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SUSUMU KEN YAMASHITA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Afghanistan and third time mission director and Assistance Coordinator 2011-2014

Washington, Peace Corps 2014-2016
Political Appointee under Obama Administration

Final Words and retirement -- December 2016

LIST OF KEY WORDS

Johns Hopkins University
National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA)
Dr. Ismail Sirageldin, Johns Hopkins University
Resources for the Awareness of Population Impacts on Development (RAPID)
Bill Goldman
Phil Claxton
The Mexico City Policy
Technical Advisors in AIDS and Child Survival (TAACS) program
Cecilia Pitas
Sigrid Anderson
Field Support
New Management System (NMS)
Reduction in Force of the 1990s
PEPFAR
Dame Helen Rees
Sec of State Colin Powell
Alternative Development Program
Peru President Alejandro Toledo
Center for Development of Youth (CEDRO)
David Leong
Requesting $1 billion for Georgia
Colombia Strategic development Initiative
Acción Social, Colombia
Kajaki Dam project, Afghanistan
Projectized program assistance
Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation program, Afghanistan
Director for Global Operations, Peace Corps

INTERVIEW

The Early Years: 1952 – 1980

Q: The date is May 16, 2017, and I am beginning the first of several interviews with Ken Yamashita. I'm going to start, Ken, by asking you your full name and how you prefer to have it pronounced.

YAMASHITA: Right, my full name is Susumu Ken Yamashita, and everyone calls me Ken. I was born December 1952 in Japan.

Q: And does Susumu mean something in particular?

YAMASHITA: It does. It is a verb in Japanese which means to go forward or ahead. It is a name that is often used for a first-born male. My middle name Ken was a nickname, after my father used it as his when he first came to the U.S. in the mid-1950's. When I became a naturalized American, I made it official and it became my middle name.

Q: And when did you come over to the (United) States?

YAMASHITA: I came over to the U.S. when I was four, about two years after my father who came in 1954 as an expat working for a Japanese company -- part of the postwar reconstruction effort of Japan. He was buying cotton along the Mexico-U.S. border. The cotton was sent back to Japan, and finished products, the early days of low quality Made in Japan textiles such as shirts and pants, were exported back to the U.S. and other countries. My mom and I joined him a couple of years later. It was 1956. We landed in the United States but we went down to Mexico and we lived in a Mexican border town, Mexicali. I went to school on the U.S. side in Calexico, California.

Q: And when you say school was it primary school or secondary school?

YAMASHITA: That was kindergarten and primary school, about four years. We moved to Mexico City in 1964 where we lived for another four years. I went to the American School in Mexico City. In 1964 we moved back to Japan for about three years. We moved to Kobe, where I attended the Canadian Academy, an English language school, for a year then we moved to Tokyo where I attended a Japanese language private school. In 1967 we moved to Peru. All of these moves were due to my father's work. I became your typical expat kid. We moved to Peru in 1967 and that's where I finished my high school at the American School of Lima.

Q: Were you fluent in Spanish by this time?

YAMASHITA: I would say almost fluent. I needed some remedial Spanish when I arrived in Lima. Even though Spanish was my first language of instruction because at age four when I started kindergarten it was in Mexico. I learned and used Spanish throughout my time in Mexico, but it was always as a second or third language. I have never had formal schooling in Spanish. While I can say I am quite fluent in Spanish, my fluency is not at the level of a native-speaker.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

YAMASHITA: I have one sister, Yukiko. She is six years younger than I. She was born in Mexico.

Q: After you graduated from the American School in Peru, what did you decide to do next?

YAMASHITA: I would like to say that my life after high school was all planned out, but in fact it was not. Because of my earlier education and parents' background, I did not have any notion of what to do post high school. It was a very different reality from what typically happens in Japan. In Japan the parents leave major parenting and education decisions to the teachers. My parents therefore relied on the high school counselor and me. I can share two examples of what I mean when I say that in Japan the parenting is left up to the teachers. When I was in 7th grade on one occasion I wanted to go the movies with some friends. My mother matter-of-factly asked me whether I had permission from my teacher to go. I was of course, stunned. Of course, I had not. Since my mother insisted, I asked permission from my teacher, who eventually agreed but only after a grilling about the movie, the time of the show and who was the "friend" who was going with me. An apparent concern about the morality of the whole thing. Another example was when my mother and I went to the obligatory teacher-parent conference. The teacher, not too happy with my grades – by the way I was equally unhappy about the school – began by berating my mother for being a bad parent. I recall he looked at her and scolded her for taking more time painting her finger nails, and, making up her hair than she did looking after my education. In good Japanese tradition my mother proceeded to apologize profoundly for being so complacent and a bad parent. Anyways, as I was contemplating going to college, the guidance counselor at the American School in Peru suggested that I apply to several of the big-name Ivy League school, plus others of similar reputation. I wasn't quite sure of what I would like to study, but I did think about any subject that could transcend languages and cultures. So, I decided on the hard sciences. In hindsight, I wonder whether unconsciously I was grappling with a loss of identity; whether I could associate myself as a Japanese, American, or Peruvian. Since the hard sciences transcended ethnicity and language, I did not have to worry about choosing an identity. My choice of hard science was certainly not because of an interest in the subject matter.

One of the schools that accepted me was Johns Hopkins in Baltimore and that's where I ended up going. Roughly towards the end of my first year, it became abundantly clear that I was not prepared to pursue any of the hard sciences. The evidence was clear: A C- in Chemistry 101 and a grade so low in Physics 101 that I had to drop out of the course. During the next year and into my Junior year I was an undeclared major. Gradually I gravitated towards environmental sciences and human ecology. This path in turn led me to courses in population and demography, public health, economics, and development.

Q: What year would that have been?

YAMASHITA: I started as a Freshman in 1971. It was as a Junior in 1973 that I became interested in development. There was a USAID story there, which I did not know about

until many years later. It was the first time USAID became central to my studies and career. It would not be my last. Here's the story:

When I arrived at Johns Hopkins as a freshman, Hopkins did not have an organized structure to support undergraduate students from abroad. In contrast for the graduate students there was a well-organized host family program that would host students during breaks in the semester such as Thanksgiving and Easter. With no support structure the few undergraduates from overseas were on their own. In my case, this became real during Thanksgiving of my freshman year. Like most campuses around the United States, everything shuts down during Thanksgiving, including dormitories and cafeterias. The campus was closed though I was allowed to stay in my dorm. My roommate who was from Hong Kong was equally ignorant of American traditions. Most restaurants in the neighborhood were closed, though we eventually found a small grocery store, the equivalent of 7-11 store, where we bought interesting looking meals with instructions to just "heat and serve." We bought a couple of those, took them back to our dorms, and heated them over the radiators. They were partially thawed out when we ate them. After Thanksgiving our student counselors at the Office of International Student Affairs were rather embarrassed and aghast that we had to go through this. It occurred to me that what Hopkins needed was an undergraduate level international student association, so my roommate and I created such an association. We were subsequently invited to be members of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs. Though the initial interaction with the Office of International Student Affairs was rocky, I became very good friends with the two women who ran the office: Naomi Zipp and Barbara Fogle. They were supportive and instrumental in my studies in my last two years. As well, the host family to whom I was assigned, Francis and Jane Cullen, were the kindest and most welcoming family one could ask for. My complete lack of understanding of American culture and the first culture shock of Thanksgiving was repeated in the spring. The seasonal return to warm weather brought with it a campus-wide debauchery over the Wizard of Oz with multiple showing of the film, and people dressed as Munchkins, Dorothy's, and Winged Monkeys. I was once again reminded that I did not belong. I did not have clear identity of who I was, a lingering doubt that first set in when I returned to Japan at age 12. I did not know whether I was Japanese, Peruvian (or Hispanic generally) or American.

Q: When you said the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs you meant NAFSA?

YAMASHITA: NAFSA, yes that's right. We were invited by NAFSA to various events, including one in 1973 at Iowa State University on global trends and issues. At this conference there was a session on population and development which resonated with me. The development bug bit me and did not let go. During the rest of my junior year and into my senior year, I took courses that related to development such as economics, sociology, human ecology and statistics. I also took courses at the School of Public Health on population dynamics. Little did I know until many years later that the global trends and issues program was funded by a grant from the USAID Office of Population to NAFSA

to encourage international students to get into development. Well at least in my case, it worked.

Q: Oh my, wow!

YAMASHITA: Yeah, my association with USAID goes back to my undergraduate days.

Q: Were there any other courses that you were particularly interested in?

YAMASHITA: Yes. In my junior and senior years, I took some courses at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (JHSP) on family planning, reproductive health, and formal demography. When I applied for graduate schools the Chairman of the Department of Population Dynamics, Dr. Henry Mosley reached out to me and encouraged me to apply to Johns Hopkins. As further enticement, he suggested that I could probably get a Fellowship and that I would not have to take many of the introductory courses as I had already done so as an undergraduate. Years after I finished my PhD in Population Dynamics from JHSPH I found out that the fellowship grant that I received was in turn a grant from the USAID Office of Population. In those days USAID was giving out some substantial grants to a variety of schools, basically in north Michigan, North Carolina, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Emory, amongst others, to encourage graduate students to get degrees in public health, population, and development.

Q: So that was "to build up centers of excellence" or something along those lines?

YAMASHITA: Yes. This was the second time USAID had a major impact on my education and career. Little did I know or appreciate this at the time.

Q: You went directly from undergraduate to graduate school?

YAMASHITA: Yes. Like many decisions in life, it was partly by design and partly by fate. Since I was a Japanese national on a foreign student visa, known in those days as the Alien Student Visa, upon completion of the education I was required to go back to my home of origin. Unless I kept studying. After I finished my undergraduate there was no reason for me to return to Japan. The concept of "return" was unrealistic. Never having spent much time in Japan, not having any connections, and not being fluent in Japanese, there was simply no way I would want to return. Thus I applied to graduate school.

Q: Did you do any international travel on any of your programs, either undergrad or graduate school?

YAMASHITA: No. My international travel and experience before the end of grad school was entirely because of my life experience, having lived in Mexico and Peru.

Q: Did you have to do a master's thesis or anything of that sort?

YAMASHITA: Well, what happens at Johns Hopkins is, at the end of your first year you go through what they call the prelims (preliminaries) and comprehensives. Depending on how you do, they offer you either a master's or a doctoral program. I guess I did well enough to be offered the doctoral program, which I accepted.

Q: Who were your advisers? Anyone that we should know about?

YAMASHITA: My principal advisor was Ismail Sirageldin, who was an economist by training. His area of expertise was the economics of population growth and development. It made sense for him to be my advisor, as that was my areas of interest. I had taken may courses in economics and statistics as an undergraduate, so I thought I would have an advantage and would not have to take too many more course. Oh, how wrong I was! Professor Sirageldin decided I should take higher level statistics, probability, and economics, to fulfill the required course-work for a master's degree in those disciplines. I ended up taking esoteric courses such as probability theory, mathematical economics, econometrics, and other similar courses. I did take some basic public health courses, but none of the advances ones.

Q: So that was a doctoral program. How long did it take you?

YAMASHITA: It was a doctoral program. It took me five years, and at the end I received a PhD, as opposed to a Doctor or Public Health (DrPH).

Yes, it did take me five years, and many times during those years I thought I would just drop the whole thing. There were many frustrating moments. Still, in the end the training set me up for my career in health development. In hindsight I believe the most significant impact that professor Sirageldin had on me which I disliked at the time was the thought process in identifying a problem and possible approaches for a solution. In addition, his ability to connect the dots, from the small detailed metrics to the big picture that is critical in being able to answer the proverbial "so what" question was instrumental in my learning. I used this approach quite often in my career and find that I am still using it today.

Q: Did you do a dissertation?

YAMASHITA: I did, and it was quite the saga like most dissertations are. I wanted to do my dissertation on internal migration. What I wanted to do was go to Colombia, collect original data on migrants and potential migrants, and try to put together a probabilistic model of what are the key characteristics that input the decision to migrate. It was going to be a non-linear, probabilistic model, and it was going to be based on a survey. The dissertation would have a double focus: testing a theory of migration and utilizing non-linear techniques for estimation of significant predictor factors in the decision to migrate. I did a lot of literature review and it sounded rather nice. I put together my proposal and asked Dr. Sirageldin who was thoroughly supportive.

One of my other professors who had agreed to be a reader for my dissertation was Dr. Ali Khan, an economics professor that I thought very highly of. After reviewing my proposal, his reaction was extremely positive and encouraging and yet puzzling. He said, "This is a fantastic proposal, do it after you're finished with your degree!"

I'll never forget him saying that and I was rather surprised. He explained: "The reason is if you embark on this you will be a student forever! The daunting task of data collection alone will take you several years. Then the methodology and the technical analysis will take you several more years. Meanwhile you'll start writing articles on bits and pieces of your research and then more analysis and more research will come up which will make you change your research all over again." He added, "It will take you forever so do something small, not at all sexy but doable, get the degree, and then embark on your lifelong research interest."

Those were some of the most profound and useful comments that I've had during my entire career. Though somewhat dejected, I came to around and did a very simple analysis of marriage trends in the United States. I used data from a longitudinal survey which added complexity. My theory was based on an approach known as the Chicago School, and it laid out an analytic approach that used economic methods to describe social events and decisions such as marriage, age at first sex, and so on. It was the Economics of the Family, and my focus was on the economics of marriage. The concept behind my dissertation was to use economic theory to predict whether a person was more likely to marry. The economists thought it was rather intriguing, the sociologists disagreed vehemently, and the demographers thought I was out of my mind. I guess in my studies, as in my life, I was conflicted about my own identity. In addition to wondering where I fit – Japanese, Hispanic, or American, why not toss in another identity crisis – economist, sociologist, or demographer? Nevertheless, I prevailed and eventually got the degree!

Q: And again, no international travel while doing your research?

YAMASHITA: No.

Q: So, you got to know Baltimore very well.

YAMASHITA: I did. I ended up living there almost 10 years, from 1971-1980, and I got to know Baltimore very well. I also got to know Hopkins very well. And yes, by the time I'd finished grad school, whatever international exposure -- I won't say experience -- I had, had to do with my upbringing rather than anything related to work or anything related to development. In my undergraduate days at the end of my junior year and beginning of my senior year, my parents were living in Peru at the time, so while visiting them over the summer I did a little research and wrote a little piece on population levels and trends in Peru, just based on library research. I went to the UNFPA office there and did some fairly rudimentary desktop research, but that was really the extent of it in terms of my overseas development experience before finishing my graduate degree.

It was also during this time – 1979 to be exact, that I married Viviana Ferragut. This year we celebrate 39 years of marriage. We have two wonderful kids, Yuri and Seiji, and two beautiful grandsons, Aodhan, age 7 and Liam, age 4. Viviana and I met when we were undergraduates at Johns Hopkins, and we were together for six years before we were married. She hung in there while I anguished over my dissertation and lost a lot of weight as I prepared for my dissertation defense. She was and still is, my anchor, cheer leader, coach, and all-around therapist. We were married in September of 1979; I defended my dissertation in December of that year and received my degree at the Commencement in May of 1980.

Q: Tell me more about your wife How does she come into this story?

YAMASHITA: Even though I met Viviana when we were both undergraduates at Hopkins, our connection goes back to my high school days in Peru. One of my friends in high school was a guy named Mike Monzon. His family was from Cuba and like many left when Castro came into power. Mr. Monzon was hired by the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) and was assigned to Peru. They had two sons, the older one, Mike, was in the same grade as I, and we became friends. After high school we went our separate ways. One day while a Freshman at Hopkins I got a note in my mailbox saying that Mike father was in town, that he's having dinner at the house, and I was invited. It was signed by Viviana. It turns out that Viviana's family, also from Cuba and Mike Monzon's family are life-long friends from Cuba days, and had stayed in touch. Mr. Monzon comes to Washington, visits my future father-in-law, they start talking and my future father-in-law talks about how his daughter is at Hopkins, the first undergraduate year that they accepted women -- 1971 by the way. Mr. Monzon jumped in and said, "Oh, I know somebody who goes to Hopkins. His name is Susumu Yamashita." My future father-in-law replied: "Well, let's invite him over to dinner." And that's how I met my wife, but we didn't start going out until a couple of years later when I was a Junior. By the way, Viviana reminds me that in fact, I did not go to the dinner.

Q: When did your wife come from Cuba? Was she an American citizen when you met her?

YAMASHITA: Her family let Cuba in 1960 and arrived in the U.S. as a refugee. Her father worked as an agronomist and was hired by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). He and his family retained the special status as diplomats under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS). She remained in that status until 1973, when she became a citizen.

Q: What did your wife do after undergraduate? Did she also go to Hopkins graduate school as well?

YAMASHITA: No, she went to Virginia Tech to get a Master's degree in Marine Biology, then later transferred to the University of Maryland where she finished her Masters in Resource Economics. Her thesis was a fascinating analysis of the Chesapeake

Bay and the intersection – and often conflict - between sports fishing and commercial fishing. A conflict that persists to this day.

The First Employment Experience: 1980 – 1984.

Q: As you approached the completion of your dissertation, what were your thoughts about what to do next?

YAMASHITA: My thoughts were very clear. Or, so I thought. Ever since high school I wanted to join the UN. It was a dream and a fantasy. The idea of joining this august world body and working for world peace was what perfect. Now with degree in hand, I was ready. Moreover, remember that at the time I was still a Japanese citizen. I had heard from a lot of people that Japanese citizens were underrepresented at the United Nations so I would get priority consideration for hiring. I applied to the United Nations before I finished my degree but the process and wait would take a long time. Professor Sirageldin urged me to get some experience in the meantime and recommended that I work for an organization to which he had been a consultant. He proceeded to introduce me to my first real job after graduate school. A relatively small consulting firm that had just won an award from USAID – The Futures Group. You probably know them. They have grown substantially since those early years. This then, was my third encounter with USAID. First as an undergraduate, then as a graduate student, and now my first job. Once again USAID becomes an instrumental factor in my life and my career.

The award that Futures Group had just won was called Resources for the Awareness of Population Impacts on Development, or RAPID. Because I had studied population demography, and economic growth, and, I could speak Spanish, it was a good fit. I worked for the Futures Group from 1980-1981. I traveled quite extensively that year. I would say probably half my time I was traveling for the Futures Group and doing analysis on population and economic growth. An important aspect of the work was to present the findings to the highest authorities in government, including presidents, prime ministers, and cabinet members. The goal was to raise their awareness about the consequences of demographic trends, and the need to plan accordingly with policies, strategies, legislation and funding to support the increasing needs in basic services. We also advocated for expanding the availability of contraception in the face of increasing demand.

This first experience. Working for Futures Group on the RAPID Project, travelling mostly in Latin America, taught me how to stand in front of large audiences, how to communicate complex technical information, and how to "think on my feet." I was very fortunate that the people working with me -- people like John Stover, Phil Claxton, Alice Weinstein and many others were instrumental in professional development as I learned about USAID, about public policy and politics. In addition to learning communication skills, I learned how to write succinctly and how to work in teams. All these skills would become helpful to me in the future.

Q: What about your plans for the UN?

YAMASHITA: I had not given up. During my year at Futures Group, I continued to interact with the UN in hopes of landing a job. There were many positions within the UN that I had applied to, and one of them was the United Nations Fund for Population Activities or UNFPA. I have a funny story about this interview. At the time the Director of the UNFPA was Rafael M. Salas. I had several interviews at UNFPA and my last one was going to be with Mr. Salas. I had no idea who Rafael Salas was, but the name sounded Hispanic. I assumed someone from Latin America. With that assumption, I thought it would be an easy interview. I would put on my best Hispanic identity and begin casually with an "Hola" and "Buenos Dias." This was going to be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

When I walk into Mr. Salas' office, I was stunned when I saw someone who looked like me. An Asian.

Q: Really!

YAMASHITA: Of course, the initial shock threw me off. Before I could recover, Mr. Salas asked his first question: "Dr. Yamashita, any relationship to General Yamashita?" That threw me off even more. In hindsight I am sure he was trying to get me to relax with some humor. But at the time I was simply confused. And I never recovered. Rafael Salas was an extraordinary director of UNFPA from the Philippines. He led the UNFPA during some of its most important growth years as budgets grew and the importance of family planning and reproductive health was acknowledged by nations around the world. General Yamashita, you may know from WWII in Southeast Asia was not a nice person. He is known as the Tiger of Malaya; he is infamous for the atrocities. By the way, and for the record, no, there's no relationship. It was a rather interesting moment for me. I had made assumptions based on names; connecting names with ethnicity and nationality that were wrong. Not only did this incident throw me off for my interview. It also raised questions about me. A Japanese by nationality and name, an Asian by ethnicity, yet more closely identified with Americans? Hispanics?

