

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
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Foreign Assistance Series

**ELIZABETH WARFIELD**

*Interviewed by: Marcia Bernbaum  
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Peace Corps - Ivory Coast, Tuberculosis Technician	1978-1981
M.A., The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy	1981-1983
Overseas Private Investment Corporation	1982
Washington, D.C.— International Development Intern	1983-1984
Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Bureau	
Barbados, West Indies— Project Development Officer	1984-1988
Regional Development Office/Caribbean	
Backstopped the Private Sector Office backstop	
Managed Basic Needs Trust Fund and Portfolio Reviews	
Washington, D.C.— Project Development Officer, LAC Bureau	1988-1991

Office of Development Resources  
 Designed two Congressionally earmarked training programs  
 Designed the Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program evaluation  
 Designed the Parks in Peril program  
 Established the Project Development Division for LAC regional programs

Guatemala City, Guatemala—Office Director of the Trade and Investment Office 1991-1995  
 Office Director of the Bilateral Project Development Office  
 Office Director of the Bilateral and Regional Project and Program Office  
 Acting Deputy Director for USAID/Guatemala’s Regional Programs  
 Designed LAC Bureau’s first non-project assistance program - CAFTA The Guatemalan Exporters Association - sustainability  
 Redesigned the Basic Education Strengthening program  
 Member of USAID/Washington’s Re-engineering Task Force  
 Developed Regional Strategy and Initiative for the Summit of the Americas

Washington, D.C.—Results and Performance Management Division Chief 1995-1999  
 Strategy and Economic Analysis Office  
 Asia and Near East (ANE) Bureau, (Leave of Absence)  
 Democracy, Education and Gender Officer, ANE Bureau  
 Developed Bureau performance monitoring system and guidance  
 Reviewed USAID/Yemen’s strategy and performance  
 Designed anti-trafficking and rule of law programs

Resignation 1999-2005

Cairo, Egypt—Office Director For Human Resources and Health 2005-2009  
 Developed the Education Strategy  
 Revised the Education Reform Program  
 Led design of Sectoral Cash Transfer Programs in Health and Education

New Delhi, India —Deputy Mission Director 2009-2013  
 Implemented USAID Forward Reforms  
 Led Trilateral Cooperation  
 Innovation: USAID/India as Global Development Lab  
 Developed 5-Year Strategy and Indian Partnership Program  
 Established Millennium Alliance and USAID/India’s Center for Innovation and Partnerships

Washington, D.C. — Local Solutions Coordinator 2013-2016  
 Led Local Solutions

Championed Local Systems as Agency Policy  
Revised Government-to-Government Assistance Guidance  
Revised USAID Programming Guidance for Sustainability  
Engaged External Stakeholders to Build Support for Local Solutions

Mexico City, Mexico — Mission Director 2016-2020  
Focused on Rule of Law, Crime Prevention, Human Rights, and  
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Created Strategic Alliance for Mexico  
Partnered with IMCO & Reinserta  
Responded to 2017 Earthquake and Led USAID Administrator Visit  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is October 12 and it's at 10am. And I am interviewing Elizabeth—or what I like to call her—Liz Warfield, who was a dear friend and colleague for many years. And I'm really looking forward to this interview. So Liz, you are on.*

WARFIELD: Thank you, Marcy. It's an honor to have the opportunity to share my experience at USAID with my colleagues.

### **Introduction**

Preparing for this interview allowed me to reflect on my thirty-year career at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In doing so, three themes emerged:

- innovation;
- local ownership; and,
- local systems for sustainable development, including private sector engagement.

*Q: Could you elaborate a bit on these themes?*

WARFIELD: Innovation in development goes beyond creating new products to transforming processes and systems. Einstein's definition of insanity—doing the same

thing over and over again and expecting different results—resonated with me. USAID's typical approach involved contracting out technical assistance and training and unrealistically expecting significant individual, organizational, or systemic changes. I felt there had to be a better way and was open to different ways of engaging in development; hence my embracing of innovation. For example, in the mid-90s, I was among the pioneers in re-engineering USAID and later championed innovation at USAID/India from 2011 to 2013.

*Q: And what about local ownership?*

WARFIELD: Local ownership extends beyond simply awarding grants and contracts to local organizations. It involves empowering local actors to lead and sustain their own development. I favor the term “local ownership” rather than “country ownership,” “local solutions,” or the currently used “localization” as several of these terms can be interpreted as solely direct awards to local organizations. In the last decade of my career, promoting local ownership became an important focus. This included elevating talented local Foreign Service National staff to higher levels of responsibility within USAID.

*Q: The third theme?*

WARFIELD: It is about sustaining development results by working with and through local systems. As USAID’s 2014 policy paper - *Local Systems: A Framework for Sustained Development* - stated, to sustain development outcomes, you need to engage all of the relevant actors in the system, including the government, private sector, civil society, and academia. Under this theme, I include another USAID policy priority which started in the Reagan years - private sector development and later private sector engagement - as it is a subset of the local system.

## **Background**

*Q: That's a fascinating overview. Can you share a bit about your background?*

WARFIELD: Sure. I was born in Baltimore, Maryland and raised in Maryland and New Jersey. The Warfield side of my family has lived in Maryland since the 1600s and has a strong tradition of government service and civic engagement. My great-grandfather, Edwin Warfield, was Governor of Maryland, a businessman, farmer, lawyer, and teacher. My father followed in his footsteps, serving in the Air Force in World War II and later the Maryland legislature and heading up the Maryland National Guard during the turbulent ‘70s. I grew up on farms in Maryland and New Jersey, caring for animals and learning to ride motorcycles. The latter came in handy during my Peace Corps assignment.

## **Education and Formative Experiences 1960-1978**

*Q: Tell me about your education and other experiences.*

WARFIELD: I attended schools in Maryland and New Jersey and had a passion for languages, music, and sports from an early age. After high school, I took a gap year, traveling to Brazil, South Africa, and Kenya, where I discovered my love for Africa. At Middlebury College, I majored in political science and minored in French. My

professors, David Rosenberg and John Spencer, were instrumental in shaping my interest in international development and African history. A semester in Ghana during my junior year was a turning point, immersing me in the culture and daily life there. I was hooked on Africa.

*Q: You decided to join the Peace Corps, right?*

WARFIELD: I was accepted at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University after college, but I wanted to gain field experience first. Joining the Peace Corps seemed like the perfect opportunity to learn about and contribute to international development. Despite having a limited background in biology, I worked as a tuberculosis (TB) technician in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), West Africa from 1978 to 1981. This experience sparked my commitment to development.

*Q: That sounds like quite a responsibility. How did you prepare for such a role?*

WARFIELD: My Middlebury Professor David Rosenberg, who had also been a Peace Corps volunteer, gave me three invaluable tips:

- Live as far away from the capital city as you can so that you can immerse yourself in the culture and fully experience the country;
- Forge your own path by not following in another volunteer's footsteps; and,
- Do not get caught up in Peace Corps politics as your time there is limited.

I took them to heart when I was posted to San Pedro in the southwest corner of Cote D'Ivoire to establish a TB clinic after my initial training at the National Tuberculosis Center in Abidjan.

*Q: What was it like working as a tuberculosis technician?*

WARFIELD: There was no TB clinic at the hospital and clinic where I was posted so I started one. Tuberculosis is an airborne disease which you diagnose through sputum exams and x-rays. I was responsible for receiving, coloring, and examining slides of the patient's sputum, ensuring x-rays were taken to inform the diagnosis of TB by the French military doctor in charge of the hospital and clinic, and following up with patients to confirm that they took their medications. It was a steep learning curve. An initial hurdle was discovering that the head of the hospital's X-ray unit, a member of the local Kroumen ethnic group, was charging non-Kroumen patients for x-rays, even though TB care was free nationwide. I spoke with him and resolved the issue, thus ensuring our patients received the care they needed without undue financial burden.

The line of TB medications at that time required two years to cure the disease so a lot of my work was about encouraging my patients to endure the pain of the shots and the nausea of the medication even after they felt better. Essentially I was their cheerleader.

At one point, an Ivorian general was put in charge of the hospital and the health clinic. Concerned with contagion, he wanted to move the TB clinic and hospital patients to Gagnoa, a town three hours north of San Pedro. I convinced him that it was not a good

idea to have people contagious with TB, most of them with very limited resources, taking the crowded public transport to Gagnoa. He conceded and I continued my work.

*Q: What happened after that?*

WARFIELD: I wanted to be sure that I left the TB clinic on a sound footing so I extended my Peace Corps service for a third year. Peace Corps headquarters provided me with a motorcycle, which significantly expanded the area that I could cover in my outreach to current and prospective patients. I also trained an Ivorian laboratory technician and a nurse to perform my duties, which was crucial for the clinic's sustainability. By the time I left, we were caring for 200 patients, a testament to the efforts of my team and the community. I loved my time in Cote d'Ivoire - the people, the culture, the food, and the languages. I even learned the local market language, Dioula, so that I could communicate with all of my patients, a lot of whom were immigrants. Yet I realized that tuberculosis was primarily a disease of poverty and I wanted to have a broader impact on the root causes.

*Q: What did you do after the Peace Corps?*

WARFIELD: In 1981 I entered the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy where I studied international economics, law, and politics. In the summer of 1982, I interned at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, where I worked on political risk insurance in the oil and gas sector. This was my initial foray into private sector investment as it related to development. I then joined USAID, which brings us back to where we started our conversation.

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*Q: Welcome back, Liz. Let's dive into your experience as an International Development Intern (IDI) at USAID. You joined in September 1983, right?*

WARFIELD: Yes, that's correct. I started with the IDI program and, after several months of training, was assigned to the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Bureau, despite my previous experience in Africa. Looking back, I value that decision given the LAC Bureau's impressive reputation at that time as I had a lot to learn about USAID.

*Q: What did you do in your IDI rotation to the LAC Bureau?*

WARFIELD: I worked with Wendy Stickel in the LAC/Development Resources Office on project design, reviewing project identification documents (i.e., concept papers) and project papers from USAID missions in the Caribbean. I was asked to prepare the issues paper for the design of a housing loan guarantee program in Jamaica, which was a new subject area for me. I also prepared a compilation of agriculture project evaluations and had a short Temporary Duty (TDY) assignment to Barbados where USAID's Regional Development Office for the Caribbean (RDO/C) was located.

*Q: Can you share with us a little bit about—because this was your first encounter with—USAID and its operations from the Washington perspective. Was there anything that particularly struck you about the way USAID operated, the issues reviews, the dynamics?*

WARFIELD: First, it was all quite new to me. My tour in USAID/Washington (USAID/W) definitely helped me take the academic theory of my multidisciplinary degree from the Fletcher School and put it into practice. The intellectual rigor applied in reviewing USAID mission project designs, initially by USAID/W and later delegated to field missions, significantly influenced my approach to development.

*Q: Tell us about your assignment to USAID's Regional Development Office for the Caribbean (RDO/C).*

WARFIELD: In summer 1984, I was assigned to RDO/C which covered 11 Eastern Caribbean countries, including Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and St. Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. RDO/C's operations involved bilateral cooperation with these countries as well as work with regional institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank and the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States. Based in Bridgetown, Barbados, the USAID mission included about 20 U.S. direct hires at the time, with the embassy located across the street.

*Q: What was the context for that assignment?*

WARFIELD: Ronald Reagan was President and Peter McPherson the Administrator of USAID. Under Administrator McPherson, USAID framed its work around four pillars:

- policy dialogue;
- institutional strengthening;
- technological innovation; and,
- private sector growth.

This was a period of clear strategic direction for USAID focused on market-based growth and private sector development. You can see some of the themes of my oral history emerging here.

*Q: What was the rationale for foreign assistance to the Eastern Caribbean at that time?*

WARFIELD: Many of the Eastern Caribbean islands were newly independent and politically fragile. Most notably, in October 1982, the U.S. government joined a coalition of six Caribbean nations to invade Grenada after the internal strife caused by the overthrow and execution of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. The U.S. government perceived the communist leanings and connections to Cuba of the Grenadian leadership to be a threat to democracy. The key U.S. initiative for the region, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, targeted these smaller, politically, and economically vulnerable states in the Eastern Caribbean, aiming to stimulate investment in the region.

*Q: So what did you do?*

WARFIELD: I was assigned to the Project Development Office (PDO) and, as an IDI, did not rotate to other technical and support offices for various reasons. I helped design new

projects and coordinated the Mission's portfolio reviews. Notably, as PDO backstop to RDO/C's Private Sector Office, I contributed to building a diverse private sector portfolio in the Eastern Caribbean. This included strengthening local business associations such as the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, assisting micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises in marketing their products locally and regionally, initiating a management training program at the University of West Indies, and conceptualizing an advertising campaign to boost tourism in the Eastern Caribbean. These early experiences were formative as private sector development and engagement played a role in my career in almost all the posts that I served.

