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A New Vision for U.S. Foreign Assistance

The 50th anniversary of USAID is certainly cause to celebrate the long history of American assistance overseas. However, we must also acknowledge that although the world is now a far different place, U.S. foreign assistance has not seen any large-scale reform in 50 years. While foreign assistance remains a vital component of our nation’s foreign policy, reform is badly needed to modernize our aid architecture and increase its effectiveness and accountability.

The Global Partnerships Act of 2011 would accomplish just that. Proposed in September by House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Howard Berman (D-CA), the draft legislation proposes across-the-board reforms to ensure that American tax dollars are spent wisely and have maximum impact. This is an exciting moment for InterAction, as we and members of our community have provided input to the drafting process over the past two years. While no bill is perfect, this draft would bring USAID into the 21st century.

As the discussion draft points out, aid is not a gift. The bill would make U.S. foreign assistance more efficient by increasing measurement of results, strengthening accountability, transparency and oversight, and eliminating the waste and unnecessary red tape in the current legislation. The bill’s language provides a framework for improved coordination among government agencies, and mandates clear, long-term development strategies. Totaling near 800 pages, the draft legislation is a careful and comprehensive attempt at reform that employs the scalpel rather than the hatchet—a stark contrast to the logic, proposed by some members of Congress, that foreign assistance cuts alone will somehow make programs more efficient. What we need, and find in this draft, are common sense reforms to ensure efficiency and accountability in how our aid dollars are spent.

Most significantly, however, the bill reimagines what U.S. foreign assistance should look like in light of new priorities and realities. True to its title, the bill emphasizes that development assistance is a partnership that must include local voices, codifying an approach to development that stresses country- and societal ownership, which solicits input from a spectrum of private actors, including NGOs and other civil society actors. This is a significant institutional shift that would align U.S. foreign assistance with the current thinking of how best to conduct effective international development.

The recognition of the value-added of international NGOs in U.S. foreign assistance is one of the most exciting parts of this legislation. The bill makes it official U.S. policy that NGOs are an important component of development work, stating that international NGOs are uniquely positioned to understand and relate to local communities and ensure that programs are inclusive and effective.

This is an important and relevant piece of legislation. Even if the whole Global Partnerships Act cannot pass the 112th Congress, it can still serve in the immediate future as the starting point for less sweeping, but still substantial, reforms. Parts of the bill have already gained bipartisan support. The Global Partnerships Act in part or as a whole will be a starting framework for future reform efforts.

As the discussion draft points out, aid is not a gift. Effective aid is good for the world and it is good for the United States. It can help a country out of poverty while also making us safer and promoting American jobs. But to do these things, our aid architecture needs to be restructured so that it operates as effectively as possible. It needs to be brought into the 21st century.

I applaud the work of Rep. Berman and his staff, led by Diana Ohlbaum, and the efforts of those in our community who also contributed to this process. True, this reform comes at a difficult time politically and is only the first step. But it represents an important shift in U.S. foreign policy thinking, rightly emphasizing partnerships and effectiveness and highlighting the role played by NGOs. And that vision is significant.

Sam Worthington
President and CEO
InterAction
U.S. foreign assistance reform legislation unveiled

In September, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Howard Berman (D-CA) unveiled a new, sweeping foreign aid reform bill aimed at restructuring and improving the implementation of U.S. foreign assistance in the 21st century. His draft, called the Global Partnerships Act of 2011, proposes to completely replace the decades-old Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which remains the framework of America’s foreign aid today.

“A bill that was passed at the height of the Cold War has in many places lost its focus and in many ways lost its relevance,” Berman said. “Everybody knows that the foreign assistance act is in desperate need of reform.”

Rep. Berman’s proposal is the first serious and comprehensive effort at streamlining and modernizing U.S. foreign assistance. The 813-page legislation would make American foreign assistance more efficient, more effective and better at serving U.S. interests abroad. At home, it presents an opportunity to bring forward renewed bipartisan consensus about what U.S. foreign assistance programs should be aiming to achieve in today’s world.

Key provisions of the Global Partnerships Act include important efforts to improve the strategy and oversight of programs abroad by limiting dependence on contractors, installing a system for evaluating and monitoring success of assistance programs and providing Congress with a larger role in setting out the priorities of U.S. foreign assistance.

The bill also improves inter-agency coordination by mandating a new oversight committee; requires the development of a comprehensive U.S. Strategy for Global Development every four years; includes a plan to strengthen USAID’s capacity; and stipulates that humanitarian action should be primarily civilian in nature.

On the nonlogistical side, the Global Partnerships Act also includes important revisions that would enshrine humanitarian principles in the implementation of U.S. foreign assistance. The draft articulates—for the first time in U.S. law—that the goal of humanitarian assistance is to save lives, alleviate suffering, maintain human dignity, and protect the rights of the extremely vulnerable. The bill additionally calls for U.S. humanitarian action to meet international standards; acknowledges the importance of local civil society in foreign assistance programming; highlights the risk of sexual and gender-based violence; and recognizes the importance of building local capacity in partner countries.

A more in-depth analysis of Rep. Berman’s Global Partnerships Act will appear in an upcoming issue of MD.
The French presidency has a highly ambitious agenda for the G20 summit in Cannes, with an overall goal of tackling the root causes of the global financial crisis and taking action to sustainably improve “global stability and prosperity.” President Nicolas Sarkozy and his ministers set the six following objectives for the meeting on Nov. 3-4:

- **Reforming the international monetary system** to more effectively respond to, among other things, exchange rate volatility, rapid inflows and outflows of foreign capital, and macroeconomic imbalances;
- **Strengthening financial regulation** over various financial sectors (e.g., over-the-counter derivatives) and improving “financial market integrity and transparency”;
- **Combating commodity price volatility** in both the oil and agriculture commodities markets;
- **Supporting employment and strengthening the social dimension of globalization** by promoting employment for the young and disadvantaged; fortifying in-country social protection mechanisms; promoting substantive social and labor rights; and encouraging more robust collaboration among international organizations;
- **Fighting corruption** by pushing for ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, and by ensuring that the Anti-Corruption Action Plan adopted at the Seoul 2010 G20 summit is progressing and producing concrete results; and
- **Working on behalf of development**, specifically in the areas of infrastructure, food security and innovative finance (with a special focus on the various financial transaction taxes proposals).

With the French presidency’s priorities clearly put forth, InterAction’s G8/G20 Task Force published an updated G20 summit policy brief in early September, with the following recommendations:

**Food security, agriculture and nutrition**
- Build on the 2009 World Food Summit and the 2009 L’Aquila $22 billion commitment.
- Rebalance donor funds to improve nutrition and reach small-scale producers.
- Integrate resilience to climate change and civil society partnerships into food security.

**Corruption**
- Strengthen “no safe haven” and asset recovery policies.
- Establish transparent, accountable public finance management systems, including budget and procurement, by Jan. 1, 2012, and increase aid transparency and accountability.

**Financial integrity and tax havens**
- Call on the Financial Action Task Force to ensure the beneficial ownership of all companies, trusts, foundations and charities is made a matter of public record.
- Require all multinational corporations in the jurisdiction of G20 member nations to report their income and taxes paid on a country-by-country basis.
- Implement the crackdown on tax havens announced by the G20 in April 2009.
- Promote a multilateral approach to tax information exchange with developing countries.

**Financial inclusion**
- Provide tools and resources for countries to set financial inclusion targets that incorporate a full range of financial services and include marginalized groups.
- Ensure the G20 Financial Inclusion Data and Measurement Task Force emphasizes quality in financial inclusion.
- Ensure policy frameworks allow informal financial service groups to access formal services.
- Establish a client protection taskforce in the G20-created Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.

**Accountability**
- Establish a permanent G20 accountability framework that is robust, credible, transparent and inclusive.
- Require that G20 working groups seek input from international organizations, governments and civil society on a regular basis and develop systems for ongoing transparent consultations.
- Publicize the terms of reference and names and affiliation of all members of G20 expert groups six months prior to each summit.
- Ensure reporting evaluates results against consistent and specific indicators with timetables and recommendations for future action including resources pledged and delivered.

InterAction staff traveling to Cannes for the summit will provide a final Infobyte on the meeting in the December edition of MD.
**InterAction welcomes new members**

InterAction is pleased to announce the following new members:

**ACDI/VOCA** works to empower people to succeed in the global economy. Its mission is to promote economic opportunities for cooperatives, enterprises and communities through the innovative application of sound business practice. ACDI/VOCA provides sustainable solutions to the most pressing and intractable development problems. Activities span the development continuum: from meeting basic needs to community stabilization, food security and nutrition, poverty alleviation, access to financial services and market integration. For over 47 years, ACDI/VOCA has worked around the globe providing highly specialized, hands-on technical assistance to promote opportunities for smallholder farmers, cooperatives, businesses and communities through innovative application of sound business practices in five core areas: food security, agribusiness systems, enterprise development, financial services and community development.

