



# USAID Alumni Association

## **April 2026 Newsletter**

### **Note from the UAA Board**

Last month, we came together at Winterfest to bid farewell to a long, cold winter and to welcome the promise of spring. Spring is a season of growth and renewal—and that spirit is guiding our work now. As we navigate a period of significant change, we are considering how best to adapt to new realities. To that end, we recently circulated a survey to gather your perspectives on the priorities and future direction of the UAA.

We have also launched the first session in our “Development 2.0” series and are building a speaker’s bureau to engage communities across the country on the importance of American global engagement and foreign assistance. At the same time, our regional groups continue to host events and discussions, strengthening our collective voice and outreach.

Here in Washington, change is also underway. In a notable show of bipartisanship, both Republicans and Democrats came together to pass a strong FY 26 foreign assistance appropriation that restores much of the Administration’s proposed cuts. In addition, the U.S. Government Accountability Office is examining the full costs associated with dismantling United States Agency for International Development, including the termination of programs and staff. (See note below).

We deeply appreciate the active participation of USAID alums to ensure that UAA’s work continues to be grounded in renewal, informed by your input, and focused on strengthening our USAID community.

### **Calendar of Upcoming UAA Events**

**New! Tuesday, April 21, 9:30-11:00 AM, at DACOR Bacon House, 1801 F Street NW, Washington, DC, DACOR and UAA will host a “Transition to Teaching” conversation.** Recently separated federal employees who are interested in learning about secondary-level teaching careers are encouraged to attend. This is a hybrid event—you may attend in person or virtually. Virtual attendees will receive a link via email. To attend in person or virtually, please register [here](#). For more information please [click here](#).

**New! Tuesday, May 12, 11:45-2:00 at DACOR for a UAA/DACOR Development Dialogue with former A/AID Brian Atwood.** He will speak on “State and AID – Building Back Better”. Known to many of you, Brian has had an exemplary leadership career in development, diplomacy, Capitol Hill and academia. Currently a Senior Fellow at Brown University’s Watson Institute, he was USAID Administrator in the Clinton Administration, Under-Secretary of State for Management, President of the National Democratic Institute, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, and much more. Please join us for lunch at DACOR (or online) for a lively discussion of this important topic with a person who has lived in both worlds. Watch for a full announcement soon.

**New! May 28 Spring Reception at DACOR Bacon House 3-5 pm**

**New! Wednesday, August 5, 2026, the annual Vermont UAA picnic** will be held in Rochester VT. All alums and friends of USAID who will be in New England in early August are most welcome to attend. For further details, please get in touch with Ann Van Dusen ([avandusen4@gmail.com](mailto:avandusen4@gmail.com)), Anne Aarnes ([ahaarnes@hotmail.com](mailto:ahaarnes@hotmail.com)) or Connie Carrino ([cacarrino@gmail.com](mailto:cacarrino@gmail.com))

**New! August 30 UAA Annual Picnic at Ft Hunt Park Area A1 12-3 pm**

**New! October 30 Post-AGM Dinner and a Show**

**New! December 5 UAA Friendsgiving**

## What is New on the Website

### [In Memoriam:](#)

Todd Davies Shelton, Elinor Bingham Bachrach, Alan Sokolski

### [News About USAID](#)

Unless otherwise stated, the links below are for information purposes only and do not convey the endorsement of the UAA, its members, or its Board. See:

- 1) [Bulletin Board](#), including Statements from UAA about Current Events
- 2) [Articles](#)