*Q: Did you manage any projects?*

WARFIELD: As part of my IDI rotations, I managed the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF), a \$10 million poverty reduction initiative created and managed by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in 1979. Centered on community development, the BNTF provided essential social and economic infrastructure, including schools, health clinics, and community centers, to the Eastern Caribbean member states of the CDB. In those days, USAID granted funds directly to regional financial institutions (i.e., the CDB). Support for the Basic Needs Trust Fund was in line with President Jimmy Carter's emphasis on addressing basic human needs through foreign assistance.

I recall one memorable incident early in my RDO/C tour when I was the U.S. government representative at the signing ceremony for the BNTF grant agreement with USAID with the CDB's President William Demas. Needless to say, I was a bit nervous. Mr. Demas fell asleep during the ceremony. I thought, well, this is going to be an interesting partnership. I later learned there was a valid explanation and we had a great working rapport thereafter. In preparing for this interview, I discovered that the BNTF continues to this day, impacting 3 million people in poor communities. That is sustainability: 35+ years later, no longer relying on USAID assistance.

*Q: What was it like managing assistance to so many countries as a regional mission?*

WARFIELD: Given the numerous islands within RDO/C's jurisdiction, our mission director, Jim Holtaway, appointed Country Coordinators to act as aggregators, liaisons, and experts for specific countries. In this capacity, I had the privilege of serving as the Dominica Country Coordinator. This role offered a unique opportunity to understand more fully the politics, economy, culture, and key figures of the island. Dominica was known for its lush, mountainous, and volcanic landscape, but, unlike other Caribbean islands, it lacked white, sandy beaches. I valued Dominica's uniqueness. The country's female Prime Minister, Eugenia Charles created a significant amount of goodwill by allying with President Reagan and the U.S. government during the 1983 intervention in Grenada. USAID supported Dominica in developing non-traditional agricultural exports like patchouli oil and bird of paradise flowers, aiming to diversify its economy beyond banana exports.

After the October 1983 invasion of Grenada, USAID established a mission in Grenada to manage its \$70 million a year assistance program. Later in my RDO/C tour, I became the USAID Country Coordinator for Grenada, responsible for ensuring effective coordination

and collaboration between the bilateral and regional mission for this extensive and highly visible reconstruction program.

*Q: What were your lessons learned from your time in the Caribbean?*

WARFIELD: Reflecting on my tour, I learned several important lessons:

- The Basic Needs Trust Fund was a good example of how community-driven projects can foster local ownership and sustainability. I am proud that it continues to this day without USAID assistance.
- Working directly with local and regional organizations such as the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce was standard practice then.
- RDO/C's model of working both regionally and bilaterally was quite effective, which is noteworthy given the challenges some other regional missions have faced in defining their roles.
- Coordinating portfolio reviews gave me a broad understanding of USAID's diverse programming, helping me be a more well-rounded officer.
- At the time, the development industry, especially the contractors, was still in its infancy, and grants and contracts were much simpler compared to today's awards.

*Q: That's fascinating. Yes, that was an interesting launch for what have become important themes in your career and of current interest to USAID. I would like to comment that, based on my experience as an intern, you were thrust into a lot of complex responsibilities not commonly encountered by interns early in their careers.*

WARFIELD: It was a great introduction to USAID.

*Q: What year did you return to USAID/Washington?*

WARFIELD: I returned to DC in 1988, after working in the Eastern Caribbean for four years. I was assigned to the LAC Bureau's Development Resources Office. There, I helped design training programs and contributed to environmental initiatives like Parks in Peril. I worked with you, Marcy, as LAC/DR's Deputy Director in the Education Office, on the design of two Congressionally earmarked training programs, one of which was later terminated for cause. I didn't know you could do that so that was a valuable lesson.

*Q: You and I were thrown into a very stressful tricky situation. That's what I remember.*

WARFIELD: You and I designed the evaluation of the \$250 million Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) which targeted socially and economically disadvantaged people with leadership potential from the LAC region, providing them with skills training and an academic education in the United States as well as an understanding of market-based economies in a democratic society.

*Q: What other programs did you work on?*

WARFIELD: I also supported LAC's environmental experts, John Wilson and Jeff Brokaw, in designing another Congressional earmark, a ten-year, \$500 million environmental initiative for Latin America called Parks in Peril with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The purpose of the program was to develop local capacity for environmental conservation in threatened biodiverse landscapes throughout Latin America. Given the magnitude of TNC's ambition, I convinced them to stagger the development of the parks over time. Rather than creating 200 parks all at once, as initially planned, they established 20 parks per year over ten years, making the process more manageable. Parks in Peril continued for 17 years with USAID support, ending in 2007. In preparing for this interview, I learned that a case study of Parks in Peril highlighted the importance of upfront due diligence and thoughtful implementation planning which is what we did in the initial phases.

Designing these various earmarks showed me that it's possible to influence their direction and outcome.

*Q: Any other highlights of your time in LAC/DR?*

WARFIELD: I revised the performance monitoring and reporting system for the Latin American Bureau and its missions, leveraging my prior experience with the portfolio review process at the RDO/C mission. During my last two years, I established the Project Development Division for LAC/DR's regional programs. This new division supported project design, monitoring, and evaluation for approximately \$60 million in annual obligations by LAC's technical and Development Resources Offices. I mentioned some of those designs above.

*Q: You were in the LAC Bureau at a time when the Bureaus played a very important role in reviewing projects. It was a very thorough review process, which I believe is no longer the case. I'd like your reflections regarding the benefits of doing that, as well as the disadvantages.*

WARFIELD: Projects reigned supreme at that time. In the '80s, USAID/W reviewed both the concept paper and the full design of any given project. By the early '90s, those reviews were delegated to the field, which I think allowed for more dynamic and relevant projects. So yes, I think it was the right thing to do.

*Q. What was the leadership of the LAC Bureau like at that time?*

WARFIELD: The Agency was starting to prioritize effective leadership at all levels, thanks to the introduction of the Management Skills Course and the Senior Management Skills Course which the firm, the Training Resources Group (TRG), delivered. These courses developed a common language among USAID leaders. In his book *The Enduring Struggle* about the history of USAID, John Norris highlighted the value of this Agency-wide focus on management skills. My long-term mentor, LAC/DR Office Director Terry Brown, exemplified the strong leadership developed in the Agency through TRG's work. Unfortunately, this focus on leadership and management tailored to USAID diminished over time.

So let me pause there. Marcy, do you have any questions?

*Q: No. Liz, Thank you for sharing these insights. We look forward to delving deeper into your journey in our next session.*

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*Q: Today is Wednesday, November 16, and we're continuing our oral history with Liz Warfield. Liz, let's delve into your time in Guatemala.*

WARFIELD: Sure. I arrived in Guatemala in August 1991 with my husband, Jeff Harding. Guatemala was then struggling with a prolonged insurgency, deep-rooted income inequality, and low health and education levels, especially among the predominantly Mayan population. Guatemala's economy was primarily agricultural - bananas, coffee, and sugar, but there was a shift towards nontraditional agricultural exports. Also maquilas, which were factories making clothing and other products for export, were on the rise. Guatemala was a fragile democracy as you will hear.

*Q: Can you describe the USAID mission in Guatemala during that time?*

WARFIELD: The mission was quite large, with about 25 to 30 U.S. direct hires and a total staff of 150. Terry Brown was the Mission Director, and the team consisted of both seasoned Latin American "hands," who had been in the region for a while, frequently as Peace Corps volunteers, and staff new to the region. Morale was quite high.

*Q: What was the USAID Mission's focus at that time?*

WARFIELD: The mission's objectives were:

- Increases in private investment and trade;
- Smaller, healthier families;
- Improved primary education;
- Increases in non-traditional agriculture (which changed to improved natural resource management over time); and,
- Sustained exercise of inalienable rights.

The program budget for the bilateral mission ranged from \$90 to \$100 million annually. The high level of funding for USAID/Guatemala based on the recommendations of the Kissinger Commission started to decline during my four-year tour.

*Q: What were some of the key projects or initiatives you worked on?*

WARFIELD: Each year, I basically had a new job due to personnel and structural changes in the Mission. In my first year, drawing on my Eastern Caribbean experience in private sector development, I served as the Director of the Trade and Investment Office (TIO). I worked with the Mission's brilliant economist, David Hoelscher, to design the LAC Bureau's first non-project assistance program focused on addressing the legal and regulatory impediments to Guatemala's accession to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). CAFTA was akin to the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA), but focused on Central America. However, Congress only approved the program after we modified it to address concerns related to Guatemalan labor laws and environmental practices.

A successful investment in the TIO portfolio was our support for the Guatemalan Exporters Association (formerly known as the Gremial, now AGEXPORT). This local organization focused on increasing Guatemala's non-traditional exports and enhancing its competitiveness. Under the leadership of Fanny D'Estrada, AGEXPORT has sustained its operations for decades, primarily without USAID assistance. This example highlights a key theme of my oral history: the importance of USAID directly investing in local leaders and organizations. In this case, USAID's decision to eventually step back actually strengthened the organization's long-term sustainability.

*Q: What happened in your second year?*

WARFIELD: I was asked to serve as the Office Director of USAID/Guatemala's Project Development Office. With the Mission's Education Officer, Susie Clay, we redesigned the \$30 million Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project, focusing on results that could sustain and significant educational reforms. We narrowed the project down from ten to three critical pilot activities—girls' education, one-room schools, and bilingual education for the Mayan population.

As a pioneer of girls' education at USAID, Susie successfully engaged private sector leaders at Fundazucar, the social arm of the sugar mills in Guatemala, to invest in girls' education. At that time, engaging the private sector in this way was a novel approach. I was also inspired by the empowerment, engagement, and educational achievement of the students in the one-room schools I visited. However, when the government later scaled the concept nationally, the results were more diffuse. Nonetheless, the Guatemalan government's commitment to bilingual education, the third USAID-supported activity under BEST, continued beyond our assistance.

*Q: How did your responsibilities evolve in the third year?*

WARFIELD: As the Mission downsized, I was asked to lead the combined Program and Project Development Offices. I was also involved in the merger of USAID's regional and bilateral programs into one USAID mission for Guatemala and Central America. That year I was selected to serve as a pioneer member of USAID's Re-engineering Task Force for which I was detailed to USAID/W during the initial launch period.

*Q: What was "re-engineering" and why was it important?*

WARFIELD: The purpose of USAID's Re-engineering Task Force was to streamline the agency's often cumbersome programs, personnel, and operational procedures. Re-engineering aimed to garner White House attention during a time when USAID's existence was threatened and political support was needed.

*Q: Can you provide an example of a process that was re-engineered?*

WARFIELD: Sure. There was frustration with the project design process which could take up to two years from concept to boots on the ground. This was partly because we often contracted external experts to conduct various required analyses—economic, social, financial, institutional, environmental, etc. — as part of the project design process. Under re-engineering, we decided that the project design and the resultant scopes of work or program descriptions could range from being very general or very specific in terms of what USAID wanted to accomplish. In retrospect, I believe this simplification resulted in USAID effectively outsourcing much of its project design and technical work, especially to our contractors.

*Q: What happened when you returned to the Mission after serving on the Re-engineering Task Force?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Guatemala became one of USAID's Country Experimental Labs for testing the new concepts developed under re-engineering. I took on the role of the mission's re-engineering guru, advising on the implementation and integration of re-engineered management systems and new program guidelines.

Historically, the Mission had signed a general grant agreement for our entire program with the Government of Guatemala. Under re-engineering, the Agency moved to sector-specific grant agreements with governments. Notably, USAID/Guatemala developed one of the first Strategic Objective Agreements (SOAG) for the health portfolio, obligating funds through a strategic framework with Guatemala's Ministry of Health for four years. This SOAG was used as a model for other missions.

The opportunity to work on re-engineering played to my interest in innovating to make USAID and development practices more efficient and effective.

*Q: What was your fourth and final year like?*

WARFIELD: In my final year, with the regional and bilateral missions fully integrated, I was responsible for the Program and Project Development Office for regional and bilateral programs and also served as the Acting Deputy Director for regional programs. The Mission Director, Stacy Rhodes, and I collaborated closely to articulate the strategy for the Mission's regional programming, which had previously been a point of contention with the bilateral USAID missions in Central America. Our strategy emphasized the advantages of regional collaboration in areas such as agricultural exports where economies of scale could be leveraged as well as cross-border issues including health and environmental concerns; engagement with regional organizations; and, the testing of innovative solutions. To ensure alignment and support, the Mission Director and I visited the bilateral missions to present our strategy. This groundwork enabled us to launch a collaborative initiative between the U.S. and Central America, focusing on the environment, energy, trade, and social sectors, in preparation for the upcoming Summit of the Americas.