**GlobalGiving** is committed to building an efficient, open, thriving marketplace that connects people who have community- and world-changing ideas with people who can support them. Its online marketplace allows donors to find and fund grassroots projects that appeal to their specific interests. GlobalGiving begins with the dedicated, tenacious individuals who are driving change in their communities. From running orphanages and schools to helping survivors of natural disasters, these people are do-gooders to the core. GlobalGiving connects these “good idea people” with the “generous giver people” and help projects of all sizes receive donations of all sizes. The organization offers projects in more than 100 countries on issues ranging from education and health care to economic development and the environment. To date, more than 112,000 donors have provided $30.8 million to 2,900 projects worldwide.

**The Eagles Wings Foundation (EWF)** provides assistance to disaster survivors and emergency management personnel following major disasters in the U.S. and around the world. In the event of a disaster, EWF deploys a team of volunteers called the Pathfinders Task Force that uses field-trained responders to reach disaster survivors at their front doors within days, while also seeking out and resolving the unmet special needs of vulnerable populations. The system got its start in 1999 during the Bahamian response to devastation from Hurricane Floyd, and it is constantly evolving to incorporate lessons from response operations ranging from Hurricane Katrina to the Haitian Earthquake to the 2010 BP oil spill and the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami. These responses are short-term in nature as they focus on emergency operations. The concept behind its system of volunteer management is simple but profound: rapidly train, type and credential spontaneous volunteers as they arrive on scene and incorporate them into task forces with responders, thus increasing their capabilities by creating a force-multiplying effect. This system ensures local volunteers are used in the most efficient manner possible while exponentially increasing the capabilities of the trained responders.

**Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF)** supports the efforts of Lions clubs worldwide in serving their local communities and the world community as they carry out essential humanitarian service projects. Needs are identified through the vast grassroots network of 1.35 million Lions clubs members in 206 countries and regions. Lions engage partners locally and globally to collaborate with Lions to implement and fund projects. The foundation is well known for its extensive sight programs, which combat the world’s leading causes of preventable and reversible blindness and eye diseases. LCIF also assists Lions in providing food, water and first aid, and in meeting other immediate needs following natural disasters. LCIF is committed to providing positive opportunities for youth through the Lions Quest program, a life-skills, school-based program. Through LCIF, Lions clubs also combat global health issues such as measles and diabetes. LCIF is dedicated to a range of humanitarian services, including helping and empowering people with disabilities to lead more independent, productive and fulfilling lives.

**InterAction is also pleased to welcome the following two new Associate Members**:  

**NGOLD** is a Center for NGO Leadership & Development at NIU. Its mission is to enhance and strengthen civil society through NGOs and other avenues for public service. Bringing together theory and practice, NGOLD operates through four pillars: academic programs, research, NGO practitioner programs and local civic engagement. NGOLD provides a space for scholars and practitioners from various disciplines and areas of interest to come together to enrich understanding and application. It provides rigorous undergraduate and graduate preparation through its interdisciplinary degree programs, offering opportunities for engaged learning for a number
of different career paths drawing on NIU’s rich academic offerings across departments and colleges. It also offers opportunities for skills enhancement for current nonprofit leaders, both locally and globally. NGOLD is an independent center within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, administering its own degrees and other programs. It operates through a small staff and through engagement with faculty from across the university.

UNHCR creates two new positions
The UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) created two new positions at the end of September. A new independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order will, for the next three years: identify possible obstacles to the promotion and protection of a democratic and equitable international order; identify best practices; and work with states so they will adopt local, national, regional and international measures. The expert’s first report will be at UNHCR’s 21st session.

A new special rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence will, for the next three years, research national situations promoting truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees that gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law will not recur. The rapporteur will then make recommendations on those findings and will report annually to both UNHCR and the UN General Assembly.

Documentary: Weathering Change
Consequences of climate change—floods, droughts, extreme weather, declining agricultural production—affect everyone. But in many developing countries, shifting temperature and precipitation patterns are making life especially hard for women and families. A new documentary, Weathering Change, tells the stories of women around the world who are shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden of climate change.

Weathering Change takes us to Ethiopia, Nepal and Peru to hear the stories of these women as they struggle to care for their families, while enduring crop failures and water scarcity. The film shows how families and communities are already adapting to the climate change challenges that threaten their health and their livelihoods, and how family planning, girls’ education, sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation are part of the solution.

As the world’s population hits 7 billion in 2011, the film calls for expanding access to contraception and empowering women to help families and communities adapt to the effects of climate change. Watch Weathering Change and learn more at www.weatheringchange.org.

Girls Not Brides: the global partnership to end child marriage
The Elders have created a group called Girls Not Brides, a partnership between many organizations, including several InterAction members, to end the practice of child marriage. Millions of underage girls are married each year, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu has recently launched an initiative to engage men and boys in the campaign.

Girls Not Brides will work at the community, local, national and international levels. Specific goals are to:
• Raise awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage by encouraging open, inclusive and informed discussion at the community, local, national and international level;
• Facilitate learning and coordination between organizations working to end child marriage; and
• Mobilize all necessary policy, financial and other support to end child marriage.

For more information, visit http://girlsnotbrides.org/ and http://www.theelders.org/.

Keeping up with Capitol Hill
As technology evolves, lawmakers have begun to evolve with it. Two tools can now help American citizens keep up with what their senators and congressional representatives are working on.

The U.S. House of Representatives is now livestreaming for mobile devices. You can watch what your lawmaker is doing at http://houselive.gov/. The website also has video archives through the 11th Congress (we are currently in the 112th). The project was launched in October.

In the wake of President Obama’s call to citizens to reach out to their representatives during the debt ceiling debate, the blog FearLess compiled a directory of Twitter usernames for senators and representatives organized by state. The list is available at http://fearlessrevolution.com/blog/the-us-congressional-twitter-directory.html.

2011 report on climate change and cocoa farmers
In September 2011, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture released a report, “Predicting the Impact of Climate Change on the Cocoa-Growing Regions in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire.” While focusing on cocoa, the report also evaluated climate change impact on cashew- and cotton-growing regions.

The report predicts that over the next 40 years, temperatures will change enough in that region that it will shift the ideal altitude to grow cocoa from 100-250 meters above sea level to 450-500 meters, both a higher altitude and reducing the range from 150 meters to 50. The effects on cocoa farming will depend on where the farm is located, according to the report. Some areas will become completely unsuitable, in some areas farmers will need to adapt their methods to continue to grow cocoa, a few areas may become more suitable for cocoa, and some currently unfarmable areas may become good places to grow cocoa. The report concludes that, no matter where they live, the farmers who will weather the region’s change the best are the ones who will both be willing and know how to adapt either their practices or their crops. Read the full report online at http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/Newsroom/Documents/ghana_ ivory_coast_climate_change_and_cocoa.pdf.

For an online multimedia tour of cocoa-producing villages in the Ivory Coast, visit The Rainforest Alliance’s website at http://rainforest-alliance.org-multimedia/cote-divoire-cocoa.

The World Bank and transparency
In its latest transparency effort, last month the World Bank released the World Bank Finances App for mobile devices. The project lets users explore bank data in a variety of ways:
• See how the World Bank spends its money.
• See where it funds projects.
• See details for specific projects.
• Explore an interactive world map of the bank’s development activities.
• Get detailed financial information at the country, project, and loan/credit/loan levels.
• Share interesting information via Facebook, Twitter, or email.
• Contact the Bank to share your insights and comments.

There is an app specifically for the iPhone, and a “web app” for all other users. Information about this project and others is available at publications.worldbank.org, under the Mobile Apps section of the Tools menu. ☞
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Reflections from the Inside

50 Years of USAID

By Hilda Arellano, Counselor, U.S. Agency for International Development
IN 1987, THE WORLD WAS IN A STATE OF GEOPOLITICAL flux. Both the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union that had erected it were soon to collapse. Hearings on the Iran-Contra affair were coming to a head. This was the year I joined the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), an agency that is no stranger to confronting and surmounting challenges on the world stage.

As USAID celebrates its 50th anniversary this November, it is once again facing seismic global shifts and adapting to meet those challenges. You could say that today everything has changed and very little has changed.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy created USAID to respond to the humanitarian and economic needs of the developing world and to address organizational and structural shortcomings in delivering foreign aid. President Kennedy realized that scattershot efforts from multiple overlapping agencies produced short-term progress that was ultimately unsustainable and unpopular with the public. He also saw a historic opportunity for industrialized nations to move less-developed nations into self-sustained economic growth, improving national security and prosperity here at home.

USAID set up missions in developing countries with the goal of helping those nations and their people. In creating the agency the same year that he also created the Peace Corps, President Kennedy outlined a commitment by the United States to bring all the expertise it could bear for the difficult challenge of overseas development. The work would be both in the United States’ best interest and in those of a world he believed should be characterized by prosperity and freedom.