## **Bulletin Board**

- USAID News Story Tracker, **USAID Media**
- The **Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs (WIFA)** is accepting new membership nominations for April 2026. [Click here](#) to see the nomination notice and [click here](#) to see an information sheet about WIFA.
- **April 10-17, 2026, the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), will host The Futures Summit, A New Era of Development Cooperation**, in-person and livestream, [1616 Rhode Island Ave NW Washington, DC 20036](#). [Click here](#) for more information and to register by April 10.
- DACOR/LAC Discussion Group dinner on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at the historic DACOR Bacon House. Cocktails will begin at 6:00 p.m., with dinner commencing at 6:30 p.m. For those unable to join us in person, there will be a virtual participation option for this important event. [Click here](#) for more information and a registration link.
- **On March 23, 2026, Former USAID Administrator Brian Atwood gave his maiden speech before the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs (WIFA).** Atwood is the new Chairman of WIFA, replacing Ambassador Tom Pickering who is now Chair Emeritus. The speech took place at the Cosmos Club of Washington. At the end, Atwood showed the video tribute to USAID that had been produced by Indonesian partners. [Click here](#) to read the speech. [Click here](#) for the Facebook video of the Indonesian program he showed the group.

## **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 articles.)

- **Where are former aid staff now?** Devex, 31 March 2026
- **USAID birth control commodities rotting in Belgium warehouse.** By Jeanna Smialek and Stephanie Nolen, *The New York Times*, 26 Mar 2026
- **Comments of Brian Frantz about USAID, former senior AID FSO.** Devex, 23 March 2026
- **State Dept Bureau of Disaster and Humanitarian Response.** Devex, 23 Mar 2026

- **Ex-DOGE Staffer Admits the Whole Thing was a Total Bust.** By Finn Hartnett, *The New Republic*, 17 March 2026
- **Kenya a year without USAID.** *Devex*, 13 March 2026
- **Stop pretending USAID’s takedown was about doing development better.** By Brian Frantz, former USAID SrFSO, *Devex*, 9 March 2026
- **John Oliver’s half hour show on USAID’s demise.** *Devex Newswire*, 10 March 2026
- **DOGE dismantling of USAID hit close to home.** By Meg Wade, *Ashland News*, 5 March 2026
- **USAID closeout chaos.** *Devex*, 6 Mar 2026

## Sunshine and Blue Skies for Winterfest 2026

Under clear blue skies on March 21, seventy-five members (and one beloved support dog!) gathered in Alexandria to joyfully bid farewell to winter and welcome the promise of spring—officially kicking off the UAA social year in style.



*Gino Deluca, Kristine Herrmann-Deluca, Clay Epperson Paula Goddard, Carol Peasley, Kathrin Tegenfeldt, Nyembezi Nyem*

The afternoon buzzed with conversation and laughter as friends old and new reconnected. We were delighted to hear from UAA leadership, Chris and Tony, who shared updates on how UAA and partners are giving voice and support to the future of foreign assistance. Be sure to visit our website and watch for the newly launched survey helping shape UAA’s path forward. We were also thrilled to welcome Lily Kak, who spoke about the inspiring Global Rhythms project, highlighting USAID through the arts. “Global Rhythms: Remembering USAID through the Arts” is a vibrant multimedia exhibition celebrating Americans who have promoted peace, saved lives, improved living conditions, and upheld democratic values with passion and compassion ([lilykak.com](http://lilykak.com)).



The lovely venue set the perfect backdrop, with plentiful food and drink keeping spirits high. It was a pleasure to welcome new members, reunite with familiar faces, and enjoy the sense of community that makes these gatherings so special.



*Rebecca Krzywda and Kerry Pelzman*



*Annabella and Peter Lapera, Frank Almaguer*

Many thanks to the Social Committee, Lily Kak, and our dedicated UAA Board members who helped bring the day together. We look forward to seeing everyone again at our next celebration—the Annual Spring Social in the garden of DACOR Bacon House on May 28! Until then, enjoy photos from the day in our album [here](#).

## Take 10 Minutes to Help Shape UAA's Future

UAA invites you to fill out a survey to help define its future at a pivotal moment for the development and humanitarian assistance community. Your insights will directly inform UAA's priorities, activities, and role in the years ahead—ensuring the organization remains relevant, responsive, and impactful. The survey takes just 10–15 minutes, and every response truly matters. If you have not already done so, **please share your perspective by April 8**. You can access the survey [here](#)

## **GAO Seeks Former USAID Officers for Closeout Assessment**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has contacted the USAID Alumni Association for assistance with their review of foreign assistance pauses and award terminations. Congress has tasked the GAO with assessing the resulting costs or savings to the U.S. government, as well as the impact on workforce reductions at State and USAID.