While I did not get a job with UNFPA, I eventually landed one at the UN Population Division. This is a Division within the Secretariat that does a lot of technical work for the member nations. This Division is responsible for publishing demographic information for the UN. Perhaps the most known publication is the Demographic Levels and Trends. In addition, the Division also provides estimates of fertility and mortality, addresses population policy matters, and produces analysis of key demographic factors related to mortality, fertility, and migration. I was hired by the Fertility and Family Planning Unit of the Division.

Q: Are these jobs in New York?

YAMASHITA: Yeah, they're in New York. My wife and I moved to New York and found a home in Mahopac, NY, which is north of White Plains, near Brewster, NY. We

wanted to buy a house, and the White Plains area sounded intriguing. But once we saw the housing prices, we started to move further and further away until we found something we could afford. Hence the location. We lived close to the train station. It took me two hours each way to commute to the United Nations by train. It is on my daily commutes where I learned to speak French! You know, when you have four hours a day you start studying. Lots of time to study and pick up a language. I learned French, and by the time we moved back to DC, almost three years later, I had a reasonable understanding of the language.

I worked for the UN for a couple of years and it turns out that the United Nations and I did not get along. My annual evaluation was barely satisfactory and I was placed on probation. Since I was not yet tenured. If my performance did not improve, I would be asked to leave. I had joined the UN in 1981, and in 1983 I was placed on probationary status. Now I am sure you have heard the conventional wisdom that nobody gets fired from the UN. Well, it turns out it is not true. And I was going to be an example of that.

Q: Was it because you were focused more on the economic side rather than the public health side?

YAMASHITA: I don't think so. I think there were probably a lot of other things. For starters, my performance was simply not good. No mystery; no hidden agendas. My analytic and writing skills were simply not up to par. Beyond my performance, I was not motivated as I did not agree with what we were doing. In those days, you may remember, the series of World Fertility Surveys were being conducted. Our job was to take the data and provide analysis about levels and trends. My disagreement was that our analysis was limited to rather simple cross tabulations. Moreover, whatever we wrote had to go through a rigorous editing process that included reviewing language for correct UN nomenclature. For example, some of the best information was coming out of South Korea and Taiwan and yet we not could refer to them. Countries of the Eastern Bloc reviewed every line and objected to any conclusion that appeared to criticize their health systems. The Developing Countries, known at the time as Third World or Less Developed Countries, objected to anything that would imply criticism of their weak programs and lack of funding commitment for maternal and reproductive health. Therefore, it took us a very long time to publish our work for general use. In the meantime, major institutions such as Princeton, University of North Carolina, Emory, Johns Hopkins as well as Population Council, Ford Foundation, amongst others were coming out with many interesting and ground-breaking analysis from the same data. Many of these institutions were carrying out this analysis with funding from USAID. I felt that our analysis at the UN was so slow and watered down that it was not adding to the body of knowledge and it was irrelevant. My biggest mistake perhaps was that I made my point very clear and often. I guess there were predictable consequences that followed.

Q: So, you started looking around?

YAMASHITA: I did. Initially I tried to stay within the UN system by moving from the Population Division. I really wanted to try to go overseas. The advice I received was that

in order to be successful in my endeavor, I needed to reach out to the Japanese Mission to the UN to get their support. Recall that at this point I am still a Japanese national, on a diplomatic visa to the UN. My conversations with the Japanese Mission were not successful. This was yet again another time when I questioned my identity. The Japanese Mission totally rejected my inquiries. I was told, in a rather un-Japanese-like directness, that I was the "wrong-type" of Japanese as I had completed my education in the US and not in Japan. This took me back to my early teen years in Japan, when a Japanese classmate openly called me a "banana" – that is, yellow on the outside but white on the inside. A kinder, senior Japanese official at the UN took me out to lunch – and suggested I leave the UN. So I did. Fortunately, my job search did not last long. I got a job with Consumer's Union. This is the organization that generates the *Consumer Reports* magazine. I was hired as a Survey Research Associate. I worked in the unit responsible for the surveys that are sent out to consumers to get their feedback on satisfaction with various products, from vacuum cleaners to automobiles. The Annual Car Issue which ranks vehicles by reliability and consumer satisfaction is a product of that unit. We are now talking about late 1983. Our first daughter was born in April of 1983, so she was barely a toddler when I moved to Consumer's Union. My wife Viviana was working for an economic analysis organization.

Q: This was still in New York?

YAMASHITA: Yes, still in NY. I was settling into my new job and getting accustomed to working for a unionized organization. Consumer Reports belongs to the Newspaper Guild and has a proud history of union activism. Late in 1983 the union and management were in disagreement over the printing of the magazine. Management wanted to move to desktop publishing using multiple colors. The Union insisted that the magazine remain traditional by using only red and black print on white paper. There was no agreement so at the end of the year we went on strike.

Q: Oh my!

YAMASHITA: Indeed. As I started to walk the picket lines in winter in Mount Vernon, New York, our situation was as follows: Our daughter, Yuri, was eight months old, we were expecting our second child (he would be born in August of the following year), Viviana fortunately had a full-time job, but we were under a tight budget and depended on my income. Being on strike, I received benefits to the tune of $100 a week so long as I walked the picket lines. The strike lasted almost five months. In January Viviana and I decided to give this situation a couple of months. If the strike persisted, I would look for additional work.

Q: And as you said you were being paid a token amount to walk the picket lines.

YAMASHITA: That is correct. When I left the UN, I was so demoralized that I had decided to leave international development work. Yet here I was not even a year later facing the prospect of unemployment. I decided I would try to get back into development, at least on a part time basis. I called The Futures Group to ask about possible part-time

consulting opportunities. At the time (March 1984) Henry Cole was Vice-President. Much to my good fortune, Henry told me that the position of Director for Latin America had just opened up as the incumbent had left to join USAID. I immediately accepted, and we moved to Washington in May of 1984. Most of my responsibilities would involve working on USAID projects overseas. Once again USAID plays a major role in my career, and my life. I returned to Washington, I returned to The Futures Group. My in-laws were living in Washington at that time so an extra bonus for us was being able to see them quite often, and for them to enjoy the grandkids.

The Futures Group and Introduction to Policy: 1984 - 1989

Q: Were you an American citizen at that time? Was a security clearance required for you to work on USAID projects?

YAMASHITA: I was a permanent resident, but not yet a citizen. Neither USAID nor Futures required a security clearance for me to work on RAPID. However, there were a few awkward instances when I was overseas, working with USAID Missions and with Embassies, including the Ambassador. I had to get into the Embassy, and with a Japanese passport, it always took time. Of course at the time the security requirements were not what they are today, but nonetheless there were some long questioning by the security guards at the Embassy followed by dismay by the Ambassador. I would often accompany the Ambassador to meet with high level officials, sometimes with the President or Vice-President. The security guards were very confused. From that time, it took me another three years before I could get my citizenship. I was finally naturalized in 1987. The time delay was nothing more than the required waiting period before I could qualify for citizenship. At the end, the process was rather simple, but again with some humorous moments. Because I had traveled overseas so frequently for Futures Group on a USAID project, I had to list every single trip, the destination, purpose, and length of travel. Fortunately, we had to write trip reports for every trip! I ended up with a long list, as in several pages long, of data to show the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) officers. It took a while to explain, but they got it.

Q: So, you moved to Washington to rejoin Futures Group?

YAMASHITA: Yes. We moved to the Maryland suburbs of Washington DC, in Montgomery County. I started to work for Futures Group immediately upon our return to the Washington area and on August 13, 1984 our son Seiji was born. In early August I was in Paraguay for a project and I had plans to return on the 10th. Coincidentally, that time was when the United Nations Conference on Population and Development was held in Mexico City. Futures Group called me in Paraguay and asked that I postpone my return and stop by the Conference. My attendance at the Conference would include the 13th of August. The person requesting my attendance was the Project Director at Futures Group, Phil Claxton. Phil was a retired State Department Foreign Service Officer. He is known to be one of the original Washington insiders that was instrumental in the creation and funding of the USAID Population Program, which ended up being one of the largest and most successful programs of the Agency. Anyways, Phil wanted me to go to the

Conference in Mexico. By the way, it was at this Conference that the U.S. laid out its controversial policy know to this day as the "Mexico City Policy." I told Phil that we were expecting the birth of our child "any day now" and that I needed to get back. Phil's response was that my wife could handle child birth by herself. He added, "after all, you know women. They have been having babies by themselves for a long time!" I was astounded. As much as I admired Phil, I could not believe he would make such a sexist remark. It led me to wonder what his motivation was in supporting population programs. Was it because of his concern for women's health? Or was it his concern for overpopulation. While it is easy to say it was both, the highly sensitive nature of the program led to intense discussion and debate. In many countries we were labeled baby killers and promoters of forced sterilizations and mandatory population control. I called Henry Cole, who was the Vice President at Futures Group and Phil's boss. Henry agreed with me that I should fly back. I returned home on the 10th of August, and Seiji was born just a few days later.

Q: Well good for you that you held your ground and returned home in time for your son's birth. Now, just for the record, can you explain what the Mexico City Policy is?

YAMASHITA: This U.S. policy prohibits any U.S. assistance to any individual or organization that provides abortion services or supports abortion through their communication programs or policy related activism. The restriction includes organizations that use resources that are not of the US government for these purposes. In particular, organizations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) lost their funding from USAID. Many other groups, such as Pathfinder had to make difficult choices about whether they would continue providing information and services (again, without using US government funds) and thus lose USAID funding, or give up what they considered a critical service for reproductive health. We were further restricted from providing maternal health services to women who suffered from infections and other conditions arising from poorly performed illegal abortions.

Q: How long did you end up working for Futures Group?

YAMASHITA: I worked for Futures Group until 1989. Until then I worked not only in Latin America but increasingly in other regions. The work took me to Africa, to the Middle East -- to Egypt in particular, Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and, Thailand.

Q: This was all RAPID-related work?

YAMASHITA: It was all RAPID related, and after the RAPID project, there was a new population policy project called OPTIONS. It was some of my most energized and enthusiastic and fun-fulfilled days of my early career, but it was also exhausting. I was traveling at least 50 percent of my time. A typical work-week would look like this: I would start travel on a weekend. As a contractor, our Golden Rule was always make the client happy. In any given country, USAID would expect me to start work first thing Monday morning, so I had to travel over the weekend and be ready. I would be in a

country for three weeks. My final day was always a Friday, handing a draft report to the USAID Mission, and then traveling home a weekend. On Monday my first day back in the office I would start getting ready for my next trip. In the meantime, I had other duties. I contributed to many contract proposals that Futures Group was working on. I will never forget one time when I was on vacation with my wife over July 4th. We were at the beach in Miami, when I received a call at 2:00 am on a Saturday. A frantic Henry Cole was on the phone, telling me I was "needed" back at the office. A proposal that was due the following Monday was still in bad shape and my input would be required. I told him I would check available flights first thing in the morning, to which he replied that he had already booked a flight for me that left at 5:45 in the morning and would get me in the office by 8:30. I dutifully went back to the office and proceeded to work all day and all night on Saturday and Sunday, finishing the proposal. Viviana and the kids stayed at the beach.

Q: Well how did your family react to your crazy schedule?

My wife, always the anchor and always supportive, would say, "You need to be here for the kids' birthdays; other than that, do what you need to do." That meant if I needed to, I could miss her birthday, our anniversary, Thanksgiving, and just about anything else. After all, what was the Golden Rule? Keep the client happy; the client is always right. Right?

Q: I guess.

YAMASHITA: That's what we tried to do, and that was my life at Futures Group. Now we're talking about 1989. One of the countries that I worked in was Ecuador. The Population Officer, the Director of the Health and Population Office at USAID in Ecuador was Bill Goldman. You may know him.

Q: I do.

YAMASHITA: On one of my trips he asked, "Ken, since you spend so much time down here, why don't you just move here?" I asked him what he meant, and he said he could use a policy advisor in his office. He said he could put together a Personal Services Contract (PSC) or something similar for me. These contractual mechanisms were frequently used by USAID and, in particular in the health and population offices around the world to augment the technical capacity of the USAID Mission.

My initial reaction to Bill's offer was, "I don't think my wife's going to like that." As I mentioned earlier, at that time my in-laws lived nearby in Chevy Chase, Maryland. We would see them almost every weekend -- certainly my wife and kids saw them every weekend. I thought "We're going to be far away from them. I don't think my wife's going to like that."

Bill Goldman responded with: "Keep an open mind. Don't say no right away, go home, talk to Viviana, see what she says, and we'll take it from there."

Ecuador and Joining the Foreign Service: 1989 – 1995

I went home after that trip, and when I shared Bill's offer with Viviana, she immediately said we should take it. I was surprised and said as much. I told her I thought she would not want to leave and be so far from her parents. I'll never forget what she said next. She said, "Why do you think I spend so much time with them? Because you're not around!"

To me that was profound. It was an eye opener. All these years I had assumed she was so close to her parents, she really enjoyed being with them, so by being very close to them, I could travel around the world while she enjoyed her parents. Little did I realize it was nothing more than a coping strategy. I called Bill and told him I would accept his offer and we started working out the details. As with all things USAID, the details were tricky and time consuming. There were many options and possibilities. Eventually we concluded that we would use a hiring mechanism known as the Technical Advisor for Aids and Child Survival, or TAACS. This particular mechanism was managed by a number of organizations, ranging from universities to non-profit organizations to contractors to other government agencies. Each TAACS Advisor was hired as an employee of the organization, funded out of the USAID/TAACS program. The selection of an organization was up to each Advisor, in negotiation with the organization and approval of USAID. Every option had their plusses and minuses.

Q: Was CEDPA (Centre for Development and Population Activities) one of the organizations?

YAMASHITA: Yes, it was. Another was Johns Hopkins. I could have chosen to become a member (probably something like Adjunct Faculty) of Johns Hopkins and be funded by the TAACS program. Alternatively, I could have joined CEDPA. Other possible organizations included the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and the think-tank, The Population Council. After some wavering, I decided that it would be advantageous to be associated with government, so I joined the CDC (Center for Disease Control). Initially they were skeptical. I was not a Commissioned Officer of the US Public Health Service (The CDC is part of the Uniformed Services), nor did I have a medical degree.

But with some cajoling by USAID, CDC eventually caved and hired me. I had decided that being part of the civil service was a good idea. I must say that in hindsight, I had no idea how much of a good idea it ended up being because I was now, for all intents and purposes, a direct hire, and being a direct hire, I had a different level of access. That was remarkable. I had my top secret clearance, and the USAID services were available to support me. My overseas career began. Once again, USAID was integral to my career. Thanks to Bill Goldman, and with funding from USAID, I was able to move overseas with my family. My daughter was 6 and my son was 4. This was their first overseas experience. Viviana left her career behind. I had a trailing spouse and third culture kids. The culture shock for my kids was initially hard and real. We initially tried to have them integrate into the Ecuadorian culture, but decided it was a bad idea after our daughter returned from school one day not knowing how to play any of the games her Embassy

American friends were playing. At the time we decided our children would be American and their life would be anchored in America (to be more precise, in Montgomery County. MD!). In hindsight this was the right decision. And once again, it was my anchor-for-life, Viviana, that made the call.

Q: What year was that?

YAMASHITA: It was 1989. Then around 1990-91, Bill Goldman and the Mission Director, Frank Almaguer, started asking me what my plans were after the TAACS program. I hadn't really thought about it, so I called my supervisor at CDC and asked for his advice. I had assumed I would have a career path with CDC and perhaps get another assignment in another country. Well it was the wrong assumption. According to CDC, I was not on a career track nor were they encouraging about such possibilities. Hence I started thinking that maybe I would go back to the contractor world. Perhaps to Futures Group for a third round!

As an alternative, Bill Goldman and Frank Almaguer encouraged me to apply to USAID as a direct hire Foreign Service Officer. It sounded like a good idea, and I proceeded to send in my application. This was 1991. I received a quick response from USAID Office of Recruitment. I had been accepted as an entry level professional. Known in those days as the International Development Intern (IDI) program. My response was less than overwhelming. I had a PhD plus 12 years of experience. Entry level did not sound like the route I wanted to take. Bill Goldman agreed. He thought I should be hired at the mid-level. I proceeded to turn down the IDI offer and told Recruitment that I would like to be considered as a mid-level hire. Recruitment's response was that while they would keep my application open, it was "highly unlikely" that an opening would be available any time soon for a mid-level. The hiring of mid-level professionals was always controversial. The employee's union, the American Foreign Service Association, AFSA, was stridently against mid-level hires. I understood the odds but could not go back to an entry level status. Then much to my surprise, an incredible letter writing campaign on my behalf started. Bill Goldman was first. He was followed by a who's who of USAID luminaries, including Frank Almaguer, Stacy Rhodes, Aaron Williams, and Ann Van Dusen. I was grateful and humbled by their generous support. A welcoming and flexible Frank Cauterucci was the head of Recruitment. He agreed and approved the hiring. The process ended up taking two years. It was 1993 when I was offered a position at the midlevel (FS-02) as a direct hire. The person that shepherded the process to the end was none other than Cecilia Pitas in Human Resources. Do you remember her?

Q: Yes, I sure do!

YAMASHITA: What a remarkable person! I'll never forget her. I was in Washington for some workshop or conference or training in the health office, and I ran into Cecilia. It was early in the week. When Cecilia saw me, she asked me how long I was going to be in Washington. I told her only through the end of the week. I wondered why she asked. To which Cecilia cheerfully responded: "Ok, good, I'm going to try to panel you and get you through so that we can get you on-board by the end of the week." In the time between

when she saw me and the end of the week, Cecilia was able to convene a panel, organize the final interview, carry it out and prepare the paperwork to bring me on-board. The week after I returned to Ecuador, I received a letter with an offer of appointment to the Foreign Service at the FS-02 level. There were so many people who were helpful to me during this process. After I joined the Foreign Service, many of the same individuals were essential to my success A word here about my unsung heroes. They are the men and women who are seldom seen or heard from. People like Cecilia Pitas, Andrew Luck in the Latin America and Caribbean region, who help us with our overseas assignment, so we can go to countries where there are decent schools for our kids. Our colleagues in Shipping and Transportation who make sure that our household belonging go to the same country and same destination as we do; our colleagues in Payroll who make sure that we get a paycheck every two week; those in Human Resources that make sure our crazy annual evaluation process moves smoothly and on time. I could go on and on. They are our invisible workforce. They are seldom thanked and often blamed. They work in dark offices and tight corners. They are few and overworked. They are my everyday unsung heroes.

Q: Were you still living in Ecuador while this was going on?

YAMASHITA: Yes. By the time we left Ecuador we had lived there six years. From 1989 to 1993 as a TAACS Advisor with CDC and from 1993 to 1995 as a US Direct Hire Foreign Service Officer. Ecuador was therefore my first tour with USAID. In 1995 we went back to Washington for my first Washington tour. The six years in Ecuador was also fortuitous for the family. Our children went through their entire elementary school years in one school. As a family we enjoyed Ecuador, going to the Galapagos, traveling along the Andes from Quito to Cuenca, hiking up the Cotopaxi Volcano and experiencing the Amazon jungle for the first time in their lives.

Q: Interesting.

YAMASHITA: One of the anecdotes about Ecuador. People always ask me, "What gets you motivated about USAID?" One of the stories I like to share is one of first experiences in Ecuador. In the early 90's we had a water and sanitation project that provided potable water to rural communities. The communities were mostly in the highlands. The project involved either digging a well or putting in a water catchment or storage tank. For the inauguration of a potable water system that we completed in a community, the Minister of Health decided to attend. Our Mission Director (Frank Almaguer) and our Ambassador also attended. It turned into a big ceremony with a lot of press coverage. I was there as the Director of the USAID Mission's Health Office. I was also responsible for making sure that everything went well. It was my first time to be responsible for such a big event and yes, I was nervous. The ceremony started, and the leader of the community gives a long and rambling speech about how for 500 years since Columbus came to the America this little community has been ignored. Ignored by the Spaniards, and ignored by subsequent governments, and really ignored by the current government. He criticized the government for not looking after the needs of the people. He went on and on. And on and on. I thought, "Oh my god! Where is he going with this?" And then he said, "But today

thanks to the generosity of the people of the United States, thanks to their willingness to let go of some of their hard-earned money, today we have water in this community." It was amazing! Frank and the Ambassador were beaming. This was one of my first "oh wow" moments. I felt I had made the right decision to join the Foreign Service. I was very proud of our Agency.