“I realize that there are among us those who are weary of sustaining this continual effort to help other nations,” President Kennedy told Congress in March 1962, four months after the agency’s creation. “But I would ask them to look at a map and recognize that many of those whom we help live on the ‘front lines’ of the long twilight struggle for freedom—that others are new nations poised between order and chaos—and the rest are older nations now undergoing a turbulent transition of new expectations. Our efforts to help them help themselves, to demonstrate and to strengthen the vitality of free institutions, are small in cost compared to our military outlays for the defense of freedom.”

The decades that followed would see support grow and then contract as the world and the political players on the U.S. stage changed. Yet, for all the budget and ideological battles, USAID’s core mission as outlined by President Kennedy has remained.

In the 1980s there was considerable debate on why "development" was taking as long as it had been. A large variety of theories and models had been in vogue at one time or another—dependency theory, trickle down and import substitution—but the fact remained that too many countries were still too poor. The new mantra of the 80s was “look to the private sector” as the primary engine of growth in developing nations. USAID missions were urged to work with host country officials and members of the private sector to help unlock this engine. A major effort under this new direction was the initiation of new programs and projects in trade promotion, as well as technical assistance in bank reform, financial markets and state fiscal reform.

In 1989, Congress passed the Support for Eastern European Democracy Act to promote democratic and free market transitions in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, enabling them to become productive members of the Euro-Atlantic community of Western democracies. Countries in this region were saddled with concentrated governments and monolithic economies that left vulnerable populations impoverished. USAID provided humanitarian relief during food shortages and focused on longer-term results by helping the former Soviet bloc countries develop free market economies and democratic institutions.

Major USAID initiatives in the immediate post 9/11 period included reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. USAID undertook large-scale relief and reconstruction efforts, focusing on meeting urgent needs for relief and rehabilitation, and long-term efforts like infrastructure, including: roads; bridges; water and sewage; health and education facilities and services; economic growth opportunities in agriculture and banking; and democracy and governance at the national and local levels.

Today, whether we are supporting the creation of the new nation in South Sudan, leading a disaster response effort in Haiti, or supporting girls’ education in Afghanistan, we are taking President Kennedy’s lead of putting American values into action.

An explicit mandate

President Obama’s Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) released in September 2010 recognizes development as vital to U.S. national security and on equal footing with defense and diplomacy—the “three Ds”—in the U.S. strategy for how we engage with the world.

Like most Foreign Service Officers, I have had the privilege to serve in different regions of the world, in countries with different levels of strategic priority for the United States. Nevertheless, a common thread weaves through our assistance: helping countries better serve their people ultimately supports the broader goals of U.S. engagement in the world.

Guided by this strong vision for development and using the State Department-led Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) as a roadmap, USAID is reconfiguring how it does its work. It is a unique opportunity for a reboot. And it is an initiative USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah has seized.

USAID Forward

In 2010, Shah instituted USAID Forward, an aggressive series of reforms to help streamline the agency’s internal processes. From procurement and capacity building to innovation and evaluation, these reforms are designed to help the agency become more efficient and businesslike. We have focused on rebuilding the agency’s budget capacity and expanding the number of professional officers at home. Among Shah’s first reforms was the establishment of the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, which is helping rebuild our intellectual capacity with evidence-based policies and strategies to ensure that we build on our successes and learn from our setbacks.

Shah has parlayed President Obama’s Feed the Future initiative into a brand new office, the Bureau for Food Security, which will help implement long-term, sustainable agriculture development efforts to ensure people can produce and sell crops in a way that helps them grow their incomes and their country’s economies. The Global Health Initia-
tive, another Obama-initiated effort, builds on the successful, integrated approach to HIV/AIDS interventions by USAID and others, and invests in strengthening country health systems, improving maternal and child health, addressing neglected tropical diseases and encouraging practical, efficient research.

Look to the future, learn from our past

Over the past half century, USAID has worked to cultivate game-changing advancements. It was an innovative and technological breakthrough in wheat varieties that launched the Green Revolution in the late ’60s and resulted in the greatest development intervention the world has ever witnessed. By teaching farmers to plant high-yielding wheat, irrigation expanded, reservoirs and canals were built, and fertilizer use widened. One idea saved millions of lives for multiple generations. From polio eradication efforts to the CAPRISA HIV trails, USAID has been a proud driver behind many breakthroughs.

We have also worked hard to expand attention to the needs of particular groups. For example, USAID’s commitment to full inclusion of women dates back to 1973 when the United States passed the Percy Amendment calling for “integration of women into the national economies of developing countries.” The agency established the Women in Development office to increase USAID’s institutional capacity to address gender-related issues and to find new approaches and solutions for gender-related obstacles to development. Today’s Office of Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment is USAID’s central point of leadership and expertise on gender issues in social, economic, and political development policies and programs.

Fifty years is but a dot on the timeline of humanity. But for millions of people around the globe, the past five decades have been marked by unprecedented leaps in health, food security, and economic and political freedoms. Our work to help families and communities build a path out of poverty, to promote healthy democracies, to help countries become more stable and prosperous, to create future trading partners and markets for our exports, has met with the kind of success that even President Kennedy may not have been able to predict.

Today, USAID is on the frontlines alongside the Departments of State and Defense, in representing the United States around the world, making decisions that affect the global community, and working to meet foreign policy goals. In Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, the agency works closely with defense and diplomacy under a microscope of media and special interest attention. However, USAID is also working just as diligently for the benefit of countries that rarely make the front pages.

Our proverbial plate is full, and so the importance of strong partnerships with NGOs, foundations, colleges, multilateral institutions and others cannot be overstated—our mutual success demands that we work hand-in-hand and communicate early and often to leverage our collective power. We will continue to listen, connect and support organizations that not only have expertise, but also have nurtured relationships in communities where they work.

Still, living up to expectations and adapting
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USAID at 50: Back to the Future

Rethinking the U.S. foreign assistance program.

By Jake Grover, formerly of Center for Global Development

"No objective supporter of foreign aid can be satisfied with the existing program—actually a multiplicity of programs. Bureaucratically fragmented, awkward and slow, its administration is diffused over a haphazard and irrational structure covering at least four departments and several other agencies. The program is based on a series of legislative measures and administrative procedures conceived at different times and for different purposes, many of them now obsolete, inconsistent and unduly rigid and thus unsuited for our present needs and purposes."

PLACE "FOUR DEPARTMENTS" with 12 and this quote from President Kennedy in 1961 would pretty accurately describe the aid bureaucracy USAID is tasked to lead today. Happy 50th birthday, by the way! Here are the problems with the current approach and some gift ideas (read: reforms) that would make its difficult job much easier.

Limitations

Although the Obama administration has made the right statements regarding development policy and proposed an ambitious reform path, structural, political and budgetary realities are such that necessary sweeping reform is next to impossible. The U.S. foreign aid system is problematic for a number of reasons.

Fragmentation & duplication: The U.S. aid bureaucracy sprawls across 12 departments and more than 60 offices. Not only are different programs duplicating each other’s work, they are also sometimes working at cross-purposes.

Allocation & appropriation: The F Process (an initiative launched in 2006 to integrate strategic planning and management across State and USAID) has deliberately brought USAID closer to the State Department, but a blurring of the lines between diplomacy and development can undermine the credibility of U.S. foreign aid. Allocations biased towards politically important recipients, instead of being based on need or potential impact, can also decrease aid effectiveness. The F Process also subsumed control over USAID’s strategic budget process. Although the agency’s recently revived budget office is a step back in the right direction, it only makes an internal budget, and final decisions are vetted through State. Regardless, USAID only controls about half of all development dollars.

Selection & elimination: A push to use the selectivity model of the Millennium Challenge Corporation is underway in the administration (for example, in the Partnership for Growth and the Global Health Initiative), but it is yet to be seen whether funding for these presidential initiatives is sustainable or if U.S. aid as a whole can be allocated more selectively and strategically. USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah touched on this issue in congressional hearings on the government’s fiscal year 2012 budget when he cited proposals to eliminate development funding for 11 countries and USAID missions in three more. By focusing funding on fewer countries, resources can be concentrated, comparative advantages exploited and coordination problems reduced.

Ideal reforms

These limitations make it difficult for USAID to enact far-reaching reforms. Not only is the agency structurally tied to State, it is also overruled or even undermined at times. Considering much of U.S. development policy and resource allocation takes place elsewhere, it is hard to blame USAID for myriad problems it has little power to address. Major changes would be necessary to fix these structural problems.

Link USAID to OMB: While the F Process
was intended to bring development policy under one roof, it never made sense to house it at the State Department, as it specializes in diplomacy, not development. The two are sometimes contradictory despite the ubiquitous “three D” rhetoric (i.e., defense, diplomacy and development as the three legs of the national security stool). In reality, they are usually considered in that respective order when it comes to foreign policy decision-making. If USAID were given back its direct line to the Office of Management and Budget at the White House, it would allow development specialists to control development policy while maintaining a clear line between diplomatic and development initiatives.

Put USAID on the NSC: If the Obama administration was serious about elevating development to the level of diplomacy and defense, USAID Administrator Shah would already have a cabinet position and be a standing member of the National Security Council (NSC), right next to Secretaries Clinton and Panetta. The QDDR (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review) exposed the flimsiness of this rhetoric when it concluded that the USAID administrator should only be “included in meetings of the National Security Council as appropriate,” the same NSC consisting of the Secretaries of Defense and State. The USAID administrator must be given equal footing if the three D approach is to be taken seriously.

