



USAID Alumni Association

July 2026 Newsletter

Note from the UAA Board

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the residents of what would become the United States of America boldly declared, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” As we celebrate the founding of that daring, idealistic experiment, let us recommit ourselves to achieving a more perfect union and remain dedicated to the goal of equality. May you all enjoy a wonderful celebration of independence!

The UAA Board and the Executive Committee met in mid-June to define the organization’s future strategic direction. Inspired by feedback in the member survey (separate article below) and the evolving international development landscape—including the dissolution of USAID and a more geographically dispersed membership—the retreat focused on clarifying UAA’s mission and vision.

Key discussions included expanding outreach to underrepresented groups such as FSNs and ISCs, evaluating our organizational structure, considering forming a separate 501(c)(4) organization, and enhancing member programs such as knowledge rescue. We also prioritized strengthening coordination with partner organizations such as the Aid Transition Alliance, Aid on the Hill and OneAID, as well as developing a more robust communications strategy. Moving forward, the Board will refine the proposed mission statements and

develop a draft strategic plan for review. This retreat marks a vital milestone in ensuring UAA remains responsive to its members and the changing development community.

Calendar of Upcoming UAA Events

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), Anne Aarnes (ahaarnes@hotmail.com) or Connie Carrino (cacarrino@gmail.com).

New! August 23 Meet-up event for Gipsy Kings ([Wolf Trap](#))
New! August 30 Annual Picnic at Ft Hunt Park Area A1 12-3 pm
New! September 26 Meet-up event for Firebird ([National Theater](#))
New! October 29 (Tentative) O Street Dinner, Washington, DC
New! October 30 UAA Annual General Meeting, Washington, DC
New! December 6 UAA Friendsgiving (Alexandria, VA)
New! December 16 Meet-up event for Hamilton ([National Theater](#))

What's New on the Website

In Memoriam:

Catherine "Cathy" Norris, Keith Warren Sherper, Janis Timberlake, Paul Philip Spishak, Douglas Perry Broome, Helen Donovan Grayson

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](#)
- 3) [Podcasts & Recorded Media](#)

Bulletin Board

- The Institute for Indo-Pacific Security (IIPS) invites you to join us at the Capitol Visitor Center on July 22, 1:00-2:15 pm ET, to unveil IIPS's newest report: "What Does America Want from Its Foreign Assistance Program?: Strategic Options and Policy-Leader Priorities in a Time of Peer Competition and Partisan Discord." [Click Here](#) for more information and the registration link.

- [The Impact Project](#) focuses on the impact of changes from January 2025 through July 2025 on government workers and programs, both domestically and overseas. If you haven't seen it, take a look at this map.
- [United States Announces More Than \\$1 Billion in Assistance to UNICEF and World Food Program to Address Global Humanitarian Needs.](#) Media Note, U.S. Dept. of State, 16 June 2026
- [Press Release, June 16, 2026, The American Academy of Diplomacy opposes H.R. 9087 provision on USAID.](#)

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.)

USAID News Story Tracker: [USAID Media](#)

- [Evaluating the impact of two decades of USAID interventions and projecting the effects of defunding on mortality up to 2030.](#) The Lancet, 19 July 2025
- [Elon Musk threatens to sue Ro Khanna over claims USAID cuts sentenced children to death.](#) By Lindsay Kornick, *Fox News*, 22 June 2026
- [Two articles – New State aid funding and hiring \(but only those with no AID experience\).](#) By Anna Gawel, *Devex*, 18 June 2026
- [AID on the Hill's founders.](#) By Anna Gawel, *Devex*, 15 June 2026
- [Mark Green, now head of ONE Campaign, returns to DRM.](#) By Anna Gawel, *Devex*, 11 June 2026
- [Why this Ebola outbreak could end up being the worst one in history.](#) Opinion by Jeremy Konyndyk, former USAID official, *The New York Times*, 9 June 1026
- [Rethinking Foreign Assistance Cuts That Endanger U.S. Interests.](#) By Alina Romanowski, Ben Fishman, Michael Jacobson, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 8 June 2026

[Podcast & Recorded Media](#)

- [Former A/AID Gayle Smith Interview.](#) By Helen Murphy, *Devex*, 17 June 2026

What We Heard: Key Themes from the 2026 UAA Planning Survey

Nearly 470 members and newsletter subscribers participated in UAA's 2026 Planning Survey. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your perspectives. Your responses provided valuable insights into what members value most and where they believe UAA should focus its efforts in the years ahead. Several clear themes emerged.

