

REPORT ON THE USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The USAID Alumni Association (UAA)'s 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on October 30, 2026, at the Center for Global Development (CGD) in Washington, DC, with UAA members participating 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 110 members and 6 guests, and virtually by 190 members. Three Alumni of the Year recipients were honored, two of whom attended in person, and a former USAID FSN who joined the meeting remotely from his home in Bangladesh. This compares with 2025, when 101 members attended in person, and 204 virtually.

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 remarks by the Center for Global Development (CGD) Vice President Markus Goldstein
- Keynote address: Fireside Chat with Administrator Henrietta Fore, Former USAID Administrator and Founder of UAA and Alice Albright, Former CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Discussion of the new UAA Strategic Framework
- Panel of aligned organizations to discuss complementarity, gaps, challenges and areas of mutual work with representatives from Aid on the Hill, Aid Transition Alliance, LocalWorks Global, OneAID, and Our USAID Community. Moderator: Jeanne Briggs, UAA Board Member
- Virtual panel representing former USAID staff from eastern, midwestern, and western states and a former USAID FSN who discussed their interests and concerns for the UAA. Moderator: Siena Fleischer
- Alumni of the Year Awards

At the start of the AGM, CGD Vice President Marcus Goldstein welcomed the UAA members. The Center has hosted the AGM for a number of years, without charge, and the UAA greatly appreciates its generosity. As part of his welcome, Mr. Goldstein stated that everyone at CGD continues to be shocked by USAID's closure, and they are fully aware of the difficult context for the former USAID staff, as well as the enormous

negative impact on the populations in developing countries who previously benefited from USAID's assistance.

Keynote Address: Former USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore and former MILLENNIUM Challenge Corporation CEO Alice Albright



Susan Reichle and Alice Albright



Henrietta Fore

Summary:

Susan Reichle moderated an animated keynote address-fireside chat with Administrator Henrietta Fore and former MCC CEO Alice Albright, who are currently guiding foreign assistance reform initiatives. As the leader of an Aspen institute hosted task force, Administrator Fore presented a future vision of foreign assistance organized around systems and platforms rather than isolated projects She emphasized the need to reinforce country sovereignty and local knowledge; strengthen public-private collaboration; invest in education and innovation; and preserve human dignity as a foundational principle. She encouraged UAA members to actively contribute ideas to the current foreign assistance reform discussions by submitting case studies and bold reform proposals. While a champion of USAID's legacy, she cautioned that functions and intended outcomes should be defined before settling the institutional home for a future foreign assistance effort.

Alice Albright described her work leading a joint Columbia University and Rice University bipartisan foreign assistance reform initiative. She presented a vision for assistance as organized around humanitarian purpose, national security, and geopolitical interests. Her reform priorities included strategic selectivity, country ownership, private capital and risk instruments, more efficient administration, and congressional/public support. Albright favored feasible near-term reforms while developing a longer-term architecture, and she stressed that reform commissions should avoid presenting inconsistent recommendations. She requested UAA members to be active contributors to foreign assistance reform efforts, and specifically asked UAA

members to share with her team three administrative reforms ideas. Both foreign assistance reform task force reports are anticipated to be completed by February 2027
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Main Points

Administrator Fore began by describing the work of The Aspen Global Prosperity, Security, and Development Strategy Group, which aims to create neutral space for constructive, trust-based dialogue that bridges silos, builds shared purpose, and advances consensus and actionable steps toward a forward-looking global development agenda. They plan to propose concrete and pragmatic models for development assistance in areas of development finance, innovations in scale and efficiency, new public-private partnership ventures, and national government financing, sustainability, and civil society strategies. Administrator Fore indicated that her team is deriving lessons from case studies of PEPFAR, AGOA and the Lobito Corridor. These illustrated how health, trade, infrastructure and diplomatic relationships can reinforce one another. She invited practitioners to supply evidence of what worked and propose approaches that could not previously be advanced within existing administrative arrangements.

Administrator Fore's vision included four interrelated priorities: (1) organize foreign assistance around country-level systems and durable platforms rather than disconnected projects; (2) strengthen country sovereignty, locally grounded problem definition and the expertise of implementing partners; (3) mobilize public-private partnerships and investment in education, infrastructure, connectivity, food security, innovative "big ideas", and new technology, including AI; and (4) retain human dignity, prevention and resilience as guiding purposes. She argued that reformers should specify the functions and outcomes of development assistance before choosing an agency or institutional home.