*Q: What challenges did you face during your tour in Guatemala?*

WARFIELD: Guatemala was grappling with a civil war, which ended in 1996. Political instability peaked in May 1993, when the then President Jorge Serrano led a self-coup,

dissolving the Constitution and National Congress and giving the order to arrest Ramiro de Leon Carpio, the Human Rights Ombudsman. De Leon Carpio managed to avoid arrest, condemned the coup, and on June 5th became president. This was the first and only coup that I experienced during my career. By the way, the Office of Human Rights Ombudsman was a recipient of USAID assistance, which also demonstrates the value of our engagement with and direct support of local leaders.

*Q: Can you share your reflections on the mission's leadership and management during that period?*

WARFIELD: Mission's leadership, under Terry Brown, was outstanding. The focus on management, facilitated by TRG's courses and mentoring, created a cohesive Mission team. USAID/Guatemala received a government-wide award for the Mission's effective management practices. The Mission's strong leadership as well as its emphasis on strategic objectives, intermediate results, and cross-office teaming by Strategic Objectives played a pivotal role in securing this prestigious award.

*Q: What did you learn from your time in Guatemala?*

WARFIELD: I learned several lessons that shaped my understanding of development:

- The elevation of strategies over projects was a positive development. The strategies were mission-based and localized, focusing on higher-level results. This focus was influenced by the enactment of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993, which prioritized measurable outcomes and accountability.
- Partnering with the Guatemalan Exporters Association demonstrated that investing in local organizations and leaders can lead to enhanced resilience and sustainability when USAID completes its funding.
- Scaling a pilot activity too quickly as the Guatemalan government did with the one-room schools model could dilute its effectiveness.
- My experience on the Re-engineering Task Force highlighted the need to balance efficiency with retaining core competencies. While external contractors provide necessary support, USAID must maintain expertise in key areas like project design and technical knowledge to lead and innovate effectively.
- The Mission had the winning combination of strong leadership, a clear strategy, and effective management, which were key in navigating the challenges we encountered and realizing the mission's goals. I am proud to have been part of that team.

Let me pause here to see if you have any questions.

*Q: Indeed, I do. I wondered how many hours there were in the day because I think even if there were 24 hours, you wouldn't have been able to do everything you did. And I know that you worked in incredibly challenging circumstances, the politics of the region, the*

*changes taking place in Washington, entering into whole new areas that you knew nothing about which is very common for many of us when we enter USAID. What do you think as you reflect? What did you as a person learn and how do you feel that you as a person contributed during that period?*

WARFIELD: It was a period of significant growth for me. Being Director of the Trade and Investment Office and later Acting Regional Deputy Director were both stretch assignments in terms of technical expertise and management oversight. There was a lot of talent in that Mission, many of whom went on to serve at the highest levels of USAID - Terry Brown, Stacy Rhodes, Bambi Arellano, Beth Hogan, Tom Delaney, Kim Delaney, Tully Cornick, among others. Hence, it was a great learning environment. I loved working with Susie Clay on education as well as being part of the initial wave of the re-engineering effort. The Foreign Service National talent was also top-notch. So, all-in-all, it was a wonderful experience and opportunity to grow as a development professional.

*Q: Thank you, Liz, for sharing these insights. Let's move on to your next assignment in our next session.*

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*Q: Welcome back, Liz. Today we're discussing your time in the Asia Near East Bureau after your return from Guatemala. Please, go ahead.*

WARFIELD: Sure. After Guatemala, I returned to DC in 1995 to enable my husband to pursue his professional interests. With a young family, I decided to forgo the offer of an Office Director position in LAC and chose a lateral position as the head of the Results and Performance Management (RPM) division in the Strategy and Economic Analysis (SEA) Office of the Asia Near East (ANE) Bureau. I wanted to work with someone from whom I could learn and SEA's Office Director Dirk Dijkerman fit that bill.

*Q: So what did you do?*

WARFIELD: RPM was responsible for reviewing the Bureau's strategic plans and resource allocation (R4s) documents, aligning them with the agency's focus on results management. Informed by GPRA, the R4 guidance that my team and I developed for the ANE Bureau became the prototype for the agency's uniform guidance on performance reporting. I had an incredibly talented team, including, among others, Michelle Adams-Matson and two consultants from Management Systems International, Lynn Carter and Jim Fremming, who helped make this happen.

*Q: Were there any challenges?*

WARFIELD: Yes. One memorable one was resolving differing opinions in the contentious review of the USAID/Yemen strategy and results. Based on concerns from Agency leadership and the Hill, I was later sent to Yemen to assess whether to shut down the USAID/Yemen program immediately or allow for the completion of its maternal and child health programs. I recommended the latter.

*Q: Anything else of note?*

WARFIELD: RPM developed a new performance monitoring system for the Bureau, which was well received for its ability to compare performance across countries and provide an integrated budget presentation. I also coordinated USAID/Washington's input to the country strategies developed for Egypt, West Bank/Gaza, and Lebanon, operationalizing the re-engineering concept of joint planning and ensuring a strategic approach to our programming in these countries.

*Q: As I recall, you took some time off during this period?*

WARFIELD: Despite the rewarding work, I realized that I was spending limited time with my young son. So, in fall 1996, I took a leave of absence, during which my second child was born. Returning to USAID in early 1998, I worked a four-day, compressed schedule focusing on democracy, education, and gender issues. This was largely a stretch assignment that expanded my understanding of these technical and cross-disciplinary areas.

During this period, I also led the design of a program to reduce the trafficking of women and girls in South and Southeast Asia, the first such program in the agency. It was later implemented by USAID/India as a regional program. Finally, I developed a regional rule of law and human rights program for the Middle East to promote democratic openings in that region.

*Q: This was around when USAID's reduction in force (RIF) occurred, right?*

WARFIELD: Yes, during this period, there was a RIF in USAID because of financial difficulties at the Agency. I was asked to serve as a mentor for some of the RIFed employees, including my former supervisor, Spike Stephenson, who later returned to serve at the highest level of the Agency, and Marcy Bernbaum, my interviewer for this oral history. Marcy went on to have an impact on the homeless community in D.C. USAID lost some of its best and brightest, including many of our middle managers, to the RIF.

*Q: What were the lessons learned from your time at the Asia Near East Bureau?*

WARFIELD: There were a few takeaways:

- Leading RPM reinforced the importance of strategic planning and the need for robust performance management systems.
- Addressing the challenges with the USAID/Yemen strategy taught me how to navigate complex situations and manage diverse stakeholder expectations, highlighting the importance of strong diplomatic skills and field assessments.
- Diversifying the geographic regions as well as the technical and cross-disciplinary areas in which I worked was invaluable for expanding my knowledge base and skill set.

By 1999, with the departure of Administrator Brian Atwood and other key appointees, the momentum of the re-engineering reform efforts at the Agency had waned.

### **Resignation**

*Q: And your decision to resign from USAID?*

WARFIELD: In March 1999, I resigned from USAID to focus on my family. My husband had a job he enjoyed and, after four years in USAID/W, we were not ready to go overseas again as is required in the Foreign Service. During my six years away from USAID, I focused on my children and my interests.

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*Q: Welcome to our fourth oral history session this Wednesday, November 30. Liz, let's continue with your fascinating story at USAID, specifically your experience in Egypt.*

WARFIELD: Sure. In 2005, due to changes in my family's priorities and thanks to a significant uptick in USAID hiring, I was able to return to USAID. Mary Ott, the USAID/Egypt Deputy Mission Director, was looking for someone with strategic planning and project design experience to help accelerate the execution of the Mission's education portfolio. So my family and I were posted to Egypt, a critical player in the Middle East and vital to U.S. national security interests. There, I served as the Office Director for Human Resources and Health.

*Q: Could you provide some context about Egypt during this time?*

WARFIELD: Certainly. Hosni Mubarak was president, and the country had an autocratic regime with limited opportunities for democratic expression. The literacy rate was around 66% with almost universal primary school enrollment. However, the education system focused mainly on rote memorization, lacking in critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Private tutoring was rampant. In health, infant and maternal mortality rates were showing improvement, in part due to USAID assistance.

*Q: How much foreign assistance did the U.S. provide Egypt at that time?*

WARFIELD: Over three decades, the U.S. has been a steadfast supporter of Egypt's peace with Israel, contributing significantly to regional stability, by providing \$28 billion in economic assistance. However, funding to Egypt was on a ten-year downward glidepath from \$815 million in 1999 to \$450 million in 2008. When I arrived in 2005, the annual budget for USAID/Egypt was \$491 million. It was a large mission with 38 U.S. direct hires, and between 200 and 220 total employees.

*Q: What was the focus of USAID in Egypt?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Egypt's goals were to:

- advance democracy and governance;
- promote rapid and equitable economic growth;

- improve the quality of healthcare and education—especially for women and girls;
- build infrastructure; and,
- preserve Egypt's antiquities and environment.

*Q: What was the role of education in the context of the USAID/Egypt strategy?*

WARFIELD: To address regional terrorism and instability post 9/11, the U.S. prioritized education in the Middle East as a key element of its foreign policy. The rationale was that educating Arab youth to develop literacy and critical thinking skills would likely lead them to become productive citizens supportive of democratic institutions, in contrast to the prevailing system of rote memorization in Egypt. Liz Cheney, leading the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative at the time, had recently helped update the Mission's strategy to emphasize education as a cornerstone. This shift led Congress to allocate significant funding, between \$80 to \$100 million annually, to USAID/Egypt's education initiatives.

*Q: What were you responsible for as the Office Director?*

WARFIELD: I led the planning, designing, implementation, and evaluation of the Mission's health and education programs. We obligated about \$100-120 million a year in health and education programming, which represented over 50% of the mission's obligations. There were twenty-four employees in the office, with fourteen focused on education. The team supervised thirty contracts and grants, and managed an additional \$100 million dollars in local currency programming.

*Q: What were the areas of focus of USAID/Egypt's education portfolio?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Egypt's education portfolio was large and wide-ranging. It included, among others:

- a \$120 million Education Reform Program to advance reforms in basic education;
- a \$100 million National Book Program to create school libraries throughout the country;
- a \$100 million local currency fund for constructing the American University of Cairo's (AUC's) new campus;
- a \$60 million scholarship program, sending Egyptian students to American community colleges;
- an awards-based program which mobilized communities and prepared schools for accreditation;
- a ten-year investment in Arabic Sesame Street;
- a scholarship program at AUC for socioeconomically disadvantaged students across Egypt's 27 governorates;

- a girls' education program;
- adult literacy initiatives;
- an early-grade reading program; and,
- a science and technology program.

*Q: What about the health portfolio?*

WARFIELD: The health portfolio was smaller and focused on:

- the increased use of family planning;
- the increased use of maternal and child health services; and,
- strengthened infectious disease and surveillance.

Given the smaller size of this portfolio and sufficient staffing, I dedicated most of my time to the much larger education portfolio.

*Q: So what did you do as Office Director?*

WARFIELD: When I first arrived, I was assigned three key tasks:

- Determine the achievements of the \$120 million Educational Reform Program (ERP);
- Address the challenges and pipeline of the \$100 million National Book Program (NBP); and,
- Reduce the mounting pipeline across the entire education portfolio.

*Q: How did you approach these challenges?*

WARFIELD: First, I worked with the education team to develop a more comprehensive strategy for basic education (K-12) aimed at achieving sustained improvements in learning outcomes. Our focus areas were:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning,
- increasing access to education, and
- strengthening school governance and management.

We measured success based on learning gains and improvements in school management and standards-based instruction, rather than traditional output metrics like the number of people trained or schools constructed. We created a strategic framework that connected all basic education activities to the goal of improved learning outcomes, aligning our designs, management systems, policy agendas, and donor coordination accordingly. This results-oriented approach met Congress's expectations for USAID's programming in Egypt.

Simultaneously, a GAO report on the U.S. government's overseas education programs recognized USAID/Egypt's emphasis on learning outcomes rather than outputs and its coordination with other donors.

*Q: How did USAID/Egypt's Education Reform Program (ERP) come about?*

WARFIELD: Well, first, some history. Prior to my arrival, USAID had supported a successful pilot project of educational improvements in the city of Alexandria. Key to its success was empowering local communities and decentralizing decision-making which led the reform-minded Minister of Education to authorize replication and expansion to other governorates. Yousry El-Gamal, who was prominent in the Alexandria Reform project, became Minister of Education in December 2005, serving in that role until January 2010. He was committed to promoting the implementation of the principles outlined in that pilot project within the education system, using strategic planning to guide the course of educational reform, and engaging USAID as a key provider of technical support. With a doctorate in computer science from George Washington University, he was an ideal counterpart for collaborating on such a complex educational system.