Q: You were in Ecuador, you said you became office director? Bill Goldman moved on somewhere?

YAMASHITA: Right. His tour ended around 1994, and I moved up to be the Office Director.

Q: So, what were the activities of your program?

YAMASHITA: The activities were typical of an overseas USAID health program at the time. It included Child Survival, Family Planning, Nutrition, and Water and Sanitation. We also had a Malaria program, and we started a Cholera program after the outbreak in the early 1990's. As in many other countries around the world, our family planning program was quite large. We supported two non-government organizations (NGO's) and the Ministry of Health. One of the NGO's was an affiliate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). That was the Pro-Family Association of Ecuador (Spanish acronym APROFE). The director of APROFE, Dr. Pablo Marangoni, was a crusty old Medical Doctor known throughout the country. We had a wonderful relationship. My trust and confidence in their operations were such that I had a vasectomy procedure done by them. When I shared this with the senior staff at the USAID Mission they were stunned that I would use the services of a beneficiary. But after the meeting I had several men in the Mission come up to me to ask whether they too, could get a procedure done. Our other NGO was the Center for Maternity and Family Planning (Spanish acronym CEMOPLAF). These two organizations were 100 percent dependent on USAID with no sign of sustainability. In the meantime, at USAID in Washington there was much debate about how to make these NGOs more sustainable. We discussed the possibility of charging a fee-for-service, charging for family planning products, contraceptives and so on. There were a lot of disagreement and very strong opinions about whether we should be charging anything at all, and whether access to family planning was a universal right and therefore should be the responsibility of government. In Ecuador, one of the moments that I feel pretty good about is that we put together a 10-year program—lasting roughly from 1990 to 2000, that would gradually put the NGO's on a path towards self-reliance. [Comment: we used that phrase back in the 1990's, long before it became a rallying cry for the Agency, as it is today, in 2018]. We used evidence and robust analytic models to make the case that the NGO's needed ten years to reach sustainability. We even estimated the "take-off point" at which sustainability would become irreversible. The NGO's were about 25% self-sustaining when the program started. We estimated that in 10 years they would reach 85% sustainability, which would be the take-off point. The Mission and USAID Washington was initially skeptical. Ten-year programs were unheard of. But we were able to convince them, and recently I heard that both organizations were doing quite well, despite several years of no funding from USAID.

Q: That's great. So, your phase out plan worked.

YAMASHITA: In that case it appears it did.

Q: Well that's impressive. As you were working in the Mission, did your sense of what you wanted to do in USAID change over time? Did you start to think about moving beyond health?

YAMASHITA: No, I did not. During the panel interview when I joined USAID, one of the final questions was the predictable "Where do you see yourself in five years?" And my answer was, "Probably in Dhaka!"

Q: (Laughed out loud.)

YAMASHITA: That was exactly the reaction from the panel. They said, "Why Dhaka?" And I replied, "Well, for people working in public health, Bangladesh is like Nirvana. It is the epicenter of every conceivable infectious disease in the world!" To have an opportunity to work in that country, to contribute, to put my two cents worth towards better understanding the infectious disease, deal with them, managing them, and controlling them is a wonderful professional opportunity, wonderful!

Though I did not say it out loud during that interview, I also thought I might be interested in Timbuktu. I had never been to Timbuktu, and other than a vague knowledge that it was in Mali, I was totally ignorant of the city, the country, or the region. It sounded exciting and challenging. When I joined USAID, my goal in life was to be a Health Officer in many challenging and rewarding assignments. You may recall that at that time the conventional wisdom in the Agency was that a typical career of an officer ended at best at the FS-01 level. Promotions in and within the Senior Foreign Service was very rare. Moreover, almost everyone that made it into the ranks of the Senior Foreign Service and therefore a Mission Director was either a Legal Advisor or a Program Officer. A technical officer becoming a Mission Director was unheard of.

Q: As you came into USAID and became office director, what had you learned about management, aid programs, and personnel? Had you had management courses at all?

YAMASHITA: Yeah, a couple of things on that. First, working with RAPID and after that with OPTIONS, both being population policy projects, gave me the opportunity to learn quite a bit about USAID policies and the politics of reproductive health. I was often invited to conferences to give a presentation on population and development. Invariably these presentations led to intense and passionate arguments over key topics of family planning, contraceptive use, abortion, ethics, and of course, the political climate in the U.S. Second, even though I started in Ecuador as a CDC Advisor, my office was in the USAID Mission, next to Bill Goldman's. I was for all intents and purposes his Deputy. I often joined him in internal meetings and on several occasions represented him in Mission meetings. I would represent the office on many occasions and had the

opportunity to attend workshops and conferences that the USAID/Washington Office of Population was sponsoring. One of the events that the Office sponsored was an annual health and population officer's meeting. It was a global meeting that brought together all the Foreign Service Officers around the world working on health and population. During these meetings we were given technical updates in the field of health and population. During these meetings we learned about technical innovations in service delivery, in new methods for data collection and analysis, in improved monitoring and evaluation techniques, and so on. The richness of our sector when it comes to evidence-based decision making is a consequence of insistence on analytic rigor. These concepts were drummed into our heads at these meetings. During these meetings we also had opportunities to learn and management and leadership. We learned about Myers-Briggs, about active listening skills, about providing supportive and timely feedback. I was not even a Direct Hire, and these best practices were already starting to seep into my brain.

Q: As you thought about what to do next, was there a bidding opportunity coming up?

YAMASHITA: Well, what happened when I joined USAID, when I was recruited in 1993, Washington initially insisted that as a newcomer, my first tour should be in Washington. They wanted me to drop my work in Ecuador and go back to Headquarters. The Ecuador Mission balked and negotiated, requesting that I be allowed to stay and complete my first two-year tour in Ecuador, followed by a full three-year Washington tour. So, 1993-1995, was my first tour as a USAID Foreign Service Officer, and it was in Ecuador. Then in 1995 I was assigned to Washington as the Deputy Chief of the Division of Family Planning Services in the Office of Population.

Washington and Office of Population: 1995 - 1998

Q: Who was your boss, the Director of the Division of Family Planning Services at that time?

YAMASHITA: Sigrid Anderson. You know her, too, I'm sure?

Q: Yes, and her husband Steve.

YAMASHITA: Sigrid was my boss, she was the Division Chief and I was her deputy. Our portfolio included the big names of family planning such as Management Services for Health (MSH), Pathfinder, IPPF, and others. CEDPA was one of my projects.

Q: The family planning program was still a big program at that time, and over time the funding has been taken down quite a few notches, but in those days that was right after HIV had just hit the streets, right?

YAMASHITA: It was before that. The Ryan-White Act was enacted in 1990 and awareness of the enormity of the HIV pandemic was just picking up. If we did have any programs it was part of the Infectious Disease Division. It is possible that specific country Missions, especially in Africa, had programs, but I am not aware of any. In

Ecuador, when I was there, we had a small program that was meant to support men who had sex with other men. The purpose of the program was about preventing sexually transmitted infections. There were a number of such infections, and HIV could have been one, but we were not focused on it at the time.

Q: So, Sigrid was your boss. What was your role in that office?

YAMASHITA: I was Sigrid's deputy. It was the first time I was an official deputy in an organizational unit. In hindsight, Sigrid was exceptionally patient with me as I learned the ropes of how to be a deputy director. I represented the Division from time to time and I looked after some of the staffing issues. I was exposed to the world of foreign service assignments and the horse-trading that happens between Mission, Regional Bureau, and the Technical Office. I met some wonderful people and I felt we worked as a team, even though we often had differences of opinions about the suitability of a specific assignment. It was also during this time in Washington that I had the opportunity to serve on the Promotions Panel. The conventional wisdom being that the Panel worked in mysterious ways and being a black box did not prove true. Because the deliberations are about staff performance, we had to be strict about not divulging any information. Still, amongst the panelists (we were four) we were open and transparent about our assessments. To this point in my career, I had experienced some interesting situations, ranging from being on probationary status at the UN, on strike at Consumer Reports, not having support at CDC, and, the long process (two years!) to get recruited into USAID. Now, in Washington, I had the opportunity to see things from the inside, and perhaps make some of these procedures just a little better.

Anyways, back to my duties as deputy. In addition to representation and staffing, I was responsible for the oversight of some of the projects funded by USAID. The two most significant ones were our grant to Pathfinder International and the Management Sciences for Health (MSH). These two organizations were recipients of significant amounts of resources. They were two of the largest in our office, and in those days given the importance of family planning within our Agency, perhaps amongst the largest of the Agency. In many countries around the world, the U.S., meaning USAID which in turn meant either Pathfinder or MSH, were the single largest provider of family planning services, including the private sector and the government. My role was to ensure that their programs were sound and implemented according to the policies and priorities of the Agency, and that they used the best practices available at the time. Much of what I did was to deconflict issues arising out of differences of opinion between the Mission, the Regional Bureau, and us. In too many cases, the two organizations became so big that they thought (and acted as if) they ran the Mission, or worse, the government program on maternal and reproductive health!

Q: I think we used to call these mega-projects flagship projects, or something like that?

YAMASHITA: Ah yes, Flagship Projects. Indeed, that's what they were called. You bring back memories. I traveled often to their headquarters in Boston, and yes, we had many disagreements. At times it was as if they were simply entitled to our funding

without concern for our priorities or those of the countries in which they worked. It was because of them that we eventually ended up calling them our "implementing partners" instead of simply "contractors." The funding that we provided to these organizations was significant. USAID funds represented at least 80% of their entire budget. The funds flowed to them through two main channels, one from Washington and our office, and the other from the Missions. Once in a while they would receive funding from the Regional Bureau.

Q: How did that work?

To use an oft-heard phrase, "it's complicated." Bear with me. Basically, the two agreements were huge empty buckets. Funding from each of the countries could be tossed into it. The Health Office in each Mission was responsible for program implementation while our Division was responsible for policy and financial management of the funds. As the funds were tossed into the bucket, we had to track the funds from each of the countries, so we created a complex procedure to do so. The process came to be known as "Buy-In" as in the country Mission is buying into the centrally procured project. The Division was responsible for the design, procurement, and award of the agreement. We were also responsible for policy consistency and financial management. The only thing the Mission had to do was let us know which agreement they wanted to use (Pathfinder or MSH, for example) and what funds they wanted to add to the bucket. We took care of the rest. Later on, the Buy-In became known as Field Support. I believe the term is still in use today.

Q: Was there a reason for the change in terminology?

My memory on the exact reason for change, and the timelines involved is a little fuzzy, but I will share with you my thoughts. In the late 90's under President Clinton, the USAID Administrator was Brian Atwood. The Assistant Administrator for Management was Larry Byrne. He was responsible for the Agency move to the Ronald Reagan Building (fondly known as the RRB). The Office of Population was located at the time in Rosslyn Virginia. The move was quite the saga. As we were trying to settle into our new digs, Byrne unveiled a New Management System (fondly known as the NMS). This new system would streamline and facilitate our lives, especially those using the "buy-in" mechanisms. Because this was a new system, obviously we could not use old, antiquated and ineffective terms such as Buy-In. The term Field Support was born. Unfortunately, the NMS was anything but user friendly and it certainly did not support the field. The NMS was a classic case, in my opinion, of a bunch of Washington business consultant types, perhaps unfairly but IBM or Price-Waterhouse come to mind, coming up with a solution for a problem that did not exist. While there was an opportunity to provide input, it became clear that Mr. Byrne and others had already made up their minds to go forward with the NMS. It was cumbersome and costly. Remember I said that as Missions added funding to the projects they were dumping funds into the bucket. Well, the NMS was supposed to be a better vehicle for keeping track of the funds. It was not. The process was so slow that we had two computers on our desk, one just for the funding. At times it took over 12 hours to just process one request from one country. Multiply this by 40 countries

and throw in our timing constraints near the end of the fiscal year by which all funding obligations had to be completed. Moreover, it was costly. The rumor is that the unfortunate Reduction-In-Force of the 90's was in part to fund the NMS and the move to the RRB. I am convinced that many of the staffing difficulties the Agency faces today can be traced back to those days.

Q: You were in Washington for three years. Did you do a lot of traveling?

YAMASHITA: Not nearly as much as I did with the Futures Group, but I did. Among the travels that I did was to Mexico to close out the family planning program; to Indonesia to close out the family planning program -- at least to put a structure in place to start closing it out. I traveled to a couple of other countries as well.

Q: So, these were phased close-outs like your Ecuador program? Was the phase-out planned for many years and the theory was that these countries' programs should be sustainable by this time?

YAMASHITA: Not quite. In many ways, both countries were ready for graduation. Their governments had shown a sustained commitment to maternal and reproductive health, making the public sector the largest provider of family planning services. The private sector had also stepped up, and they too, were major providers. The USAID funded NGOs were small players in contrast. Both countries were in the middle-income advanced developing nation status and their contraceptive prevalence rates were quite high. In other words, both countries were ready. However, there were separate "trigger actions" that started the ball rolling, which is where I became involved. In the case of Indonesia, it was the Mission Director and the Health Officer that decided that the time for graduation had come. The Mission requested Washington support for an assessment, which we did. We had good data to back up the decision to close out. The government was appreciative of our support and agreed with our decision. The NGOs were not happy, but they understood our decision.

Q: Good. Now I take it Mexico was a different situation.?

YAMASHITA: Yes, it was. A little bit of background. After the Mexico City Conference on Population and Development in 1984, when the U.S. unveiled the new policy which became known as the "Mexico City Policy," the regulations and procedures governing USAID funded family planning projects included many provisions regarding client rights and informed consent. Ten years later, in 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, changed the debate substantially. There was much greater emphasis on equality and women's rights, access to education and employment, and sustainable development. Under President Clinton there was much greater emphasis on human rights. Even though the USAID family planning programs reflected the changing perspectives, there were many critics on both the right, claiming we were supporting abortion, and the left, claiming we were abusing women's human rights. An important programmatic imperative was ensuring informed consent. In other words, providers of family planning services were required to provide sufficient

information to their clients, regarding family planning methods, including side effects. The information had to be clear, concise, and understandable regardless of the level of literacy of the client. Any organization that violated the terms and intent of this requirement would lose USAID funding.

The Mexican government, especially through their Social Security Institute (acronym in Spanish: IMSS) was the major provider of public sector family planning services. The method most requested was the IUD which was placed immediately after childbirth. While the government of Mexico provided most of the funding, USAID through our Pathfinder project also provided significant resources. USAID learned that concerns were being raised by human rights NGOs that women who were going the IMSS for childbirth were having IUDs inserted without their consent. This was a serious allegation, and I was tasked with the investigation. I worked closely with the Assistant Administrator for the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Regional Bureau at USAID at the time, Mark Schneider. As I am sure you know, Mark has been and continues to be a champion of human rights throughout the world, though especially in Latin America. Though we were not always in agreement, I always appreciated his thoughtful and values-based opinions. We were very closely on this issue in Mexico and I am proud to say that we have remained friends.

Q: Oh really? That's interesting. So, this wasn't one of the Jesse Helms' issues?

YAMASHITA: It was an issue for both Republicans and Democrats. Mark took the lead on policy and political matters while I dug into the operational issues. After our trips (yes, there were many) we concluded that in fact, the Mexican government was not providing women with a clear choice based on informed consent. This brought back the dark days of forced sterilization in India. Some might say the situation in Mexico was not as bad, since the insertion of an IUD was not a permanent, irreversible contraceptive method. Such an argument was irrelevant. Whether it was a sterilization, or an IUD, or any other method of contraception, the fact of the matter is that women were not given a clear and conscious choice based on informed consent.

Q: What was the USAID Mexico's opinion?

YAMASHITA: We worked closely with the Mission. The Mission Director, Art Danart – I am sure you know him – was supportive of our analysis and our conclusions. It would be up to him to begin the close-out. We made some dramatic decisions, such as immediately freezing disbursement of funds to the government. We also gave the NGOs short notice that we were cancelling their grant agreement. We asked our USAID internal Inspector General to audit Pathfinder to make sure that violations of informed consent were not happening in other countries. That we had taken such concrete and harsh actions was observed not only by our other grantees and contractors, but also public sector organizations. I'd like to think that we sent a clear message about our commitment to informed consent.

Q: Did you have any other interesting stories from this time when you were in Washington that you'd like to pass on?

YAMASHITA: I think that was one of the more interesting ones. Three years of Washington go by quickly and go by slowly at the same time. A lot of what I was doing was the day-to-day work of managing and monitoring these projects. I must say I made many trips to Boston where Pathfinder and MSH have their headquarters. I worked with the organizations and we had a global program that I think overall was very, very successful. And as my three years was starting to wind down, one of the things that I tried to do was to take a step back and think about whether continuing with USAID was the right thing for me to do in terms of my interest in development. I still maintained an interest in development, but wasn't sure whether for me to continue with USAID was the right way to exercise that interest.

So, I was thinking of what I should do next, and the options included leaving USAID. Right about that time I got a call from Aaron Williams, who was the Mission Director in South Africa. He asked whether I would be interested in an assignment in South Africa as Chief of the Health Office. My reaction was to immediately accept. I dropped the idea of leaving USAID and got ready to pack. Except I still had a few details to worry about. One was to get the blessing of Washington. Duff Gillespie was head of the bureau, and when I mentioned it to Duff he was not enthusiastic. He would not stop me (which he could have done), but he did not recommend it. The USAID health program in South Africa was miniscule, the South African government had their act together with a robust program of their own, and there was not much else to do. He felt that an assignment to South Africa would be detrimental to my career. But this was the South Africa of Nelson Mandela. Plus, I would get a chance to work with Aaron Williams. He had been instrumental in my getting into USAID, and for the second time, he was instrumental in my career. He was a major reason why I decided to stay with USAID.

The second concern I had before agreeing to South Africa was the family situation. My father-in-law had passed away recently, and my mother-in-law was quite sick. She was virtually bed-ridden and had moved in with us. Going to South Africa meant we would have to ask one of my wife's sibling to take over her care. A motivation for leaving USAID was that we could look for a larger house which would give us enough room to live comfortably and to care for my mother-in-law at the same time. My wife and I talked it over, and she fully supported a move to South Africa. She felt such a move would be good for the family and my career. She spoke with her brother who agreed to take in my mother-in-law.

So, I called Aaron back and accepted the position.

South Africa and HIV/AIDS: 1998 – 2001

Q: Interesting. Did you have other thoughts as you prepared your move?

YAMASHITA: Yes, I did. About that time that the South Africa opportunity arose, and I was thinking about my next career move, I felt that whatever the decision I made, I wanted to push myself beyond my comfort zone. After my Washington assignment I could probably get an assignment in Latin America. But I was looking for a new challenge. I had never served in Africa, so the opportunity was intriguing. Now, many would say that South Africa is not "real" Africa, or that South Africa is Africa for beginners, but I was o.k. with that. After all, as far as Africa was concerned, I was a beginner!

Q: What year was it that you left for South Africa?

YAMASHITA: It was the summer of 1998. I was about to embark on my third assignment with USAID as a Foreign Service Officer. The first was Ecuador from 1993 – 1995, then Washington from 1995 to 1998, and now to South Africa. I would remain there for three years, and then move on to Peru, which was in 2001. After I called Aaron and packed for South Africa, a curious thing happened. Aaron left! He decided to retire. Aaron called me to let me know. He also told me who his successor would be: Stacy Rhodes. I was disappointed to hear that I would not get to work with Aaron, but happy to hear that I would work with Stacy. Another wonderful leader and also instrumental in my recruitment and appointment to USAID.

Q: So, when you went to South Africa it was already post-Apartheid?