Preserving USAID's Institutional Knowledge was the Highest Priority. Respondents overwhelmingly identified preserving and sharing USAID's institutional knowledge as UAA's highest strategic priority.

Members Value Professional Connections and Peer Support. Providing peer support and professional networking ranked as the second highest overall priority, especially by members who separated after January 2025.

Members Support a Broader External Role for UAA. Significant numbers supported engaging the American public about international development, educating policymakers and stakeholders, advocating with Congress and the Executive Branch, and collaborating with other organizations working in the foreign affairs and development community.

Members Want Opportunities to Contribute. Respondents expressed strong interest in becoming personally involved in many aspects of UAA's work. The greatest interest was in helping preserve institutional knowledge, engaging the public, and educating policymakers.

Members Want a More Inclusive and Accessible Organization. Survey responses also highlighted opportunities for organizational growth. Among those who had not joined UAA, common themes included wanting greater inclusivity, a clearer understanding of UAA's mission and value, and broader outreach beyond the Washington area.

Overall. The survey revealed broad agreement on UAA's core strengths while also highlighting opportunities for growth. Different members also bring different perspectives. Recently separated staff

placed greater emphasis on professional networking and career-related support, while longer-term alumni placed greater value on discussion forums and collaboration. Members living outside the Washington area expressed strong interest in greater regional engagement.

The 2026 UAA Survey findings provided an important foundation for the Board's June 15 & 16 strategic planning discussions. You can view a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the UAA 2026 Survey findings [by clicking here](#).

USAID Knowledge Rescue Initiative

The USAID Knowledge Rescue initiative has rescued hundreds of thousands of public-facing documents, photo libraries and websites, and interviewed hundreds of former USAID staff, since February 2025. Under UAA and AID Transition Alliance the initiative is now evolving into a broader development knowledge effort, with the launch of the Development Knowledge Commons website at the [Global Knowledge Summit - Dublin](#) at the end of June, on this [Platform](#). These efforts are vital to preserve a significant portion of development knowledge and enable expansion over time beyond USAID knowledge. The new Development Commons platform is expected to provide for document rescue, search and access with an initial 112,000 documents. Over the coming weeks, additional documents will be added, totaling well over 275,000 individual files. In addition, an AI-assisted tool is being developed to assess and learn from some 500 interviews and oral histories of former USAID staff. Integrating knowledge from the interviews and documents may bring to light a wide array of lessons learned and enable further analysis. This knowledge will help practitioners, researchers, foundations, governments and aid agencies worldwide, and help ensure that future development and humanitarian assistance efforts are based on lessons learned from the past and present.

The USAID Knowledge Rescue initiative is sponsored by the [Aid Transition Alliance \(AidTA\)](#) with fiscal oversight by [Forward Global](#). The Initiative is implemented by the USAID Knowledge Rescue Initiative through the close operational collaboration of the [USAID Alumni Association \(UAA\)](#), the [Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training \(ADST\)](#), and a Paris-based development archive, [Coherent Digital](#).

We need funding and volunteers to expand the collection, improve features, and stand up a peer community of practitioners. We also want to interview you! We will soon be reaching out to UAA members who expressed interest in getting involved in these efforts through

the 2026 UAA Survey. If you would like to get involved, but didn't note your interest through the survey, you can sign up to volunteer at volunteer-coordinator@development-commons.org.

And if you are interested in being interviewed on your experiences in USAID that you feel may be valuable for "development 2.0", let us know [here](#). If you want to organize a group interview on a specific USAID topic, country or problem area contact atwooddavid@gmail.com.

Tony Pryor, USAID Knowledge Rescue Co-Chair and UAA Board Member
Stacey Young, USAID Knowledge Rescue Co-Chair and former Chief Knowledge Officer of USAID

UAA's FSN Working Group Support and Advocacy for Former USAID FSNs

UAA's FSN Working Group, composed of former US and FSN USAID employees, has been working to provide support and advocacy for former USAID FSNs after the 2025 closure of USAID Missions. Activities include advocating for SIVs for FSNs who were RIFed just short of completing the time needed to earn an SIV; fair access to USG employment opportunities (whether or not related to assistance functions assumed by embassies); fair severance pay for FSNs (only 2 months of pay after 30 years of service in some countries); and protection of FSNs from retaliation by their governments due to their former USG affiliation. Letters to Secretary Rubio (click [HERE](#) to read) have been ignored. However, Congressional staff have expressed interest and been receptive to briefings and other input. The Working Group also coordinated with other USAID-related groups on issues such as legislative input and litigation.