*Q: What was the focus of the ERP?*

WARFIELD: The ERP aimed to extend the reforms started in Alexandria to seven additional governorates. Initially, the ERP design lacked focus and did not clearly connect its many activities to a higher-level outcome. Also, the roles of the two ERP contractors were unclear and often overlapped. The revision of USAID/Egypt's education strategy helped clarify ERP's objectives, determine the value of each activity, organize how they related to each other, clarify the responsibilities of each contractor, and define the expected outcomes.

*Q: Did the ERP evolve after USAID/Egypt updated its education strategy?*

WARFIELD: Yes, the ERP subsequently focused on improvements in student learning, decentralization, community participation, and the professional development of teachers. One implementing contractor, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), worked at the macro level to develop an enabling environment for reform and promote standards of excellence. Meanwhile, the American Institute for Research (AIR) operated at the micro level, implementing school-based reforms in schools and districts. True to one of the themes of this oral history, AED employed a systems-based approach to its work on educational reform to some extent.

*Q: How did you handle the issues with the National Book Program (NBP)?*

WARFIELD: Resolving the implementation issues and reducing the \$100 million pipeline of NBP, also implemented by AED, required close monitoring and strategic adjustments. The program aimed to both increase reading among school-aged children by setting up school libraries in Egypt's 39,000 K-12 schools and improve the local publishing industry. USAID partnered with an Egyptian non-government organization (NGO) associated with the First Lady, Mrs. Mubarak, executing the project in four stages. To expedite implementation, we introduced daily tracking of the first phase of

book deliveries. Disagreements with the Egyptian NGO over the selection of a local provider for the second phase led to a pause in operations and a redo of the solicitation. Nevertheless, despite facing allegations of price fixing, collusion, and religious subversion, we completed all four stages of the project, delivering 25 million books to 8 million students. The success of this significant undertaking was largely due to the dedicated efforts of senior FSN Adel Gohar, AED Chief of Party Nancy Parks, and education team member Tina Hegadorn.

*Q: What did you do about the overall pipeline issues for the education portfolio?*

WARFIELD: Similar to the NBP, the education team monitored program execution and expenditures closely and expedited, to the extent feasible, our design of new programs. With an annual obligation of around \$100 million for education, we successfully designed and procured about \$144 million in new programming with a small, but amazing team during my time in Egypt.

*Q: In what other areas were you involved?*

WARFIELD: Soon after my arrival, Embassy leadership, for political reasons, wanted to gradually move the entire USAID portfolio (excluding the congressionally mandated democracy programming) to sectoral cash transfer programs. This would enable greater agility in the U.S. government footprint and align with the maturing relationship between the United States and Egypt. This shift would empower Egypt to play a more significant role in its development and implement significant policy reforms crucial to the country's modernization. While the mission had a history of cash transfers related to economic growth, there was little to no staff experience with cash transfers in other sectors. In my first year, Deputy Mission Director Mary Ott, a seasoned USAID economist experienced in cash transfers, provided valuable guidance. After she left, I relied on my own experience with sectoral cash transfers in Guatemala. However, her departure left a noticeable gap in the Mission's expertise in this area.

*Q: So what did you do to act upon the Embassy's request?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Egypt's education and health teams successfully negotiated a \$240 million program to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of health and education services in Egypt and establish an autonomous National Science Foundation (NSF) for Egypt, modeled on the U.S. NSF.

The basic education reforms for the education cash transfer aimed to transform the sector through teacher certification, elimination of student tracking, decentralization, and increased private participation in textbook production and school construction, among others. A key reform was the passage of the 2007 Teachers' Cadre Law. It provided a professional career track for teachers and linked teacher pay to performance. It was a revolutionary concept in Egypt's K-12 education system, where classes were overcrowded (in some cases, 80 students to one teacher) and the teacher-to-administrator ratio was 1:1.2. The Ministry of Education, with USAID's technical assistance, navigated fierce opposition from vested political interests and teacher unions to pass the Teachers' Cadre Law.

*Q: That was an ambitious reform agenda. How did the Ministry of Education certify teachers?*

WARFIELD: The education team, through ERP's AED contract, supported the Egyptian government in developing its teacher certification process by helping design 62 tests with 10,000 items covering Arabic, pedagogy, and subject matter expertise. These tests, calibrated for different levels of teachers, helped operationalize the Teachers' Cadre. In August 2008, 847,000 Ministry of Education employees took the Teachers' Cadre exam, a groundbreaking step in changing the incentive structure for teachers and administrators, aiming to improve educational quality by linking pay to performance. Successful candidates, including administrators qualified to teach, could return to the classroom, thereby addressing the imbalanced teacher-to-administrator ratio and reducing classroom density. It was a huge, politically fraught undertaking - nerve-wracking but successfully executed. In the end, however, as I recall, the Ministry of Education (MOE) lowered the standards for passing the exam.

*Q: Any other reforms of relevance under ERP?*

WARFIELD: The assistance that AED provided to the MOE in developing its national education strategy was probably one of the most important activities that USAID/Egypt supported. In addition to the reforms cited above, the strategy included decentralization of service delivery, privatization of school construction management, more efficient textbook publishing, school-based management and accreditation, and MOE restructuring. The Ministry took ownership of the strategy and measured its progress.

As noted previously, sustaining these reforms and countering extremism through liberal education was central to U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Key players in advancing these educational reforms and developing the MOE's strategy included Deputy Minister Reda Abou Serie, former MOE Advisor Hassan Bilawy, and USAID's Hala El Serafy.

*Q: Anything else that you would like to share about your portfolio?*

WARFIELD: Other highlights of my tour included:

- Sending 1,000 disadvantaged Egyptian students to American community colleges for professional certificates and associate's degrees to enhance U.S. credibility in the region as U.S. prestige and influence were declining;
- Initiating an innovative early grade reading program for Egyptian students in grades kindergarten to third grade to address the low level of reading competency. USAID subsequently expanded this program regionally;
- Negotiating free airtime and raising \$500,000 to help sustain USAID's ten year investment in Arabic Sesame Street, *Alam Simsim*, albeit with limited success;

- Developing public-private partnerships known as Global Development Alliances (GDAs) in USAID, including an executive education program for health ministry staff with the Wharton Business School; and,
- Securing \$20 million to aid Egypt in averting a major avian influenza pandemic.

*Q: You referenced a downward glidepath in funding for USAID/Egypt. Did the Government of Egypt accept that?*

WARFIELD: The budget for USAID/Egypt experienced a substantial reduction, dropping from \$450 million, as I recall, in fiscal year 2008 to \$200 million in 2009. The Government of Egypt viewed this cut as a unilateral decision by the U.S. government. In addition, they were dissatisfied with USAID's democracy programming. In 2008, the Egyptian government halted the obligation of future USAID/Egypt's funds until the program's direction could be clarified. They also impeded the implementation of existing programs and launched a negative campaign against USAID in state-controlled media.

*Q: How was this resolved?*

WARFIELD: In April 2009, two months before my departure, the Deputy Chief of Mission Stu Jones asked me to coordinate the visit of Nita Lowey, Chairperson of the House Appropriations Committee and a strong supporter of USAID, to Egypt. She visited Egypt with four other members of Congress to discuss the Middle East peace process, regional stability, and military and economic assistance with the Egyptian government. The nineteen-person delegation, including Mrs. Lowey and her staffer Nisha Biswal, deepened their understanding of Egypt's role in regional dynamics, the challenges of promoting democracy, and the deadlock on bilateral economic assistance. Following her return to the U.S., Mrs. Lowey successfully secured an increase in FY2009 funding for Egypt, which ended the ten-month impasse and enhanced the collaborative relationship between the Egyptian government and the U.S. government.

*Q: What lessons did you learn from your time in Egypt?*

WARFIELD: These were some of my lessons learned:

- In Egypt, I witnessed USAID's transition from specific country strategies to the more centralized Foreign Assistance Framework (FAF). A reporting tool primarily for Congress rather than a performance management system, the FAF focused on inputs and outputs over tracking measurable progress towards outcomes such as improved literacy or reduced infant mortality.
- My background in strategic planning, project design, and results management was helpful in adopting a more strategic and accountable approach to our portfolios.
- The downsizing at USAID left USAID/Egypt with a shortage of experienced, mid-career Education Officers. Luckily, senior FSNs Hala El Sarafy and Adel Gohar, managing 100+ million programs, and our junior FSNs elevated to management roles, were instrumental in achieving significant outcomes with a relatively small team.

- Evaluations showed that programs with local community engagement, like the New School Program promoting girls' education, consistently outperformed others and demonstrated greater sustainability. However, local engagement was challenging due to government concerns about potential Islamist influences in education.
- With USAID leadership prioritizing public-private partnerships through Global Development Alliances (GDA), we let our contractors manage these engagements given our limited staffing. Later in my career, I would prioritize direct engagement with the private sector to optimize on that relationship.

*Q: This is an incredibly large portfolio. I don't know how you did it. I certainly couldn't have. But I'm pleased to see that USAID now is giving increased acknowledgement to the role of FSNs and the importance of recognizing their work. You had FSNs managing a very large amount of money. Were you ever able to sleep?*

WARFIELD: Yes, I did. I really appreciated the opportunity to oversee such a large, diverse education portfolio ranging from basic education to technical-vocational education to higher education. It was a petri dish for testing new concepts (i.e. early grade reading, decentralization, educational finance, etc.). And it was great to work with such a talented team.

*Q: Interesting. Well, Liz I never had—I knew a lot about what you were doing with this education program—I had no idea that you were doing so many things all with very, very large programs so we can discuss offline about that. Thank you. That was great. Very cool. Wow.*

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*Q: Welcome to our session this Wednesday, December 28, Liz. Today, you're going to share your experiences in India with USAID. Please, go ahead.*

WARFIELD: Thank you, Marcy. My assignment to India marked a pivotal moment in my career. The size, sophistication, and complexity of India demanded a new approach to development and provided a tremendous opportunity for me to grow as a leader. Mission and Bureau leadership empowered me to help rethink how USAID operated in India. The apt title of USAID/India's current strategy - *Innovate, Partner, and Go Global* - captures the transformation that we started in 2011 and which still continues today. I will explain more below.

*Q: Can you give us some context about India?*

WARFIELD: Absolutely. Despite its image as an emerging superpower with a strong space and technology sector, India also struggled with significant poverty, with over 800 million people living on just \$2 a day when I was there. The country was crucial to achieving global development goals and vital to U.S. foreign policy interests in the region.

*Q: What were those interests at that time?*

WARFIELD: During his visit in 2010, President Obama described our relationship with India as one of the "defining and indispensable partnerships of the 21st century." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton operationalized that vision by initiating Strategic Dialogues with India in 21 different areas, aiming to elevate the relationship to one of growing cooperation. While the United States and India had enjoyed over 60 years of productive development collaboration, including landmark successes like the Green Revolution and programs targeting HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, India's emergence as a regional and global power and its expanding trade and investment ties required a new approach. For USAID, this meant shifting from a traditional donor-recipient dynamic to a peer-to-peer partnership. This transition to a partnership of equals meant working together to tackle development challenges both within India and globally.

To give you a sense of the high-level attention on India and the demands on the Embassy, including USAID/India, during my four-year tour, there was one Presidential visit, three visits from the Secretaries of State—Clinton and then Kerry—and five visits from USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah.

*Q: How did USAID's strategy in India evolve during your tour?*

WARFIELD: When I arrived in 2010, USAID/India was primarily focused on health, along with energy and environmental programs. Our initiatives covered a wide range of issues, including HIV/AIDS, family planning, maternal and child health, polio, tuberculosis, nutrition, food aid, disaster management, and even a modest education program that included vocational training and early grade reading. We also had a legacy governance program to enhance fiscal management and accountability. The annual budget was \$95 million, supported by 112 employees: 25 U.S. direct hires and 83 FSNs.

The Obama Administration introduced global development initiatives in energy, climate change, food security, and health, prompting us to realign our portfolio accordingly. Without a confirmed USAID Administrator until January 2010, there was some confusion within the Embassy regarding which U.S. agency would lead on some initiatives, especially Feed the Future (FTF), which focused on agriculture and nutrition. This issue was resolved around 2011.

*Q: How was the Mission when you arrived?*

WARFIELD: USAID/India had just downsized under the previous Bush Administration. However, with the introduction of the Strategic Dialogues, USAID/India, under the leadership of Mission Director Erin Soto, pivoted to an "expand and rebuild" mode. During my first two years in India, we scaled up programming, staff, evaluations, and office space.