YAMASHITA: Yes, it was. Mandela's term was coming to an end, and the world was awakening to HIV/AIDS. As Duff had said, the USAID health program consisted of a modest child survival program in one of the provinces, and, a small reproductive health program. Amazingly, we did not have an HIV/AIDS program. Yet the evidence was clear. The epidemic was seriously affecting individuals and organizations. It was estimated that one in three women in South Africa was infected. Major corporations, such as the mining companies, openly admitted that they needed to hire five employees for every three positions because of turnover due to death. We would visit villages that were ghost town, virtually the entire community wiped out by the epidemic. In other villages there was a booming business – in coffin -making. Cemeteries were overflowing, and bodies were being buried one on top of another. Meantime, President Mbeki and his government refused to acknowledge the epidemic and the private sector did not know what to do. Meanwhile, USAID was asleep at the wheel. No HIV/AIDS program, not even a hint of one. I went to Stacy and argued for a program. He agreed and together we made a proposal to Washington. It was summarily turned down. The rationale was the lack of government commitment as evidenced by the pronouncements of President Mbeki. I was not going to give up that easily. I enlisted Stacy and the Ambassador to rattle the cages. I mentioned our situation to some of the activists that were pressuring us for funding. It worked. Finally, Washington gave in and we received a mere $2 million for our first program. This was 1999.

Q: Did you have to deal with the President directly?

YAMASHITA: Not with him personally, but we did meet frequently with the Minister of Health, the Director General of Health, and, the Director of Maternal and Reproductive Health. On the matter of HIV/AIDs, they were not ecstatic that we had started a program since "there was no problem," but they did not stop us from moving forward. We worked very closely with some brave activists and service delivery NGOs, including the Baragwanath Hospital Reproductive Health Research Unit and the Soweto based HOPE Worldwide.

Q: And could you make any headway with them?

YAMASHITA: Oh yeah, absolutely. As a matter of fact, it was during that time that the government started to come around and acknowledge that the country had a serious epidemic on their hands. I worked closely with many individuals and activists even though we did not have programs with them. I think that in those days we needed the moral support of each other to keep fighting the epidemic and the government. The effect of the epidemic touched every corner of the country, every sector, and every institution. It was devastating.

In the midst of all this despair, we had nuggets of hope and resilience. I recall one of our projects, with HOPE Worldwide. It was a faith-based organization that provided community-based hospice care for those with AIDS in terminal stages. They felt that by caring for them and providing some drugs that could help some who tested HIV+, it could help improve their health status. We gave them a small grant and they became an important partner. I visited their installations when we started the program. The outpouring of appreciation from the community was inspiring. About a year later I visited the organization again, and a woman who worked there came up to me and said, "Dr. Yamashita, do you remember me?" When I responded that I did not, she told me that at the time our program started, she was ill with HIV and associated symptoms, and, she was pregnant. Since then, and thanks to the USAID program, her life was much better, her HIV was under control and her child so far was AIDS free. She said, "It's because of your program."

Q: Oh, wow!

YAMASHITA: Another one of those inspirational stories that keeps me going even in the face of seemingly overwhelming political and bureaucratic challenges. In those days we had many VIP visitors from Washington including members of Congress and the White House. The President's Advisor for HIV/AIDS was Sandy Thurman, who visited us several times. Much of what she saw in South Africa served as a foundation for a new White House initiative in support of the fight against the epidemic, and eventually led to PEPFAR (The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) which was legislated under President Bush with great support from First Lady Laura Bush.

Q: Oh really?

YAMASHITA: Another proud moment was our initiative to start a regional program encompassing four countries. In an informal gathering, the health officers of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and myself, decided that one of the major constraints to getting a hold on the epidemic was the porous nature of our borders and the movement of people from one country to another. Truck drivers and sex workers in particular were an especially high-risk group for becoming infected by HIV. We decided we were going to do this without telling Washington because if we told Washington we knew they'd get in the way! So being the anarchists that we are, we just went ahead and did it. It was only after the fact that Washington woke up and said, "Oh! What's this about? What's this about? Did you consult with us?" We had not consulted Washington, and we did not ask for additional funding. We used our own resources and designed a program that addressed the epidemic across the border, following major transportation corridors. We called it the Corridors Project. It turned out to be quite a success story.

There were many other proud moments in South Africa. Let me share two. One was the combined USAID and Embassy support for our staff. The impact of the epidemic was felt in our organizations. Many of our staff had family members who had died of AIDS. Washington established a policy to assist staff, but initially restricted the access to the services to Americans only. In other words, the official State Department position was that health services would not be available to our South African employees. I raised hell, Stacy raised hell, and the Ambassador raised hell. So did the CDC Advisor in the country. Together we made sure our voices were heard. In fact we decided to openly ignore State Department policy and proceeded to make services available to our South African staff. Washington eventually caved, and changed their policy.

The other proud moment, and one that shaped my thoughts about my next assignment was how we integrated HIV into the programming of other offices. As my understanding of the epidemic deepened, it became clear that a public health approach alone would not be sufficient. We needed the support of the other sectors. While my colleagues from the other offices of USAID were sympathetic, they were reluctant to reprogram their projects and use scarce funds for this purpose. So I offered to give them funds from my limited budget. The funding I gave to the Economic Growth Office funded research on the impact of the HIV on business. The research was fundamental in convincing CEOs of major corporations in mining, manufacturing, and services to adopt policies supporting employees with HIV. The funding to the Education Office supported adding content on HIV to curricula and the funding to the Democracy and Governance Office supported activities of human rights organizations. Duff Gillespie objected to what he considered a watering down of our resources but I proceeded anyways. This experience was an eye-opener. Whereas my education in graduate school included a heavy focus on the interdisciplinary aspects of economic development, my work with the other offices at the USAID Mission in South Africa was operational and gave a programmatic perspective of what it meant to have an interdisciplinary approach to development.

Q: Was Stacy there the whole time you were?

YAMASHITA: Yes he was. He was a great leader and a role model. He was always compassionate and caring. His political instincts were always on target. So much of what I know about being a Mission Director I learned from Stacy by observing him in action. I was looking forward to working with him for a full tour (that is, four years) and perhaps even more. But then as I was ending my second year in South Africa, I received a call from Duff Gillespie. The year was 2000. Duff asked me if I would like to go back to Washington to be the Director of the Office of Health Policy, in the Bureau for Global Health. I had just left Washington and I had no desire to go back in the near future. That's what I told Duff in response to his query. Duff insisted. He said he would like to put my name on the list of possible candidates. He said I could always back out at a later date.

Since I could back out later, I didn't see any down sides to having my name considered. That's what I told Duff. A little bit of background here. It turns out that the office director positions and many others, including mission directors, fall under the category that was known as the senior management group (SMG), the collection of senior positions in the Agency, normally filled by a Senior Foreign Service Officer though at times someone at the FS-01 level was selected. The SMG has changed names over time, today I believe it is called the Senior Leadership Group, or SLG. What happens is that one office will propose a name, then by committee they'll select the person. So for example, if I want to be mission director in Thailand, I'd first submit my name to committee and I need a sponsoring office. Ideally it would be the Asian bureau and then the committee will review and decide, "Yes, he should be the AID director in Thailand." Likewise, there's a whole group of these positions, including the position of office director in Washington. I was now applying to be an office director in Washington and so my name goes into that hat.

Q: So you're moving into the Senior Foreign Service.

YAMASHITA: Well, I'm moving into the position of senior management group, I'm not yet in the senior foreign service (SFS). (These are) two different things. The AID foreign service is one where rank is (determined by) a person, not a position.

Q: You were still an FS-01?

YAMASHITA: By then I was an FS-01. I was not in the SFS, but I was applying for a SFS position in Washington. Once my name was in that committee everybody in the committee gets to see it, including people in Latin America who had just found out that the deputy AID mission director in Peru had to curtail for health reasons. So they suddenly had a gaping hole in Peru. They remembered me from Latin America days and they said, "Oh my God, Ken is available, I wonder if he would like to go to Peru and be the deputy mission director." Basically they were stealing me away from Doug so that I could go to Peru, and when they suggested that I do that, I told them let me think about it overnight.

I went over to Stacy and I said, "What do you think about it?"

He said, “There’s no thinking about it, take it!” So that was my first foray outside of health. It got me into Peru as deputy mission director and as the deputy mission director I was overseeing the entire AID program.

Q: Before we move on too much to Peru, let me just ask you for a little bit more on South Africa, because we’ve had a number of people we’re interviewing who served in the early days in South Africa. Were there any particular difficulties you found working there? I know Stacy said at one point if you’re mission director in Guatemala, they throw down their serapes, and you walk on them, and if you go to South Africa they say what’s USAID? (It was a) totally different attitude toward USAID with much less history. How did you find South Africa compared to your Latin America work?

YAMASHITA: It was only my second overseas posting right, so I didn’t have a lot to compare it with. We only had the one project, which was child survival, and we had our very small reproductive health program, so my world was limited by that interaction. It was not a broader policy direction that Stacy certainly had, and so the notion of what is AID was not something I had to deal with because the relationships were already established.

Q: Was there any sort of anti-U.S. sentiment about either family planning or your work in HIV?

YAMASHITA: In my sector I did not find any. By then the government had fully bought into our child survival program and they were very appreciative that we were working in an area that was exceptionally underserved. It was in the Eastern Cape Province. If you look at a map of South Africa, toward Cape Town from Pretoria, Johannesburg, but slightly further to the east toward Port Elizabeth, that area. It was in a rural area supporting health programs there. Working with South African counterparts was very rewarding. Just as I would find years later in Colombia, South Africa has an incredibly rich pool of talent, and well financed social programs. They know what they need, and, are clear about what the role of foreign assistance should be. For example, in our health programs, the government would lay out their plan and their budget. They would point to a few holes, almost always technical in nature, where our assistance would be welcome. With a relatively small level of funding we could make a significant impact.

I had the pleasure and honor of working with many talented South Africans that sacrificed so much during Apartheid, and yet found in themselves the healing and forgiveness that is a signature of Mandela’s spirit towards reconciliation. One was the Director General of Health at the Ministry of Health. A black South African, he had been jailed during Apartheid and he had scars to show where dogs had attacked him. Yet his humanity and caring for all women and children of South Africa was inspiring. Another person was Dame Helen Rees. She was awarded damehood by Queen Elizabeth in 2015 in recognition of her contributions in South Africa. When I met her, she was simply the Director of the Reproductive Health Research Unit at the Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, the largest hospital in South Africa. USAID had given the Unit a small family planning grant. Dame Helen was always gracious and very appreciative of the support we

were providing. Only later did I learn about her courageous past. During Apartheid, Dame Helen was a medical doctor in the emergency room at Baragwanath. It was at the time that the Government was denying that they were torturing black prisoners. Baragwanath often received patients that Dame Helen would treat, and she saw visible signs of torture. She took pictures of the wounds, hid them in her clothes, and smuggled them out when she would attend health conferences in Europe. Since she was white, the South African authorities did not search her. She would pass the pictures to human rights organizations who would use them as evidence that the Government was lying. Had she been caught, she would probably have been jailed for treason and even sentenced to death. Yet she felt the risk was necessary. Years later, she would be so thankful to USAID for a small grant. Dame Helen was a humble person and never talked about her past. She thought simply, that it was the right thing to do.

Q: Wow, that's amazing. Now, let's shift gears to your family. How did they feel about moving to Peru?

YAMASHITA: My wife was fine with the move. Remember that her family is from Cuba so Latin America was very comfortable to her. Her Spanish is flawless and has always maintained a cultural connection to the region, so she was excited at the prospect. She was perfectly happy moving.

Q: Did she try to work when you were in South Africa?

YAMASHITA: She did. In fact her work was very rewarding because it would take her back to the technical areas of her graduate training. She was a Program Assistant in the Office of Economic Growth at USAID. She got involved in technical matters and assisted the team leaders with everything from operations, management, budgets, and documentation. It was a fun time for her.

Q: What about your children?

YAMASHITA: That's another highlight for us. I am often asked of the countries where I have served, which is my favorite. In terms of my career, each one has a special spot in my heart. But in terms of family, I would say South Africa. Our children where in high school when we arrived there, and my daughter graduated from the American International School in Johannesburg, AISJ. What made this time special is that we could treat our children as adults, so as we traveled around the country, there were four adults sharing the adventure and enjoying each other's company. We saw Cape Town, we went to several game parks including Kruger National Park, of course. We did not have to worry about dragging unhappy children all over the place.

Q: And the school in South Africa was good?

YAMASHITA: Yes, it was. AISJ had an International Baccalaureate (IB) program that was excellent. I consider the IB program as more holistic and comprehensive than the Advanced Placement (AP) program often found in an American school. The AP program

tends to be subject specific, such as chemistry or history, while the IB program is more holistic. Our daughter graduated from AISJ with an IB certificate, while our son graduated from the American School in Lima one year later, also with an IB certificate.

Q: In terms of whether these international schools are helpful to getting into the colleges you want to get into, how did they do? Especially the one who graduated in South Africa, what happened next?

YAMASHITA: Both of our children attended small liberal arts colleges, our daughter to Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida and our son to Albright College near Reading, Pennsylvania. They both received good scholarships and substantial amounts of advanced credit thanks to the IB. Beyond that, and this is one of the reasons I am a fan of the IB, our children were prepared for critical thinking. They could analyze, debate, defend, and criticize any issue that was presented in class. The worldview that they received as part of the IB experience is one that I am convinced has stayed with them to this day.

Q: Good. In the long run did either of them go into international work?

YAMASHITA: Actually, no. Our daughter went into teaching and today she is the director of a charter school in St. Petersburg, Florida. Our son works in the IT section of a small private firm outside of Washington DC.

Peru, Senior Foreign Service, and 9/11: 2001 - 2004

Q: We are moving through Ken's illustrious career and he is about to move to Peru where he will be Deputy Mission Director. Ken, I'll ask you to take it from here.

YAMASHITA: My assignment to Peru was fortuitous. The Deputy Mission Director had to curtail his assignment for health reasons. The Latin American and Caribbean Bureau, LAC, was facing an unexpected opening and was searching for possible candidates. They saw my name on the list of applicants to a Senior Management Group (SMG) position, and, reached out to me to see whether I would be interested. Of course I was! Peru was where I grew up and where I finished my high school in 1971, so now 2001 -- 30 years later -- it was in many ways coming home. I arrived in Peru with my family in the summer of 2001. The "summer" is winter in Peru, and the weather is atrocious. Lima is on the Pacific coast with a unique geography. The confluence of the cold Humboldt Current from the south Pacific and the warm air of the Amazon that flows over the Andes results in a permanent cloud weather and a drizzle that is known as "garúa." By the way this weather and the dripping humidity was the reason why the previous Deputy Director ended up curtailing. We were getting settled into our new environment when 9/11 occurred.

Q; What was that like?

YAMASHITA: I remember feeling unmoored. I always thought of the U.S. as home and as a safe place. I was ready to venture out to any place in the world on behalf of the U.S.

government because I knew that I could always go home. To the safe-haven of the U.S. Now suddenly this safe-haven was no longer safe. Perhaps this was an overly melodramatic and naïve view of the U.S., but there it was. I will also always remember the poise and steady leadership of Secretary Colin Powell. He was in Lima at the time, attending a special session of the Organization of American States (OAS). The purpose of this special session was for the countries to adopt a Democracy Charter, one where the countries of the region would commit to democratic values such as open and fair elections, adherence to human rights, and addressing poverty. Among other things, it was a ploy to poke at Cuba and recent events in Venezuela, but the governments were ready to sign the Charter (Chavez became president of Venezuela in 1999 and the early signs of authoritarianism were starting to show). On the morning of 9/11, Secretary Powell was at a breakfast meeting with his counterparts from the region. An aide brought him the news about the attacks. Powell could have easily informed the others that there was an emergency back home and he needed to leave. Everyone would have understood. Instead, Powell informed those gathered, and then asked to change the agenda of the special session, with the immediate signing of the Charter. It was reported that he said that the Charter was important now more than ever. That the attacks were an attack on democracy everywhere, and that the collective commitment to democratic principles was essential to ensuring that such an attack never happen again. What a statesman! The clarity of thought and presence was inspiring. It made me so proud to be an American. Of course, the governments agreed and they all signed the Democracy Charter of The Americas.

Q: Wow. Now tell me about the USAID program. What was the size of the program? Was it very different from the one in South Africa?

The Peru program was substantially larger than the one in South Africa, largely because of the alternative development program. This program, we called it the AD program, was intended to provide farmers an alternative to growing coca. It was part of the U.S. efforts to curtail coca growth.

Q: Did it work?

In some ways, yes it did. But not in others. For starters, a strict one to one substitution of coca for another crop was unrealistic. Coca is a weed, and like all weeds, grows just about anywhere with very little maintenance. Once the leaves were harvested, the coca growers would dry them out. The longer they were dried out, the higher the price per weight. The farmers would then use the dried coca leaves as cash. In other words, they would literally take bags of dried coca leaves to the market and barter for essential foods and other products. Many farmers did not have bank accounts and were living outside of the formal economy. Because we could not offer a direct one for one substitute for coca, we had to change our focus and propose a comprehensive livelihoods approach. In other words, while we would offer the farmers a crop, we would also build roads and provide social services, and work with law enforcement to provide civilian security. It was a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to community development. We had many challenges, which is why I say that it did not work everywhere. The government had to align its sectors, such as health, education, welfare, agriculture, so that they would all be

coordinated and would enter a community at the same time. Such coordination was unheard of and resulted in delays and chaos. The law enforcement side of the ledger was totally independent, so in addition to coordination on the government side, we had to coordinate on the assistance side. For USAID that meant coordinating with the Drug Enforcement Agency, the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau (INL), and with the military.

Q: Who was the Mission Director in Peru at the time?

It was Tom Geiger when I arrived. He stayed for about a year and then Patti Buckles came in to replace him.

Q: Was it hard to work for two different Mission Directors? Was there a lot of adjustment?

Certainly, adjusting to different styles was something I had to learn. Shortly after my arrival, I asked Geiger what his expectations were from his Deputy, and how did he see us relating to one another. Tom said, "I see you as my alter ego." He further explained that he would like to take about half of the technical portfolio and he would like me to take the other half, plus the management responsibilities, such as financial management, executive office, and controllers. He urged me to establish relationships with the Embassy including the Ambassador, counterparts including ministers and heads of organizations. That is pretty much what I did. After Geiger left and Buckles arrived, I asked her the same question, and she responded, "I see you as my alter-ego."

However, she then said, "You do nothing unless I tell you. You don't go to meetings at the Embassy, you don't represent the Mission to Peruvians who are counterparts, and you do nothing unless I tell you." She did not even want me to go to the Embassy for routine administrative meetings unless she told me to. The period with Buckles was one of personal growth and learning. Perhaps the most important lesson I learned is that the deputy position in any job, but certainly in USAID, is one of the most difficult. As the deputy you need to transform yourself into anything and everything that the mission director expects you to be, and you need to support and at the same time complement. If the mission director is a micro manager, you need to be the "hands off" person. If the mission director wants to be the nice guy, you need to be the hard person, and make the difficult choices. If the mission director only wants to interact with a couple of people, you need to interact with everybody else. If the mission director is an introvert, you need to be an extrovert, and if they are an extrovert, you need to be an introvert. I understood why the Agency insisted on officers going through the experience of being a Deputy Mission Director before being elevated to Mission Director.

Q: How long was Geiger there and were you two together before?

YAMASHITA: Geiger was there for about a year. I had not worked with him before. Buckles arrived and was there for about a year. I remained a third year as Acting Mission Director. I arrived in 2001 and left in 2004.

Q: So she had a very short stay.

YAMASHITA: She had management and leadership challenges that resulted in her early departure. It was a difficult time. USAID/Washington got involved and they sent at team to conduct a Mission Management Assessment. The Embassy got involved as well.

Q: Peru was a large program for the South America region. Could you recall roughly what your budget was?

YAMASHITA: I think it was about $200 million, of which about half was alternative development and half was regular development programs.

Q: Were you doing anything on the alternative development side of the portfolio with Geiger?

YAMASHITA: Initially it was a small program. While Geiger was there the main program focus was democracy and governance. Alejandro Toledo had been elected President in April, after the controversial administration of President Fujimori. This was the same year that George W Bush became President, so it was an opportunity for the two countries to kick off a strong partnership. Toledo wanted to focus on justice and reconciliation following the years of violence by the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso and the human rights violations of Fujimori. Bush wanted to focus on counter-narcotics and drug interdiction. USAID was prepared to respond to both issues, and we did. With Geiger's background in legal and judicial matters it was natural that he focus on the justice and reconciliation matters. He asked me to work on the USAID support on counter-narcotics. This support eventually become the alternative development project.

Q: Were you involved with getting the alternative program started and figuring out how it would work?