Alice Albright presented the work of a bipartisan initiative, The Future of Foreign Assistance Task Force, co-hosted by the Institute for Politics, Columbia University, and the Baker Institute, Rice University. The task force led by Albright and other senior leaders is charged to develop workable proposals for the future of U.S. foreign assistance. It will conduct an assessment of geopolitical shifts, development challenges, competitive dynamics, and emerging opportunities to develop a pragmatic framework for US foreign assistance in an era of strategic competition.

Her discussion framed three rationales for foreign assistance: humanitarian responsibility, U.S. national security and geopolitical interests. She emphasized building agreement across political perspectives and among parallel reform initiatives. Albright's four reform directions were: (1) more selective and strategic allocation of assistance, with clear objectives; (2) stronger country ownership and locally appropriate implementation; (3) more effective mobilization of private capital and risk-sharing instruments; and (4) administrative simplification, stronger performance and

congressional and public support. She distinguished immediate procedural changes possible within present structures from longer-term decisions about institutional architecture. Her specific challenge to the audience was to identify three practical administrative reforms that would reduce burdens while maintaining accountability.

Administrator Fore: Action requests of UAA members

Request	Practical output
Document what worked and why	Contribute short case studies identifying outcomes, enabling factors, and lessons.
Submit bold development proposals	Submit ideas for Aspen and other commissions, including previously blocked innovations.
Develop prevention-financing ideas	Suggest mechanisms to prepare for health, climate, and humanitarian shocks.
Identify transformative investments	Offer proposals on food systems, infrastructure, education, connectivity, AI, and Innovation.
Educate Congress and staff	Conduct practitioner-led briefings, accessible examples, and be ready for UAA participation in Congressional delegation.
Prepare one-page fact sheets	Develop materials to educate the American people including materials for civic organizations such as Rotary clubs.
Mobilize UAA's national networks	Build upon and expand UAA's Community-based presentations and engagement beyond Washington.
Offer teaching and training	Share development expertise through potential future courses for FSI, universities, and other institutions.

Alice Albright: Action requests of UAA members

Request	Practical output
Identify THREE specific administrative reforms	Identify focused procurement, oversight, or reporting changes that reduce burden without weakening accountability.
Document operational obstacles	Provide firsthand accounts of what makes development implementation effective or ineffective.

Engage civic associations	Further strengthen UAA's speaker's bureau to make presentations in different parts of the country to chapters of Rotary and other community based organizations.
Use former USAID practitioners as public speakers	Provide concrete local and international development examples to explain foreign assistance and development to the American people.
Cultivate congressional champions	Contribute to education of incoming legislators, staff, and relevant committees.
Coordinate reform proposals	Participate in efforts to develop more coherent messages across commissions and task forces.
Pursue feasible near-term changes	Contribute ideas and proposals to reform initiatives focusing on the use of existing authorities, budgets, and oversight.

Audience Questions and Comments

- *A member challenged the premise of modernizing development while placing it in State; described State's bureaucracy as structurally ill-suited to the development mission and noted her opportunity to speak about the issue in a forthcoming talk.* Susan Reichle endorsed the distinction between diplomacy and development. Administrator Fore advised defining the functions and outcomes first, then designing an appropriate institutional home; Albright emphasized concrete improvements that could be advanced under present arrangements. Chris Milligan reminded participants of the public speaking materials posted on the UAA website including public-speaking PowerPoints, recorded trainings and materials; He also invited suggested revisions.
- *Have the current foreign assistance reform initiatives been investigating allegations used to justify USAID's elimination, separating partially valid criticisms from inaccurate ones?* Reichle noted the UAA knowledge-rescue and lessons-learned works were designed to address this issue. Administrator Fore acknowledged historical administrative shortcomings and Albright proposed concrete scrutiny of current mechanisms.
- *How has foreign assistance incorporated diversity and inclusion and how will these principles be featured in future foreign assistance?* Reichle emphasized longstanding inclusive development; Administrator Fore cited dignity as an underlying principle for future effort. Albright expressed concern about the retreat from diversity and the need for a workforce reflecting partner societies.
- *A member asked what the next two years could realistically look like under an administration hostile to development and its principles.* Reichle acknowledged the challenge. Administrator Fore urged functions-first design and developing

Congressional talking points; Albright urged near-term assessment of State-administered programs and submission of concrete proposals to Congress.