*Q: How was USAID at that time?*

WARFIELD: USAID's capacity as an agency had diminished over the past decade of reforms with the introduction of the Foreign Assistance Bureau in the State Department, the elimination of USAID's Policy Bureau and evaluation unit, the decline in USAID staffing, the increased contracting out of assessments and designs, and somewhat opaque authorities. Yet, the planning of foreign assistance had historically constituted USAID's

very strength as an agency. With it weakened, USAID had essentially become a contracting agency.

*Q: What did the new Administration do to address these concerns?*

WARFIELD: To regain its standing as a premier development agency, USAID launched the *USAID Forward* reform agenda in 2010. It included:

- increased staffing,
- reinstatement of the Program Cycle,
- procurement reform,
- government-to-government assistance,
- private sector engagement,
- innovation,
- science and technology, and
- local solutions.

*Q: What was your role in the Mission when you arrived?*

WARFIELD: As Deputy Mission Director, I was responsible for overseeing strategy and programming while mentoring eight new Foreign Service Officers. In line with the *USAID Forward* Program Cycle reforms, I focused on strengthening strategic planning, project design, monitoring, and evaluation. We reinstated portfolio reviews, the first of which resulted in consolidating the number of grants and contracts the Mission managed. The mission began designing activities in-house and awarded the first ever contract to independently evaluate 12 programs over 18 months, moving away from multiple sector-specific contracts.

*Q: What challenges did you encounter in your first year?*

WARFIELD: Without a bilateral agreement with the Government of India (GOI), USAID/India was required to obligate our funds within the same fiscal year that they were received. That is a short turnaround time. To resolve this, the Mission negotiated six new partnership agreements with Indian ministries, four with whom we had not recently engaged. Given the small scale of USAID's assistance relative to the GOI's budget and India's perception of itself as a partner rather than a recipient, these negotiations had to be handled with utmost sensitivity. We rewrote USAID's standard provisions to reflect that partnership with India. We finalized these six agreements shortly before President Obama's visit in November 2010.

*Q: What was USAID's role in the visit?*

WARFIELD: During the visit, the GOI requested agricultural assistance to address its 40% crop loss. However, advancing the concept of “trilateral cooperation,” USAID/Washington aimed to work with India regionally to share its agricultural practices with Bangladesh and Nepal under the Feed the Future (FTF) initiative. A founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, the GOI was reluctant to engage in such an endeavor.

Instead, USAID redirected its focus to engaging with India in Africa. In preparation for President Obama’s visit, the Agency’s Chief Innovation Officer Maura O’Neill, the Asia Bureau’s Assistant Administrator Nisha Biswal, and I developed a concept paper for an "Evergreen Revolution," inspired by the Green Revolution of the 1960s. The Evergreen Revolution aimed to leverage India's technological and organizational innovations to address food insecurity in Africa under the FTF initiative.

Meanwhile, it took about a year for Washington to determine that USAID/India would not provide bilateral agricultural assistance to India.

*Q: What agreements related to USAID were reached during the President’s visit?*

WARFIELD: President Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed to pursue trilateral cooperation in addressing development challenges in Afghanistan, Africa, and other regions. This included USAID/India funding Indian agricultural institutions to provide training for African participants and partnering with India's Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) to implement programs in Afghanistan. This trilateral cooperation required complex negotiations involving multiple governments, USAID missions, and embassies.

*Q: Any other takeaways from this visit?*

WARFIELD: In preparing for this visit, I discovered three things about India:

- social entrepreneurship and impact investment in India;
- the strength of the Indian private sector; and,
- the strength of India’s local non-profit organizations, including Dasra in Mumbai, and their increasing global presence.

*Q: Why social entrepreneurship and impact investment?*

WARFIELD: Early in my tenure in India, I connected with Don Mohanlal, formerly of the International Youth Foundation, due to our mutual ties to Baltimore. Now the Executive Director of the Nand and Jeet Khemka Foundation in Hyderabad, which focused on social entrepreneurship, Don invited me to attend their annual summit. At this event, I learned how social entrepreneurs could provide market-based solutions for some of USAID/India's program objectives.

This experience led to first my and later Mission Director Bill Hammink’s participation in Intelicap’s Sankalp Forum, then the premier global summit for impact investment and

entrepreneurship based in Mumbai. Impact investors focus on companies or projects that generate financial returns while also creating positive social or environmental impact.

USAID's involvement in Sankalp broadened our exposure to various private sector stakeholders, particularly local innovators and investors. This later led to USAID/Washington partnering with Intellectap to support its efforts in nurturing early-stage businesses in Southeast Asia and East Africa through capital, knowledge, and networks. This support enabled Intellectap, a local organization, to expand its innovative model globally.

*Q: What did you discover about the Indian private sector?*

WARFIELD: When I arrived in India, I noticed that USAID/India had few Global Development Alliances (GDAs) with limited to no financial contributions from partners. Transacting a small GDA with Pfizer highlighted the significant staff effort and reputational risks involved, prompting me to consider more effective partnership approaches. Reviewing Forbes' list of billionaires, I saw an opportunity to leverage India's business talent and wealth. By partnering with Indian business leaders, their foundations, and the Government of India, we could tap into local expertise and resources to enhance our development impact, aligning with USAID Forward's focus on private sector engagement.

*Q: What did you discover about Indian non-profits?*

WARFIELD: During the President's visit, I learned about Dasra, a pioneering Mumbai-based NGO, from USAID/India's talented Program Office Director Jennifer Graetz. Founded in 1999 by Indian-American lawyers Deval Sanghavi and Neera Nundy, Dasra was driving social change in India supported by Indian philanthropists. Dasra formed giving circles among wealthy Indian donors, developed the capacities of early-stage non-profits, and conducted strategic research to guide the philanthropic decisions of their giving circles.

I also discovered that other Indian NGOs were sharing their best practices internationally without foreign assistance. For instance, the Indian non-profit Pratham extended its evidence-based survey of reading, learning outcomes, and schooling status to Pakistan and Tanzania in 2009.

Together, NGOs such as the Khemka Foundation, Intellectap, Dasra, and Pratham demonstrated that there were strong local organizations in India, who could potentially partner with USAID and were already making global development contributions on their own. These findings aligned with the Administration's focus on local solutions and the global sharing of India's best practices.

*Q: Where are we now in the timeline of your tour?*

WARFIELD: In early summer 2011, Erin Soto completed her tenure as Mission Director, and I served as Acting Mission Director until Bill Hammink took over in the fall. Bill

arrived with a clear mandate from USAID/Washington to strengthen the peer-to-peer partnership with India, focusing on addressing development challenges both locally and globally. Under Bill's leadership, the Mission aimed to provide strategic clarity and build momentum for this new partnership model, which began during President Obama's 2010 visit. The challenge was effectively operationalizing this ambitious concept.

*Q: How did you do that?*

WARFIELD: Bill and I prioritized implementing the *USAID Forward* reforms—particularly in innovations, partnerships, the program cycle, and local solutions—and developing a new strategy for the mission. Although USAID/W introduced the *USAID Forward* reforms as separate constructs with their own targets, the Mission integrated them into our strategy and programming to manage them more effectively.

*Q: You have referenced innovation previously. Can you explain that part of the USAID Forward reform agenda?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Washington primarily led this change, which I supported. As a Program and Project Development Officer, I prioritized analysis, strategic planning, results, and sustainability. However, the Mission's evaluations often showed that the results of our projects, implemented through international contractors and NGOs providing mostly technical assistance and training, were not sustained. I felt there had to be a better way. Recognizing the need to adapt to the changing global development landscape and align with USAID/W priorities, I championed innovative solutions, particularly those sourced locally, specifically designed to address India's development challenges.

*Q: What informed your thinking?*

WARFIELD: I read the literature on innovation and its connection to development, especially within the Indian context. India was known for its flourishing technology sector as well as its proficiency in “jugaad” or “frugal” innovations - cost-effective solutions that could be swiftly and affordably scaled by the private sector or government, impacting millions of lives. Discussions with thought leaders like Northwestern University's Jason Saul and insights from M.I.T. articles on open and closed innovation also shaped my views.

Concurrently, I was following USAID/W's new Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) initiative. Still active today with strong bipartisan support, DIV invests in innovators and researchers to test new ideas, develop evidence of impact, take strategic risks, and advance the best solutions for development issues. In addition to rigorous evidence, it prioritizes cost-effectiveness and the potential to scale, leading to sustainability. When I was posted in India, the country boasted the largest number of USAID's DIV recipients, which further demonstrated India's strength as a development innovator.

*Q: How did you apply your findings?*

WARFIELD: In September 2011, at the request of Mission Director Bill Hammink, I drafted a paper titled "*Frugal Innovation or Jugaad: USAID in India as a Global Development Laboratory*." Bill presented it to USAID/W leadership, effectively laying the groundwork for our new strategy focused on innovation, partnerships, and the global sharing of good practices from India. Nisha Biswal, USAID's Assistant Administrator for Asia, played a crucial role in supporting this paradigm shift, marking a significant departure from traditional USAID approaches.

*Q: Can you elaborate on USAID/India's new strategy?*

WARFIELD: Over 17 months, Bill Hammink and I worked with the USAID/India team to develop a new five-year Country Development Cooperation Strategy. It integrated many of the themes we identified, such as pursuing innovative solutions, partnering with local stakeholders, and leveraging private sector resources to address challenges in areas like maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, renewable energy, forest conservation, early grade literacy, food security, and climate change. Our focus was on achieving rapid, cost-effective outcomes that could be scaled locally and shared globally. This 2012-2017 strategy aimed to shift the USAID-India relationship from a traditional donor-recipient model to a peer-to-peer partnership, where India and the U.S. collaboratively tackled global development challenges.

After engaging with a broad spectrum of stakeholders—ranging from major foundations to social entrepreneurs, and at international conferences—the strategy was approved in spring 2013. I am proud to say that, to this day, the themes of Innovation, Partnering, and Going Global continue to serve as the cornerstones of USAID/India's strategy.

*Q: How did this strategic shift affect USAID/India's operations?*

WARFIELD: One of the most significant changes was hiring Nehal Sanghavi as USAID/India's Senior Innovations and Partnership Advisor in the fall of 2011. With his deep connections to India and extensive experience in mobilizing private sector resources, Nehal played a key role in strengthening USAID/India's partnerships by leveraging networks, financial resources, and technical expertise to support more impactful development investments.

Building on this, the creation of USAID/India's Center for Innovations and Partnerships was another critical step. This center integrated expertise in innovations, partnerships, impact evaluations, and science and technology, allowing the Mission to strategically align resources and foster a culture of innovation. Together, these efforts enabled USAID/India to engage more effectively with non-traditional partners, support early adopters, and implement diverse and sustainable development approaches.

*Q: Did these changes resonate with the Mission?*

WARFIELD: To a certain degree, yes. Moving away from USAID's traditional contract and International NGO model was challenging, as it required developing new knowledge and changing incentives, behaviors, and systems. Nonetheless, Bill, Nehal, and I conducted extensive outreach to non-traditional social entrepreneurs, investors, high-net-worth individuals, foundation leaders, and visionary development figures,

encouraging our staff to embrace new partners and approaches. As a result, USAID/India successfully co-created 17 new activities with local partners and secured nine new awards aligned with our strategic framework. The Mission forged valuable partnerships with unconventional allies, leveraged India's strengths, and developed a more systematic approach to design and performance management.

*Q: How was this strategic shift reflected programmatically in the Mission?*

WARFIELD: The Indian Partnership Program (IPP) exemplified this strategic shift. This new Annual Program Statement sought innovations that could significantly impact USAID/India's focus areas: health, education, energy, and the environment. Structured as a stringent Global Development Alliance, the IPP required partners to match contributions equally, with at least half in cash, leveraging India's substantial resources. Local organizations, vetted by our finance and procurement staff through field visits, implemented these projects. This approach allowed USAID/India's local staff, especially in finance and procurement, to engage directly with partners, adding significant value. The IPP effectively integrated USAID Forward reforms—innovation, private sector engagement, and local solutions—into a single program, marking a transformative shift in our operations and setting a precedent for other missions

*Q: Were there other programs of note?*

WARFIELD: To prepare for a visit by USAID Administrator Raj Shah, we launched the open innovation platform, the Millennium Alliance (MA), in just ten days. Partnering with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), we secured \$7.5 million from both the public and private sectors to match USAID's contribution, totaling \$15 million. This was notable as it marked the first direct financial contribution ever from the Government of India to a USAID program. FICCI played a key role in attracting investments for early-stage innovators in sectors like agriculture, water, education, and health. Today, the MA remains active, having created 150,000 jobs, impacted 7 million lives, and leveraged \$49 million in funding.