YAMASHITA: There was already an alternative development program in place, but it really took off after I arrived, as we received significantly increased resources. A lot of my involvement was in understanding how alternative development fit in with longer term development processes, and it was certainly my first time working closely at the interagency level. And talking about counter narcotics, you may remember at the time we talked about crop substitution, and then we changed that to alternative development and alternative lifestyles. There was a lot of controversy and skepticism around our program. Our law enforcement colleagues felt that the priority should be on interdiction of drugs, the eradication of coca plants, and bringing to justice the traffickers. They felt that we were wasting our time with our crop substitution efforts. Our colleagues in development felt we were too close to the police and military. Moreover, alternative development did not attack the root cause of poverty nor were we working with the most vulnerable populations in the highlands of Peru. Our geographic focus was the high Amazon jungle.

The challenge therefore was to find the right mix of short term coca eradication and short term economic benefits to make up for the loss of income that farmers received from coca and link them to longer term development efforts. Much of my time was taken up in discussions and heated debate with my colleagues in the Embassy. While we were ready to support the law enforcement efforts with alternative development, supporting communities after their coca is eradicated, we needed more time and greater buy-in from the communities to ensure that our interventions were sustained. We also asked the other U.S. agencies greater coordination regarding location and timing of their interventions, so we could be ready to assist. This was not easy. Understandably, much of the success of the eradication and interdiction efforts were based on an element of surprise. If USAID entered into a community to discuss our assistance efforts, they would quickly realize that an eradication campaign would soon follow. The traffickers would disappear, and the remaining farmers would be the losers. The farmers, after having their coca eradicated, would say to us that they need money, as in cash, to subsist. The farmers used the coca in a barter economy as cash, so our eradication efforts had the effect as taking away their daily subsistence cash. Beyond their request for cash, the farmers would also ask that the coca be substituted with another crop with equal or more value with the same level of effort to grow. This was also difficult. There was not a crop that would meet coca's profit one-to-one, and the inputs and time required for harvest were different. Since coca is similar to a weed, it requires virtually no maintenance. In the high jungle environment, it grows very quickly, providing multiple crops during the year. It is hearty and resists pests and disease. We kept coming up with various ideas as a substitute crop, including rice, coffee, pineapple, heart of palm, and many more. These were only partial solutions.

So, we had to diversify our approach. We went from a one-to-one crops substitution model to one of livelihoods security. By livelihoods we meant not just crops, but access to credit and markets, access to public services such as health, education, and justice, and, presence of and trust in local civilian law enforcement, namely the local police. The "glue" that was needed to bring these elements together was what we called "social cohesion," basically the sense of community, ownership, and, pride. We provided funding for the various components, and, we established some strong private-public partnerships in market-oriented crop production, and, access to markets by building roads. For example, there is a major highway that runs north-south in Peru on the coast side. There are some accessible roads along the highlands, but there were virtually no road networks of that kind in the jungle. A jungle highway has been the dream of the Peruvian government going back to the 1960's which never became reality. We built a major portion of this highway through an innovative public-private partnership. The road connected farmers to markets in ways never before possible. I credit Jim Riordan with much of the conceptual thinking behind this approach, of focusing on producer to market linkages. Riordan was the Senior Economist for one of our contractors. Up until then our approach to small community economic development was to focus on the producer such as a women's cooperative and try to find a market for what they produced. Unfortunately the products that were produced did not have much of a demand. Riordan brought a different approach. He often said that, "rather than trying to sell what you produce, you should produce what will sell." Though it sounds like a simple maxim, it was a huge paradigm shift for farmers, producers, and even development officials.

Q: In the end, do you think this livelihoods security approach is economically feasible?

YAMASHITA: In many ways, yes, I do believe it worked. Today there are some major exports from Peru, such as coffee and cacao, that began as programs of our alternative development efforts. But I hesitate to say that is has been successful in all cases. Successful crops are few and far apart, and the time and intensity input required is considerable. From first planting to reaping economic return can take months if not years. In the meantime, farmers need subsistence cash. Coca is very attractive. Moreover, even as the crops took off, not all farmers were winners. And importantly the public sector services, such as health, education, social welfare and judiciary, were slow to respond. Frustration with lack of services quickly turned to the community searching for alternative, non-state actors. The destabilization that ensued was exactly what the narco-traffickers and terrorists needed to gain ground.

Q: So then in your opinion the success was mixed?

YAMASHITA: Correct. I felt pretty good in terms of our intervention in those regions where we worked. For reasons of security and access, we could not work in all regions of the country where coca was grown. In terms of coca production at large, Peru like many other countries, Bolivia and Colombia in particular, there is a phenomenon that is often known as the "balloon effect." It works as follows: if you squeeze a balloon with air, the area you squeeze forces the air to another part of the balloon. Likewise, if you eradicate coca in one area, coca growth "moves" to another area. The trick is to eradicate coca in one region, then provide sufficient livelihood security and make it sustained before the coca and the economy of illegality comes back. Timing, adaptability and flexibility are key. Yet as I am sure you know, none of those three are hallmarks of USAID programming and budgeting cycles.

Q: How was the political leadership in Peru at the time? Were you able to work easily with the Peruvian government?

YAMASHITA: When I arrived in 2001, President Fujimori had just left office and President Alejandro Toledo had just been inaugurated. So, just to summarize the timeline, President Fujimori left under a cloud with allegations of having violated human rights as he pursued the Sendero Luminoso. He would later be convicted and sent to jail. Toledo ran on a rights-based platform and won. He was inaugurated in April of 2001. This was also the same year that George W. Bush began his presidency. Toledo's first act as President of Peru was to cut the military budget by 25% and his second, to request President Bush to re-start the Peace Corps. He also committed to a full and unwavering support for counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. Both on the human rights front and on the social side of counter-narcotics, which eventually became known as alternative development, USAID was poised to take a major lead.

Q: Toledo was a man trained by Peace Corps volunteers if I remember correctly.

YAMASHITA: Yes. His story is amazing. It starts when he was a teenage boy in a small town in the highlands of central Peru. He spent a lot of time shining shoes and finding errands to do for change. He only occasionally attended school. His family came from a poor, rural background. One day he saw an American couple and he saw possibilities for profit. The Americans, it turned out, were Peace Corps Volunteers and were looking for a place to stay. Toledo took them to his house and convinced his parents to rent out a room to this couple, which they did over the next two years. In those two years, the Volunteers convinced Toledo to keep studying, and encouraged him to complete high school. After the Volunteers left, they remained in touch. They helped him get through high school and apply to university. They helped him get a scholarship to a university in the U.S. He then stayed for graduate work, and eventually worked for the World Bank. Decades later, he is President. His motivation for inviting Peace Corps to return, as he often will say, is that his ability to rise and become President is all because a couple of Volunteers had faith in him and did not give up. He owes it all to Peace Corps. He is very proud to say that his first act as a president was to cut the defense budget by 25 percent and his second act as president was to ask for Peace Corps to come back! And one of my high notes while serving in Peru was that I helped Peace Corps come back! Peace Corps had closed their offices in 1975 due to violence and political instability. Upon receiving Toledo's request, the Ambassador, concerned about the security issues was skeptical. He wanted one of the U.S. agencies already in the country to host the Peace Corps and help them navigate the political and security waters. Well, I raised my hand, and volunteered. I worked very closely with some exceptional professionals. George Baldino was working at the USAID Mission in the Economic Growth office. He was a Volunteer and once a Country Director for Peace Corps so he knew the ins and outs of the organization. He had lived in Peru for many years so knew the country and the institutions. Kate Raftery was the point person for Peace Corps. Once a Volunteer and Country Director, Kate worked in the Washington headquarters of Peace Corps. The program officially re-started in 2002, and today, the Peace Corps in Peru has over 200 volunteers and is one of the largest and most successful.

Q: If you arrived at the end of Fujimori's term, Sendero Luminoso -- who pretty much put him in -- were no longer a significant factor at that point, is that correct?

YAMASHITA: That's correct. The Fujimori government pretty much did away with Sendero Luminoso, so a lot of our work was reconstruction and reconciliation. In the process of defeating the Sendero, Fujimori used strong arm tactics, giving the military leeway to abuse the rights of citizens, leading to mass killings and a scorched earth campaign. Toledo ran on a rights-based platform, selling his background as the first Indigenous presidential candidate. While Toledo did re-establish the rule of law, he would end his term under a cloud of allegations of corruption and misuse of public funds. During my time in Peru, one of the most interesting programs that I had the opportunity to be engaged in, was one that supported the truth and reconciliation process. Working with the special prosecutor and the Ministry of Justice, it was very much as in South Africa, which was a peace and reconciliation process where there was a special tribunal set up to understand the atrocities on all sides, certainly by Sendero, but also by the military. I'll never forget one of the public forums where an older woman came up and

she said that she knew her son was dead. She did not seek revenge or retribution. She did not care whether her son was killed by the Sendero or the military. But she asked the special commission to help her find his remains so she can give him a proper Christian burial and put him in a cemetery with his family. It was gut wrenching and it was so heartfelt. These were the wrongs that we were trying to right in a country that was so devastated by violence. Giving voice to the voiceless. I felt very proud of USAID.

Q: It sounds like you had a lot of interesting things going on at that period.

YAMASHITA: Yeah, I did. As I was thinking about getting ready for this interview, John, I was reflecting on all the different things that happened while I was in Peru and it's amazing. You start to deconstruct and think about all these little pieces that happened to you, the interactions that you had, and the people that you met. It's just astounding.

One of our other programs, also a part of the alternative development program, was with a local NGO called CEDRO (Center for Development of Youth) an acronym in Spanish. What they did was work primarily with the youth that had become addicted to drugs. One of the saddest things that I heard was that the coca producers, who produced the cocaine and ship it outside to the United States, would also sell to the local markets, especially targeting poor youth. Here's how it worked. The production process from coca leaf to cocaine powder requires the leaves to be crushed and mixed with gasoline and other types of highly toxic ingredients, turning it into a wet brick. The brick is further processed and the powder that remains is cocaine. In this process, there is residual that is heavily laced with the toxic ingredients such as gasoline and solvents. This residual, with little additional processing, becomes gold for the small traffickers that sell it to the poor youth of Peru. It is highly toxic and highly addictive. This organization (CEDRO) was trying to reach out to youth to prevent the use of this type of coca based drug and to treat the youth who were already addicted. The youth who were addicts and did not have the money to buy even these cheap drugs would run up to a car stuck in the typical Lima traffic, wrap a wet rag around the hot exhaust and take a whiff. The high they would get from exhaust fumes was similar to the high they would get from the drugs. And equally toxic. CEDRO was always grateful for the small grant we gave them. I always felt the honor was ours.

Q: Right. Any other highlights that you can recall?

YAMASHITA: In addition to the wonderful program experiences that I mentioned earlier, and the exceptional professionals with whom I worked, I would say there were two major experiences that were personal. The first was my role as Deputy Mission Director. I first had to shift from Tom Geiger to Patti Buckles. Their management and leadership styles were 180 degree opposite from one another. I had to quickly adapt. Then under Buckles, with her style, I became a sounding board for the rest of the Mission. The Mission staff appreciated what I was doing, as did the Assistant Administrator for LAC, Adolfo Franco. After Buckles left, Franco asked whether I would like to be appointed Mission Director. I turned it down. I said to Franco that the period with Buckles was so contentious that if I were to stay as Mission Director, staff may think that there was competition between Buckles and me, and that in the end, I was the

winner. This is not a sentiment that I heard, but I decided I did not want any speculation of the sort to damage the excellent work of the Mission. As I mentioned earlier, I learned a lot about what it takes to be a Deputy Mission Director, and the "chameleon role" that he/she needs to play.

My second experience was my role as Mission Director. After I informed Franco that I would not accept the Mission Director position, I started looking for my next assignment. Though I would be completing only three years of a four-year tour, I felt that it was the right time to move on. As I thought about what I might want to do next, I decided I wanted the challenge of a new region. One that I knew very little about. There were a couple of openings in the Europe and Eurasia region; I inquired about them, and Kosovo came up as a possibility. So, I applied and was selected. But when the time came for the actual appointment, it was delayed. It turned out that Franco had blocked my appointment. As I understand it, he felt that I could not be trusted as a loyal spokesperson for the Bush Administration. Here is what I believe happened. When I was Acting Mission Director in Peru, one of the programs we supported was in the area of maternal and reproductive health. Aspects of that program were taken out of context by conservative organizations and reported to Congress, who in turn called USAID to demand accountability. Adolfo Franco called asking for details. He was not satisfied with our explanation and demanded to know who was in charge of the Office of Health in our Mission. It became an Agency-wide crisis, with frantic phone calls and messages from the General Counsel's Office, the Bureau for Global Health, and LAC. My concern was that Franco was interested in knowing who was in charge of the Office so that he could in turn direct me to take administrative action. In other words, fire the person. Moreover, I am convinced that Franco wanted me to take the action, so that his fingerprints would not be on any paper trail. Well I refused. I repeatedly refused and told Franco that I was the only one accountable, as I was the Mission Director and all things happening in the Mission were my responsibility. I further told him that if he wanted, he could replace me. Of course, he did not. With this experience I learned that the Mission Director position is a political one, not too different from the one held by the Ambassador. The Mission Director might as well be a political appointee and subject to the whims, vagaries, and political convenience of the White House and the party in power. When the Europe and Eurasia and Agency leadership learned of Franco's objection, they reached out to him and he eventually allowed my appointment to go forward. I left Peru in the summer of 2006 and arrived in Pristina, Kosovo, soon after. My two children were in college. My wife Viviana and I were about to embark on our first empty-nest assignment.

Kosovo and First Time Mission Director: 2004-2006

Q: You did a direct transfer?

YAMASHITA: Direct transfer, that's correct. I was in Kosovo two years. One of the things that I learned about Kosovo is just how important it is for the United States to show moral leadership overseas. In Kosovo we were treated as demigods. Americans were so favored it was astounding, humbling, and, on occasion even embarrassing. I can share with you an anecdote. In the official realm, for example, I remember visiting one of

the towns in southern Kosovo. The mayor of the town asked to meet me outside of town, so I did. I got out of the car and he took me by the arm and he started walking me into town. It's a little town with nice clean cobblestones, electric lights, it's very neat, and, appears to be functioning quite well. As we walked, the Mayor said that during the war the people of his town were listening to the BBC radio wondering whether NATO would bomb Serbia. It was Madeline Albright at the time, making the case for NATO intervention, and when NATO decided to intervene, the people of that town were ecstatic. As the bombing campaign against Serbia started, the Serb military came through this town, pushed out all the townspeople in what they called a "horseshoe operation." Imagine a military maneuver where the forces line up in a U-shape formation and pushed everyone out of town to a retention camp. The Military then returned to the town an burned it to the ground destroying everything, including people's belonging, photos, mementos, etc. After the war the townspeople came back and what they found was smoldering rubble. As the townspeople stood around in a zombie-like shock, the first humanitarian assistance workers arrived. They were Americans from USAID, our OTI.

Q: Our Office of Transition Initiatives?

YAMASHITA: Yes. The Office of Transition Initiative, together with Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), were the first to arrive and worked shoulder to shoulder to start reconstruction efforts. They involved all the townspeople in cleaning up rubble, getting the things back together, etc.

Q: Oh my!

YAMASHITA: With tears streaming down his face, he said, "And this is what you see!" And he shows me the cobblestone streets, electric lights, store fronts that are functioning, and he said, "We will never, ever forget what you did for us!"

He said, "we will go to the ends of the earth for you!" To this day whenever I tell this story I get choked up. Years later I met the USAID Director who headed up the operations, Craig Buck, and his Executive Officer, Fernando Cossich. Fernando recalls working first out of Bosnia and later out of Macedonia. In the beginning they were not allowed to overnight in Kosovo. There were no banking services, so he had to carry bags full of cash to pay staff, contractors, and, services. Those were heady times and I think we showed USAID at some of our best. Our commitment and creativity with a singular focus, which was to support and assist a war-torn country.

Q: That's a hard act to follow isn't it?

YAMASHITA: Indeed it is. And it was not the only time that I received such a response. The Kosovars had a heart-felt appreciation for what the U.S. had done to liberate and then re-construct their country. We would follow through and continue our political, financial, development, security, and moral support through the years until Kosovo achieved independence in 2008. That was the year Kosovo declared independence and the U.S. recognized Kosovo the day after.

Beyond any official appreciation, the Kosovars had a special place in their hearts for us as individuals. For example, I remember one Saturday my wife and I went to the supermarket in downtown Pristina. When we got to the line at the checkout counter, the people in front of me recognized me from the newspaper and television, and, immediately moved out of the way so I could go first. I would politely decline, saying that I could wait in line like everyone else. Even my response evoked appreciation, and greater stature for Americans. After all, unfortunately waiting in line was not a custom often exercised by some of our colleagues from other nations. I would speak to the USAID staff, especially the American staff, about my experiences, letting them know that in public and in our private lives, we are under a microscope. We are adored and we need to live up to their expectations. So I would urge our staff to behave accordingly.

Q: How did you like living there?

YAMASHITA: It was comfortable but difficult. Though we felt very safe, the fact that Serbia did not recognize Kosovo other than a renegade province meant that violence could flare at any moment. In fact, in the disputed northern city of Mitrovica, there were a number of incidents that reminded us of the instability. At a personal level, remember that this is a post-war environment, so many items were not readily available. We drove often to Macedonia or to the military base – the Kosovo Force, or KFOR, as it was known to buy daily consumer items. Other parts of Europe were easily accessible so on holidays it was easy to get away. The Post, that is the Embassy community, was limited due to ongoing security concerns so we could not have dependents under 21 at Post. My wife and I were fortunate that our children were in college. Still, this was our first "empty-nest" assignment which meant additional challenges, especially for my wife. As she often puts it, she had to re-invent herself yet again. And that's the other half of our foreign service, right? We have amazingly loving and dedicated families wherever we go, and that was the case with me, whether it be South Africa or Peru or now Kosovo. The kids went with me, my wife was what we call a "trailing spouse." She reinvented herself at every post based on her interests and what was available, making sure that whatever she did would not take away from her attention to our children.

Q: Right. Now in terms of your mission operations, how big a staff did you have and what was your budget?

YAMASHITA: Let's see. We had close to 100 staff, with 20 or so Americans and about 80 Kosovars. Our budget was around $200 million per year. With the population of Kosovo being only 2 million the program was quite sizable on a per capita basis.

Q: That's a huge program! What was the content of the program? What was the focus?

YAMASHITA: We worked in all sectors except security. Remember we were involved in nation building in its rawest form. Kosovo had no institutions. In fact, the government was a special United Nations operations, known as the UN Mission in Kosovo, or UNMIK. We worked on political party building, judicial system and access to justice,

social sectors such as education and health, economic sectors such as agriculture, private sector, and, energy. We also worked on peace-building and integration at the community level. In addition to residual conflict between the Serbs and Kosovars, there were unresolved grievances amongst the many clans of Kosovars. We were involved with just about every cabinet department, playing a central role in the creation of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance, and others. It was truly nation building.

Q: Any particular highlights from the program side that you can recall?

YAMASHITA: There were many. One that stands out is our support for privatization of publicly-owned enterprises. As Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia, publicly-owned enterprises were the norm. After the war, the international community determined that privatizing these enterprises would be a priority, not just for future economic progress, but also for the significant revenues it would bring to the treasury of this new country. While UNMIK was the chair of the privatization commission, the U.S. had an outsized role and since I was representing the U.S., I ended up being one of the most influential in privatization decisions. I did not have any previous experience with privatization, so I depended a lot on other experts. Critical to my success was the Director of our Economic Growth office, Sharon Hester, who had experience with privatization in other countries and was an exceptional communicator and detailed professional. I tried to balance the interests and priorities of the various actors in the room. The UN, as UNMIK, tried to be the neutral arbiter, while the EU generally supported the views of Serbia, who were not present, and the U.S. tended to ally itself with the Kosovars, represented by a Special Representative of the President. It was an interesting mix of technical content, political maneuvering, and, at times pressuring different sides to come together.

Q: Did you have a Deputy Mission Director?

YAMASHITA: Yes, one of the best deputies ever, David Leong.

Q: And what did you tell that person about the responsibilities between the mission director and the deputy director? I could guess!

YAMASHITA: Well, more than being my alter-ego, I needed someone who would complement my skills, who would serve as my conscience, and, who would serve as a co-pilot, which meant he needed to warn me when I was about to drive into a ditch. But before we get into the nuances of the relationship between Director and Deputy Director, I found out that I had a challenge on my hands even before my arrival. Unbeknownst to me, David had been promised the Director position after the incumbent left. But instead of living up to their promise, the Agency assigned me instead. I blocked his path to becoming a Mission Director.