The GAO is specifically looking to identify grants officers and former USAID employees—including AORs/CORs, certifying officers, and procurement officers—who can speak about the award termination process and how it may have changed after January 2025. Additionally, they are seeking HCTM-related officers to discuss workforce reductions.

A background paper with further details can be found [here](#).

If you are willing to share your expertise, please contact J.P. Avila-Tournut ([AvilaTournutJ@gao.gov](mailto:AvilaTournutJ@gao.gov)) and Amanda Jones Bartine ([BartineA@gao.gov](mailto:BartineA@gao.gov)).

## **Announcing UAA Speakers Bureau**

The new UAA Speakers Bureau hosted a kickoff training session on March 27, 2026, focused on effective presentation techniques for engaging the American public about foreign assistance. Three experts presented their approaches: Paul Bolton (Aid On The Hill) shared his methodology for conducting local community meetings to build support for foreign assistance, Rachel Peniston (Aid On The Hill) explained how local conversations connect to policy-making in Washington, and Martha Van Lieshout (USGLC) provided communications tips and USGLC resources for community outreach. The session addressed challenges around messaging terminology, with participants discussing the effectiveness of using "international assistance" versus "foreign aid" and exploring ways to connect kitchen table issues to international engagement. The presenters emphasized the importance of personal storytelling, avoiding jargon, and building relationships with local community leaders as key strategies for successful outreach. A second training session has been scheduled for April 6. Outreach materials will be available on the UAA website.

## **Regional Events**

**From UAA's Regional Chapter in Florida: An Afternoon of Collegiality and Inspiration**



On March 13, 2026, James Kunder, former Acting Deputy Administrator of USAID and Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East, delivered a talk to a packed meeting room of the Foreign Service Alumni Association of Florida. The Association includes former Foreign Service Officers from State, USAID and the other foreign affairs agencies. The group had assembled at the Marsh Creek Country Club in St Augustine, Florida. The audience included retired Ambassadors, senior and mid-career officers, many who left the service years ago as well as several younger USAID and State officers, many of whom were RIF'd over the past year and returned to their homes in Florida.

Jim Kunder traveled from the DC area to deliver a candid, unscripted assessment of the state of U.S. foreign assistance, the dismantling of USAID, and the political dynamics shaping development, diplomacy, and defense. His talk blended historical perspective, policy analysis, and personal experience, while repeatedly inviting tough questions from the audience. UAA covered Kunder's travel expenses for the trip. [Click here](#) for a summary outline of and a video link to his speech.



## **Attention Alumni in Minnesota and Surrounding States!**

Steve Silcox in Northfield, MN is interested in forming a USAID Alumni group in the Midwest with Zoom or other program meetings and possible in-person meetings at a central location for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakota for former USAID Alumni in those states. Please contact him at [scsilcox@gmail.com](mailto:scsilcox@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining the group.

## **Atlanta Get Together**

On February 8 Alexious Butler hosted a social gathering of former USAID and implementing partners staff in the Atlanta area. The group included Laura Wilkinson, Whitney Adams, Jessica Morrison, Navya Nadimpalli, Wayne White, Kail Padgitt, Moses Ndifon, Anupa Deshpande, Catherine Hayford, Gail Williams, Nia Williams (CDC), and Elana Aquino (The Carter Center).

The gathering also included Asher Moss from Alliance for American Leadership, an organization advocating for the reinstatement of an independent US development agency.



## **Western States Regional Activities Updates CALIFORNIA: LOS ANGELES**

USAID/ Los Angeles gathered for its second meetup at the Heavy Water Coffee Shop in L.A. The hot sunny California day welcomed this USAID

family of extraordinary talent and international experience. Contact: Faye Haselkorn [[fhaselkorn@yahoo.com](mailto:fhaselkorn@yahoo.com)]



*Photo (left to right): Veena Reddy, Nikki Patel, Kevin Smith, Anh Pham, Faye Haselkorn, Farhad Ghaussy, Priya Sharma, Yulia Kysla, Christine Sheckler (San Diego), & Maria Au. Ariel Wexler and Abby Lantz (not shown)*

## **HAWAII**

USAID/Hawaii alumni and friends gathered on 8 March to renew personal and professional connections, form new ones, and enjoy a special Pau Hana to continue to strengthen our bonds and support each other.