*Q: Fascinating. What about the Grand Challenges?*

WARFIELD: I was also intrigued with USAID/W's Grand Challenges. Different from DIV grants which were a general call for innovations in a given sector, Grand Challenges focused on specific, clearly defined problems in global development (i.e., why do some infants or their mothers die within 48 hours of delivery). The Grand Challenges approach aimed to bring together diverse perspectives to find innovative, scalable solutions. USAID/India established several multi-stakeholder platforms to tackle critical issues in maternal and child health, tuberculosis, energy, water, early literacy, and food security. As a result of these Grand Challenges, USAID invested in social entrepreneurs and innovators who, among others,

- Developed technology-enabled solutions such as mobile health platforms and biometrics to monitor frontline health worker attendance (Dimagi);
- Used low-cost projectors to disseminate best practices to rural farmers at scale (Digital Green); and,

- Employed language subtitling from Bollywood movies to enhance literacy (PlanetRead).

*Q: Any other highlights?*

WARFIELD: Yes, indeed. During a luncheon hosted by U.S. Ambassador to India Nancy Powell, Mission Director Bill Hammink discussed USAID/India's work with social innovators with Tom Friedman of The New York Times. Friedman expressed interest in our social innovation efforts and was eager to meet some of the innovators we supported. We organized a gathering where he interviewed five of these social entrepreneurs. As a result, Friedman published an article titled "*The Virtual Middle Class Rises*" on February 2, 2013, in The New York Times. His piece highlighted our pioneering work and lent credibility to our strategic approach and vision.

*Q: What were the key lessons learned from your time in India?*

WARFIELD: These were my takeaways:

- The shift to a peer-to-peer partnership with India required us to rethink our strategy by focusing on co-creating solutions and shared investment in India's development. By engaging with the country's vibrant private sector, social entrepreneurs, and local organizations, we leveraged local expertise, networks, resources, and solutions. This approach played to India's strengths, resulted in more impactful and sustainable investments, and highlighted the importance of innovation and collaboration in development.
- The dynamic environment in India, marked by high-level political attention and evolving development priorities, taught me the importance of being adaptable and responsive. We had to navigate complex partnerships and rapidly adjust our strategy to align with both U.S. foreign policy goals and India's unique context, which was critical for advancing our development objectives.
- The new Administration had a lot of new priorities and initiatives which, at times, challenged the absorptive capacity of staff, especially those new to USAID. In retrospect, the Agency could have benefitted from a more deliberate approach to change management.
- Most importantly, leadership matters. We could not have accomplished any of this without the visionary leadership and strong support of Assistant Administrator Nisha Biswal.

*Q: Thank you, Liz, for sharing these insights.*

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*Q: Today is Wednesday, February 22, 2023. We're interviewing Elizabeth Warfield. And she is going to share with me today her experience transferring back from India to Washington DC. Liz, welcome.*

WARFIELD: Thanks, Marcy. My family wanted to return to the U.S. after India. In spring 2013, I bid on the newly created position of Local Solutions Coordinator, located in the office of the Agency's Counselor, Susan Reichle. The position was a good fit given my work in India on Local Solutions and other aspects of the USAID Forward reform agenda. And I was delighted to work with and learn from Susan.

*Q: Can you remind me what USAID Forward was about and how it related to Local Solutions?*

WARFIELD: USAID Forward was a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at transforming how USAID operated, focusing on delivering impactful results, fostering sustainable partnerships, and promoting innovation. Local Solutions (LS) was a key initiative under USAID Forward, specifically aimed at enhancing the capacity of local organizations and governments to lead and sustain development efforts. Local Solutions originally was known as Implementation Procurement Reform (IPR), which included efforts to diversify the partner base, increase government-to-government assistance, and develop local capacity. IPR gained prominence when Administrator Shah set a target for 30% of USAID funds to go directly to local organizations, a significant shift towards empowering local stakeholders.

*Q: As I recall, there was a strong reaction from USAID implementing partners to this target?*

WARFIELD: Yes, though I was overseas at the time and was not fully aware of its magnitude. The infamous line in one of Shah's speeches about "The Agency is no longer satisfied with writing big checks to big contractors and calling it development" did not sit well. I was told that the international contracting community rallied their respective members, raised money, and lobbied Congress to put guardrails on IPR, including defining who qualified as a local partner and limiting the awarding of local contracts to \$5 million per award, among others. There was also pushback from Mission Directors in terms of workload and oversight. As a result, in 2013, the Agency relaxed this requirement and the 30% target was no longer mandatory. Subsequently, USAID rebranded IPR as Local Solutions to more accurately represent its broad goal: to empower local entities and expand their involvement in USAID's development programs.

*Q: What were your responsibilities and the challenges you faced?*

WARFIELD: As the Local Solutions Coordinator, I was responsible for leading and integrating the LS reform across the entire agency. This was challenging because the position wasn't tied to any specific sector and lacked dedicated staff and resources. Yet it required significant organizational change and coordination among diverse stakeholders. I collaborated with various teams and bureaus, including Local Capacity Development and Government-to-Government Assistance, managing 16 different workstreams to align and streamline efforts. Additionally, LS was closely scrutinized by Congress, USAID's Inspector General, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), requiring me to coordinate the agency's responses to three audits and ensure a consistent message, which demanded considerable time and effort.

*Q: How did you coordinate this wide range of activities and actors?*

WARFIELD: When I started, I found out that the funds and personnel originally allocated for Local Solutions had been absorbed into different bureau budgets, leaving me without dedicated support. However, over time I was able to bring on talented staff like Adam Jacobs, Zach Pusch, and Danielle Pearl, who managed communications, monitoring, and evaluation for Local Solutions.

*Q: Okay, that was a very helpful background and context. What next?*

WARFIELD: Susan Reichle first asked me to define Local Solutions. Later she handed me a document on local systems primarily written by Tjip Walker from USAID/W's Policy Planning and Learning Bureau. The paper recognized that USAID's traditional linear and sectoral approaches were inadequate for addressing complex development challenges and introduced systems thinking to understand interdependencies within development contexts.

*Q: So what did you do with it?*

WARFIELD: Initially, I was perplexed by the paper, but after discussions with Tjip and David Jacobstein, we conducted 20 internal and external reviews and gathered feedback from 400 stakeholders. This led to the *Local Systems: A Framework for Sustained Development* paper, which became USAID policy in April 2014. It not only offered a new strategic vision and risk management framework for Local Solutions, but also informed the Agency's broader development thinking. It shifted the focus from who our partners are to what partnership truly means. It defined Local Solutions as enhancing local systems—government, private sector, and civil society—to enable them to lead, fund, and sustain their own development.

*Q: How does that differ from the institutional strengthening we've been doing over the years in the public and private sector, which has been part of USAID's focus?*

WARFIELD: The Local Systems Framework emphasizes the contributions of multiple interconnected actors within a system, such as a health, education, or agricultural system, rather than focusing solely on individual institutions. It takes a holistic approach, considering all actors, their relationships, and the incentives driving their actions. For example, strengthening only the Ministry of Agriculture won't ensure sustained increases in food production. Hence, as development practitioners, we need to understand and support the entire system—its resources, the roles and relationships of actors, and the rules and results that guide their actions. This comprehensive understanding is key to achieving lasting development outcomes. Does this answer your question?

*Q: Yes, it does. It sounds incredibly complex and ambitious.*

WARFIELD: At its core, it's about engaging all relevant actors to sustain outcomes like increased agricultural productivity. It is a more holistic view of development. The Local Systems Framework policy encourages the Agency to redefine results beyond traditional metrics to include system characteristics such as capacities, relationships, and resource

flows. It also emphasizes developing ways to measure these attributes and conducting more ex-post evaluations to understand what sustains after USAID assistance ends.

Although it took some time for me to fully understand and appreciate this paper, it influenced my thinking not only during my Local Solutions stint, but later as Mission Director in Mexico and beyond. Any more questions on this?

*Q: No, keep going. I have others coming.*

WARFIELD: Government-to-government (G2G) assistance under USAID's Automated Directive System (ADS) 220 was initially part of the Implementation and Procurement Reform (IPR) and later became a focus of Local Solutions. It faced scrutiny from Congress and USAID oversight agencies due to concerns that USAID might be indiscriminately funding governments. Additionally, missions were frustrated with inconsistent guidance, and both technical and regional bureaus sought better ways to manage risks. To address these issues, I led a team to revise ADS 220 guidance, incorporating feedback from missions and using the Local Systems Framework to more effectively balance fiduciary, programmatic, reputational, and contextual risks. This led to a strategic overhaul of risk management for G2G assistance, including setting milestones to safeguard investments and establishing clear protocols for democracy reviews in potential recipient countries. The revised guidance, issued in July 2014, helped recalibrate how USAID evaluated risks and rewards, earning our team the Mary A. Randall Group Award for Innovation.

Additionally, we responded to a GAO audit that led to streamlining the Public Financial Management Risk Assessment Framework (PFMRAF), reducing the assessment timeline from sixteen to two months, aligning our financial assessments with other donors, and creating tools to measure the effectiveness of our support. These changes ensured that USAID retained G2G assistance as an important tool for sustainable development. An example of successful G2G assistance was in Peru, where USAID helped reduce illicit cocoa production, with the government funding half of all alternative crop planting.

*Q: What engagement, if any, did you have with USAID's partners?*

WARFIELD: I actively engaged with external stakeholders to build support for Local Solutions, turning initial skepticism into collaboration. Organizations like the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN), Plan International, Oxfam, and Save the Children sought to understand and measure the impact of Local Solutions better. Our collaboration with MFAN led to publications that demonstrated the initiative's value to Congress and other stakeholders. Recognition from Devex and validation from partners helped enhance the credibility of our approach and drive internal change at USAID. This work earned me the Agency's Superior Honor Award and a Presidential Meritorious Rank Award.

*Q: What did you do to help communicate this vision?*

WARFIELD: I spoke about LS to every incoming USAID officer and at major conferences. Adam and Zach introduced USAID's first podcast series featuring field

experiences with Local Solutions, conducted webinars, and produced newsletters to keep staff informed and engaged.

*Q: Changing USAID practices is difficult. How did you go about it?*

WARFIELD: My mentor, Terry Brown, recommended John Kotter's *Leading Change*, which provided a valuable framework for organizational change. We applied Kotter's eight-step approach to Local Solutions, developing a clear vision as noted above, building a coalition of stakeholders, and achieving early wins. We also focused on empowering staff, revising incentives, and effectively communicating our goals.

*Q: How did you strengthen staff capabilities and motivate them to advance Local Solutions?*

WARFIELD: The LS team designed global training programs for over 1,000 employees on project design, negotiation, implementation, and other skills relevant to Local Solutions. We also helped launch "Localworks," an innovation hub for LS, and created a "Masters Lab" that brought together field practitioners to collaboratively solve challenges related to G2G assistance.

Congressional support was key. Along with earmarking funds for Localworks, Tim Rieser, Senator Leahy's staffer on the Senate Appropriations Committee, advocated for changes in USAID's staff recruitment, training, and incentives to prioritize local engagement. In response, the LS team revised USAID's core competencies and promotion criteria to include sustainability and local ownership.

*Q: How did you measure the success of Local Solutions?*

WARFIELD: Initially, USAID measured the success of Local Solutions by tracking the percentage of funds directed to local entities, which increased to \$2.6 billion by 2015, nearly tripling since 2010. We continued to monitor this metric, even after it was no longer mandatory, as it provided a useful indicator of local engagement. However, success was about more than just financial targets; it focused on empowering local partners to sustain and lead development efforts effectively. The Local Systems Framework paper highlighted the best approaches and challenges in measuring systems change and sustained outcomes. By my final year at USAID/W, initiatives like Feed the Future and the water strategy were at the forefront of assessing sustainability and local ownership in their programs.

Given the emphasis on capacity development under IPR and Local Solutions, Congress asked us to measure whether our efforts to develop organizational capacity and strengthen public financial management improved performance in government, civil society, and the private sector. We developed guidance, piloted new tools to track these changes, and shared our approach with the Missions and external audiences.

*Q: Can you give some examples of the results achieved under Local Solutions?*

WARFIELD: Our focused learning agenda and communication efforts enhanced results reporting, which we shared widely. In Kenya, local collaboration with USAID halved

drug costs. In Nepal, partnering with a local pharmaceutical firm to produce Chlorhexidine reduced child mortality by 34%. In Peru, government-to-government assistance in the San Martine region doubled second-grade reading levels to 30% and reduced chronic malnutrition from 23% to 16% in five years. That local government in Peru also improved its planning, budgeting, and advocacy for increased domestic funding, with effective oversight from the country's Supreme Audit Institution.