It is even worse. David had taken a leave of absence from the Agency and had reservations about coming back. The Senior Deputy in the E&E Bureau, Gloria Steele, convinced David to come back to the Agency and assume the role of Deputy Mission

Director for Kosovo with the promise that he would be promoted to Mission Director after the incumbent left. David accepted and went to Kosovo. He was already at Post when I arrived.

Q: Well, this is probably a good management issue to discuss on how you handled this issue.

YAMASHITA: I handled the situation as best I could. I approached it head-on and shared with him what I understood the situation to be. I was very apologetic, I did not know this was the situation. I said that I absolutely wanted this relationship to work, and I asked him his thoughts on what he thought on how we could relate to one another to make it work. That's when I shared with him my vision for a Deputy, as I mentioned previously. But more than how I handled the issue, this story is all about how David handled the matter. His true leadership qualities came through. He was understanding and forgiving. He was compassionate, professional, and courteous. I considered David a true alter-ego, meaning he could replace me at any time and anywhere. We worked closely together and made decisions together. I never thought of myself as being his boss. I saw David as my equal and my mentor in many ways, and that's how we worked it. I'd like to think that we had a good partnership, that's the feedback that we got, and we remain good friends to this day!

Q: Good for you! Programs were, I think you said, gradually going down from a high of $200 million to $100 million. Was that simply that it was less of a priority in terms of what was going on in Eastern Europe?

YAMASHITA: I would say it was a combination of things. Partly it was budget priorities out of Washington. As Kosovo inched towards a declaration of independence, Washington felt that the job of the U.S. was done. The EU, which had always been the largest donor, continue to provide support. The World Bank started to provide loans, and the Kosovar government was becoming more and more self-reliant. Still, even as our budgets were starting to shrink, the Kosovar government would frequently look to us for support

Q: Talk about being in the catbird seat. Had you worked closely with the EU before?

YAMASHITA: It was a very interesting situation to be in. For example, when a major delegation from the EU or the World Bank would come to Kosovo, the government would ask for our opinion, including comments on program areas and allocated budgets. Representatives from other donors would frequently come to us for advice on how to approach the Kosovar government and for our support for their programs. I tried to be as neutral as possible and supportive of our colleagues from the other donor agencies. I would always say to the Kosovar officials that in the end it needs to be their decision based on their understanding of what is best for the people of Kosovo. Of course, there were certain times when I could not help myself and share a snarky comment with my staff or with our Embassy.

Q: Were the other donors doing mostly infrastructure?

YAMASHITA: The EU was involved in all sectors, including infrastructure. They were in all of the sectors that we were, but with much greater resources. While we agreed on most things, on others we had conflicts. Often the EU would want Kosovo to follow the "EU model" on such things as the access to justice, or basic education. Our approach was that the Kosovars should decide by themselves. The U.S. model was often different, but I did not want the whole effort to turn into a EU versus US tussle. The EU insisted on a European model because they felt that Kosovo needed to be part of Europe. Since the EU tended to support Serbia on many matters, the Kosovars were suspicious of EU's motives. This is one of the reasons why the Kosovars often came to us for a trusted opinion.

Q: Were there any clashes between the Serbs and the Kosovars during that period?

YAMASHITA: There was always the possibility, especially around specific dates. Serbia never recognized Kosovo as an independent country, and, the northern city of Mitrovica remains a divided city, with the north controlled by Serbia and the south by Kosovo. A river flows between the two, and a bridge is a reminder of the divide. From time to time there are clashes on either side, with both sides blaming each other. I would not go so far as to say that there were clashes between the armed forces of Serbia and Kosovo.

Q: Did USAID have a role in trying to mediate those kinds of issues?

YAMASHITA: Absolutely. In fact, we had programs specifically targeting, supporting Serb communities in Kosovo, not just in the north, but down south near the border with Macedonia. We would be very clear to the Kosovars about why we were doing this. We emphasized the need for tolerance and inclusion. We reminded the Kosovars that now that the Albanian majority was in power, they could not discriminate against a minority population.

Q: Well it sounds like a challenging mission and a fairly large staff. Were you pleased with the way the program was functioning while you were there and what you left for your successor?

YAMASHITA: I was. Our program addressed the key issues faced by Kosovo; we had willing partners; we had resources; and, we had terrific staff. As I left I felt that the Mission was in good shape, and as I hear about Kosovo today, I would like to think we have made positive contributions towards a peaceful and independent Kosovo.

Q: Anything else you want to say about Kosovo before we move on to your next exciting adventure?

Another one of our real success stories—a very pleasant success story -- happened with one of our Kosovar staff, Gresa Caka, pronounced Tsaka. She was the secretary for the Front Office when I arrived. My Deputy David gave me a quick rundown on Gresa,

noting that she was pleasant and hard-working but required quite a bit of coaching when it came to her skills as secretary. Her English was very good. She was enrolled in a university in Bologna, Italy, studying long distance for her Master's in International Law. In one of my first meetings with her, Gresa said that her studies were taking up a lot of time. She said that she felt as if she wasn't pulling her weight as a secretary, that she would try to do better and that she was prepared to give up her studies so that she could focus on her job as a secretary. For her, it was job before studies. David and I considered her situation, then, went back to her and insisted that she finish her studies. In fact, we told her we were going to make it an explicit requirement for her performance evaluation for USAID. We also told her we would give her the time to study and to travel to Bologna when necessary. After she finished her degree, we transferred her to the Democracy and Governance Office as a Program Assistant. As a lawyer, she became an expert on constitutional law and European law. Because of her expertise, the government of Kosovo invited her to be on the drafting committee for the new Constitution. What an honor! Shortly thereafter she was recognized with the USAID Foreign Service National of the Year Award. More recently, I heard that she was selected to be on the constitutional court as a judge. A truly brilliant amazing woman, and we were able to just release some of that potential in her, which is what I often think is the ultimate goal of what we do -- to release that potential that exists in people. What a privilege and honor to be able to say that I worked with exceptional people like Gresa.

Q; Wow. And now, on to your next adventure?

YAMASHITA: As my tour was wrapping up, the opportunity opened up to come back to Washington to be head of the HIV/AIDS Office in the Bureau of Health. I thought that was an opportunity that I really did not want to pass up and I was selected. HIV/AIDS was now a priority and there was an entire office devoted to it and PEPFAR was up and running. Since I was involved in the pre-PEPFAR days in South Africa, I thought what an interesting way to come full circle through HIV/AIDS. That was the motivation behind my wanting to come back and be head of HIV/AIDS.

Washington, PEPFAR, and, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia: 2006 - 2009

Q: Who was the head of the Office of Health at that time?

YAMASHITA: The head of the Global Bureau for Health was Kent Hill. He was a political appointee under George W Bush. I was the Director for the Office of HIV and AIDS, one of several offices in the Bureau. Kent Hill was my boss. Our office had funding from PEPFAR or the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief. PEPFAR was the largest single program in the history of U.S. assistance outside of military assistance and post-war reconstruction assistance. The program was coordinated by the State Department and it was an inter-agency effort that included Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health, National Institutes of Health, Department of Navy, Peace Corps, and USAID. The CDC and USAID were the two largest players in this program. And we were always at loggerheads. The program required a very heavy management

load and significant intrusion and oversight from Washington. I felt that my job first and foremost was to support the field and to shield the field from Washington. And that's what I did. At least that's what I tried to do.

Q: As I recall, PEPFAR is kind of a multi-headed beast run primarily by a PEPFAR director who's in the State Department, but with...

YAMASHITA: Yes. The official title was Secretary's Representative and Coordinator. Mark Dybul was the Coordinator when I was there.

Q: And then we had the CDC, HHS (Department of Health and Human Services), and USAID all working under that structure.

YAMASHITA: Yeah, There were very large number of organizations, but the two main ones were AID and CDC and we did not see eye to eye on anything!

Q: Despite your previous employment!

YAMASHITA: Perhaps part of the friction is that as a once employee of CDC, I sort of knew the internal workings of CDC and the Department of Health. I knew the various layers and interests at play, which meant that I could read CDC and their motives. Something they did not like. But beyond that was a philosophical difference. CDC wanted to focus on curing AIDS by medical intervention and drug distribution. USAID wanted to focus on building systems. While the two could complement one another, the competition was so fierce that consensus was not possible. Even Ambassadors would weigh in with opinions that were often turned down by CDC. The competition was so fierce it even involved staffing categories. Because CDC was staffed with civilians and members of the uniformed services, remember that CDC has commissioned officers of the U.S. Navy, they were not subject to the same limitations of the Foreign Service.

Q: The PEPFAR program in the field is one thing, but I believe you didn't have the same kind of huge centrally funded projects as you probably had when you were working with family planning. Is that correct?

YAMASHITA: Well they were different. The family planning program was uniquely USAID. We did not have other agencies to contend with. The centrally funded projects dominated the family planning implementation efforts, and, country programs were discussed between Washington and the field, but within USAID. In PEPFAR, though we did have large centrally funded projects, there were many that were field based. Each country program was discussed at the inter-agency level but within the country. Then the agreed upon country program came to Washington where the inter-agency, coordinated by State, would discuss some more, and arrive at an approved country program.

Q: What was the role of your office in Washington?

YAMASHITA: I would say our first responsibility was to do everything we could to support the Health Officers in the field. Because USAID is involved in many aspects of health, the Health Officer is not necessary an expert on HIV/AIDS. Neither is the USAID Mission Director. Yet when it came to a head-to-head discussion with CDC, we were outgunned. On their side CDC had experts in HIV/AIDS. On our side we had a health generalist in our Health Officer and a Mission Director that often knew only a little about the health sector. It was worse when it came to meetings with the Ambassador. Very often the Ambassador would insist that only the head of the agency attend. That meant the Mission Director for USAID, and the CDC director, since CDC was a separate agency according to the Embassy. The discussions were often one-sided. While the CDC person could speak eloquently on technical matters, the USAID Mission Director had to rely on briefing that were given by the Health Office. Often, though not always, CDC got their way. Our job in Washington was try to intervene with PEPFAR and with our State colleagues to try to even the playing field. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it did not.

Q: Did you develop a relationship with the CDC director, whoever was responsible for PEPFAR in CDC in Atlanta?

YAMASHITA: I did. My direct counterpart was Debbie Birx. She was the Director of HIV/AIDS. She later became the PEPFAR Coordinator at State. I believe she is still in that position. I consider my relationship with her and with others at CDC to have been cordial and professional, although we did have many disagreements. In fact, the disagreements were such that on one occasion it almost led to my being fired.

Q: Oh?

YAMASHITA: Yes. In those days, the pace and intensity of the program, not to mention the intrusion of PEPFAR/Washington was such that I started to write a weekly memo to all the Health Officers around the world. I called it "Monday Morning Muddle." It was an e-mail that I would send out every Monday, with news, opinions, gossip, and some light fare. A typical memo would include latest directives from Washington, my opinion on the mood of Congress regarding budgets, a little gossip about the Agency, and some light jokes about how poorly the Washington professional teams are doing. I tried to make it as casual and informal as possible. In addition to valuable information, I wanted to give our field officers the sense that we were not only listening to them but also sympathizing with them as we collectively tried to navigate the rough waters of PEPFAR. The intrusion of PEPFAR was so intense that even the CDC staff in the countries started to complain, as did the Ambassadors. When those complaints reached the Coordinator, he called a retreat. At that retreat the PEPFAR leadership, of which I was part, agreed to reduce the management burden on the field. Yet no sooner did we return from the retreat that PEPFAR sent out more tasks and directives to the field. That's when I had had enough. I wrote in my next Monday Morning Muddle a long note about the frustrations of PEPFAR with apologies to the field for not being able to reduce the management burden. Well, that note got around to the Coordinator, who was furious. He called Kent Hill, who in turn called me. Kent Hill told me that the Coordinator wanted me fired. Kent spoke with the Coordinator and convinced him that my message was unintentional. That I would

apologize. The Coordinator agreed so that is what Kent wanted me to do. So I did. Reluctantly so.

Q: So indeed a tough job, and different philosophies of management, clearly.

YAMASHITA: Yeah. This was the second time I put my career on the line. The first time was in Peru. When the Assistant Administrator, Adolfo Franco, demanded to know who the Director of the Health Office in the Mission was. I refused to give him the name, instead insisting that all actions of the Mission were under my responsibility, and therefore if he wanted to hold someone accountable for actions, it should be me. The second time was with PEPFAR, and my memo to the field. On both occasions, I was fortunate to have forgiving bosses, Adolfo Franco and Kent Hill, who allowed me to continue my career. On the other hand, in hindsight, I have no regrets about taking the course of action that I did, even if it would have led to my dismissal.

Q: How long did you end up staying with HIV/AIDS?

YAMASHITA: About a year and a half. I realized after my actions – often referred to as a Career-Limiting-Gesture, or CLG, that my days with HIV/AIDS were numbered. As I pondered what I might do next, I received a call from a colleague I knew from my days in Kosovo. He was serving in the Regional Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, where Kosovo was located. He told me that the Bureau was looking for a Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator and wanted to know whether I might be interested. I jumped at the opportunity.

Q: What where their challenges? What were they asking you to do at that point?

YAMASHITA: The Assistant Administrator for the Bureau was Doug Menarchik, a political appointee under George W. Bush. I was his senior deputy. Doug left in the fall of 2008 and I remained as Acting Assistant Administrator for the remainder of the Bush administration and through the early transition to the Obama administration. The challenges facing the Bureau were multiple, though two stand out. First was historical. This was 2008, about a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Many of the countries we assisted in the early years, such as Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, had graduated to become members of the EU. We had few countries in our region. The natural question was whether we should remain a Bureau, indeed, whether our continued existence was justified. The second challenge was administrative. As we narrowed our geographic bounds, we had fewer countries but geographically spread out. Our countries included Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia in Europe. We had a Mission in Hungary that supported our programs regionally. In Eurasia, we had Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. A decision had been made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to move Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan over to the Asia Bureau from the E&E Bureau. Afghanistan was a separate Office. The move of the "-stan" countries caused administrative and management challenges that I had to handle.

Q: This was a new region for you, right?

YAMASHITA: Yes it was. I learned a lot during my time with E&E. One of the most interesting countries I learned about was Armenia. Their history of conflict with Turkey and Azerbaijan, their claim to Noah's Ark, combines with a high dependence on Armenian expatriates for economic sustenance that makes our development efforts very complicated. I also learned about frozen conflicts. That is, conflicts between nations that have not exploded into all-out war but remain a major point of contention in bilateral relations. Two in our region that stood out are Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and, Transnistria, between Moldova and Ukraine. Some would say that Ossetia in Georgia, where the Russians invaded, was another one. I also learned more about the Balkans; the conflict between Macedonia and Greece, and why the word "balkanization" comes from that region.

One of the high points of my time in E&E was a low point in world history, the unfortunate invasion of Georgia by Russia. It happened during the summer of 2008. Following the invasion, I attended many meetings at the White House to decide what actions we could take in retaliation. One idea raised by the National Security Council (NSC) was for USAID to stop funding programs in Russia. I objected on grounds that the bulk of the program in Russia was mostly in the Chechen Republic, or Chechnya and it was mostly promoting democracy and governance. The Russians did not like our program and would be ecstatic if we closed it down. Then I gave an alternative. Instead of punishing Russia, we could support Georgia with a massive assistance program to help with the reconstruction efforts and supporting the displaced population. Much to my surprise, the NSC agreed, then asked me how much I would need. Thinking about our program in Kosovo, and the relative size of the two countries, I pulled a number out of the air - $1.0 billion. Then to my further surprise, they agreed.

Q: So YOU'RE the one responsible for that!

YAMASHITA: But the NSC also asked that if they came up with the funds, could I get it all programmed by the end of the fiscal year. Now, mind you this was in August. The end of the fiscal year was September 30th. We had about a month and a half to program $1.0 billion. Without batting an eye, I said yes. And it was done.

Q: Oh, my goodness!

YAMASHITA: I left the NSC with a cool, calm, and confident face which broke down into a sweaty panic as soon as I got back to USAID. I called the Mission Director in Georgia, Bob Wilson, and started to plan out what we would do and how fast we could do it. Thanks to Bob's contact with the government, his ingenuity and quick thinking, we were able to pull it off.

Q: I remember hearing that figure and thinking that's a nice round number, and but I didn't realize that you had to obligate it in a month and a half!

YAMASHITA: What we did is we focused on two things: the immediate support for refugees internally displaced, and their winter needs. You know in Georgia the winter comes early and comes hard. We wanted to make certain that everything looked ready and in place to support the displaced people when the winter came. We put a lot of resources to that and then we put a lot of resources into rebuilding their livelihoods which meant support for agriculture in the winter. By using grains that are pest resistant and can be sowed in the late fall, the harvest in early spring can be substantial and complements the typical summer harvest. Our USDA helped out considerably, as did our military by bringing in material for the displaced families.

Q; How did you program that massive amount of money?

We had a bilateral agreement with the government. In other words we needed to sign one agreement that would place the entire amount in one program area. We called it reconstruction and rehabilitation program. This was the requirement for obligating the funds by the end of the year. Even something this simple required quite a lift, including support from many offices in Washington. The urgency voiced by the White House helped a lot! Once in this bilateral agreement, we could take our time and fund specific projects. That said, we didn't want to take too much time, as the seasonal change was coming soon and the needs of the displaced people were many. Our relationship with the Georgian government was excellent. The President and our Ambassador were totally supportive which also helped to move the process.

A rewarding moment came in the spring of 2009, during the harvest season. I had the opportunity to visit the northern province where the Russians had invaded. The fields were a sea of golden grains, with enormous harvesters busily at work. I met with the governor, who told me that when the Russians invaded, everything had been burned to the ground. The Russians employed a scorched earth policy. That is, burn everything down so that reconstruction would be near impossible. After the invasion, the governor hosted many high level visitors, including Presidents and Prime Ministers, even Royalty. There were visits by international organizations such as UN and World Bank. Every visitor commented on the terrible situation and promised assistance. But in the end, the only assistance that arrived was from the U.S. The governor pointed to the fields of grain behind us and, sweeping is arm, he said "This is all thanks to the American people and USAID. You were the only ones that came through for us." In hindsight, I think many well-meaning governments simply did not want to annoy Russia by siding with Georgia. The U.S. stood on principle and I am proud that we did.

Q: What a remarkable story. Now let me see, you spent three years total in Washington before you decided to move back overseas?

YAMASHITA: Yes, three years which is the typical tour in Washington. But my decision to go back overseas was not straightforward. At the time I started questioning whether I wanted to stay with USAID.

Q: Was that a push or a pull? Was somebody saying here's something we really want you to do, or were you saying, "Well, I've done what I was going to do in AID and it's not as exciting for me anymore.

YAMASHITA: It was a bit of both. On the one hand, I still had battle scars from the PEPFAR days. I wondered whether continuing to work with USAID was the best way to stay engaged in development. I did not look forward to an overseas assignment full of Washington oversight and micromanagement of field activities. On the other hand, I had some very good offers from the private sector, not associated with USAID, but involved with development initiatives. It was attractive. This was the second time I seriously considered leaving USAID. Both times were while I was in Washington, the first being when I was in the Office of Health, Family Planning Division. At the time, it was Aaron Williams who convinced me to stay and go to South Africa. This time I got a call from the Latin American Bureau, asking whether I might be interested in going to Colombia as Mission Director. I immediately accepted and thus ended my ideas about leaving USAID.

Coincidentally, my move to Colombia worked well for my wife as well. I mentioned before that while in Kosovo my wife decided she needed to re-invent herself. Indeed, she did. She applied for and was accepted to the State Department as an Office Management Specialist. This the category of staff that serve as assistants and secretaries to the various officers, including the Ambassador. Her first assignment was to Morocco, while I was in Washington. After I was assigned to Colombia, she was also able to get an assignment to Colombia, so we served together for nearly two years.

Colombia and Second Time Mission Director: 2009 - 2011

Q: So in the summer of 2009 you went to Colombia. A big change from E&E and a huge important program.