- *Another member urged electoral organizing and voter outreach to elect representatives supportive of foreign assistance, including concrete action around Election Day.* Reichle endorsed civic participation; Albright emphasized communicating development's relevance to voters beyond Washington.

Discussion of the New UAA Strategic Framework Plan



Steve Haykin

Summary: *The session began with a presentation of UAA's 2026 Annual Report by Board Member Steve Haykin, which detailed accomplishments during the previous year. That report was distributed to the membership prior to the AGM; it is also available on the UAA website. The session then moved on to discuss how the UAA will need to adapt to a changing membership base and foreign assistance environment. This included presentation of a two-year framework based on three pillars that focus on strengthening UAA itself; preserving and utilizing USAID knowledge; and offering greater value and support to members. Much more detailed planning will be done over the coming year to refine the strategy in line with resource realities (financial and volunteer time).*

New Strategic Famework



Board Member Alicia Dinerstein presented the new strategic framework, emphasizing that the framework is still evolving. It lays out a direction for the next two years and will be refined as resource requirements are defined and as greater input is received from members. The framework was developed based on a survey of members done in March-April 2026, followed by UAA Executive Committee discussions and board retreats. Nearly half of the survey respondents had been involuntarily separated from USAID after January 2025, and just over half reside outside of the Washington, DC area. Knowledge preservation, peer support, and advocacy emerged as key priorities from the survey. These became the three key pillars of the new strategy: (1) Strengthen UAA itself; (2) Preserve and apply USAID's international development knowledge; and (3) Provide greater value to and support to members. Communications, regional outreach, social connection, and collaboration with other organizations cut across the three pillars.

Pillar One: Strengthen UAA. UAA hopes to grow and increase the involvement of members. To do so it must respond to a changing environment. This will require extensive outreach to separated personnel, including FSNs, institutional support contractors, and former staff outside of the DC area. The UAA will need to clarify and

increase the value of membership as well as strengthen administration and governance of the organization. Resources -- financial and volunteer time -- will need to be defined and inevitably increase. Regional chapters provide an opportunity, but the process of doing so is still undefined. A consultant has been hired to assess major needs for this pillar, including potential organizational and bylaw/governance changes.

Pillar Two: Preserve and Apply Knowledge. Considerable work on this has already been done through the Aid Transition Alliance (ATA), in collaboration with UAA, especially in collecting reports, evaluations, and other records, and through the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) in conducting oral history interviews. The ATA has also collected additional "tacit" knowledge through an extensive series of subject-matter interviews. A "Development Commons" has been created to make recovered material available and searchable to the public, including practitioners and researchers. UAA worked with ATA to prepare a proposal to fund this expanded work, especially the transition from rescue to practical application. The aim in the future is to use this knowledge to influence the Congress and others in development of Foreign Assistance 2.0. The longer-term role of UAA in this work under Pillar Two must be further defined. The Development Issues Committee is expected to continue its discussion groups and increase its outward-facing efforts.

Pillar Three: Support Members. Members are at vastly different stages in their careers and lives. Alicia presented many of the options that have been discussed to date, including more accessible social and wellness activities, explicit career support, and possible renewed short-term financial assistance. The membership committee will also be looking at eligibility requirements, including whether it can be broadened, as well as at the current dues structure and ways to expand revenue. All options will be considered, and decisions will be made based on feasibility. A strong and deliberate effort will be made to listen to those who are outside of the DC area.

Before opening the session for Q&A, Alicia reiterated that many decisions are still to be made. Some of the preliminarily proposed activities would require significant funding; others would require significant volunteer time. Key next steps include an early November message soliciting volunteers for focus groups; collecting member interests and skills; refining governance and bylaws; and further work by the board to advance refinement of the strategic framework and implementation. She also urged members to join the operating UAA committees, to participate in the focus groups, and to help advance communication.

Questions from UAA members and responses from the Board

- *Is there a mapping of like-minded organizations?* The Board welcomed a formal mapping and suggested that it be built upon existing coordination tools. The UAA website does have considerable information on other organizations. In the afternoon session with aligned organization one of the organizations mentioned that that they have conducted a mapping exercise which the Board will take a look at.