*Photo (right to left) — Ron Robinson, OTI; Lori AA/ANE; Erin Wroblewski, PO/DC; Steve Olive, MD/India and Bhutan; Cristina Olive, HA India and Bhutan; Katrina Kruhm, EXO/DC; Carla Hitchcock, CLO/Taiwan; Elaine Rossi, Health/John Snow (standing)*

## **NEW MEXICO**

USAID/New Mexico folks came to our latest potluck in Corrales, New Mexico.

Potlucks are a monthly thing, open to all comers. The next is scheduled for 17 April. Contact: Bill Schaedla [[schaedla@gmail.com](mailto:schaedla@gmail.com)]



*Photo (left to right): Rebecca Black, Marc Griego, Andrew Nelson, Joyce Friedenber, Bill Schaedla, & Pantita Schaedla.*

## **WASHINGTON STATE**

Big showing for USAID/Seattle's dinner club - Ethiopian episode. Since July, USAID alums have been meeting up every other week for happy hours, dinners, coffee chats, hiking or kayaking. Contact: Jason Gilpin [[jjgilpin@gmail.com](mailto:jjgilpin@gmail.com)]



*Photo: Bronwyn Llewellyn, Jason Gilpin, Jason Wolfe, Anne Bernier, Alix Cho, Apoorva Jadhav, Brenna McKay, Elisa Adelman, Emily Cercone, Emily Brown, Hadas Kushnir, Jessica Stephens, Max Austin*

## **Global Rhythms Art Exhibit**

The exhibit, "Global Rhythms: Remembering USAID through the Arts" brought together 40 former USAID staff, implementing partners, and their families and friends to commemorate USAID's legacy through paintings, photography, sculpture and poetry to ensure that USAID's legacy was not erased. The opening reception on March 7 was attended by over 150 people, and was an inspiring and uplifting culmination of a year of loss, grief and shock. The room was brimming with camaraderie, love and pride for our service. The exhibition was open through March 31. It is being followed by another show April 4-29, starting with an opening reception on April 4. Click [here](#) for details.

We are very pleased to report also that the John F. Kennedy Presidential Museum and Library in Boston has accepted the offer to receive the first copy of a coffee-table book that the "Global Rhythms" leadership group plans to publish with all the images from the art exhibit. Since USAID was established by President Kennedy, and the exhibit honors his legacy, the JFK Museum and Library said that they would be honored to receive the book. Further information on a turnover event in Boston will be announced when planning for that event is finalized.

## Additions to the Bibliography of USAID Authors

Three new books and one old one are worth your attention this month.

*Into the Woodchipper: A Whistleblower's Account of How the Trump Administration Shredded USAID* by Nicholas Enrich offers a behind-the-scenes look at USAID under siege, from the early days when Enrich and his team were unaware of what was to come to the shockingly ignorant, callous, and bigoted conversations they witnessed. Enrich, the former director of the Office of Health, reveals in this detailed, no-holds-barred account what was truly at stake when DOGE set out to dismantle one of America's most effective humanitarian institutions, and how millions of lives hung in the balance.

Two new memoirs have been added to the Bibliography and are worth your attention. Kaisha Effiom, former USAID/Rwanda Mission Director has written, *I Said my Piece with Peace: Inside USAID's Final Days* and Jennifer Erie's *The World in My Bones: The Diplomat Queens Made*.

Finally, in the "You Would Be Amazed What is in this USAID Bibliography" category, you can find a book about USAID in Iran: *Mission for Peace: Point 4 in Iran Reflections of the head of Truman's Point 4 Program from 1952 to 1955* by William E. Warne.

Please send info on any new books written by USAID foreign service and GS officers, their family members, and FSNs to [JPielemeie@aol.com](mailto:JPielemeie@aol.com).