YAMASHITA: It was indeed a big and important program. Then President Uribe had taken a big step towards eliminating the FARC terrorist threat plus the major narcotics networks had been neutralized. The President also support U.S. efforts to eradicate coca, including aerial spraying, which was highly controversial. He fully supported the Colombian military and welcomed U.S. trainers. By the way, in conversations with our military colleagues, they would often note that the Colombian military has become so effective and professional that the U.S. forces would routinely depend on their leadership and intelligence gathering to fight the FARC and to interdict major drug movements. On the social side, Uribe understood the need for a balanced approach to counter narcotics and the importance of alternative development. He created a structure within his office called Acción Social, or social action, with significant funding and broad authorities in order to support communities. For USAID, Acción Social was our main counterpart. The Director, Diego Molano, and his Deputy, Sandra Alzate, became good colleagues and friends. I had the pleasure and honor to work closely with them and travel to all corners of Colombia.

Q: And only recently have we had the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, so the fighting with the alternative groups was going on all that time. What was the focus of your program in Colombia?

YAMASHITA: The U.S. priority, as well as that of the government of Colombia, was counter-narcotics and counterterrorism. After having made significant inroads against the terrorist group, FARC, which in Spanish stands for Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and after most of the biggest narcotraffickers such as Pablo Escobar were eliminated, the remaining effort was to seal the success and provide much needed assistance to communities and population groups that were most affected. There was also quite a bit of controversy around the tactics of the military including allegations of mass killings that needed to be addressed. With the creation of Acción Social, USAID became a major player in this post-conflict process.

Q: And I understand the Colombians are very capable?

YAMASHITA: Not only very capable but also professional and well resourced. I worked side by side with Diego Molano as equals. This was not a donor-recipient relationship. Diego had had the ear and respect of the President. On several occasions, President Uribe would visit rural communities where he held town halls. He dragged many of his Cabinet members; and Diego and I would also attend. USAID was the only donor present. That alone was quite the honor. During the town hall, the President would listen to the community, who would raise issues, such as the lack of water or lack of services. The President would turn to the relevant Cabinet member and in front of the public would demand an explanation and a solution. Diego would pipe in and would relay to the President what Acción Social was prepared to do, often with the assistance of USAID. The President would then turn to me to confirm that USAID could provide the support. Of course my answer was always, "Yes, Mr. President. As you request." At a more programmatic level, Diego and his Deputy, Sandra Alzate would meet with us and discuss their annual program and the funding allocated to specific projects. They would point to the holes where USAID assistance was being requested. Frequently the assistance involved high level technical analysts. While they knew that they could not be part of the selection process, they did ask to be part of interviewing the key technical experts. They wanted to make sure that the experts selected were better than the resources they could get from Colombians. I thought that was a fair request. By the way, it is an axiom that I have tried to follow throughout my career. That is, I have no problems hiring experts and contractors and I have no problems paying them high prices. In return I expect the best of the best.

Q: Sounds like a sort of mature relationship.

YAMASHITA: Yes, it was. The only other times I have experienced such a relationship was in Mexico when we closed the family planning program, and, in South Africa when I was there as the Health Officer. Perhaps such a maturity is consistent with these countries being considered a middle-income country.

Q: Who was your predecessor as mission director?

YAMASHITA: Ambassador Liliana Ayalde was my predecessor. She was followed by a short period by Susan Reichle. I replaced Susan. After I left, Nadereh Lee, who was my Deputy, moved up to be Director.

Q: Well let's take a few minutes to talk about what you thought you were able to do while you were in Colombia. What were some of your accomplishments as you saw them?

YAMASHITA: Three highlights in particular. One was the interagency. President Uribe was insisting on an integrated approach to addressing the challenges that Colombia faced. One reason for his creation of Acción Social was his frustration with the vertical and territorial structures of the various ministries. Thus he insisted that the U.S. support him with an equally integrated approach. The Ambassador, William Brownfield, agreed. In order to achieve such an integrated approach, the Ambassador could have named an inter-agency coordinator, or could have selected one agency to take the lead. Instead, he pulled together a small group from his senior team to create what he called the Colombia Strategic Development Initiative, or CSDI. Even though "development" was part of the title, this initiative was equal parts military and counterterrorism, civilian security and counter-narcotics, and social and economic development. Thus the three agencies were USAID, Drug Enforcement Agency, DEA, and, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, INL. One of the many characteristics that I appreciated about Ambassador Brownfield is that he never favored one agency over another. Although INL is part of State Department, he did not favor INL. He treated all of us as equals. In order to maintain that level of trust, we needed to be nimble and flexible. At times I had difficult conversations with my own staff who wanted to protect their projects, but more than invoking the authority of the Ambassador, I would first consult with Diego Molano and together we would configure the appropriate response.

Q: Excellent!

YAMASHITA: A second highlight was the creation of a program addressing the unique needs of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous Peoples, or ACIP. There was concern by many in Congress, in particular the Black Congressional Caucus, and amongst human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and the Washington Office for Latin America, that Afro-Colombians and the Indigenous peoples had been disproportionally affected by the violence. Many in these two communities lived in remote rural areas which were ripe for incursion by terrorists or the military. The west coast of Colombia, where many of the Afro-Colombian communities existed, was isolated and perfect for the drug lords to set up shop. In many cases, communities were terrorized, and families separated. Their livelihoods were destroyed. Out of such concerns, our Congress set aside specific funds, known as earmarks, to support the communities. As I looked at our response, I felt that our response was haphazard and lacked focus. When I asked my team for an accounting of our efforts, the response I got was piecemeal. For example, the agriculture project would have a seminar and they would invite five Afro-Colombians. Or we would include 15 Afro-Colombians in a reproductive health conference. Or we would

count the few Indigenous candidates that were selected for a short-term fellowship. Rather than continue down this path, I felt we needed a well thought-out, dedicated program. When I proposed my idea to the Mission staff, the initial response was push back. I think their concern was that I would dilute their programs by taking funds away from their project for this new program. They were correct in that I was proposing to fund the program out of our existing budget, which meant other projects would receive less. But I challenged the team to think about how to make efficiency improvements in their ongoing projects. I then told the team that starting a new program was not negotiable; that I intended to proceed regardless of their concerns. So we started on a design process which took some time. We consulted widely with various communities and interest groups. In the end we came up with a ten-year program. The program started after I left and has changed in scope and content. Still, I understand it's going strong to this day.

Q: Great. You said you had a third highlight?

YAMASHITA: Yes. My third highlight was supporting the return of the Peace Corps, which had left Colombia in the mid-80's out of concern due to violence and security. In those days the FARC was a major terrorist organization and Pablo Escobar was in control of the drug economy. Colombia was on the verge of becoming a failed state. Anyways, Peace Corps left, and in 2009 the U.S. received a request for the return of Peace Corps. Ambassador Brownfield agreed to the request, and, just like in Peru, I volunteered support by USAID for their return. I once again called on George Baldino for support and relied heavily on Diego Molano and his team at Acción Social for detailed information on possible sites for the Volunteers. Ambassador Brownfield left; his successor, Ambassador Michael McKinley was not supportive, but did not reverse our course of action. We were able to put together a plan, which was carried out and continues this day, with an ever-increasing number of Volunteers serving in Colombia.

Q: Now you said your wife was with you. Was she pleased to be back in Latin America?

YAMASHITA: Yeah, in several ways. It was an opportunity to be assigned to the same Post. I think I mentioned earlier that she had joined the State Department as an Office Management Specialist (OMS). Her first assignment was Morocco, and her second, Colombia. She started as the OMS to the Political Section, and then served as the OMS for Ambassadors Brownfield and McKinley. Having my wife serve in the Front Office of the Embassy helped in further forging the relationship between USAID and State. Following Colombia, my wife was assigned to The Hague, Netherlands. That was early 2011. Shortly thereafter, I was assigned to Afghanistan.

Q: Any other thoughts about Colombia?

YAMASHITA: On a personal note, I felt very good that I was able to establish a relationship of trust with Ambassadors Brownfield and McKinley. Brownfield asked me on several occasions to be the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, and when he left, he asked me to be the Charge for about a month, until the arrival of Ambassador McKinley.

During that month, August of 2010, Juan Manuel Santos was inaugurated as President of Colombia, following the peaceful transition from Uribe. We were fortunate that many of his advisors knew USAID and had positive experiences. They reached out to us on several occasions as the transition neared, and we worked closely with the advisors to formulate a new plan for the Santos Administration.

At that point, I had completed the first year of the standard two-year tour in Colombia, so I started considering what might come next. One possibility was to extend in Colombia for a third year. That's when I received the call from Washington.

Q: Who made the call to you?

YAMASHITA: The first call was made by the Director of Human Resources, Debbie Kennedy.

Q: And she said, "It's your turn," huh?

YAMASHITA: Well, sort of. Debbie said that Human Resources was putting together a list of potential candidates for Afghanistan and wanted to know whether it would be o.k. for her to include my name. I was actually ready to serve, but, I did respond with a laugh, telling her, "You know, that is business of just compiling a list is nonsense, because once your name is on the list you know what happens next!" We had a good laugh, and, in the end, I agreed. So I ended up on the list. After this call, I spoke with my wife, to let her know that there was a chance I would get assigned to Afghanistan. As always, she was totally supportive with whatever decision I would make. The second call came from the Agency Counselor, Hilda "Bambi" Arellano. Bambi is a good friend whom I have known for years. I knew that her call would be a definitive one. Bambi told me that they were prepared to select me and wanted to confirm my availability and willingness. I agreed, but on condition that I be allowed to serve two years. Assuming of course that I did not fail in my duties. You may remember that since 2002, when USAID re-started operations in Afghanistan, the tour was a one-year assignment, including for the Mission Director. I was being considered for the 2011 cycle, and if selected, I wanted to be Director for two years. Bambi asked me why, to which I replied that one year was too short a time to carry out a program. It took nearly that long to fully understand the complexities of any development context, never mind one that was post-conflict, controversial, and, under intense oversight scrutiny as Afghanistan. And so, with that I was assigned to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, Third Time Mission Director, and, Assistance Coordinator: 2011 – 2014

Q: Today is June 1, 2017. We are moving through Ken's long, illustrious career to talk about his tour in Afghanistan. In the last segment Ken indicated that he was offered a job, but he said he would consider it if he could stay for two years, not just one year. And with that, Ken, we'll turn it over to you.

YAMASHITA: Right, after I was selected but before my move in the summer of 2011, I travelled to Washington for key meetings, that started with Raj Shah, our Administrator. This was a strange meeting. I expected Raj to talk about the development and political issues as well as his vision for Afghanistan. Instead he focused only on the number of USAID American staff in the country. At the time we had about 250 US citizens, another 300 Afghan nationals, and about 100 nationals from other countries, known as Third Country Nationals, or TCN. The mandate and therefore my first priority was to increase the American staff to a total of 387 by the end of the fiscal year. Now mind you I am having this conversation at the end of May, so the challenge ahead was enormous. To expect a bureaucratic organization such as USAID to move quickly enough to hire over 100 foreign service officers was an impossible task. Yet there it was. I also met with Tom Nides, who was the Deputy Secretary of State for Management, who repeated the same mandate. I also spent some time with the office at USAID that supported Afghanistan. It was an independent office called Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, or OAPA. The Assistant Administrator was Alex Thier. The staff at OAPA were excellent, as were their counterparts at State, which was called the office of the Secretary's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or SRAP. Ambassador Richard Holbrook was the Special Representative and hence the director of the office of SRAP. Karl Eikenberry, a former general, was the U.S. Ambassador at the time. During my short time with OAPA I learned a lot about the unique organizational challenges I would face in Afghanistan, starting with the immense intrusion of State and the military. We used military terms such as deployment instead of assignment. Hence I was being deployed to Afghanistan. I also took part in special security training including learning about weapons and defensive driving. With all that crammed into my head, I deployed in early June 2011 to begin my two consecutive one-year tours.

Q: Most people who went to Afghanistan who were working with you, or for you, were happy to keep their tours to one year, so obviously the security situation didn't bother you as much as it might have bothered them.

YAMASHITA: I think staff were aware and cognizant of the security risks. I don't think it necessarily bothered them. However, remember that a tour in Afghanistan, or other critical or priority posts, such as Iraq, Pakistan, or South Sudan, were mandatory for foreign service officers at USAID. So there were a number of officers in Afghanistan that were there against their wishes. The disagreement with their deployment was partly because of security, but also because of separation from family. In addition, many felt that what we were doing in Afghanistan did not constitute good development practices. The military were deployed in six month rotations. Such a short time was impossible for USAID, as it was for State. So for foreign service officers from all agencies, the deployment was set at one year. The benefits were substantial, including salary supplements for danger, and, a generous leave policy which allowed for five breaks over the course of twelve months. On the other hand, one had to stay in Afghanistan, boots-on-ground, as we used to say, for at least 300 of the 365 days in the year, to get full credit for the benefits. You can imagine that planning for five breaks over a twelve month period, staying exactly 300 calendar days in-country, and ensuring coverage of the office by

negotiating with other colleagues was quite the logistical and management nightmare. There were a number of staff that spent more time on planning their breaks than they did on ensuring that programs were successfully implemented, though I would say that the vast majority of staff were outstanding professionals who were resilient and committed to the work regardless of security. There were also quite a large number that chose to stay more than two years, in some cases even up to four or five!

To further add to the complexity, because the majority of staff elected to serve one year, we had significant turn-over every year. In fact, we estimated that approximately 85% of staff turned over every year. That means around 400 staff! It was hard keeping track of the officers as they came and went.

Q: The ones outside of Kabul, were they for PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) or were they for a program that was already going?

YAMASHITA: The staff outside of Kabul were virtually all for PRT's. The disconnect between our officers out in the field and our officers in Kabul managing existing programs was a shortcoming that we tried unsuccessfully to overcome. Here is what I think happened. Because of the intense pressure to get our numbers of staff up to the goals that were set, we began hiring a large number of individuals that were short term hires. They were known as Foreign Service Limited officers, or FSL. This program has changed over time, but when I was there it was basically a three-year commitment with no further guarantee of a job with USAID. Many of the FSL officers were familiar with Afghanistan or development, but not with USAID procedures. With very little training they were sent out to the field to be the lone development officer assigned to a combatant command. The officers were known as Development Advisors. These officers would deploy with the command into the communities and have meetings with community leaders. At these meetings, the community leader would request a small development project, such as rehabilitating an irrigation system. The Commander would look to our Advisor, who would consider such a project as a good idea. As you know, in USAID there is a long and torturous road between a project idea and implementation on the ground. Well, the Advisor would return to his office and call Kabul for help. In Kabul, we certainly had projects working on irrigations systems, but as in any typical USAID program, we had a large contractor who had submitted a program plan including the locations where they would be working. These were determined by the terms of the contract. If the Advisor were lucky, his, or her, location would be included in the contractor's project. If not, well the Advisor was out of luck. The Commander would not be happy with such an outcome. He could not understand why USAID could not rapidly divert resources, or start a new project, or re-align ongoing activities to be responsive. We were criticized for not being agile and not being responsive to the needs of the military nor the community. They were right.

Since we're on the topic of personnel, let me go just a little deeper into that. When I arrived in Kabul, I found out that the USAID staff in the field did not report to me. Instead they reported to the Office of Field Support, an office of State at the Embassy. The Director of the Office was Dawn Liberi, formerly of USAID. She did not want the

USAID staff communicating with us directly, and she did not want us to have any part in deciding where the staff would be deployed. So in addition to the programmatic disconnect I mentioned earlier, here was a clear disconnect in the chain of command. What we knew about the role and work of each officer was determined by State, and we depended wholly on State communicating with us. Then there was the issue with the number of staff. From the time I arrived, the drumbeat from Washington, the Embassy, and the military was that we did not have enough officers on the ground. We kept recruiting and delivering the officers to the Office of Field Support who proceeded to deploy them. We only heard from them in moments of crisis when USAID was not able to respond to the development needs of communities because we did not have flexible project mechanisms. I would meet officers for whom I was accountable for the first time when they came to my office at the end of tour to say good-bye. It was embarrassing. Early in my tour I asked the human resource officer in the Mission to give me a full accounting of our staff, in Kabul and in the field. Believe it or not, it took almost two years to come up with a correct staffing table. At one point, the Executive Officer, who is in charge of human resources, told me that they could not reconcile the positions, as we did not know where staff were. Each officer is supposed to have a unique position number assigned to him or her, and we were supposed to know where in Afghanistan that position was. In fact, we did not. At the end of two years, when we finally had the table cleaned up, it turned out we had more than 500 American staff. We had overshot our goal, yet Washington kept insisting that we had more recruiting to do. Thankfully, during this period we did not have a major security incident that would have required us to get full accountability. We would have failed miserably, and worse, we would not have known if some disaster had befallen one of our staff.

Q: Remind me, Ken, what year this is.

YAMASHITA: This was the summer of 2011. I had just arrived. In addition to all these personnel issues, I also had to quickly get up to speed on our projects. When I agreed to go to Afghanistan I knew that the pace would be significantly greater. In my first few months there, I learned first-hand that not only was the pace greater, so was the intensity and the sphere of action. Our program was huge. Remember that the Obama Administration started in 2009, so the first budget of the Administration was in 2010, which we received in 2011. The budget we received was $4.0 billion. While I was there it went down to $2 billion.

At the same time that we were starting to process this huge budget, the mid-term elections of 2010 brought in the Tea Party and a Republican House of Representatives that was highly critical of the Obama Administration. In addition, President Obama had promised to draw down the military presence in Afghanistan by the end of his first term, which was in 2012. So, no sooner were we finally able to reach, and exceed, the magical number of 387 American staff in Afghanistan, we were directed to start the draw-down, to 100 Americans and all of them located in Kabul. While we were not able to meet the draw-down goals by 2012, we did reach that number by the end of President Obama's second term.

Q: Surely there must have been some programmatic rationale behind these changes?

YAMASHITA: We made the case for a continued large staff due to the immense budget that required oversight. Our arguments did give us some flexibility, but in the end it was about the surge and then the drawdown, plus the increasingly difficult security situation.

Q: How many of these people did you actually meet, and, how many of them were you aware of what they were doing?

YAMASHITA: I met some but not all. I mostly knew what they were doing, but not in any detail. Of course, I found out a lot about individuals if there were issues. I relied heavily on my senior team, which included three Deputy Mission Directors and four Regional Directors, one for each regional platform in Afghanistan, North, located in Mazar-i-Sharif, South, located in Herat, West, located in Kandahar, and East, located in Bagram. In Bagram and Kandahar we were located within the military base, while in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif we had offices in the city. By the time the draw-down had ended, we had closed all those offices.

Q: Tell us more about where you were able to travel outside of Kabul? Could you get to some of these locations where personnel were located?

YAMASHITA: One of the things that I've always liked doing when arriving at a new assignment is to get out as soon as possible to the field and start meeting some of our beneficiaries. I have always felt that in the world of development there's nothing better than actually sitting down with beneficiaries and having a conversation about what life is like for them. I always felt it was important to hear their voice and give them a chance to interact directly with the Mission Director, without the filter of local leaders, the government, contractors, or program managers. So, in keeping with my past approach, I asked my staff to organize a field trip. It was organized, and I went out. But when I went out, it was in an armored military transport vehicle in a convoy. When I arrived at the project site, an area had been cordoned off and the beneficiaries were sitting in a circle, where I joined them. Some distance away from the cordoned area, there were troops stationed at key points, some keeping an eye on my meeting and others looking out for possible incursions. There was a helicopter overhead, circling the area to give a broader view of the terrain. The men and women in uniform who escorted me that day were the most professional and low-key that you can imagine. They were courteous and respectful of the local community and gave me wide berth so that I could freely speak with the beneficiaries without feeling constrained by the presence of military. After I returned to the office, I reflected on this experience and decided that the intensity of effort and the level of intrusion into the daily lives of communities was not justified just because a Mission Director wanted to visit the field. After that, I went on only one other field trip, to the major hydroelectric dam in the south, the Kajaki Dam. I visited our teams at the regional platforms in all four locations and met with counterparts at those offices. But I did not go out into the field.

Q: So, security may not have been a primary concern for you personally, but it was always in the back of your mind?

YAMASHITA: In terms of personal security I was not too concerned. The Embassy compound was well protected, and, I had an additional security detail of eight wonderful men. They were contract security experts and they would escort me everywhere. There was always one person just outside my apartment should there be a need for evacuation. The one person that always trailed me called my "shadow." Indeed, that's what he was. About the only place he did not follow me was inside my apartment. These men were excellent professionals, courteous and respectful. They understood that the nature of my job required that I attend meetings outside of the Embassy with frequency, and, often in public. For example, I was able to participate in opening ceremonies, inaugurations, and school graduation events. My security team took my job seriously, and, in return I took their responsibilities seriously as well. There were numerous times the person assigned to be my "shadow" would come to my office and tell me that they have some disturbing and worrisome information about the venue, or the road to the event. They would always ask me whether the event was important. If I said yes, they would have made it work. However, I always took their advice. No meeting, no event was so important that it was worth risking lives. My security detail was willing to put their lives on the line so I could attend a simple event. I found that to be very sobering.