- *Is the knowledge-management (KM) effort also documenting litigation efforts? Are there special themes for the KM work?* While recognizing the importance of the litigation efforts, knowledge capture has focused on pre-January 2025 information. There is a separate coordination group outside of UAA that is tracking the various litigation efforts. More generally on the KM front, Tony Pryor noted that sectoral work is being done. There will be increased use of AI to permit deeper analysis. A Practitioner Working Group is being created to help guide the process.

- *A variety of questions arose related to the use of knowledge, especially in helping to define the future of foreign assistance. Do we have ways to engage with people at State working on former USAID programs? Can the UAA follow the National Association of Retired Federal Employees in its pivot from primarily member services toward advocating for a future federal workforce? Can UAA do more to use practitioner interview, focus groups, and its accumulated experience to articulate what future foreign assistance should look like? Can we do more to advocate or do we need to partner with others?* Some agreed with the idea of supporting the work of former USAID colleagues now at State, while others were less certain about receptivity. The Board noted that KM/Lessons Learned teams will prepare strategic one-page documents to share with the Hill and others working on Foreign Assistance 2.0. These could also be made available to staff at the State Department working on foreign assistance. The Board also noted that it may be impossible to define a single UAA position on Foreign Assistance 2.0, as views among members will inevitably vary, but we can provide valuable input on specific approaches and issues. Members were asked to put their ideas on paper as to the future of foreign assistance. The Board strongly supported the need for UAA to use its knowledge to advocate for the future of foreign assistance; we can advocate; we cannot lobby. UAA will also continue to enable individual members to engage in a variety of fora debating the future of assistance.

- *Can UAA do more to interact with new actors in the development space, including philanthropy? Can we help them be more strategic and impactful?* There was general support for this idea, but it would probably require the foundations to express interest.

- *Can the UAA do more to help people find jobs in the sector? Can UAA help to push for extension to the "one year" of preferred eligibility for employees involuntarily separated? Can we do more to erase the "stain" of USAID on people's resumes that has occurred because of the negative rhetoric in early 2025?* The Board recognized the importance of these issues and will try to address as Pillar Three is further refined.

- *What will be happening in the next six months?* The Board quickly ran through several of the key actions: focus groups, matching of volunteer skills and interests, potential dues and bylaw revisions, continued outreach to members to

identify needs, and melding of plans and resources. The framework is not yet a detailed, costed work plan. Immediate focus will be on bringing us closer to a detailed plan.

Panel of Aligned and Affiliated Organizations: Complementarity, Gaps, Challenges and Areas for Mutual Work



Panel Members (L to R): Jeanne Briggs, Moderator and UAA Board Member; Laura Pavlovic, Our USAID Community; Kristen O'Planick, Aid on the Hill; Cate Klepacki, One Aid; Jackie Greene, Local Works Global; Alicia Dinerstein, Aid Transition Alliance (ATA) and UAA Board Member.

Summary

The panel brought together representatives of five organizations working to support former USAID personnel, preserve development expertise, and shape the future of U.S. foreign assistance. Panelists described their organizations' respective missions and activities, highlighting opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration with UAA. Our USAID Community focuses on workforce rights, legal assistance, and accountability; Aid on the Hill advances congressional education and advocacy for U.S. foreign assistance; OneAid mobilizes and connects the broader foreign assistance community; Local Works Global promotes locally led development and preserves country-level knowledge; and the Aid Transition Alliance supports professional networks, workforce well-being, and knowledge preservation. A recurring theme was the potential for UAA to serve as a convener and coordinating hub, leveraging the complementary strengths of these organizations while avoiding duplication of efforts. Although no formal coordination arrangements were established, the discussion identified opportunities for joint action in congressional engagement, workforce support, knowledge preservation, and future foreign assistance reform.

Main Points

Jeanne Briggs introduced the panel by emphasizing the importance of cooperation among organizations that emerged or expanded to support former USAID personnel and the wider foreign assistance community following the agency's dismantling. She asked the participating groups to describe their distinctive missions, identify complementary areas of work, and consider how they might coordinate rather than duplicate their efforts. The discussion highlighted legal redress, congressional engagement, workforce and community support, locally led development, and the preservation of USAID's institutional knowledge.