At the request of Congressional staff, the Working Group recently conducted a survey to estimate the number and countries of former USAID FSNs with more than 15 years but less than 20 years of service interested in an SIV (about 161 FSNs from 36 countries.) Click [HERE](#) for the Report. Shockingly, one FSN was RIFed only 5 days short of the needed 20 years of service, while many others were RIFed with less than one-to-six months to go. Similarly, a number of FSNs from the few challenging countries where SIV eligibility had been set at 15 years were RIFed short of the needed time by 15 days to less than a year.

Elections to UAA Board 2026: July 15 Deadline

The UAA Board has three positions available opening in October 2026 and we seek your participation. This is an opportunity to help

guide the organization and options for the future of international development, and to support USAID staff. You are key to making this happen! Your vast development and organizational experience are critically needed at this time. We are asking you to nominate yourself or to nominate someone else who would be an excellent board member. You only need to be a UAA member in good standing to nominate yourself or someone else.

Nominations – June 1st, 2026, to July 15th, 2026

Ballots will be distributed and voting begins September 1-30, 2026

The election announcement will take place at the Annual General Meeting in October 2026, date to be confirmed.

UAA Board Members Stephen Haykin, Christine Sheckler and Jeanne Briggs are the members of the Nomination Committee 2026 to oversee the nominating process and the elections. Please send nominations or questions to office@usaidalumni.org

Additions to Bibliography of USAID Authors

The UAA will continue to collect and publicize information about books written by USAID FSOs, FSNs, and family members adding to our on-line collection. Four more have been added to the **Bibliography of USAID Authors**:

Smith-Sreen, John. 1) *I Witnessed: The Indian Ocean Tsunami*; 2) *The Bhopal Gas Tragedy* and 3) *The Gujarat Earthquake*. Juggernaut Books publisher. All in 2026. Available in both Kindle and hardcopy.

Retired USAID FSO, John Smith-Sreen has published three children's books as part of a growing "I Witnessed" series with four more in process. The purpose of the series is to educate children about disasters (both natural and human-induced) so that they can be better prepared to deal with them in their lifetime. The main characters are children who find themselves facing significant challenges when disaster strikes and who, through their own efforts and ingenuity, extract themselves from danger. All the stories are set in India and based on real disasters that families, communities and countries faced. The books are beautifully illustrated. The other manuscripts which are pending are The Kerala Landslides, COVID 19, Uttarakhand Floods and the Orissa Super Cyclone. All are available on Amazon in both Kindle and hardcopy.

Wentling, Mark. *Breaks from Reality*. 2026. Archway Publishing. ISBN 978-1-6657-9635-4

Mark Wentling's latest book of fiction is about Leah, a middle-aged woman from a small town in Kansas, who is pregnant by her new

husband after she divorced her previous husband of 22 years. Leaving behind the six children she had with her previous husband, and taking a seventh illegitimate toddler with her, she travels in her new and younger husband's luxury car to the to his home in New Haven, Connecticut to start a new life. The book, set in the 1950s, is full of unexpected twists and turns. Leah endures many difficulties but survives to build a life in New York City, which she could not have possibly foreseen. An unforgettable story based on a true experience.

This is retired USAID FSO Wentling's 11th book in our bibliography.

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

Development Dialogues

UAA-DACOR Discussion Panel Nicholas Enrich, author of the best-selling book *Into the Wood Chipper – A Whistleblower's Account of How the Trump Administration Shredded USAID.*



On Friday, June 5, the UAA/DACOR lunch program at DACOR featured a conversation with Nicholas Enrich, author of the best-selling book *Into the Wood Chipper – A Whistleblower's Account of How the Trump Administration Shredded USAID*. This talk with Chris Milligan, UAA Board Co-Chair and former USAID Counselor, before a full house at DACOR and a large group on-line, provided a vivid first-hand account of what Nick and his USAID colleagues went through

trying to save vital health programs from seemingly uncaring administration officials. To see the video [click here](#).