Realistic options
But those gift ideas might be out of our price range (politically). Instead, there are a couple realistic options that would elevate the role of development and give USAID a stronger voice.

Dual hat—Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance: While the last USAID administrator was dual-hatted as the director of foreign assistance (the person in charge of the F Bureau/Process), Administrator Shah has not received this designation, even though this could give USAID a stronger voice in the aid allocation process. The position currently sits vacant.

New hat—Global Development Council:
In the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) on Global Development, released over a year ago, the administration called for a Global Development Council comprised of a broad spectrum of outside stakeholders. Although there is understandable fatigue for such exercises, this council could be different by providing ongoing policy guidance—not just reports or policy reviews—and, above all, by promoting policy coherence. Such a high-level panel could provide strategic guidance based on stated purposes for aid that are often lost in the annual budgeting process.

While both of these options are plausible, with the PPD and the QDDR both completed, there is unlikely to be another major initiative soon. In the meantime, USAID will continue its ostensible midlife crisis without the proper authority or political clout to enact broader reform. Perhaps we should revisit JFK’s speech for inspiration and listen this time when he urges us to “revise our foreign aid organization, and our basic concepts of operation to meet the new problems which now confront us.” There is no better time than the present.

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A History Rich in Research Discovery

Heralding USAID’s unsung but crucial contributions to finding tomorrow’s solutions.

By Kaitlin Christenson, Coalition Director, Global Health Technologies Coalition

In its 50 years, USAID has been best known for its leadership in addressing development challenges around the world. It has worked in education, finance, health, democracy-building and natural disasters.

But one main aspect of its work has not received much attention: support for research and development (R&D).

My job focuses on what the U.S. government is doing to advance the pipeline of global health R&D projects so that those who deliver health services in the developing world have the best possible tools to save lives. When I take a step back and look at USAID’s work over the years, I see a history of innovation across the agency. Much of this new technology has benefited women and children, who are now rightly a major focus of USAID’s programs.

Just a few years after USAID’s inception in 1961, it joined the global effort to eradicate smallpox. One of its activities was funding research that adapted the mechanics behind U.S. military jet injectors for application of the smallpox vaccine. These injectors used high pressure rather than a needle to deliver the vaccine, and they eliminated the need for electricity to power the device. In large part because of the reach made possible by the injectors, the last case of smallpox was recorded in Somalia in 1977, and the world was declared free of smallpox two years later.

This was a major breakthrough in protecting the lives of children, as more than 80 percent of children who contracted smallpox during its peak died from the disease.

During the 1970s, U.S.-supported research led to the discovery of an improved formulation of oral rehydration therapy (ORT) that has saved many children suffering from life-threatening diarrhea. The illness often comes on incredibly fast, but ORT’s liquid mixture of salt and sugar stabilizes children just as quickly. ORT has helped save millions. Diarrhea still remains the number two killer of children in the developing world (behind pneumonia), but the introduction of ORT has substantially reduced the numbers of deaths.

In the 1980s, earlier U.S.-funded agricultural research started to produce dramatic results that improved farmers’ yields, especially in Asia, home to the Green Revolution. This research, funded through organizations such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), helped increase yields of rice, wheat, maize, sorghum, cassava and beans. Women benefited greatly. Landless poor people—many of whom were women—received much more work due to the increased yields. Small farms, which were largely headed by women, also benefited from the increased yields.

The leadership at USAID knows all too well that these innovations involved a great deal of trial and error, steadfast patience and learning from failures as well as successes. One great example has been research into microbicides, a vaginal gel that researchers hope will allow women to protect themselves from HIV. For years, researchers tested multiple ideas without success; and each one allowed them to cross off certain approaches, or to alter their focus in order to have a better shot in the future.

Just last year, the CAPRISA 004 tenofovir gel trial results showed a 39 percent reduction in a woman’s risk of becoming infected with HIV. The results were a critical first step to getting an effective HIV prevention method for women, but they did not signal the end of the story. More research is needed to build upon this trial.

“We tend to all celebrate breakthroughs, but we don’t look at how many combinations we had to try to get to that point,” noted Alex Dehgan, USAID’s science and technology advisor. “It’s also important to remember that success from research in years past led to the drugs and vaccines and tools that diagnose disease we use today.”

Earlier this year, USAID sponsored an event in Washington called Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development. The event was part of a larger USAID program that provides grants to foster innovations for pregnant women and newborns worldwide, and represents in many ways the future of USAID’s role in R&D. USAID and partners brought 77 people (out of 613 who applied) to Washington for the final round of this global competition.

Just walking around the event was like being given a looking glass into the future of global health R&D. Innovators and inventors stood by their small booths and talked to passersby about how their ideas could save lives. One compelling idea was to convert a drug that is typically administered by injection and used to stop a woman’s postpartum bleeding after birth into an aerosol spray. Another innovation was a pouch containing drugs to prevent children from contracting HIV during home births. If these ideas work, they are brilliant. If they don’t work, my hunch is that the ideas have taken us farther down the road to discovery, a road that can fulfill one of USAID’s core missions: saving women’s and children’s lives around the world.

The Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC) is a group of nearly 40 organizations working to increase awareness of the urgent need for technologies that save lives around the world.
Overlooking the Obvious

Why female condoms can and should be a bigger part of the U.S. HIV/AIDS effort.

By Mary Beth Hastings, Vice President, Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)

When women in the developing world talk about female condoms, they don’t limit the discussion to methods of planning a family or tools to protect their health. They use words like “rights” and “power” and reference things like marital rape and negotiation dynamics. For them, the beneficiaries of U.S. foreign assistance, these condoms are about claiming both their health and their equality.

“As women, we should never have to ask our husbands’ permission to save our own lives.” That was how Edinah Masiyiwa, executive director of the Zimbabwe Women’s Action Group, responded when she was asked why women should have access to female condoms at all.

Edinah’s reference to saving her own life is not hyperbole. Female condoms have proven to reduce the risk of sexual transmission of HIV by 97 percent. Research conducted in Brazil, India, Thailand, the U.S. and Zambia indicates an increase of protected sex acts and a decrease in sexually transmitted infections when both female and male condoms were well-marketed simultaneously. In addition to its efficacy, the female condom is also in demand by women, men and health organizations.

Rowlands Kaotcha, country director of The Hunger Project in Malawi has hard numbers in hand. “We are [serving] communities that are consuming 3,000 female condoms per three months,” he said in Choosing Prevention, a documentary on female condoms in Malawi. “What if we overlay this concept over the country? What does that translate into? That’s a huge number, so there is evidence of demand.”

It would be logical to assume that donor countries are heavily investing in the obvious.

The U.S. is the world’s largest provider of female condoms, but in 2009 they still only accounted for 3 percent of its total condom distribution.

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HIV/AIDS PREVENTION

NOVEMBER 2011 MONDAY DEVELOPMENTS
**Challenge: The condom gap**

The U.S. has identified a serious "condom gap" affecting several countries in Africa with a high HIV prevalence. Yet, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) is not allocating enough funding to support female condom procurement and programming, especially for former focus countries that cannot access condoms through the Commodity Fund (established by USAID in 2002 to help overseas missions address HIV prevention through procurement).

**Solution:** OGAC should centrally-finance female and male condom procurement to help close the condom gap. It should allocate funds directly to the Commodity Fund so all countries can access this account. OGAC should also allocate robust resources to support female and male condom programming, especially for former focus countries.

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**Challenge: Coordination and oversight**

Coordination between OGAC and USAID officials on female condoms is limited, which contributes to them being overlooked in decision-making on funding priorities. In addition, neither OGAC nor USAID has a clear oversight mechanism for financial and technical support for female condom programming.

**Solution:** OGAC and USAID should form an interagency team to engage in strategic thinking and resource allocation planning on female condoms and the broader condom gap. They should also conduct an evaluation of PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) support for female condom programming and develop a related system to track financial and technical support.

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**Challenge: Standardizing decision-making**

Whether the U.S. procures female condoms in a given country is highly dependent on the personal biases of USAID mission staff. Some Washington- and field-based officials lack awareness of the female condom or hold negative attitudes about it, in part because there is currently no guidance explaining its importance and relevance in HIV prevention and family planning programs.

**Solution:** OGAC and USAID should expedite the issuance of guidance to field staff highlighting the evidence on female condoms. It should also be included in guidance for the administration’s Global Health Initiative, citing it as an important example of integrated, woman-centered programming. OGAC and USAID should fund related training for doctors, nurses and counselors.

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**Lack of awareness and/or negative attitudes of headquarters officials and mission field staff pose barriers to female condom support.**

The U.S. has the opportunity to scale up its investments in procurement and programming—a show of support that would lend legitimacy to an already legitimate tool and give teeth to many of the principles embodied by the Obama administration’s Global Health Initiative.