## Development Dialogues

### **Development Issues Committee: First in a series of discussions on Foreign Assistance 2.0.**

If you missed the opening session on "Foreign Assistance 2.0: Limits to USAID Informing the Public about its Work" on March 24th, you can now view the recording [here](#). The event was a success, with 102 participants out of 172 registrants.

The session featured insights from several distinguished speakers:

- Sarah Lavin, former USAID Assistant General Counsel, discussed the legal limitations regarding USAID's engagement with the U.S. public, noting that there are surprisingly few legal prohibitions.
- Dorothy (Dottie) Rayburn, formerly of USAID's Office of Legislative Affairs, shared her experiences with Congressional staffers and related an anecdote regarding the reaction to USAID recruitment advertisements on DC buses.
- Gregg Young, former USAID Director of Web Management, highlighted that while the USAID website receives a million hits

annually, most traffic pertains to funding and jobs rather than the agency's substantive impact and work.

Please view the recording for the full presentation and discussion.

Additionally, keep a look out for future sessions. The UAA aims to provide practitioner perspectives on best practices for the next iteration of foreign assistance. If you are interested in presenting on a best practice topic, either individually or as part of a panel, please contact me (Tony Chan) at [tsc8019z@gmail.com](mailto:tsc8019z@gmail.com).

## Profile: Leslie "Cap" Dean

USAID is the centerpiece in Leslie "Cap" Dean's career, which included both public and private sector engagement and covered more than half a century. After serving for five years as a U.S. Air Force captain and one year in international banking, Cap joined the USAID Foreign Service in 1970. Upon his retirement in 1998, he undertook a new career as a USAID contractor as well as a lecturer, guest speaker, and Department of Defense contractor.



During Cap's 28-year career as a USAID FSO, he served as Mission Director in South Africa and Zambia, and as Deputy Mission Director, Program Officer and Economist in his earlier postings to Laos, Pakistan, Nepal and Tanzania. In his rotations to USAID/Washington, he served in the Africa Bureau as Director of the Office of Southern Africa Affairs and as the

Bureau's Deputy Assistant Administrator. Cap's four years as Mission Director in South Africa came at one of the most challenging times in that country's history. He led the design, development and management of USAID's complex and politically volatile \$650 million portfolio during South Africa's transition to a post-apartheid, democratic government.

Cap noted that the most meaningful moment of his career was at President Nelson Mandela's swearing in ceremony. He commented that Mandela was probably the only person in all of Africa who could have brought about the end of apartheid without having a violent race war. Cap was proud to be with President Mandela in the new Presidential office in Pretoria at the signing ceremony for a major new project between USAID and South Africa.

Following his official USAID retirement, Cap served the agency twice in Iraq: in 2004 as the Coalition Provisional Authority Regional Coordinator for Baghdad (de facto Mayor of Baghdad and Governor of Baghdad Province); and in 2007 as Deputy Coordinator for Economic Transition in Iraq and Senior Advisor for Ministerial Capacity Development. His work in 2004 is captured in the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training's Oral History – Iraq Experience Project – published in October 2004. In the following decade, Cap lectured to U.S. Military units deploying to Iraq and spoke at conferences and military institutions. He also worked part time for General Dynamics Information Technology and for the U.S. Joint Forces Command.

Cap retired from USAID with the rank of Minister Counselor. He holds BA and MA degrees in Development Economics and International Development from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He also studied Economic and Social Development at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

Cap and his wife, Jeanne Lambert Dean, have been married for 63 years. In 2018, they self-published a 381-page memoir, "Three Continents—Four Decades—Eight Countries." The memoir (now, unfortunately, out of print) is dedicated to their parents and intended to inform family and friends. Cap and Jeanne are based in Scottsdale, Arizona where Cap has served in multiple volunteer management roles at their local Presbyterian church. They enjoy spending time with their son David and spouse and three grandchildren in Finland, and daughter Laura and spouse in Phoenix, Arizona. Cap can be reached at [cdean5000@aol.com](mailto:cdean5000@aol.com).

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