures, grounded not in circumstance but in shared purpose.

We stood beside our USAID colleagues when it mattered most—offering job training, advocacy, and financial support. We joined forces with like-minded organizations to defend the importance of development assistance and to honor the professionalism and dedication of those who serve. We safeguarded the Agency’s history, preserving its memorabilia and protecting vital records that reflect decades of development expertise and impact. And we convened a thoughtful and well-attended Annual General Meeting that challenged us to ask not only what has been lost, but what must come next.

As we look ahead, the opportunity before us is clear. We can engage the American public with renewed conviction about why foreign assistance and American leadership matter. We can help shape policy conversations and advance development thought leadership. We can deepen connections with new members, strengthen our regional chapters, and broaden our circle to include all who have served the Agency. So let us step into 2026 with confidence and resolve. Let us carry forward the lessons of the past year, renew the bonds that unite us, and continue building a community defined by service, integrity, and shared belief in a better future.

What's New on the UAA Website

Calendar:

***New!* January 21, 2026, 9:00-10:30 am EST, Live Webinar**
When A Difficult Year Echoes: Navigating Anniversary Stress Related to the Foreign Aid Freeze. This webinar, open to all members of the international humanitarian and development community, will offer a compassionate exploration of anniversary stress related to the foreign aid freeze. See article below. [Click here to register.](#)

[In Memoriam:](#)

Gerald Franklin Hyman, Marilyn Ann Zak, Harry Joseph Petrequin, Jr.,
Linda Margaret Rogers, Henry William Reynolds

NOTE: Bulletin Board and Article entries during the last two months have been too numerous to list all of them here, so only those by former USAID officers and a few others that deserve special mention follow. For those interested in seeing more, most of which are about the effects of dismantling USAID, please use these links:

- 1) [Bulletin Board](#)
- 2) [Articles](#)

Bulletin Board

- [On Thursday, January 15, 2026, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm ET join the Center for a New American Security \(CNAS\) for a discussion featuring Representative Ami Bera and the Honorable Ted Yoho, moderated by CNAS CEO Richard Fontaine on "The Future of U.S. Foreign Assistance."](#)
- [Final Report of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Dec 2025](#)
- [USAID Supplemental Annuity Update and Grievance Instructions, updated 11 Dec 2025, AFSA](#)
- [On Nov. 6, 2025, former USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore received the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity from the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative at the American Academy of Diplomacy.](#)
- [At the Breaking Point: The State of the U.S. Foreign Service in 2025. Report of an AFSA survey, 3 Dec 2025](#)
- [On Nov. 22, 2025, at the World Conference on Lung Health in Copenhagen, Denmark, the prestigious Karel Styblo Public Health Prize was shared by the Desmond Tutu TB Center at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and the former TB Division of the U.S. Agency for International Development.](#)
- Nov. 17, 2025. Announcing a new podcast, "Global Development Interrupted." The podcast was started by former USAID staff as a way to document the stories of the people whose work was upended

when United States foreign assistance was cut. It also focuses on the impact rolling back investments in foreign aid will have on US and global security. It is a great podcast that interviews former USAID staff in every episode. More information is available on Substack: <https://globaldevinterrupted.substack.com/about>

Articles

(Click on the “Articles” link above for more articles posted on our website. Click on the boldface item headings there and below for a hyperlink to the full article or video.)

- **USAID deserves a Nobel Peace Prize to recognize its impact.** By Victor Barbiero, former USAID officer, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 20 Dec 2025
- **Brief note on various support mechanisms for fired AID workers.** *Devex*, 22 Dec 2025
- **ADST Features USAID’s Dave Harden’s Oral History – and Christmas.** From ADST Biweekly: Holidays in the Foreign Service, 19 Dec 2025
- **The US used to lead. It doesn’t anymore.** By Mark Ward, retired USAID officer, *Politico*, 18 Dec 2025
- **Scooter Wisdom: Life Lessons from the Streets of Saigon.** By John Harris, former USAID officer, *The Foreign Service Journal*, Nov-Dec 2025 issue
- **USAID’s influence should be reignited.** By David Billings, retired USAID officer, *Daily State News*, 15 Dec 2025
- **Former USAID chief (Mark Green) sees promise in Trump’s aid rethink.** By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 28 Nov 2025

- **Squanto and USAID: An American Thanksgiving Tragedy.** OpEd by Jim Kunder, Alliance 4 American Leadership, 25 Nov 2025
- **Restoring Transparency: Rebuilding the Foundations of U.S. Foreign Assistance Data.** By George Ingram, Senior Fellow Emeritus, the Brookings Institution, and Sally Paxton, U.S. Representative, Publish What You Fund, MFAN, 11 Nov 2025
- **Reauthorization of the Development Finance Corporation.** By George Ingram, Brookings Institution, 5 Nov 2025

Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities

Closing of Aines International

Linda Aines is retiring and closing her Aines International recruitment activity for international development activities. Her [farewell post](#) lists several other places where job seekers can still look for openings.

Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) is seeking applicants for a part-time Communications Advisor to fill a new vacancy.

The primary focus of this part-time position will be writing – collateral materials (e.g., factsheets, briefers), press statements, newsletters, website copy, etc. Location: Washington, DC area (remote office). Rate is \$3,000 monthly retainer (12-15 hours/week). A full job description can be seen [here](#).

UAA Friendsgiving 2025

On December 13, 36 UAA members plus families and friends gathered in Alexandria for our first UAA Friendsgiving. Participants enjoyed good conversations and lots of great food as UAA provided turkeys and ham while everyone brought family favorite sides and desserts to share. It

was a joy to see the participants -- a mix of new and old members -- greeting old friends, meeting new ones, and sharing news and contacts.

During the gathering, UAA Board members and committee representatives shared new information on the USAID Staff Financial Support Fund, as well as the state of UAA efforts to continue to support foreign assistance writ large and to re-think what UAA's role should be going forward. Board Co-Chair Tony Chan is working on a piece on future directions for UAA.



Friendship Potluck spread



Tony Chan carving the turkey



Roberta Mahoney and Oren Wyche-Shaw



Julie Koenen and Karen Freeman



Chuck and Tricia Yesolitis



Luba Faiara and Margot Ellis



Tim Cox, Veena Reddy, Sharon Carter and Rose Rakas



Laura Samotshozo and Melissa Williams

Many thanks to EVERYONE for all of the food, laughter and camaraderie! Special recognition goes to the volunteers whose excellent teamwork was the basis for the event's success:

Thank you to Margot, Melissa, Sharon, Denise, Monika, Roberta, David, Chris, Tony, Paula and Patrick.

Hope to see you all at UAA's Winterfest gathering later this winter.

More photos from the Friendsgiving can be found at this [link](#).

NOTE: Several lost items were found at the Sept. 6 picnic and the Dec. 13 Friendsgiving Potluck event. If anyone would like to claim one of them please contact Karen Freeman at ugandakaren@hotmail.com See the photos of articles [here](#).

What's New in the UAA National Chapters

To expand UAA's reach, strengthen its relevance, and respond to the impact of USAID's dismantling, UAA is supporting gatherings of alumni across the U.S. and abroad. California and Florida are the most active and have established chapters. Groups are also active in New England, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Washington State.

California Chapter: California has five active local groups—San Diego–Orange County, Los Angeles–Desert, Santa Barbara–Central Coast, San Francisco–Oakland, and Sacramento–Sierra. These groups meet regularly in person to provide networking, job-search assistance, and community support. *Contact: Christine Sheckler, cmtsheckler@gmail.com*



UAA Los Angeles, CA



UAA San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area, CA



UAA San Diego, CA (Tony Pryor visit)



UAA Sacramento-Sierra, CA

Florida Chapter: Under the leadership of Miles Toder, Florida has been active for several years and works closely with the Florida Foreign Service Alumni Association. Outreach to former USAID colleagues relocating to Florida has driven strong membership growth, contributing to a doubling of UAA membership this year.

Members are invited to join the Florida Annual Meeting on January 16 (virtual or in St. Petersburg). Contacts: Miles Toder (milestoder@hotmail.com) or Alan Van Egmond (alanvanegmond@gmail.com)

Expanding Participation Nationwide: In 2025, UAA Outreach Committee Co-Chair Christine Sheckler conducted outreach trips across Western states to assess interest in new chapters and connect with returning USAID colleagues. These efforts included meetings in San Diego, Portland, and Seattle, generating strong interest and engagement.

UAA Board-Membership liaison Tony Pryor traveled to San Diego, Portland, and Seattle the week of December 14 to discuss options for expanding Alumni participation, the implications for membership and programming, and UAA's work on saving USAID knowledge. Carissa Page hosted a meeting in Portland, Oregon, and Vikki Stein gathered the group in Seattle, Washington.



UAA Seattle, Washington



UAA Portland, Oregon

Based on these discussions, recommendations will be presented to the UAA Board to support chapter expansion and inform ongoing reviews of UAA's mission, membership, and programming. For the full article on the website [click here](#).

USAID Staff Financial Support Fund Update

Please note that the fund is no longer accepting grant applications but is accepting donations so that we can try to fund all the eligible applications we now have. See below for details and the link to the donation page.

During the final weeks of December, UAA's USAID Staff Financial Support Fund received an additional \$120,000 in donations, resulting in a total donation level of just over \$480,000. This amazingly generous show of support for the USAID community has allowed the fund to reduce significantly the number of unfunded eligible applications. As of 12/26/25, we approved 189 grant requests, the number that our fund balance could accommodate at the time. Over the next couple of weeks we expect to approve another 50 or so given our new donations, and will continue to approve requests based on eligible applications until the fund balance is depleted. December 31, 2025, was the deadline for new grant applications.