However, there are several challenges to scaling up the U.S. investment that are rooted in Washington-based policies, procedures or funding restrictions. U.S. officials recently drew attention to an acute and burgeoning condom shortage in many countries in Africa with high HIV prevalence. In addition, lack of awareness and/or negative attitudes of headquarters officials and mission field staff pose barriers to female condom support. And the U.S. still has no specific policy guidance for the field to promote female condoms or provide incentives to procure and program them, which would help combat these negative attitudes.

Moreover, U.S. global AIDS legislation favors abstinence and fidelity activities, sometimes to the exclusion of comprehensive approaches that contain condoms. Finally, even though officials routinely ask to see more evidence of female condom use as a precursor to any scale up, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) has no mechanism to collect data on distribution or use.

For each challenge, there is a solution that would strengthen the overall U.S. response to HIV. In the March 2011 report Female Condoms and U.S. Foreign Assistance: An Unfinished Imperative for Women’s Health, CHANGE recommends a number of solutions, including those in the accompanying sidebar. All are based on findings from an extensive literature review and interviews with key experts.

Female condoms are not the magic bullet to stop HIV/AIDS, but they are an important tool. With increased and steady support from donors like the U.S. and a commitment to improve and expand programming and training, they will gradually become available to all, improving health and saving lives. And we must always remember that people—especially women—are waiting for us to do our part to make effective access a reality.

“Even when the overwhelming demand is coming and we know it’s there, we are even failing to provide the commodity,” said Chisomo Zileni, a program officer with the National Youth Council of Malawi. “We don’t have enough. We just don’t have enough.”

Additional recommendations from the report are available at http://www.genderhealth.org/media_and_publications/publications/category/research_documents/. Choosing Prevention can be seen at http://www.preventionnow.net/about_us/why_prevention_now/
USHY JOBS WITH HIGH SALARIES usually are a luxury afforded to only a small portion of most societies. In Lebanon, for example, only a small portion of the labor market is made up of positions in large local or multinational businesses. The majority of work is found in small family businesses, local factories and workshops, stores and other essential businesses.

“In today’s world, especially here in Lebanon, parents always want their kids to study and grow up to be doctors, lawyers, architects and other such highly-regarded professionals,” says Raif Chwayri, chief executive officer of Al Kafa’at Foundation, one of the largest vocational training institutes in Lebanon.

The reality of most Middle East economies is that the majority of jobs that need to be filled are for car mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, computer technicians, electricians and construction workers. Finding skilled labor to fill these positions is not so easy, because in markets like Lebanon, these jobs are considered to be reserved for lower classes. There is also a stigma about vocational training education (VTE) being only for those who failed in the formal education system, at school or at university.

But for millions living in refugee camps or marginalized communities, vocational training can provide the best opportunity to gain a foothold in the marketplace. International and local NGOs and community organizations are partnering to help make that possible. In some instances, multinational corporations are also stepping up to the challenge when funding is an obstacle.

UNHCR, the UN’s refugee agency, has spearheaded a number of programs that focus on capacity building and empowerment for refugees around the globe, particularly women. Its livelihood strategies include
microfinancing along with entrepreneurial mentoring and access to information and communications technology coupled with training in computer skills. According to a 2010 report, 31 tech training centers have been established in 13 countries to service refugees and displaced populations. UNHCR reports that it runs livelihood programs in 70 percent of its field operations—from IT (information technology) centers in Yemen to sewing projects in northern Myanmar.

In many countries, multinational corporations, governments and NGOs are cooperating to advance vocational training education, reform and expand existing programs to adapt to the needs of the ever-changing job market.

In Lebanon, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) estimates there are more than 425,000 Palestinian refugees, most living in camps established more than 60 years ago. It is illegal for Palestinian refugees to work in camps established more than 60 years ago. The situation is similar for Iraqi refugees who fled to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and have trouble integrating into the job market. In fragile economies, refugees have no or minimal work status and usually can only find menial, “unofficial” jobs outside the system. Many NGOs in Lebanon are offering intensive vocational training programs to help Iraqi refugees acquire new skills to find work to sustain their families. There is now a special focus on women, especially those who are the sole breadwinner of the family while their husbands struggle more to find work.

Many training sessions take the form of nonformal education, using methods based on the well-being and psychosocial needs of refugees, both youth and adults. Women’s groups, peer education and cultural sessions also help improve life and work skills, taking into account the culture sensitivities of the recipients.

VTE experts in Lebanon say a key to success lies in changing a society’s attitude toward vocational education. “The stereotypical view that we have here in Lebanon and in the rest of the region is something that needs to change because these people are qualified, well-trained workers working in a field that they love,” explained Sawsan Al Masri, project coordinator for the International Labor Organization, which has been actively working to try to improve the field of vocational training and education in Lebanon.

This stereotyping is ironic, educators say, given that in Germany factory worker positions are highly sought after and reserved for only the most qualified and best-trained individuals. In the United States, construction workers are among the highest paid, because the ability to work in construction is seen as a special and unique skill. Until now, few programs for women have responded efficiently to local labor demands. Studies have shown that vocational training for women in “feminine skills” such as sewing, catering and nursery management do not usually lead to economically viable activities and improvement in their livelihoods. Few programs that encourage entrepreneurship have developed training for women in secretarial, graphic design or other skills that would support their goals. Short-term vocational training for men is more encouraging, especially in specific building trades during the current construction boom.

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Confessions of Two Adult Educators

It’s harder than it looks, but the payoff is priceless when done right.

By Edouine François, Director of Training Services, Freedom from Hunger, and Maria Matilde Olazabal, Director of Freedom from Hunger in Mexico

Have you ever watched someone make a great discovery? Maria Matilde Olazabal did in Chiapas, Mexico, while training a group of Chamula women to explore different ways they could improve their savings and define their own saving goals. One woman turned to the group and said, “What we are doing here is dreaming that we can reach anything with our own effort. I am not used to dreaming. I like it!”

Many people have a lot of experience as trainers. They might think they know how to do adult education. They might even think it is relatively straightforward. But, in fact, as adult educators with decades of practice, both Maria Matilde and Edouine François are humbled by how long and hard their journeys were to understanding what it takes to offer quality education that leads to real change and not just knowledge gain. And accomplishing this requires following some important principles, considerable experience, and lots of good listening with an attitude of flexibility.

Most understand that a lack of education significantly limits options for solving development challenges and that education can empower people striving to improve their lives. The big challenge is how to make education effective for adults who did not benefit as children from good schools. How can greater outcomes be achieved in the lives of adult learners, particularly when they are illiterate and live in remote areas with scarce resources?

How adults learn

Adults living one day at a time rarely have the opportunity to reflect on how they approach basics such as nutrition, health or money management. Education can help them develop their logical thinking and realize that change comes from within. But this is not like education for children. Adult education involves engaging the learners in dialogue: asking questions that stimulate a search for new answers from the knowledge they already have; having conversations that encourage them to look at new ways to approach their everyday activities; staging group discussions to discover new possibilities. This approach is imperative when designing and delivering education for impoverished women and men.

Call her Jennifer, Fatoumata, Ana or Soumitra, and let it be in America, Africa or Asia—adult learning principles resonate for all adults and work well across frontiers. Adult learners need to feel that they are being treated with respect and that their voices are heard in decisions that will impact their lives.

Put learners first

Edouine learned this lesson the hard way while working with farmers in remote mountains in Haiti. He confesses to having driven hundreds of kilometers and having worked many hours on a training workshop before he realized that most of the farmers were illiterate and therefore wouldn’t be able to do the exercises the way he had planned. Adapting the materials to make them work was hard, but it taught him a lesson: put learners first in all steps of a program—from needs assessment to design to pilot testing to training delivery and monitoring.

Test training materials

Reality in the field sometimes trips up the best designs. One helpful step is to pilot test training materials with the target group before the actual learning event. As one colleague often says: “What makes perfect sense in our nice offices might flop in the field, and we would not have known unless we tested in the field.” For example, one field test showed that the training session that planners liked the most was horrible in Burkina Faso. It had too many illustrations for the facilitators to handle and too much content for good knowledge retention. The key isn’t knowing what is best in theory, it is recognizing what is best for the learners with whom you will work.
Let learners make decisions

Women managing poor households are expected to be responsible for almost everything in their families and homes, but rarely do they get to decide what will happen. Being part of decision-making and having responsibility for the decisions they make empowers them with skills that make change possible. When planning education efforts for them, let women decide the rules for their group meetings. Allow them to decide how to solve a community or group problem. Organize sessions in which women can assess the results of their decisions and be accountable for them.

Apply what is learned

Hands-on practice during training sessions and encouragement from peers and educators make learners more confident in applying what they have learned in their daily lives. The voice of a woman in Benin still echoes. Days after a session on preparing oral rehydration solution (ORS), she had the opportunity to use it for her sick daughter. She was so excited talking about what she did and so grateful to the trainer for having her practice preparing the ORS during the learning event. The practice boosted her confidence so she did not hesitate to do it at home, which probably saved her daughter’s life. Having learners apply what they learn is the best recipe for promoting lifelong changes. It also forces educators to make learning activities concrete, practical, simple and appropriate to the levels of experience of the learners and their environments.