Our USAID Community (OUC). Laura Pavlovic described OUC's concentration on workforce rights, accountability, legal resources, and redress for former USAID employees. The 2026 proceedings report more than 2,500 members, legal resources for nearly 200 colleagues representing themselves, and support for more than 2,200 MSPB appeals. Ms. Pavlovic's presentation emphasized that many former staff did not leave voluntarily and continue to seek remedies, possibly including reinstatement. She identified potential collaboration with UAA on FSN support, broader workforce concerns, and knowledge preservation. The group's role thus extends beyond professional networking to the legal and personnel consequences of the agency's closure.

Aid on the Hill. Kristen O'Planick described advocacy and public education intended to preserve effective U.S. foreign assistance as an important element of American foreign policy. She emphasized building relationships with members of Congress and their staff, including through district-level engagement and outreach to newly elected legislators. Potential areas of cooperation with UAA included congressional education, connections with FSNs, engagement with think tanks, and recovery of institutional knowledge. The discussion also addressed the case for retaining an effective, independent development capability as future U.S. foreign assistance arrangements are considered.

OneAid. Cate Klepacki described OneAid as a connector across the foreign assistance community, using rapidly established communications networks to share information, mobilize volunteers, and provide mutual aid. She mentioned a tracking sheet of organizations founded by former USAID personnel and a Solidarity Fund to assist colleagues in need. Ms. Klepacki urged UAA to consider the broader foreign assistance ecosystem in future membership and activity planning, including implementing partners and other practitioners, and proposed stronger ties between UAA chapters and OneAid's state and regional networks. She also acknowledged the limitations imposed by reliance on volunteers and scarce organizational resources.

Local Works Global. Jackie Greene described the organization's work to preserve lessons from USAID's Local Works program and advance development approaches grounded in local leadership and country-level experience. She emphasized that future reforms must include people in countries where development programs operate and the communities directly affected by assistance decisions. Panelists recognized the tension

between this principle and funding requirements or congressional directives that can constrain local priorities.

Aid Transition Alliance (ATA). Alicia Dinerstein discussed ATA's efforts to mobilize resources, keep former colleagues connected, support mental health and wellness, and preserve and apply knowledge from USAID. The discussion considered opportunities for UAA to assume a more active leadership or convening role in knowledge preservation, while ATA and other partners contribute resources and technical capacity. Panelists did not announce a finalized governance structure or allocation of responsibilities for this work.

Across these presentations, the panelists described organizations with related but distinct strengths. OUC concentrates on rights and redress; Aid on the Hill on congressional engagement; OneAid on rapid community connection and mutual aid; Local Works Global on locally led development and field knowledge; and ATA on transition support and institutional knowledge. A recurring proposal was that UAA could help convene the groups, share information, and make their respective services more visible, without replacing their specialized missions. Participants also emphasized that any future policy discussion must include FSNs, implementing partners, regional groups, and communities directly affected by development activities.

Questions from UAA members and responses from the panel

- *Participants asked how the organizations were coordinating their activities and whether there was a common website, calendar, or portal through which people could identify services and avoid duplicating work.* Panelists reported that much coordination was taking place informally through Signal groups, email lists, and personal contacts. OneAid suggested that UAA might act as a shared convening hub while specialized organizations retain responsibility for their own activities.

- *Members asked whether a different Congress could address the institutional and personnel damage associated with USAID's closure and who might emerge as congressional champions for foreign assistance.* Aid on the Hill emphasized establishing relationships with newly elected legislators, educating congressional staff, and sustaining district-based advocacy. Panelists saw possibilities for progress but did not predict a particular legislative outcome or promise restoration of the agency, reinstatement, or workforce redress.

- *An audience member questioned how locally led development can be achieved when congressional earmarks and directives may restrict the choices available to partner countries.* Panelists reaffirmed the importance of local ownership and the inclusion of field and community voices in decisions about future assistance.

- *A member asked whether the organizations were distinguishing activities and outputs from outcomes, and whether limited volunteer time was being directed*

toward work with demonstrable results. The question underscored the need for clearer measures of effectiveness and disciplined use of scarce capacity.

- *Members asked what a closer relationship between OneAid and UAA would look like, including possible connections between UAA chapters and OneAid's state and regional groups.* Ms. Klepacki supported closer collaboration, broader inclusion of the foreign assistance community, and practical links between regional networks. She also noted the limits of OneAid's volunteer and financial resources.