We will continue to solicit donations into 2026 so that we can fund as many remaining eligible applications as possible. We ask that you help us in this effort by donating what you can. Every donation, regardless of the amount, has a meaningful impact on the development community and the future of international development.

The following note of thanks is representative of the messages we receive after grants are disbursed: "As 2025 comes to a close, I wanted to send my heartfelt thanks once more. Your grant helped me to pay off medical bills for a big surgery I had in May, alleviating financial stress ahead of the holidays. Despite not yet securing a new job, the polarizing headlines, and heartbreak for our global community, acts of kindness such as UAA's in administering these grants keep hope alive. Thank you for throwing out a lifeline when we needed it most."

Thanks to everyone who has supported the fund through donations. If you have not and wish to do so, here is the link.

<https://donate.thecommunityfoundation.org/usaida>

FSN Gathering in Indonesia



Oemi Soenarjo (now 79) and Diana Putman. Oemi started with USAID in 1968. She is as personable and sharp as ever.

More than 100 FSN alumni of USAID/Indonesia gathered in Jakarta for a reunion on November 23. The event, which was organized and managed by the Indonesian alumni, was held in the American Club. It drew 171 registrants, including a few USAID FSOs who had remained in Indonesia when the mission closed. Former USAID/Indonesia International Development Intern (IDI) Diana Putman (in Indonesia 1985-1988) happened to be in Jakarta in November when she heard about the planned reunion and was invited to attend.

Diana reported that the program opened with videos and slideshows, including videos by former USAID/Indonesia Directors Jeff Cohen and Desaix "Terry" Myers. It also included speakers, games, and lunch. The retired FSNs at the reunion represented the mission's long presence in Indonesia: a few had joined USAID/Indonesia back in the 1960s. It was a lively, friendly gathering. While many of the younger people are still working hard to find new careers Diana commented that "the overall mood at the event was high."



This is the group of old-timers. The very tall man next to Diana is Indro Soebagio. The man with the white shirt and white hair is Pak Agus. Sitting next to Oemi is Ibu Retno in the flowered jacket and next to her is Ibu Lanna who also started in 1968.

When a Difficult Year Echoes: Navigating Anniversary Stress Related to the Foreign Aid Freeze

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

9:00 - 10:30 EST | 14:00 - 15:30 GMT | 17:00 - 18:30 EEST | 21:00 - 22:30 ICT

As the anniversary of the foreign aid freeze approaches, many people may notice a return of stress, emotion, or uncertainty—sometimes in ways that are subtle, sometimes more pronounced.

This webinar, open to all members of the international humanitarian and development community, will offer a compassionate exploration of anniversary stress related to the foreign aid freeze.

Through brief psychoeducation and guided reflective exercises, participants will gain a clearer understanding of why this time of year

may feel charged, feel less alone in what they may be experiencing, and feel validated in their responses. The session will also invite participants to approach the anniversary with greater intentionality—honoring both personal and collective experiences of the past year.

Hosted by The KonTerra Group under the auspices of Aid Transition.

[Click here to register.](#)

Pay 2026 UAA Dues Now

UAA dues for calendar year 2026 may be paid now. Both those who have paid for 2026 and those who were members in 2025 may continue to attend UAA Member-only events through March 31st. Beginning on April 1, 2026, only those who have paid membership dues for 2026 may attend UAA member-only events. A cut-off date for dues payment to attend the Annual General Meeting will be announced later in the year.

An explanation of paying dues to UAA, including 2026 dues levels, is on our website at: <https://usaidualumni.org/dues-payment/>.

For questions, please email us at office@usaidualumni.org

--Carol Dabbs, Treasurer

Inscribed Awards Update

Please check the list and help us locate awardees

As we posted earlier, UAA members and USAID staff worked together to rescue some 175 inscribed plaques, awards, and certificates from the RRB last summer. The awards included Length of Service, FSN of the Year, Civ-Mil Cooperation, Distinguished Career Service, and a series of named awards. We compiled a list of awardees and asked that you review

the list to help us reach out to the awardees so we could unite them with their awards.

Many responded and we started to think about how to get the awards to the awardees. Just before Christmas, we learned that two officers will remain employed by USAID for several more weeks, that they wondered if we had found any awards in the rescued materials, and that they might be able to help mail the awards. We returned the awards to the USAID officers and will continue to work with them to find addresses for the awardees.

The two remaining USAID officers are Myra Emma Stokes and Chris Thomson. They can be reached at mestokes@usaid.gov, chrthompson@usaid.gov or through foundawards@gmail.com. Please contact these three addresses if you have any questions or can provide contact or address information for the awardees. [Click here](#) to see the list of awardees.

