

Where are former aid staff now? *Devex*, 31 March 2026

Where are they now?

Some are running for political office or advocating for aid on Capitol Hill. Others are done with the U.S. government altogether and have moved in different directions — volunteering or starting new businesses ranging from [consulting gigs](#) to law firms to [bed and breakfasts](#).

Then there are the lucky ones who have found steady employment in development — whose LinkedIn job announcements often come with a note of humility that many of their former USAID colleagues have not been as fortunate. An informal survey — organized by a former USAID-er — backs up that sentiment.

Becky Band Jain had spent more than two decades working with INGOs, [USAID](#), and U.N. agencies before finding herself out of a job. Feeling that those job announcements masked the unemployed reality for thousands like her, Jain put together a survey and posted it on LinkedIn. Within 10 days, 725 global development professionals had [responded with stories about the toll the layoffs had](#) on their careers, financial security, identity, and mental health, writes *Devex* contributor Emma Smith.

One year after USAID's collapse, the majority of professionals who took part in the survey — **68% — are still unemployed**, underemployed, involuntarily freelancing, or forced into early retirement. Many — **38% — have been searching for a job** for over 12 months. “It has been personally just hard to read through them. I notice a heaviness and a sadness,” Jain says.

Many people, of course, mentioned the financial strain: savings wiped clean, retirement funds withdrawn, future plans put on indefinite hold, Jain says. Those closest to retirement age described ageism in the job market and being overqualified, with “essentially, decades of experience working against [them],” while one younger respondent wrote: “Us 30-somethings are in the worst spot imaginable. Senior folks had full careers and savings. New grads have time, but the middle got hit hardest.”

But the losses run deeper, which Jain wanted to chronicle “so that people could feel a little bit less alone.” “The top theme was not just about jobs, **it was really mourning the mission**,” and the people and programs left behind, she explains. “That really speaks to the type of folks who were involved in this work. Very compassionate ... humanitarians whose mission was to help people.”

Read: [What has happened to the people who lost their jobs in the aid cuts?](#)