Promote learner-to-learner education

Working together for a common cause can positively change the way a community develops. But the challenges of teamwork can be overwhelming, especially when community members have no experience in sharing responsibility. Collaborative learning is a great tool to enhance learners’ capacities to work together in different settings. When adults engage each other through participation in small groups, they can easily learn new things and practices from each other. In fact, it can be hard to disengage them from mutual learning! As soon as Maria Matilde introduced the topic of planning for progressive construction of rural housing in a workshop in a Raramuri community in Chihuahua, Mexico, all the
FACE-TO-FACE WORKSHOPS ARE time-consuming and cost a lot of money. And, far too often, they take professionals like nurses, teachers and managers away from their workplaces where people need them most. But we all need workshops, don’t we? Face-to-face workshops, which provide skill development people need to get better at their jobs, are at the core of most capacity building programs we design, support and deliver.

But how can we provide quality training without pulling people from their daily work so much? The solution lies in creating an always-accessible online learning environment that offers an experience as close as possible to the best face-to-face learning experiences: true engagement with colleagues, collaboration on interesting real-life problems, opportunities to critically challenge acquired knowledge and simultaneously construct new knowledge, as well as networking to nurture future work relations.

What does that take? First, there needs to be strong focus on doing rather than knowing. The key is collaborative work tied into authentic real-life experiences, instead of mere discussions. Team tasks play a central part in e-workshops. They are not “add-ons” and they are not optional. Yet no one should be required to be online at the same time as anyone else at any point in an e-workshop. Learning design should be carefully tailored to ensure learners can participate in collaborative work whenever they have Internet access and time, within the limitations of the workshop schedule. Designing successful, asynchronous team tasks is the most challenging part of these programs and requires help from specialists.

Underneath it all, trainers have to believe in what they are teaching. A young trainer in Mali brought a strong dose of resistance to a training-of-trainers workshop on malaria prevention. She challenged and questioned everything, even expressing skepticism about the idea that using a mosquito net is a good way to prevent malaria. She was persuaded to try using a mosquito net for a year, and later she admitted her household had suffered less from malaria when she used the net. The experience made her powerfully effective in conveying to the people she then trained the importance of using nets. In fact, her trainees now use nets and even convince others to do the same: a priceless result of good adult education!

The Potential of E-Workshops

> Can online training be as exciting as a great face-to-face workshop?

By Anouk Janssens-Bevernage, E-Learning Expert, DynaMind

Women announced they had to leave early to attend to household chores. But when she tried to wrap up their time sharing their own experiences to help each other better manage house construction projects, they asked for more time.

Reinforce as much as possible

Reinforcement strengthens skills and builds confidence. In Senegal, confusion arose because Edouine repeatedly used a concept the group did not understand. A whole hour passed before he realized they were lost. He recovered by explaining what he meant and then reinforced the explanation throughout the rest of the workshop, reviewing the sequence of activities and breaking the activities into less-complicated steps. He now reinforces as much as possible by moving one step at a time, from simple to more complex tasks, from group tasks to individual tasks, until the learners become more confident.

Train adult educators differently

Edouine and Maria Matilde’s confessions can be summed up this way: We had to change ourselves as educators before we could help others to change their lives. Without special training, everyone tends to teach others the same way they were taught in school. Yet even if someone had great teachers in school, they probably did not see what they did to prepare; and in any event, adult learning is a different. Great adult educators understand the learners they are working with, facilitate dialogue, achieve the most appropriate balance for different learners in the room, test materials beforehand, create space for learners to apply the learning, prioritize collaboration, reinforce messages continuously and expect the best from their learners.

Underneath it all, trainers have to believe in what they are teaching. A young trainer in Mali brought a strong dose of resistance to a training-of-trainers workshop on malaria prevention. She challenged and questioned everything, even expressing skepticism about the idea that using a mosquito net is a good way to prevent malaria. She was persuaded to try using a mosquito net for a year, and later she admitted her household had suffered less from malaria when she used the net. The experience made her powerfully effective in conveying to the people she then trained the importance of using nets. In fact, her trainees now use nets and even convince others to do the same: a priceless result of good adult education!

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Second, the right e-facilitation style is crucial. Avoid the style used in a typical university e-course. E-workshops aimed at skill training for busy professionals in developing countries need a different level of care and support. E-facilitators need a warm and friendly online...
“voice” and a very visible presence, and they need to be experts at supporting online teamwork. Tailored e-facilitation training is needed to ensure that e-workshops are well run.

And finally, use the right technological tools. There is no need for expensive propriety software platforms. Open source software is free and frees up limited resources for what is important: learning design and learner support. E-workshops seem to work best when designed on linear interfaces (e.g., Moodle) that promote a “learning journey”-type design.

Poor internet access

E-workshops can and have been run in countries with very limited Internet access. The key is to design the workshop in a way that allows participants to use the limited connection wisely. Avoid the need for lengthy downloads of resources and spending time reading the resources when online. The learner should only need to log on to the Internet to contribute to the team activities, submit assignments and communicate with the facilitators. Everything else should be designed to be done offline. Also ensure that the offline/online experience is seamless; if it is clumsy, people will not complete the training.

Although webinars are increasingly popular, digital challenges make synchronous online learning events problematic. People can join “anywhere” but not “any time”—which for most people in developing countries is a challenge. Besides, too often webinars tend to focus on experts making presentations and offer little opportunity to truly engage the learners.

Workshop participants need to be supported in an e-learning environment that looks the same whether online or offline.

When you choose an e-learning platform to support your e-workshops, make sure the offline version is easy to develop. This does not just mean the resources; the whole interface should be visible when the learners open the CD ROM or memory stick. Workshop participants need to be supported in an e-learning environment that looks the same whether online or offline in order to reduce the potential confusion when locating learning resources and activities in these different modes.

Blending

While doing a training entirely online is often possible, sometimes funders’ stipulations or other factors may require face-to-face interactions. In those cases, blending delivery modes may be your best option. E-workshops have proven successful in providing additional learning opportunities before and after a face-to-face workshop. An e-learning pre-workshop online can make a face-to-face workshop more efficient by preparing participants in advance. A follow-up e-workshop is especially useful to support the transfer of learning to the workplace. Some training evaluation models (e.g., the success case method that documents the nature of success and combines rigorous evaluation methods with the emotional impact of stories) particularly benefit from support through e-workshops.

When designing “blended” learning, it is important to have a lead designer who has in-depth experience in the different modes used in the blend. This will ensure that the trainees have a seamless experience instead of a series of disjointed learning events.

Valuable potential

Instead of reaching 20 or 30 key people in one face-to-face workshop, we can reach hundreds through e-learning—often with about the same budget. And the e-learning route has many other advantages, including allowing professionals to continue with their jobs while being able to learn and work with colleagues across the world. The challenge is to make online training as exciting as the best face-to-face workshop, with true collaboration opportunities and numerous networking spinoffs. With the right mix of tailored learning design, facilitation and technology, this is possible. While most organizations still have more experience with face-to-face model, it is time to make greater use of the e-workshop option. The potential gains are too valuable to ignore.

Questions and comments can be sent to the author at anouk@dynamind.co.nz.

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Questions and comments can be sent to the author at anouk@dynamind.co.nz.
“O, HOW DO I GET WORK WITH AN INTERNATIONAL NGO?” That was a question posed by a sincere undergraduate at a campus lecture on urban poverty in Southeast Asia. The answer can be simple: Identify what NGOs usually look for in entry-level headquarters or field positions—field experience, demonstrated cross-cultural skills, language and a master's degree, usually in a technical area. This answer reflects a demand side perspective and is not intrinsically wrong. But it may not be exactly right either, as it begs the question of what really prepares people to work in this multi-faceted and complex field. What educational and other preparation choices do people wishing to make a difference have as they seek to prepare themselves?

A more useful and less straightforward answer requires understanding some of the current conversations taking place within higher education. Both international development and nonprofit management are emerging disciplines within this changing field. As the new disciplines evolve, some of the questions now being asked are: Does nonprofit management belong to the broad field of public administration or to the field of business or to a yet-to-be defined third field? Are civic engagement and democratic engagement the same thing? How are theory and practice most usefully bridged? Where and how is complexity captured within interdisciplinary studies and a coherent view of the key concepts underlying NGO leadership developed? Similarly, what is the “best” set of perspectives to understand issues impacting international development?

The Peace Corps has been a traditional route into international NGOs. Many NGO leaders and staff have Peace Corps experience. Often their trajectory has been from volunteer service to graduate school to work for NGOs. The National Peace Corps Association has found that the pattern has held true from the first decade of the Peace Corps, when 30 percent of returning volunteers went into nonprofits or international development, to the current decade when 47 percent of returning volunteers have chosen these career routes. The route through graduate school is bifurcated, with some taking a technical path and others taking a management or MBA approach. But is this the right advice today?