*Q: Are there other ways that you worked to imbed this reform across the Agency?*

WARFIELD: Yes, through USAID programming guidance. After Dr. Shah's departure, interest in LS seemed to decline, but programmatic changes and feedback on the complexity of the Agency's Program Cycle led to a revision of USAID's programming policy, ADS 201. My colleagues, especially Tjip Walker, and I advocated for including principles of sustainability and local ownership in the ADS 201 guidance, and agency leadership agreed. Embedding these principles changed how USAID defined and measured results and risks. I'm pleased to see that, eight years later, these concepts remain a core principle of the Agency's programming policy as "Promoting Sustainability through Local Implementation and Financing."

*Q: To conclude, what was the impact of your work?*

WARFIELD: As noted above, my three-year tenure as LS Coordinator was marked by challenges and achievements. By the time I left in October 2016, the agency had issued the Local Systems Framework policy, revised its G2G assistance guidance, and updated its program guidance to emphasize sustainability through local systems as the ultimate goal. We had developed training to operationalize this focus and revised the core competencies, promotion precepts, and skill matrices to align staff with this strategic direction. I credit the formidable force of 1,000 LS advocates for making these achievements possible.

*Q: Were there any lessons learned?*

WARFIELD: There definitely were:

- First, I saw how crucial it was to pull everyone into the conversation—across different parts of the agency and with external partners and stakeholders. It was all about building strong, systemic support to make policy changes stick.
- The second lesson involved navigating institutional change. Shifting towards locally-driven solutions was tough—there's always some pushback and red tape. It really drove home the importance of sticking with it and communicating clearly, so we could move towards more effective and sustainable development efforts.
- Third, rolling out the Local Systems Framework shifted our approach to development, emphasizing holistic solutions over piecemeal ones. Was there wholesale adoption by the agency? No, but there has been growing acceptance over time. Challenges remain, such as the complexity of systems thinking, the need for a cultural shift within USAID, and the requirement for more flexible

funding mechanisms to support adaptive management. Nonetheless, I remain optimistic, especially as the broader development community increasingly adopts a systems approach.

- Finally, once again, strong leadership was crucial. Even as USAID priorities and Administrators changed, consistent support from leaders like Susan Reichle, Tim Reiser, and those at MFAN made a big difference.

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*Q: Welcome back, Liz. Today, being Tuesday, April 11th, we are reaching the end of our interviews. You'll be discussing your last assignment in Mexico. Please go ahead.*

WARFIELD: Thank you, Marcy. This marks the final chapter of my three decades with USAID, where I've been dedicated to promoting innovation, local ownership, and sustainability through local systems globally. Serving in Mexico tested all aspects of my experience and resilience.

*Q: What was it like?*

WARFIELD: My tour began amidst a series of significant events: a new U.S. administration taking office; mission morale issues; a major earthquake, and significant political changes in Mexico, including the election of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

*Q: Can you provide the context in which you were operating?*

WARFIELD: Mexico, a middle-income country with a thriving private sector and over a decade of democratic consolidation, was the U.S.'s third-largest trading partner. Despite this, Mexico suffered from high levels of poverty, income inequality, and widespread corruption. It was a major supplier of illegal drugs to the U.S., contributing to approximately 100,000 American deaths annually. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), benefiting from about \$330 billion annually in illicit trade with the U.S., threatened the legitimacy of the Mexican state, weakened the rule of law, and dampened economic growth. These organizations, deeply intertwined with systemic political corruption, had significant influence in at least 11 Mexican states.

*Q: How did this affect security in Mexico?*

WARFIELD: At that time, an estimated 150,000 people had been killed or disappeared since Mexico initiated its war on drugs in 2006. Homicide rates were increasing by double digits in the two years prior to my arrival. Shockingly, only 1% of crimes were punished in Mexico. Additionally, Mexico ranked third, behind Syria and Afghanistan, in the number of journalists killed. And it consistently ranked in the bottom 30 percent of countries in the global corruption perception index.

*Q: What were the priorities of the U.S. government when you arrived?*

WARFIELD: The shared concerns between the U.S. and Mexico were focused on prosperity, security, and migration, with a strong emphasis on security due to the impact

of drug trafficking on U.S. public health. Central to USAID's efforts was the Merida Initiative, a \$3 billion bilateral agreement aimed at combating drug trafficking, money laundering, strengthening the rule of law, and reducing crime and violence in Mexico. Additionally, the U.S. worked with Mexico to address irregular migration from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

*Q: What was the focus of USAID's work in Mexico at that time?*

WARFIELD: About two-thirds of USAID/Mexico's \$244 million portfolio supported reforming the criminal justice system, preventing crime and violence, protecting human rights, and reducing corruption, all under the Merida Initiative. We also worked on forest conservation and clean energy, and facilitated cooperation between Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries to tackle migration's root causes.

*Q: You mentioned initial morale issues. How were these addressed?*

WARFIELD: Upon arrival, I faced significant morale issues and high staff turnover among FSNs. We quickly addressed salary disparities between our FSNs and the local staff of our contractors and streamlined hiring to restore the Mission to full staffing.

*Q: Any other challenges?*

WARFIELD: The Mission struggled with timely obligations, partly because we lacked Strategic Objective Agreements (SOAGs) with our counterparts in the Mexican government, as the State Department's International Narcotics and Law (INL) office in Mexico was the lead at the federal level under the Merida Initiative. To tackle this funding issue, we established weekly tracking meetings which enhanced our coordination of activity design, procurement, and financial reviews of local organizations. These improvements significantly increased our obligation rate.

*Q: How did the new U.S. administration's priorities impact the Mission's strategy and programming?*

WARFIELD: With the new administration's focus on national security, particularly on combating TCOs, disrupting illicit finances, and enhancing border security, we adjusted our programming to align with these priorities. We concentrated on key states, especially along the U.S.-Mexico border, and focused on analyzing TCO operations and their impact on corruption and state legitimacy. We also engaged directly with local stakeholders to reduce pretrial confinement across 13 states, increase arrests of corrupt officials and cartel members, and establish a watchdog group to monitor corruption in public procurement. These efforts aligned with our commitments under the Merida Initiative, demonstrated USAID's impact to the new administration, and helped protect our budget from anticipated cuts and secure a soft congressional earmark for our program.

*Q: Other developments?*

WARFIELD: Ambassador Mark Green became the USAID Administrator in August 2017.

*Q: Among the challenges, you mentioned an earthquake.*

WARFIELD: By mid-September 2017, USAID/Mexico had completed its obligations of funds two weeks before the end of the fiscal year—an unusually timely achievement in my experience. This efficiency proved critical when, just two days later on September 19, 2017, a devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck only 75 miles from Mexico City.

*Q: What was USAID's response?*

WARFIELD: Following the devastating earthquake, USAID quickly responded with support, including deploying search and rescue teams and donating to the Red Cross. These efforts significantly increased the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico's public engagement and helped strengthen the U.S.-Mexico relations during a sensitive period.

*Q: What happened after that?*

WARFIELD: Two weeks later, Administrator Mark Green visited the disaster sites. The earthquake, followed by a visit by the highest ranking person in USAID, was demanding, especially for a small Mission with relatively new staff. They, along with their embassy colleagues, received a Superior Honor Group award for their work.

What I discussed above was the bulk of our work during my first year (2016-2017) at USAID/Mexico.

*Q: What were the priorities of Administrator Green?*

WARFIELD: Administrator Green framed his vision for USAID and foreign assistance as the "Journey to Self-Reliance" (J2SR) and prioritized the diversification of our partner base. Members of the Local Solutions team, including Zach, Danielle, Tjip, and David, helped develop the J2SR guidance so the programming themes essentially remained the same:

- partnering with host country governments and other actors to achieve locally-sustained results,
- helping countries mobilize public and private revenues,
- strengthening local capacities, and,
- accelerating enterprise-driven development.

*Q: How did you operationalize this guidance?*

WARFIELD: In line with this guidance, USAID/Mexico adopted a systems approach to the development challenges that we were addressing. To achieve our objectives, we partnered with the Mexican government, the private sector and civil society at the federal, state, or local level, as relevant, in identifying problems, sourcing innovative solutions, leading the engagement, mobilizing local resources, and monitoring and evaluating their impact. As needed, we also developed the capacities of these local partners. Implicitly,

we were “co-designing, co-creating, and co-financing” these partnerships before it became the vogue in USAID.

Before that, however, I had to dispel the misconception that the Mexican private sector did not engage nor invest in democracy and governance which was the majority of USAID’s programming in Mexico.

*Q: How did you do that?*

WARFIELD: By chance, COPARMEX, a union of 36,000 Mexican companies contributing to 30% of Mexico's GDP and creating 4.8 million jobs, reached out to collaborate with us. Unknown to me, they had worked with USAID in the past and were eager to collaborate with us in combating violence, impunity, and corruption through COPARMEX’s national network of federations and business centers. These issues significantly affected the Mexican private sector, making them an ideal partner for addressing complex problems systemically.

*Q: What else did you learn?*

WARFIELD: I consulted Forbes magazine’s global listings of billionaires and multimillionaires and realized that Mexico, despite having only a tenth of India’s population, had a comparable number of high-net-worth individuals. This highlighted the potential to tap into Mexico’s substantial financial, corporate, and philanthropic resources. I believed it was important to collaborate with these local resources rather than rely solely on U.S. taxpayer dollars to finance initiatives of mutual interest.

*Q: Great, so that was the private sector. Any challenges in engaging with Mexican civil society or the government?*

WARFIELD: Not really. Engaging with Mexico’s nascent civil society organizations (CSOs) and capable local governments was crucial from a systems perspective. I also discovered that some of Mexico’s more established CSOs preferred a direct relationship with USAID, rather than working as sub-grantees of USAID contractors. Our programs had the potential to achieve more sustained results when aligned with strong local leadership and resources.

*Q: Anything else that informed your thinking?*

WARFIELD: Compared to India, Mexico had a more modest development innovation culture. However, I believed it was important to seek out innovative local ideas to help achieve our strategic objectives. Additionally, there was limited awareness of USAID's activities in Mexico, so I saw broadening opportunities for engagement, working systemically, and focusing on scale as ways to improve our visibility and impact.

*Q: So, how did you apply these concepts to your programming?*

WARFIELD: The Mission developed the Strategic Alliance for Mexico (SAM), an innovative Global Development Alliance. This Annual Program Statement solicited public-private partnerships that could generate innovative ideas and build coalitions to

meet USAID/Mexico's ambitious strategic objectives. Partners in the alliance were required to match USAID funding, with at least 50% of their contributions in cash, and the implementing partner was to be a local organization. This approach mirrored USAID/India's successful Indian Partnership Program.

*Q: Was there any interest in this new offering?*

WARFIELD: We actively promoted the SAM to key stakeholders in Mexico, attracting significant interest. USAID Administrator's Chief of Staff, Bill Steiger, took note and recommended expanding the program to the Northern Triangle countries of Central America.

*Q: Can you give some examples of the partnerships under SAM?*

WARFIELD: One of our most important partnerships was with the Mexican Competitiveness Institute (IMCO) to combat corruption, a priority for both the U.S. and Mexico. Co-financed by the Mexican Business Council and led by Juan Pardinas, IMCO played a critical role in anti-corruption efforts. During the Peña Nieto administration, IMCO collaborated with other civil society organizations to draft Mexico's first anti-corruption legislation, gathering over 630,000 signatures in support. Under Juan's leadership, IMCO produced an influential report detailing the economic impacts of corruption in Mexico. USAID's partnership with IMCO underscored our commitment to fostering local leadership, which was especially crucial as IMCO's work put its leaders at significant risk, including being targeted by the government using Pegasus spyware. In his subsequent role as Editor in Chief of the Reforma newspaper, Juan also faced threats from President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador due to the paper's critical reporting on the government.

Additionally, USAID/Mexico developed six other alliances, including a significant collaboration with Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity (MCCI), which combined research, investigative journalism, strategic litigation, and communication to tackle systemic corruption. Another partnership was with local NGOs in Chihuahua and Nuevo León using the "focused deterrence" approach from the U.S.. The aim was to reduce crime by targeting high-risk offenders and involved \$2 million in private sector co-financing. These and other partnerships reinforced our commitment to addressing crime, violence, impunity and corruption through innovative and locally-driven approaches.

*Q: Any other local programs of note?*

WARFIELD: Another successful local partnership was with Reinserta, an organization co-financed by private donors that helped young people affected by the criminal justice system. Saskia Niño de Rivera and Mercedes Castañeda co-founded Reinserta as they realized that there would be no safety in Mexico without addressing the prisons, many of which were controlled by the cartels. These ladies were fearless, often being called in to mediate riots in high security prisons.