Development Issues Committee Discussion with Sarah Rose on Government Partnerships in Global Health Cooperation



On Wednesday, June 10, the Development Issues Committee hosted a discussion with Sarah Rose, Director of Policy with the Share Trust on **“Government Partnerships in Global Health Cooperation.”** Ms. Rose addressed the opportunities and challenges with current modalities of foreign assistance in the health

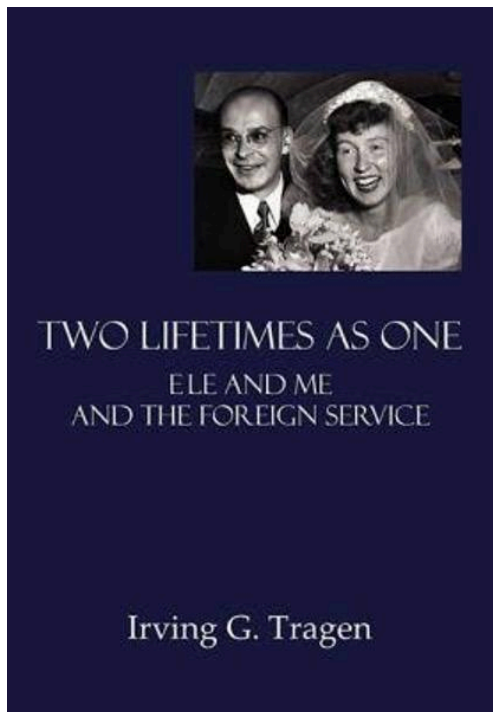
sector. She then engaged in open discussion with participants on experiences with and prospects for Government-to-Government cooperation in international development. Participants highlighted Congressional resistance to G2G programming in the past, and the need for sufficient institutional capacity in the host countries.

Profile: Ambassador Irving Tragen



On May 18th, 2026, Irving Tragen celebrated his 104th birthday with friends in San Diego <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuGKjp3EP8s>. His truly remarkable life story is told in his 2019 autobiography “Two Lifetimes as One: Ele and Me and the Foreign Service” sponsored by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST). As he often points out in the book, he could not have done his job without the support of his wife.

In 1948, he began his career as a Technical Labor Officer in Mexico, El Salvador, and Chile with pre-AID agencies. In 1960 he was integrated into the Foreign Service as Labor Attache in Venezuela and in 1962 was named Labor Adviser for the Alliance for Progress, a



State-AID joint program to support Latin American development. Two years later he was appointed the Director of its Office of Institutional Development. He later served as USAID Director in Bolivia; Director of the State-AID Office of Argentine, Paraguayan and Uruguayan Affairs; Vice President of the Inter-American Foundation; Chief of the Central American Regional Office (ROCAP); Economical Consular and AID Mission Director in Panama; and Deputy Ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS). In 1978, Irving was awarded the AID Distinguished Service Award.

Defining the cream of his career, Irving reported is not easy. "Working in the Alliance for Progress was the most challenging and stimulating ten years in the Foreign Service. I deem development cooperation to be an intricate component of U.S. foreign policy with developing nations. Assignments in Bolivia, Central America and Panama as USAID Director required combining diplomatic and technical skills in order to support the host countries in achieving their objectives of building institutions and training people as well as improving relations with my country."

Retiring in 1980 from the Foreign Service, Irving joined the OAS, first as the Chief Operating Officer of its Technical Cooperation Program and then as the first Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). He reminisced, "After retiring from the Foreign Service, my most rewarding work was as Executive Secretary of CICAD. I prepared the documentation that the OAS used to justify the creation of CICAD and was named its first Executive Secretary. My work over the next eight years created the secretariat, helped define its program and facilitated cooperation among 34 member states to confront drug trafficking and drug abuse in the Western Hemisphere." He retired in 1995 yet continued to work in Central America on short term assignments until 1998.

Ele Tragen collected Latin American handicrafts and gifted her collection to the Museo de las Americas in Denver. You can see it at the museum's Tragen Gallery. Ele and Irving also endowed the Irving G. and Eleanor D. Tragen Chair of Comparative Law at the UC Berkeley School of Law (from which he graduated), and the school

annually sponsors the Tragen Lecture of Comparative Law. They also endowed the Tragen Fellowship at the UC San Diego (UCSD) School of Oceanography and a fund at the UCSD Medical School Geriatrics Department. After Ele's death in 2005, Irving endowed the annual DACOR award for the Foreign Service Spouse of the year, known as the Eleanor Dodson Tragen Award.

Since his 100th birthday, he has written three novels set in El Salvador focusing on the reasons why development did not take place in Central America during the Alliance for Progress years. "Manana Is Yesterday" and "Esperanza: Daring to Dream Beyond Borders" are to be followed this summer by the anticipated release of "Twilight of a Dream." ADST is sponsoring the three as a trilogy "Voices of Change."

Based in San Diego, Irving remains active by lecturing at the World Affairs Council and participating on panels at the UCSD Center of Mexico-US Studies and other academic institutions.

Make Your 2026 UAA Membership Contribution
USAID Alumni Association