Undergraduate level

The undergraduate questioner, like many of his peers, is seeking a career path to “make a difference” both domestically and internationally. In response to this desire, universities are developing academic programs to address complex global issues in their myriad aspects. Students like these come with demonstrated commitment and civic-mindedness, as approximately 22 percent of all young adults and 32 percent college students have already had some volunteer experience according to the report 2010 Civic Life in America. That is to say, the undergraduate questioner who wants to work with NGOs in international development may already have begun his preparation.

Undergraduate preparation for an international career has frequently been through study of political science or anthropology, supplemented by area studies and some language training, and, increasingly, a study abroad experience. These remain valid approaches for basic preparation, but there are now some alternative paths.

Universities are increasingly stressing the importance of interdisciplinary studies and a coherent view of the key concepts underlying NGO leadership. Work in the NGO space of tomorrow requires more options than ever to prepare oneself to make a difference.
plinary programs and engaged learning. Engaged learning includes the familiar internship, as well as other hands-on learning through laboratories, research and other means. It also now includes the important concept of service learning, in which students serve to learn and learn to serve by direct and formative engagement with their communities based on the principles of reciprocity and mutual respect. This route rejects the model in which the classroom is the sole imparter of knowledge in favor of a more inclusive model where community becomes an integral part of learning and knowledge creation through collaboration and problem-solving. Students exposed to these principles gain fundamental preparation for a career in international development—even if there is nothing specifically international about what they are doing. The concepts of mutual respect and service are excellent building blocks.

New interdisciplinary courses of study, whether focused on environment or community change, acknowledge the complexity of the issues, respond to student demand, and address the need for multiple perspectives. Currently, there are approximately 60 programs in the U.S. offering minors, certificates or majors in areas focused on civic engagement and community service through interdisciplinary studies, with service learning aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Real world opportunities to serve are integral to the academic program—even if there is nothing specifically international about what they are doing. The concepts of mutual respect and service are excellent building blocks.

Graduate level

While graduate study in a technical area such as agriculture or public health is a typical route into NGOs, an increasing number of programs offer interdisciplinary programs in international development. These programs parallel the interdisciplinary interest at the undergraduate level. The language describing each such program varies, reflecting in part the relative newness of the field, with emphasis on such areas as social change, sustainable development and community development, among others. A review of one popular graduate school website (www.GradSchool.com) reveals over 200 graduate level programs worldwide fall under the broadly inclusive term “international development” specializations. Of these, over 50 at the master’s level have international development in the name of the program.

The context for international development and humanitarian response has changed enormously since the 1960s, and even within the past decade. Nascent and robust civil societies, conflict-affected populations, wars, refugees, endemic food insecurity, accelerating urban growth, weak governance and inequitable economic growth all loom as large challenges.

There are also serious philosophical questions about the roles NGOs can and should play. Increasingly, scholars are interested in the NGO space. Some argue that, in the aggregate, NGOs are advocates for social change; others argue that they play an ameliorating and enabling role. Understanding these debates is part of preparation.

Just as scholars are newly interested in the NGO space, so too are new philanthropists, seeking to “do it better” than established NGOs, as well as social entrepreneurs, seeking out of the box solutions. Sometimes, these two groups overlap. Both are certainly influencing international development and the practices of NGOs and offer new paths into them.

The emergence of social entrepreneurship is partly a response to the pace of change. Using business models and market forces to address social issues is an attractive notion that is finding its way into many graduate and undergraduate business programs. Those who might once have pursued a traditional MBA may now consider specializing in social entrepreneurship—making a difference by applying business knowledge and strategies to social challenges. The Social Enterprise Conference is now an annual event at the Harvard Business School (the 11th conference was held this year) attracting standing room only crowds.

In some places, social entrepreneurship may also eclipse narrower and more closely codified approaches to management within nonprofits by solution orientation and focusing attention on program scope and scale. Where will the Googles of the NGO world come from? The entrepreneurship approach suggests a different type of preparation and appeals to many who have had careers in other sectors and now seek to give back globally by applying knowledge they have gained from quite different enterprises.

Current challenges

Our rapidly changing world—particularly its technology, economics and modes of communication—is a given to which those working in international development and humanitarian response must continue to adapt. It is no longer enough to develop deep content knowledge or to master sophisticated methods of good practice. Rather, increasingly, whether on the frontline or in the CEO chair, development practitio-
Projects

America’s Unofficial Ambassadors

Organizations
Creative Learning, Inc.

Location
Washington, D.C., serving programs around the world

Funders
Private donations

The Project

The America’s Unofficial Ambassadors (AUA) program seeks to increase the number of private American citizens doing voluntary service in Muslim-majority countries. The idea behind the project is that people-to-people relationships between America and the Muslim world are few, and when Americans volunteer in these countries, Americans and people in the Muslim world will come to understand and appreciate each other better. At Creative Learning, we believe this is the foundation of peace-building.

As part of this effort, our website features the AUA Directory of Recommended Organizations. This free, searchable database is the premier resource for researching credible volunteer opportunities across the Muslim world.

In compiling the directory, we researched more than 1,000 organizations and conducted extensive interviews with program staff and volunteer alumni. The result is a comprehensive collection of profiles of the leading organizations that send or host American volunteers for short-term, impactful service in Muslim-majority countries.

The 59 organizations currently featured provide diverse opportunities in 39 countries. Programs range from one week up to one year, and are appropriate for a wide range of ages and skill levels. Some programs, like the International Executive Service Corps, place volunteers on individual assignments and require experience in a specific field, like finance or farming. Several organizations, like Physicians for Peace, send teams of healthcare professionals on group volunteer missions. Other programs, such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and the Tandana Foundation, send volunteers abroad in groups but do not require a specific skill-set. Still others, such as International Humanity Foundation, offer flexible, individual service placements that can be tailored to volunteers’ specific skills. Opportunities range from teaching English in the Palestinian Territories and building schools in Mali to restoring historic buildings in Albania and training NGOs in Bangladesh in “new media” skills.

The AUA Directory is searchable by country or region, sector (e.g., health or education), duration of service and experience level. It allows volunteers to find organizations that match preferences by program type (e.g., summer program) and program components, such as offering language instruction or academic credit.

By December 2012, AUA aims to encourage more than 1,000 Americans to commit to at least one week of volunteer service in the Muslim world.

For more information contact AUA Project Coordinator Andrew Stinson at AndrewS@creativelearning.org or visit our website www.unofficialambassadors.org.

Power of Play

Organization
Kids Around The World

Location
Worldwide

Funders
Compassion International, Samaritan’s Purse

The Project

For many organizations today, short-term mission trips focus on food, medicine and ministry. Whether working at schools, churches or orphanages, the work takes many forms—all designed to provide aid and make a difference in the lives of others.

Kids Around the World (KIDS) is filling a unique niche in providing for the needs of children who are faced with war, natural disaster and poverty. KIDS serves the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children across the globe … through playgrounds. Partnering with other organizations, businesses, schools and churches in the U.S. and abroad, KIDS utilizes play to reach children and help rebuild communities.

Why playgrounds? The fact is that play has been deemed so important to the development of children that Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child calls play a fundamental human right. Further, the American Academy of Pediatrics notes that play is essential to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children. However, playgrounds go much further. Playgrounds become safe gathering places for communities, bringing families together and restoring a sense of normalcy to places that desperately need it. Equally important, in a world where children rely daily on others for their needs, a playground represents something that is for them and them alone. A playground screams, “This is for me! Someone cares enough to make this just for me.”

One might think playgrounds are an expensive proposition, given the other needs that abound in developing nations. However, Kids Around the World has developed the Recycled Playground Program, which uses playgrounds from park districts across the U.S. that are no longer in use. KIDS removes and refurbishes them, and gives them new homes around the world where they can be enjoyed by children for many years to come—all for a fraction of the cost of a new playground.

Interested in bringing a playground to children? No experience is necessary to be part of a volunteer team. In fact, you can even create your own team from your business, school, church or group and join
us for a week that will literally change lives. Visit www.kidsaroundtheworld.com for more information, or contact Nick Falco at NickF@kidsaroundtheworld.com.

The Lietnhom Vocational Training Center

Organization World Concern
Location Lietnhom, Warrap State, South Sudan
Funders Individual donors

The Project
The Lietnhom Vocational Training Center was created to address the tremendous need for young people in South Sudan to attain skills to find employment or start their own income-generating activities. Most are uneducated beyond primary school and rely on livestock (a major source of conflict in the area) as a livelihood. The training center is the only vocational program in all of Warrap State, which has a population of about 1 million people.

Young men and women enrolled in the program can learn skills that are needed in their communities, such as auto mechanics, driving, sewing, screen printing, cooking and baking. The length of each course varies, with the longest taking one year.

Following 20 years of civil war and a collapse of infrastructure in South Sudan, unemployment remains one of the country’s major socio-economic challenges. Many households are headed by women—the majority of whom are illiterate and unskilled.