- *A participant asked how organizations heavily dependent on volunteers could sustain their activities over time.* The panel recognized the need to consider stable funding, staffing, compensation, and administrative systems, particularly for activities that have grown beyond what informal volunteer coordination can reliably support.

- *A participant asked whether assistance programs should be designed with clearer graduation, sustainability, and exit criteria rather than continuing indefinitely, referring to the Millennium Challenge Corporation as one possible point of comparison.* The panel recognized the importance of country ownership and sustainable development results.

- *Participants also raised the situation of former USAID staff who objected to being described simply as "alumni," given that many had been involuntarily separated and were pursuing legal or personnel remedies.* The discussion reinforced the distinction between ordinary alumni networking and OUC's work on workforce rights, accountability, and redress. It also showed why coordination must preserve the different missions of member-service organizations and those providing specialized legal support.

Possible Areas of Cooperation

The panel identified several opportunities for continued discussion:

- A light-touch mechanism for sharing organizational information and calendars;
- Coordination of congressional education and district-level outreach;
- Referrals to legal, workforce, and mutual-aid resources;
- Joint efforts to preserve records and practical experience;
- Stronger links among UAA, OneAid, and regional networks; and,
- More systematic inclusion of FSNs, country-level professionals, and local communities in deliberations on the future of foreign assistance.

The central unresolved questions were who would convene the groups, how organizational autonomy would be preserved, what administrative resources would support coordination, how progress would be measured, and how UAA's educational

and member-service role would intersect with organizations engaged in advocacy or litigation. The panel did not establish a formal partnership structure or collective results framework.

Virtual Panel Representing Former USAID Staff



Moderator Siena Fleischer: Jason Wolfe, Northwestern U.S. states; Jannatul Farjana (FSN) Bangladesh; Roy Geiser, Northeaster U.S. states; Purvi Patel, Midwestern U.S. states

Summary

*Board member Christine Sheckler organized this "Regionals-Global" panel, entitled, "Voices from the Field (US and Abroad)," which was moderated by **Ms. Siena Fleischer**, and included four former USAID staff who have been active in leading informal groups of recently involuntarily separated. USAID staff across the U.S. and abroad: **Ms. Jannatul Farjana** (FSN) in Bangladesh – and global OAA FSN network coordinator, **Mr. Roy Geiser** in the Northeastern U.S. states, **Ms. Purvi Patel** in the Midwestern U.S. states, and **Mr. Jason Wolfe** in the Northwestern U.S. states. The panelists reported that many former USAID staff continue to seek employment and navigate resettlement challenges, with many still unemployed or underemployed 18 months later, having accepted lower-paying positions. There was a common theme of expressed frustration and suffered moral injury. They highlighted the UAA network as a valuable resource for regional groups and noted opportunities for members to assist colleagues pursuing employment, networking contacts, interviews, or other opportunities in regions outside the DMV. They welcome more proactive UAA support in connecting regional cohorts with relevant individuals and organizations. Given the difficult circumstances and limited opportunities many former USAID officers continue to face, the panelists underscored the importance of participation in regional gatherings. They also agreed that UAA should clearly define and prioritize the value it provides to involuntarily separated USAID employees. As UAA enters 2027, clearly defined member support will be important to retaining members who joined after February 2025.*

Finally, the panelists agreed that foreign assistance should be reframed to be understood as community development, consolidating both domestic and foreign development assistance. International development skills can be squarely mapped to domestic realms. It doesn't need to fall into this foreign vs. domestic dichotomy.

Main Points

In answer to the question of how the groups were formed and what was the focus of each, Farjana noted that the FSNs who were involuntarily separated in Bangladesh wanted to maintain connection with each other and have met periodically to provide peer support as they search for new livelihoods. Geiser noted that the 25 former USAID currently at the Harvard Kennedy School add to the numbers in the New England region and shared that Signal groups and WhatsApp have been critical to creating and maintaining contact and have helped members with finding jobs and getting job references. Patel noted that the group in Illinois began as the Illinois Chapter of OneAID, with a Signal group now including neighboring Midwestern states. It now has 80-90 members, of which about half are active and 25 are highly active. The group reinforces peer support and social gatherings, in addition to sharing information on local panel discussions, meetings, and lunches, with the goal of maintaining the presence of former USAID staff in these local discussions. The group is fluid and continues to define itself and create connections. Wolfe noted that the group based in Seattle was formed initially as a group of remote workers, who were joined by others who repatriated after termination, with 146 now in the Signal group, including former USAID employees as well as former implementing partner employees. They provide peer support and have a strong partnership with the former Peace Corps group.