Reinserta aimed to reduce risk factors for vulnerable youth. With USAID's support, Reinserta worked with 500 juvenile offenders - 15% of Mexico's total - and significantly

reduced their recidivism rate from 60% to just 1%, thereby reducing the pool of potential recruits for TCOs. Reinserta is still going strong after completing USAID assistance, continuing to protect children and youth affected by violence.

*Q: Were there any other innovations of note?*

WARFIELD: Our collaboration with the Rapid Results Institute (RRI) under USAID/Mexico's Rule of Law program was an important innovation, involving 100-day challenges with government, civil society, and the private sector to address impunity, crime, violence, and corruption. This approach engaged local actors in setting and achieving ambitious goals, often through improved collaboration and problem-solving. An important insight from our contractor about this approach was that their role shifted from delivering results to facilitating systemic changes. This represented a fundamental shift in thinking and is probably one of my biggest takeaways from my time in Mexico.

By March 2018, RRI's approach had yielded substantial outcomes, with increases in the resolution rates of commercial robbery and auto theft cases by 400% to 1,200% across seven states. These crimes significantly fund transnational criminal organizations, highlighting the impact and relevance of this innovative approach. Ultimately, however, the success of this approach depends on sustaining the processes and collaborations that achieved these results.

*Q: You mentioned developing local capacity above. What did that involve?*

WARFIELD: Shortly after I joined USAID/Mexico, the Mission launched a capacity development program for civil society organizations, initially focusing on basic skills like financial management and organizational development to meet USAID grant standards. Over time, we aligned this program with the mission's strategic objectives, concentrating on cities and states where USAID was actively engaged. We worked with 30-40 local, often grassroots NGOs, providing what USAID/W called Capacity Development 2.0, which aimed to strengthen these organizations' abilities to operate effectively within local systems. After four years, we evaluated the program's impact and used the findings to design a follow-on program.

*Q: Speaking of evaluations, how did the Mission go about measuring progress towards its objectives?*

WARFIELD: The effectiveness of USAID/Mexico's programs against TCOs was initially unclear due to the lack of a robust results framework. Initially, both USAID/Mexico and the INL/Mexico focused on measuring inputs and outputs rather than outcomes, a point noted by Congress. Recognizing this gap, USAID/Mexico developed a more comprehensive results framework, including establishing baselines and targets to measure the higher-level impact of its programs on TCO activities. This framework, developed in-house rather than relying on contractors, was completed by the end of September 2018.

*Q: So those were your first two years of your tour in Mexico. What happened in the next two years?*

WARFIELD: The context changed. Addressing migration at the U.S.'s southern border continued to be a huge priority in the U.S.-Mexico relationship. Added to that were the, at times contentious, trade negotiations among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada to replace NAFTA with a new agreement. However, these developments did not hinder our development assistance efforts in Mexico, including under the Merida Initiative.

In July 2018, the political landscape underwent a dramatic shift with the landslide electoral victory of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) in July 2018, followed by his inauguration in December 2018. Engaging with the federal government became more complex during this transitional period, marked by a pause in interactions with the previous federal government six months prior to the election and another six months after the election as the new administration took shape.

*Q: A year-long transition period between governments is a long time. What did USAID/Mexico do during this time?*

WARFIELD: USAID/Mexico's local engagement with state governments, the private sector, and civil society in Mexico was crucial for strengthening diplomatic and development ties during this period of waning Mexican public sentiment towards the United States. We focused our programs on developing the evidence base at the state level to build support for national changes in areas like anti-corruption, security, and crime prevention. For instance, in Chihuahua, our support enabled the state's Attorney General to push for a national DNA database for missing persons. Our initiatives to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders in prisons were expanded nationally. Other efforts also had a tangible impact, including protecting journalists under threat, helping at-risk youth, and encouraging cities to resolve outstanding criminal cases.

*Q: At the same time, this was the first year or so of Administrator Green's tenure. How did the Mission respond to his priorities?*

WARFIELD: We championed self-reliance, a priority of USAID leadership. In portfolio reviews and activity designs, the Mission focused on aligning investments with local priorities, leveraging a range of local resources, and expanding engagement with local actors. In doing so, we worked to balance the potential for sustained results with the risks of local partnerships.

*Q: How did this work align with the AMLO Administration's emerging approach?*

WARFIELD: By investing in local leaders addressing corruption, impunity, violence, and deforestation, we prepared to engage with the new government. However, the AMLO administration had a significantly different form of governance, distrusted the private sector, and challenged the assumptions and approaches of civil society. So, it was a bit of a challenge navigating between the U.S. and Mexican administrations' priorities.

*Q: What were the new AMLO Administration's priorities and how did the Mission respond?*

WARFIELD: With the AMLO administration's shift towards economic development as a solution to Mexico's security challenges and its preference for multilateral cooperation, USAID/Mexico adapted its strategy to support these priorities while continuing to address issues of corruption, security, and migration. Specifically, during my last year, we developed a new five-year strategy to align our efforts with both U.S. and Mexican priorities, focusing on promoting mutual security and prosperity.

*Q: What about the Merida Initiative?*

WARFIELD: Initially, there were challenges with funding and responsibilities between the State Department's INL Office and USAID/Mexico regarding the Merida Initiative. INL primarily focused on federal-level operations, while USAID engaged at the federal and state level. Under the Charge D'Affaire, both INL and USAID increased collaboration, reduced redundancy, and presented a cohesive U.S. government strategy to the new Mexican administration. This coordination helped position the Embassy to negotiate the next phase of the Merida Initiative.

*Q: Were there other priorities under Administrator Green's leadership that the Mission had to address?*

WARFIELD: Yes, there was a strong focus on supporting USAID's Foreign Service National (FSN) staff. Under the Agency's transformation agenda, we needed to shift staff incentives from primarily managing large technical contracts to enhancing their skills in developing local capacity and facilitating systemic change. This aligned with the direction Tim Rieser advocated for when I was the LS Coordinator.

USAID/Mexico's financial management, procurement, executive, and program office teams exemplified this shift by leveraging their expertise to introduce a week-long training course for our 21 local partners and our capacity development contractor. They also launched an innovative webinar series that received praise from the Agency's Chief Financial Officer and was slated for regional expansion.

Additionally, keen to elevate talented FSNs, I promoted our leading FSN financial management analyst and FSN executive officer to leadership positions within the Mission, accompanied by an upgrade in their position classifications.

*Q: Were there other USAID reforms relevant to the Mission?*

WARFIELD: I served as Mission Director Liaison for the Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform initiative led by USAID/W's Randy Tift. This effort produced 173 recommendations, some of which were then implemented by USAID/Mexico to rebalance its workload and minimize excessive contract micromanagement. To this end, the Mission also shifted to more outcomes-based contracting. Finally, we adjusted our portfolio to balance our involvement with local and international implementers as well as U.S. small and large businesses, and introduced new partners in line with the administration's priorities.

During my tenure, we significantly diversified our partner base and expanded our engagement with the Mexican private sector and civil society: 45% of our contract funding went to U.S. small businesses, 34% of our partners were new to USAID, and more than 60% of our implementing partners were local organizations. Our collaboration with the Mexican private sector also grew substantially, as we established 16 new public-private partnerships, increasing our local private partners from nine to 42 and leveraging \$42 million in matching funds. Randy praised our program as a model for the agency.

*Q: What lessons did you learn from your tenure in Mexico?*

WARFIELD: Here were my takeaways:

- The transition to the AMLO administration highlighted the importance of adaptability in our strategic planning. Adjusting our plans in response to evolving political priorities was crucial to maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of our programs. With our new country strategy, we shifted from a primary focus on security to include economic development, ensuring our initiatives aligned with both U.S. and Mexican priorities.
- My time in Mexico underscored the importance of local ownership in achieving sustainable development. By engaging local governments, civil society, and the private sector, we tackled challenges more effectively and tailored our efforts to local needs. Importantly, USAID contractors became facilitators of systemic change rather than just deliverers of specific results, thereby enhancing the sustainability of our work.
- During my four-year tour, cultivating strategic partnerships, particularly through the Strategic Alliance for Mexico (SAM), was crucial in expanding USAID's impact and resources. By diversifying our partner base and collaborating closely with local organizations, we introduced innovative solutions to persistent challenges and strengthened community resilience and self-sufficiency. These efforts not only enhanced the capacity of communities to respond to immediate needs but also established a foundation for sustainable development, ensuring the benefits of our assistance would continue long after our direct involvement.
- The effectiveness of USAID's work was significantly improved when our staff engaged directly with local actors, rather than operating solely through contractors or grantees. This direct engagement fostered deeper relationships, built trust, and led to more nuanced understandings of local contexts.

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## **Conclusion**

*Q: Welcome back, Liz. Today is Thursday, April 28th, and this is our final interview. I'm both pleased to have you and sad that this will be our last discussion. Please share your overall lessons learned from your career with USAID.*

WARFIELD: This has been a great opportunity to think about my career after retiring almost three years ago. Reflecting on my 30-year tenure with USAID, I've distilled several critical lessons that have shaped my approach to development:

- **The Importance of Strategy and Adaptability:** Throughout my career, understanding the rationale behind our assistance and adapting our strategies to evolving contexts have been key to advancing sustainable development outcomes. USAID's approach to planning shifted from a focus on individual projects in the Eastern Caribbean to a broader strategic framework with impact measurement in Guatemala to address its complex challenges. In Egypt, clearly articulating our education strategy allowed us to effectively allocate resources and maximize impact. My tenure in India led to the development of an innovative and enduring strategy that emphasized innovation, partnerships and global sharing of practices. In USAID/W, Tjip Walker and I had the opportunity to revise programming policy to incorporate principles of local ownership and sustainability, which I then applied in Mexico. In my final year in Mexico, we developed a new strategy to address not just security concerns, but also economic development to align with both U.S. and Mexican priorities. These experiences underscored the importance of a flexible and well-informed strategy to respond to changing needs and priorities.
- **Local Ownership and Sustainability:** I believe that foreign assistance should empower local systems and actors to sustain results on their own. Interestingly, when I began my career, USAID was directly engaging with and supporting local organizations and institutions—a practice that diminished over time but later resurfaced under Administrator Shah's Implementation and Procurement Reforms and then Local Solutions. What I enjoyed most in the countries where I worked were the strategic partnerships we forged with local governments, civil society, and the private sector. By developing their capacities as needed, leveraging their resources, and tailoring our support to the local context, we increased the prospects for sustainability.
- **Openness to Innovation:** I championed innovative approaches to development, whether it was re-engineering USAID, focusing on early grade reading in Egypt, leveraging India's technological expertise and frugal innovation, advancing the groundbreaking Local Systems Framework, or supporting the novel strategies of fearless Mexican leaders to address corruption, crime, violence, and other security challenges. While evidence-based 'best practices' have value, I believe it is also important to make room for non-traditional, especially local, voices and novel ideas at the development table.

- **Private Sector Development and Engagement:** Engaging with the private sector has been an important part of my career, beginning with my early experiences in the Caribbean. The private sector in most of the countries that I served played a crucial role not only in the economy but also through their contributions to sustaining development outcomes. Whether it was sugar cane growers supporting girls' education in Guatemala, FICCI crowding in investments for early-stage entrepreneurs in India, or COPARMEX helping to reduce crime, violence, and impunity in order to protect their business interests in Mexico, the private sector brought valuable insights and resources to the table.
- **Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs):** I had the good fortune to work with some incredibly talented FSNs. While USAID often faces challenges in retaining enough U.S. Direct Hires, there is a glass ceiling for FSNs. I understand there are valid concerns regarding legal liability for some positions, but I believe it is to USAID's advantage to fully leverage FSN talent by broadening their experience and, as merited, assigning them higher levels of responsibility within a mission.
- **Leadership and Career Development:** It may sound trite, but leadership truly matters. I had the privilege of learning from some exceptional leaders, including Kim Finan, Terry Brown, Bambi Arellano, Stacy Rhodes, Dirk Dijkerman, Nisha Biswal, Bill Hammink, and Susan Reichle, to name a few. I could not have achieved what I did without their support, and for that, I am deeply appreciative. In fact, some of the positions I chose were based more on the opportunity to learn from these leaders than on the roles themselves.

Looking back, I am very grateful for the opportunities I've had, the lessons I've learned, and the incredible people I've worked with throughout my career. In closing, I remain hopeful about the future of development, knowing that with the right strategies, the engagement of local actors and systems, and innovative thinking, USAID can continue to have a meaningful and sustained impact around the world.

*End of interview*