Twenty-year-old Mary, a recent graduate of the vocational training center, is likely the first female driver in Warrap State and already has leads on jobs. The opportunity to learn a skill like driving has opened up a new life of independence for her.

Each year, 120 students—60 women and 60 out-of-school youth (20 boys and 40 girls)—receive training in a specific industrial skill.

Some graduates receive start-up capital (seed funds) to start businesses. The school is also connected to Lietnhom’s village bank and other development agencies that may continue supporting participants. The business community is educated about the needs of the vocational training center and how they can support it as well.

For more information, visit www.worldconcern.org/training.

Sell More For More

Organization Carana Corporation, ACDI/VOCA
Location Rwanda
Funders USAID

The Project
“This is a very important training in helping our country achieve food security,” said a representative from the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture at a ceremony honoring cooperatives completing the Sell More For More (SMFM) capacity building program.

SMFM is one of a component of a larger Post-Harvest Handling and Storage project funded by USAID and implemented by Carana Corporation. ACDI/VOCA was subcontracted to design and implement the development of farmer cooperatives through the innovative SMFM program.

In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) contributes to the implementation of the SMFM program through their Purchase For Progress (P4P) initiative to increase farmer capacity and incomes through local procurement. WFP’s procurement officer in Rwanda described the outcome of the SMFM program: “Our field visits show an improvement in the quality and storage of harvested crops.”

A review of quality inspection reports overwhelmingly demonstrates this improvement. Prior to the SMFM program, there was only a 38 percent acceptance rate of local procurements due to low quality. Now, 100 percent of all procurements from cooperatives trained in SMFM pass WFP’s rigorous quality standards.

“Sell to WFP sends a signal to other buyers in the region that the cooperative has the ability to meet quality, quantity and timing requirements. This links cooperatives to premium markets and results in higher incomes for rural households.

Nutributter

Organization Edesia
Location Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Madagascar and Malawi
Funders Food for Peace

The Project
In the rural Guatemalan department of Zacapa, caregivers of children ages 6-24 months come to the homes of community leaders to receive one-month rations of a fortified peanut paste called Nutributter. Although the World Bank states that 54.5 percent of Guatemalan children are chronically malnourished (stunted), the children...
targeted with this paste are not necessarily clinically malnourished. Rather, they are being targeted with a preventive supplement in hopes that they will never reach the advanced stages of malnutrition. The same approach is being used in four other countries around the globe through funding from the Food for Peace (FFP) program at the U.S. Agency for International Development, in partnership with U.S.-based nonprofit Edesia.

This innovative, preventive approach is in line with new trends in global thinking. International experts, governments and agencies recognize that providing better nutrition through a series of cost-effective interventions within the first 1,000 days of a child’s life (from conception to 2 years) could save millions of lives and increase a country’s GDP by at least 2-3 percent annually. The average Nutributter supplementation period of 6 months costs around $15 per child, but the benefit goes far beyond.

Nutributter is an LNS (lipid-based nutrient supplement) designed to provide essential nutrients young children need to grow and develop properly at a time when they cannot get essential micronutrients and fatty acids through traditional foods. With logistical burdens in mind, Nutributter is a ready-to-use food requiring no preparation; it can be eaten directly from the package or mixed with traditional weaning foods. It does not require refrigeration and has an 18-month shelf life. It comes pre-packaged in a 20g daily dose. All of these features aim to overcome infrastructure challenges and improve program efficiency.

Edesia, the only U.S. producer of Plumpy’nut, an internationally used treatment for children with severe acute malnutrition, is pioneering the use of LNS products like Nutributter. “We need to be innovative to find better ways of ensuring that we reach young children during the critical stages in development. If we don’t, the effects are often irreversible,” says Executive Director Navyn Salem. Under the FFP grant, Edesia has provided Nutributter for World Help’s programs in Guatemala and Honduras, ADRA in Madagascar, Cithope in Malawi, Evangelical International Ministries in Honduras and Nascent Solutions in Cameroon.

To learn more visit www.edesiglobal.org

OCTOBER

October 31-November 4
Building Bridges Through Intergroup Dialogue
U.S. Institute of Peace
Washington, D.C.

NOVEMBER

November 3
Summit of the G20
Cannes, France

November 7
Financial Management for U.S. Government Funding
Jakarta, Indonesia

November 10
World Immunization Day

November 15-17
GIK Summit 2011: Road Work Ahead
Baltimore, MD

November 17
USDA Procurement Development
Washington, D.C.

November 19
World Toilet Day

November 21-25
Science Meets the Media Workshop
Stellenbosch, South Africa

November 25
World Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

November 28-Dec 9
UN Conference on Climate Change
Durban, South Africa

November 29-Dec 1
The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
Busan, South Korea

DECEMBER

December 1
World AIDS Day

December 5-6
INTRAC: Civil Society at a New Frontier
Oxford, UK

December 5-8
International Conference on Sustainable Development of Natural Resources in Africa
Accra, Ghana

December 7-8
UN High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development
New York, New York

APRIL 2012

April 30-May 2
InterAction’s Annual Forum
Washington, D.C.
to 21st century challenges will not be easy. As a result, ensuring that USAID has the staff, technology and resources that allow it to perform its role and meet expectations is one of the major challenges right now in a difficult budget climate. That is why we are revitalizing our internal structures, focusing on monitoring and evaluation, and investing in innovative, targeted interventions that can save lives for pennies on the dollar.

It is a good challenge. It is positive challenge. But I don’t think we can minimize how much hard work it will take to meet the expectation before us. Development will always be the most difficult piece of the three D triangle. It is long term. Its results do not follow budget cycles and political winds. And it depends on numerous factors that are often out of anyone’s control—from budget debates to earthquakes.

However, since its creation, USAID has graduated over 30 countries from assistance to partnership. As those in developing countries stand up, USAID can stand down, allowing our assistance to be replaced over time by vibrant markets, strong civil societies and efficient, accountable local governments.

Fifty years ago, South Korea was poorer than two-thirds of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa and it was one of the largest recipients of American assistance in the years following the Korean War. USAID supported South Korea’s agriculture and industrial sectors, helping the country focus intent on an aggressive growth strategy. Today, USAID no longer provides assistance to South Korea; instead, the country is a net donor of foreign assistance and a vibrant source of trade for America.

Long-time aid recipients like Chile, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Poland and other emerging economies have become America’s fastest growing markets. Eleven of the 15 largest importers of American goods and services are countries that graduated from U.S. foreign assistance, and 12 of the 15 fastest growing markets for U.S. exports are former U.S. aid recipients.

Our work at USAID is so challenging and so rewarding. Much of our history has been marked by flexibility and transition. When I joined in the late 1980s, the agency was beginning to open more than 30 new missions in the former Soviet Union. I remember thinking then that USAID was very much on the cutting edge of development. And it still is. I believe USAID’s best days are ahead as we continue to work to meet our obligation as the premiere development agency.

Al Masri and Chwayri agree that VTE in Lebanon needs to improve dramatically in order to play a more serious role in the educational system and to change the attitude of workers toward manual labor so it is seen as a legitimate and viable profession. They cite many challenges, including a lack of financial support and qualified teachers, and poor cooperation between the labor market and vocational training institutions.

“A lot needs to change before vocational education is a strong player in the system,” Chwayri says. “And that includes coordination between the manual labor market and vocational training schools.”

The needs of the marketplace are changing in response to new technologies, growing competitiveness and the demand for higher quality services. For experts, one challenge is adjusting existing VTE programs and adapting the skills of workers already on the job. They see the competency-based approach, which focuses on educating students based on the needs of the labor market and encouraging continuing education and skill upgrades for those already on the job, as a method for improving VTE. The strategy has already gained positive results in North America and Europe, and is slowly starting to develop in Lebanon and the broader region.

The YMCA, for example, has worked with fruit farmers in the Bekaa valley to update their farming techniques and improve production. In a recent pilot project by ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid), field studies of the labor market in and around the Nahr El Bared area in northern Lebanon encouraged the organization to support plumbing courses after employers expressed a need for skilled plumbers.

Employers and employees are starting to rely on VTE as a continuing education program too. Short-term programs like B-Start at Al-Kafa’at Foundation are developing to support people already in a job to upgrade their skills to match the needs of a more competitive and demanding market.

Local and international NGOs operating in Lebanon are helping improve the vocational education field by providing financial support, encouraging more nonformal education, and building the capacity of local providers, most of which are nonprofits. Giving people the skills to earn a living provides more than income potential, the trainers say. It also restores their dignity and sense of purpose.

NGOLD (The Center for NGO Leadership and Development at Northern Illinois University) focuses on civil society and NGO studies through interdisciplinary academic (degree and certificate) programs, research, practical application and civic engagement. In a variety of ways, it brings scholars, practitioners and students together, and provides a space for theory and practice to enrich each other.
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1 Based on RDA Group’s GQRS cumulative survey at three months of service in three surveys of 2009 Ford and competitive owners conducted 9/08-5/09.
2 Based on analysis of data published by EPA (11/09).
3 Star ratings are part of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Safercar.gov program (www.safercar.gov).