Responding to a question about the need for psycho-social support, Geiser stated that many people in New England are still looking for work or are under-employed; that they resent their involuntary separations and feel unappreciated; and that many families are still struggling with resettlement. He noted that coaching groups have been a great support and are still needed. Farjana explained that the biggest need among the Bangladesh group is livelihoods; many are still unemployed, their savings have run out, and they have need for financial support. This group did not get career counseling, training, or help with job searching, which they would now like to see UAA help provide. Wolfe explained that while ¾ of the group based in Seattle have found employment, there is still much anger and grief to process. He remarked that there is nostalgia for how well USAID functioned, particularly among members now working in local government. Patel commented that the group has suffered indignities from individuals who work within some humanitarian and foreign policy organizations in the region, who are often quick to voice public support but have rarely been helpful or receptive to collaboration, further engagement, or offering solutions,

Responding to a question about reaction to the new UAA strategic framework, Geiser said the UAA network can serve as an important resource for regional groups and noted that UAA members could help those involuntarily separated and still looking for employment by hosting and/or providing support to people searching for jobs and interviewing in other regions. He suggested that the discussion of foreign assistance

should be reframed to be understood as community development, consolidating both domestic as well as foreign development assistance. Patel observed that terminated USAID employees are dealing with the broader issues in the overall job market - such as AI filters, difficulties receiving interview offers, and an inability of HR staff to understand transferrable skills - which means jobseekers need to employ a more personal human-centered approach, leaning on networking. She said the funds provided by UAA were critical in helping support former USAID staff who have faced financial burdens in the past year. She also requested that UAA members visiting Chicago or other places in the Midwest as keynote speakers, guests on panel events, guest lecturers, etc., reach out to members of the local group or consider personally connecting local members with the host institutions, to help address the issue of local UAA members being ignored or undervalued. Wolfe questioned the relevance of UAA up to now for members outside of the DC area and hopes that UAA will invite the regional members to help in implementing the new strategy. Farjana hopes that all unheard voices are brought to the table and noted the importance of networking and staying connected, as well as the need for help for FSNs who are relocating to the US. The regional/overseas cohort, including FSNs, requests substantive participation in initiatives to share creative ideas and draft options for the future of Foreign Assistance 2.0.

Responding to a question from audience member Stephen Brager on how to create/formalize a regional chapter for the European-based chat group, some panel members questioned the need to create formal chapters. One observation was that giving members of a new chapter tangible goals to work towards or a specific set of objectives while networking and building membership would help to keep chapter members engaged. In answer to what UAA can do to help regional groups, panel members noted:

- The need for help in making connections to institutions that work in international development, foreign assistance, or foreign policy, which would include helping to access foundations and academic partners;
- The need for help with how to frame the discussion of the future of development, which seems to center around “AI will save all;”
- The possibility of a competitive grants program to support regional groups;
- And the need for financial resources and coaching for FSN groups.

Alumni of the Year Awards



Susan Reichle and John Lovass



Mohammed Ashraful Haque

The AGM concluded with the Alumni of the Year Awards, recognizing the exceptional contributions of former USAID employees since they left the Agency. There were three recipients this year.

- John Lovass, who retired in 1994, was recognized for outstanding contributions to his community of Reston, Virginia. John was the founder of the Reston Farmer's Market, a primary feature of which is to provide access to low-income families.
- Susan Reichle, a former counselor of the Agency, was the founder and CEO of The International Youth Foundation, and she also provided leadership in efforts to assist the transition of former USAID employees.
- Mohammed Ashraful Haque, a former USAID/Bangladesh Foreign Service National, for his continuing work on the environment in Bangladesh. Mr. Haque has joined the World Bank to continue his work on environment.

MEETING WRAP-UP

The UAA Board co-chairs concluded this year's in-person and virtual Annual General Meeting by thanking the participants for their valuable contributions, and the UAA members for their support. They also thanked the UAA Annual General Meeting Committee and its co-chairs, Joy Riggs-Perla, Anne Peniston, and Steve Wingert, for planning and leading a successful AGM.