Thank you for your assistance!

50 Years of Global Health

50 Years of Global Health, Saving Lives and Building Futures was written in 2013 to capture the rich and diverse experience of USAID in the field of Global Health. The main audience is current and future USAID professionals who would benefit from learning from the past to build stronger global health programs in the future. The document content was overseen by a 13-member Health History Project Advisory Committee that had members throughout USAID. It involved a desk review of over 350 documents (all listed in the annex), 26 key informant interviews and four online surveys with current and former global health professionals.

The book contains a decade-by-decade review of global health programs since 1960, provides a timeline for each decade of events, includes informative graphs, charts and key data, and presents lessons learned over this time and thoughts for the future of global health. It was intended to be a living document with the content online so that

additional years of experience could be added. The book has been disseminated since 2015 and has also been used by the broader development community to get a better understanding of USAID's essential contribution in this important field. It is a valuable tool for those looking to capture 50 years of experience and lessons in past USAID global health programs. Please [click here](#) to see a copy of the full report.

Development Dialogues



The Development Issues Committee hosted Tod Preston, Executive Director of the Managing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) on October 7. Mr. Preston highlighted MFAN's advocacy for transparency in foreign assistance, the importance of local ownership and for continuing support for international development.

He discussed the fiscal year 2026 appropriations deliberations noting that, despite concerning reductions overall, some sectors have received support on Capitol Hill. He referred to recent publications by MFAN on the Department of State's Global Health Strategy and on recommendations regarding the operational requirements for administering foreign assistance. Salient points from the ensuing discussion addressed windows of opportunity for rebuilding development assistance and the importance of reestablishing an independent development arm of the U.S. Government. You can view a video of the discussion by [clicking here](#). You can read a transcript of the discussion by [clicking here](#).

Profile: Jose Garzon and Lisa Magno

Jose Garzon and Lisa Magno met in the Philippines in 1992, where Jose was assigned as a Food for Peace and Program Officer. Lisa, then a senior



Foreign Service National (FSN), managed one of the largest civil society programs in the Agency, issuing and monitoring dozens of grants to local and international NGOs. Although they worked in opposite sides of the USAID building, Jose's evaluation report (AEF) during that time noted that he "closely coordinated with the NGO team leader." Hmm.... They married in the Philippines and were then posted to Bolivia. Lisa continued as a USAID Implementing Partner, joining the USAID Foreign Service in 2003.

Along the way Jose and Lisa switched backstops. A political scientist, Jose entered the Democracy and Governance (DG) backstop and led democracy and governance units in Bolivia, Washington DCHA Bureau (Rule of Law Division of the Democracy and Governance Office), Guatemala, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. Lisa launched her Foreign Service career as a Program Officer. Following tours in Guatemala and Afghanistan, she became head of the Program Office in Kosovo.

Jose takes pride in helping build the Federation of Municipal Associations in Bolivia, launching creative programs in Guatemala to keep youth out of gangs, and leading the efforts to build bridges between Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo. He retired in 2014 but continued to work for USAID on contract for several years, most notably in DRG, Nicaragua and Serbia. Lisa meanwhile returned to Kosovo as Deputy Mission Director and then Mission Director, with Jose and their dog Samson at post. During the COVID pandemic, Samson served in Kosovo as the unofficial "Mission therapy dog." Lisa concluded her career, which began as an FSN-10, as Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Europe and Eurasia Bureau. Among many accomplishments, she led USAID's programming in the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Ireland, and Greenland. She oversaw the \$26 billion Direct Budget Support Program during the ongoing war in Ukraine, for which she received a Presidential Award.

While finding tandem assignments proved challenging at times, they both agreed early on to remain posted together, accepting only short-term separations. They also took pains to avoid dealing with work problems at home. As much as they valued their careers, family and their personal happiness always took priority.

Since retiring, both remain active based in Fairfax County, VA. Jose works as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children, a Special Advisor to the USAID funded ABA (American Bar Association)-Rule of Law Initiative, a member of the Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board, and as a local community activist. From 2015-2017, he helped coordinate the UAA Mentoring Program and has personally mentored several USAID FSOs. Since retiring in November 2024, Lisa has joined the Eurasia Foundation Board of Directors and has relished family reunions in California, Sydney, and Tasmania. Both worked this past year as election officers, most recently in their own precinct. At home, they enjoy caring for Samson (who is still a therapy dog), and visits with their grandsons, Jackson and Owen. Jose tends to his mini garden in the spring and summer, while Lisa is whipping up culinary delights and organizing monthly mahjong socials. Both remain in close contact with their former USAID colleagues and are committed to the work of the Agency and its legacy.

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USAID Alumni Association

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