Q: Did you experience any specific incidents?

YAMASHITA: Not personally, but incidents did happen. The first was around the anniversary of 9/11 in 2001. I was on my first break, visiting my wife who was working in The Hague at the American Mission to the International Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, or OPCW. I had planned on a ten-day break, when on the second day I received a call from one of my deputies, Jeff Ashley, that the Embassy compound had been attacked by mortars and gunfire. There were no incursions. I asked him whether I should go back. His first response was no, but, as I heard hesitation in his voice, I decided to cut short my break and get back to Kabul immediately. I am glad I did. Fortunately, there were no physical injuries, but staff were mentally wounded. The risks of doing development work in a war-zone became real for all of us. There was a lot of healing to do and we were fortunate to have a supportive team in Washington, that, eventually became known as Staff Care.

A second incident that affected me was when the Director of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) in Kabul, Wadel Abdallah, was killed along with 11 others. There was an attack on a popular Lebanese restaurant called the Lebanese Taberna by a group of Taliban insurgents. Mr. Abdallah was someone I knew and had worked closely with. Donor coordination generally was critical in Afghanistan and our relationship with the IMF was very good. Mr. Abdallah was Lebanese so he felt at home in this restaurant. In fact he would frequently invite us to join him "at his house." I had joined him on several occasions. Earlier that week, we saw each other at a large meeting and he suggested that we have lunch at the Taberna. I agreed but we could not coordinate our schedules. Then

the attack on the restaurant happened. Had I been able to change schedules around, it is likely I would have been there with him on that fateful day.

Q: Close.

YAMASHITA: There were two other incidents that affected me personally. One was when Army General Harry Green was killed by an Afghan police cadet in August of 2014. General Green was a close counterpart, with responsibility for oversight of the huge U.S. support to the Afghan civilian police. At that time, the U.S. funded some 85% of the entire cost of the Afghan police. This included salaries, uniforms, weapons, ammunition, vehicles, building, and, training. A lot of training. I met General Green in my role as the Assistance Coordinator and principal Embassy liaison to the military. From the beginning, General Green and I shared the same concerns about the accountability of funds that were being given to the Afghan government. General Green understood the USAID concepts of systems strengthening and institution building. We fought many battles together, some with the Afghan Ministry of Interior where the police were housed, and several with our own military, who felt that just paying the bill without any institutional assistance was enough. The day he was killed, General Green was visiting the Afghan Police Academy. It is not a normal visit that I would make, on the other hand, had General Green invited me, I would have gone, as I was very curious about how Afghan police are trained.

The other one was when one of our own, Foreign Service Officer Ragaei Abdelfattah, was killed by a motorcycle bomb in August of 2012. He was posted to one of the provinces, Konar, in eastern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan. Ragaei began his career as a USAID contractor in Egypt. He moved to the U.S. and eventually joined USAID. This was his second voluntary tour in Afghanistan. Ragaei, along with a group of six others were going to a meeting at the governor's office when they were struck by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle. Ragaei, two servicemen, and one Afghan were killed. A State Department Foreign Service Officer and another serviceman were wounded. Ragaei always talked about how grateful he was to the U.S. for giving him the opportunity to succeed in his career and to give him a new life in the U.S. He felt blessed and he felt that the least he could do was to serve in Afghanistan in return. This was his second tour. His was a true American story.

Q: So you had to handle these difficult situations and still stay on top of your massive program?

YAMASHITA: Ah yes, the programs. It was massive, indeed. I am fortunate that I had three highly capable deputies. I'm pleased to say that many went on from Afghanistan to become Mission Directors. Our program consisted of many traditional development areas, such as health, education, agriculture, and, democracy and governance. We also a large private sector program and the largest of all was the energy and infrastructure office. That's where we had our most controversial projects, those involving roads.

Q: Why were they controversial?

YAMASHITA: Road construction was central for the military to achieve its goals. The communities constantly asked for roads to be built, which would help them get better access to markets. But USAID procurement, especially for road construction, took a long time from idea to implementation. A two-year process was not unusual. Such a timeline was unacceptable to the military and the communities, so, we were rightly criticized. We tried speeding things up and taking short-cuts but that did not work, as audits later showed. Then we had to deal with the insurgents. Every time we finished a piece of road, it would be blown up. Our costs sky-rocketed and our performance plummeted. It was painful.

In the end I would say that the road construction efforts were a failure. It was a failure on many levels, starting with our inability to clearly articulate the case for a development-based approach to infrastructure while at the same time we failed to successfully push back on the military and their understandably short-term construction needs. A long-term strategy for infrastructure wrapped around a community development construct with full buy-in from the people of the community was simply a bridge too far to cross. It was not realistic. It would not be acceptable to the White House and the insurgency would certainly undermine our cause. So, the mandate and the directive were to go ahead and build the road with the intent that the longer-term development interventions would come later. In a few occasions the strategy worked. More likely though. Our efforts were thwarted by the Taliban who would destroy the roads as soon as we built them. They would harass and threaten the community at night while we were working on development projects during the day. It was a no-win situation. All of this resulted in a project - and I'll say this using USAID language-that achieved only 20 percent of its goals in terms of number of kilometers of roads constructed. This meagre achievement came at a cost of 120 percent of the original budget.

We had another infrastructure project that is near and dear to my heart, the Kajaki Dam. I apologize for a little bit of history here, but I think it is worth repeating. The Kajaki Dam is an earthen dam located in the south of the country, near Kandahar. The river that feeds into the dam is also the source of irrigation to the Sangin Valley, one of the most fertile in Afghanistan. This is a region that also saw some of the bloodiest battles between the Taliban and the U.S. Marines. Before the U.S., the British marines also suffered some of their greatest losses. From a development perspective, the Sangin Valley is a major source of food security for the southern half of the country. It a large and fertile valley capable of producing a variety of agricultural products. This valley is also one of the main growing regions for poppy which is used to make heroin. And, this valley is considered to be the home of the Taliban. So, no matter how one looks at it, the valley serves a critical and strategic purposes. At the northern tip of the valley is the Kajaki Dam, named after the town where the dam is located. It is an earthen dam first built in the 1950's by the U.S. The dam was built with sufficient capacity to provide electricity to the valley and irrigation water throughout the year, including the dry season. Two turbines for the generation of electricity were installed in 1975 by USAID. A third turbine was not installed because of the Soviet invasion in 1979. In 2005 after the return of USAID, the two installed turbines were rehabilitated. Before the third turbine could be installed,

major fighting broke out between the Taliban and the coalition forces. The British marines suffered some of their worst casualties in these battles. The U.S. marines entered the battles in 2010 and eventually gained control of the valley and the dam. Now it was up to USAID to complete the project with the installation of the third turbine. This was in early 2011.

When I arrived, Marine General John Allen was the Commander of the Coalition Forces. He wanted to know what our intentions were with respect to the Kajaki Dam. He was ready to hear us say that we would not proceed with the construction. I heard all sides of the discussion but in the end decided that Afghanistan's economic future was going to depend on agriculture for a very long time. The productivity of the Sangin Valley was therefore crucial to the development of the country. I recommended to Washington that we proceed with the project. Unfortunately, Washington was wavering and a decision was not forthcoming. In the meantime, General Allen was getting understandably inpatient, as he had deployed marines to the Dam to hold it, that is, to protect it, from the Taliban. Our Marines were dying while USAID was trying to reach a decision. The U.S. Ambassador at the time was Ryan Crocker. He also weighed in, supporting the General. Raj Shah, our Administrator, visited Afghanistan in October of 2011. During their last meeting, he agreed to proceed with the project. But later started to walk back his decision. In the end it took another year and intervention by the National Security Council to decide to go forward with the project. The procurement process was long and controversial. Obstacles seemingly appeared out of nowhere. This was the third time I put my career on the line. I told the Assistant Administrator for OAPA, Alex Thier, that I was making some decisions that were within the authority of the Mission Director. I said to him that if he did not agree perhaps it was time for him to look for another Mission Director. Alex never replaced me, but he also never agreed with my decisions. While this saga was unfolding, our Marines were fighting the Taliban and holding the dam. It was a travesty.

It is of some consolation that two years after I left Afghanistan I received news that we finally completed the installation the third turbine. The two other turbines had been refurbished, and the dam was generating electricity for the valley.

Q: Interesting story. What about other sectors, such as health and education?

YAMASHITA: I think we had some great successes in health and education. During the Taliban regime, access to health and education especially by women and girls was severely restricted. The restrictions were reflected in worsening health conditions for women and newborns and evidenced by spikes in maternal and infant mortality, and, decreases in literacy rates especially amongst girls. After 2002 USAID along with many donors embarked on a major program to increase access, especially for women and girls. After ten years of effort, we could see the results by the statistics. We opened clinics, trained nurses and female doctors; we opened schools, purchased textbooks, and trained teachers. We also refurbished many schools, adding secure toilet areas for girls and dormitories for the older girls. The Taliban notwithstanding, the issues around gender are a major challenge in Afghan society. Even amongst our staff, I would hear of cases where

our male employees were bullying females. The women would plead with us not to do anything, as they were concerned with after-work retaliation.

We also worked closely with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. There was quite a bit of rehabilitation to do in agriculture, in the aftermath of the destruction caused by war. Irrigation ditches were not working, waterways were clogged, and open markets were non-existent. We worked with the Ministry of Energy to improve access to electricity and revenue collection. We also supported the Independent Electoral Commission to plan and carry out elections, including the recent one where President Karzai peacefully handed over power to President Ashraf Ghani. Overall I would say we made a lot of progress since we re-opened our doors in 2002. However, there is still so much more yet to be done.

Q: I imagine the oversight was quite extensive?

YAMASHITA: Yes it was. There was, of course, the Congressional oversight. But, we did not have too many Congressional Delegations because of distance and security. The delegations that came normally wanted to visit the troops and were not that interested in USAID. We also had the press. I became very good friends with our press liaison at the Embassy. In my time in Afghanistan there was hardly a week that went by without at least one request for an interview by some of the major news organizations, such as Washington Post, New York Times, Al Jazeera, and the Wall Street Journal. But, by far the most contentious relationship was with the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR. All of our organizations, whether it be USAID, State, or DOD, have their internal Inspector General. What made this Special IG unique is that he had the authority to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse across all agencies and departments. The SIGAR was a mirror unit to one that was created for Iraq, the Special IG for Iraqi Reconstruction, or SIGIR.

Q: What was so contentious about the relationship?

The SIGAR for most of the time I was there was John Sopko. He decided to take a combative approach to his role, with the assumption that we did not know what we were doing and were wasting taxpayer funds everywhere. From his perspective, there was nothing we could do right. He would release parts of an audit without the proper context. For example, on one occasion he accused us of having built “thousands of schools” and we didn’t even know where the schools were located and whether the schools were built in the first place. This was the headline he would release to the press and to Congress. We were forced into a damage control mode as queries from Congress and the press flooded our offices. I very quickly learned how to explain our program without being defensive and adding context to the report by SIGAR. On this particular issue of school construction, we asked SIGAR for the full report, which they delayed in handing to us. In the meantime, the criticism grew. When we finally saw the report, we noticed that they had exaggerated the number of schools that we allegedly paid for, and, they relied on simple Google Maps to identify the school location. When they could not identify the school on a satellite map, they determined that we were lying. At no time did they go to

the location for verification. After we did our due diligence, we found only two schools that either were never built or were not in use. In one case, the school had been built but was re-purposed to serve as a town center. In another, the Taliban had bombed the school and the community was waiting for the conflict to ease before trying to rebuild. These nuances never made the SIGAR report.

Q: Now in addition to your regular programs, did you also have government-to-government program assistance as well?

YAMASHITA: Not initially. Of course, all of our programs were approved by the government. But implementation was through our contractors and grantees, similar to what we do in other countries. The government-to-government, or G2G approach is when the government does the implementation. While I was there we felt that the government still did not have enough capacity to implement. In addition, their internal controls were weak and we could not be confident about their fiduciary responsibility. Before we could give funding directly to government, we needed to certify their financial systems. The certification process was carried by our financial management team and our general counsel. They had very strict guidelines on what types of internal controls would be acceptable. The Afghan government was also required to have other systems in place, such as in internal independent audit, a human resources system that includes payroll, and, a transparent and equitable procurement system. The government was deficient in all of these areas. We worked very closely with other donors to improve the capacity of Afghan public while at the same time the Afghans were increasingly exasperated by what they saw were bureaucratic hurdles. After all, who needs a functioning payroll?

So, with the other donors we came up with an approach that was projectized program assistance. This is an approach that many donors have used in other countries, and it is a hybrid between project support and G2G. To be more specific, a pure form of G2G is when funds are released to the government based on specific policy reforms Typically these reforms are economic in nature, such as doing away with gasoline or electricity subsidies. This approach is typical of the World Bank and the IMF. USAID does not employ this approach anywhere because we are interested in the end result of our investments. For example, it is not enough to say that a policy change expanding the access to education by all children regardless of race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, or economic status will result in a release of funds to the government. Such an approach may be acceptable to the World Bank or IMF. For USAID, we need to know how many students benefitted. Moreover, we do not want our funds to go to the general treasury. If the desired change is in the education sector, then we want to make sure that the education ministry receives the funds. The USAID approach is therefore a projectized approach to G2G. This is what we proposed, and, was accepted by other donors and the government of Afghanistan.

But then negotiating the details became excruciating. The Afghans decided that because they and the donor community were equals, we would also be held accountable for results. The whole process became to be known as mutual accountability. The Afghans were accountable for performing on key policies and implementation of those policies.

The donors were accountable for ensuring that funds were available. All of this was unveiled at an international donor conference which was held in Tokyo. A big matrix was presented as the framework. Hence the name stuck – the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, or TMAF. The TMAF became a living roadmap for all donors and anyone interested in development in Afghanistan.

Many of these events were occurring in 2012, as my second year was coming to a close and as I was starting consider options for my next assignment. The Ambassador at the time, James Cunningham, asked whether I would stay a third year and be the interagency assistance coordinator, sitting at the Embassy.

Q: A third year! And as we know, you said yes. Now, who was your supervisor? Was it Cunningham?

YAMASHITA: As in any Mission, my official evaluation was prepared by the Ambassador. When I arrived it was Karl Eikenberry. He was followed by Ryan Crocker, and then James Cunningham. However, there were four positions that were held by former Ambassadors: the Deputy Ambassador, Michael McKinley; the Ambassador for Management, Hugo Llorens; the Ambassador for Economic Assistance, Rick Olson; and the Ambassador for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement, Steve McFarland.

Q: Five Ambassadors?

YAMASHITA: Yes. I would say that I got along with all five. Ambassador Rick Olson was the one who coordinated USAID along with other agencies such as Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Commerce, USDA, and a few others. So he was my day-to-day boss. The State Economics Section was also coordinated by Olson. After Olson left, Bambi Arellano arrived and took on that position. It was when Bambi Arellano was leaving that Cunningham asked whether I would stay and be the Coordinator to replace Bambi. But then the surprise. He said that Ambassador McFarland was also leaving, and Cunningham wanted me to take his responsibilities as well, under one consolidated Coordinator for Economic Assistance, Rule of Law, and Law Enforcement. I accepted, and that's how I ended up staying a third year. I was detailed from USAID to State Department to take on this role. My role was coordinate all non-State agencies at post, and to be the principal liaison with the military for everything that did not include combat operations. I had over twenty Departments, Agencies, and Sections to coordinate. There were the assistance sector agencies such as USDA, CDC, Commerce, and of course, USAID, but, also on the law enforcement side, I coordinated DEA, FBI, Customs and Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security, Treasury, Justice, plus some others I can't talk about because it is classified information.

Q: Now, before we move on to your role as Coordinator, can you tell me more about your work with the military? How was that?

YAMASHITA: It was great but complicated. Overall I could not ask for a more professional, well meaning, and, responsive group of partners to work with. It was quite

an honor and privilege to work alongside our men and women in uniform. But, it was complicated. I think one acronym says it all: JCIATF. In other words, the operations in Afghanistan were Joint, in that all branches of the U.S. military were involved. Combined, in that it included Afghan forces. International, in that it was a coalition of forces from many countries. TF, in that it was a Task Force which meant temporary in nature. The "A" stood for Afghanistan. Thus, Joint Combined International Afghanistan Task Force. So, when I would meet with my military counterparts, it could be one of many involved in Afghanistan. Plus, the commanders in the field had quite a bit of autonomy so I would often meet with them separately. Each group that I met with had different requests and different ideas. In addition there was the Commander of ISAF, or the International Security Assistance Force. When I arrived it was General David Petraeus. He was followed by Marine General John Allen, and then by Marine General Joseph Dunford. So, in terms of coordination, the sheer number of meetings I would have during the course of one week was enormous.

Q: Were those meetings about programs?

YAMASHITA: Programs and strategies. I would normally meet with Generals and Colonels to discuss strategy and program direction. I tried to delegate program details to my deputies or to office directors. They would meet with Lieutenants and Captains to discuss details of programs. In general, when we met with our military colleagues who were in ISAF headquarters, there was greater understanding of what USAID could and could not do. It was more difficult when we met with field commanders.

Q: How So?

YAMASHITA: The field commanders would often talk to us about their plans for entering a kinetic district. By kinetic I mean that it is a zone in conflict. In other words, either there is fighting going on, or there are plans to go to the district to fight the insurgents. The Commander would say that after they defeated the Taliban, USAID needed to come in right after and set up a government. Ha! A small request. All it required was for USAID to get involved in the aftermath of an armed conflict. The conflict often resulted in death and destruction. Many times, civilians were part of the casualty. So, it was up to us to set the government structures in place, start cleaning up the place, rebuild the buildings, provide health care, open up the schools, open up the clinics, give a livelihood, agriculture, and, provide meaningful employment. Make sure that the goods get to market so that the townspeople can live peacefully. I am exaggerating the request, but not by much.

Q: You also probably didn't even know who the local personnel were you would be working with in such a community. Did you have Afghan experts who could help you on these kinds of issues?

YAMASHITA: Let's start by thinking about what resources we had on the table that I could use. One of the most important assets I had was the Office of Transition Initiatives, or OTI. They had programs across the country and were the type of program that could

come close to meeting the needs of our commanders on the ground. But like everything else USAID, the OTI program was being implemented by contractors under a specific set of contract terms. Even OTI, the program I would consider one of the most nimble in the USAID realm, could not move quickly enough to meet the need of the Field Commander. We needed to get Washington approval. We needed to amend contracts. We needed to negotiate with the contractor. It just took too long. Moreover we would have to move resources from one community to another, even as our work was not complete in the first community. We simply could not meet the needs of the military. As far as they were concerned, their job was to fight and defeat the enemy on the ground, hold the territory until USAID arrived, and then leave. After they left, security for that community would be up to local forces, often an ill-equipped and poorly trained police, or a community group that acted as a voluntary militia. So when the Taliban returned, we would immediately leave the community for security reasons. Things would fall apart, and the military would have to return. We were often blamed for not working fast enough to complete our work in a sustainable manner.

Q: Did the military say, "Well if you can't do it, we'll do it?"

YAMASHITA: The situation that I just described did not happen all the time. The field commanders were frustrated because the overall strategy of the military was not working. It was not working because a key player in the strategy was USAID and, in their minds, we could not deliver. The leadership at ISAF in Kabul were more understanding but also frustrated. They knew that they could not do it, even though there were many attempts, and many declarations of "well, if you can't do it, we will." When it came down to basic development projects, they were as tedious and bureaucratic, if not more so, than we were. They did not want to do it. They did not have the personnel on the ground to do it. At one time field commanders were given funds to use they needed for projects in communities. If a community needed $20,000 for a market that was destroyed during combat, the commander could provide the funding. But then, who would do the construction? What were the design and safety requirements? All these details were beyond the scope and expertise of the field commander and his troops. We worked very closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who were the experts that could answer these technical details. There was quite a large contingent of the Army Corps in Afghanistan, but, they too, had their limitations starting with requirements for due diligence before construction started. As I listened to their litany of requirements, I felt that compared to the Army Corp, USAID requirement were a piece of cake!

By the end of my second year and into the third, the military was drawing down so our coordination diminished to a trickle. They were focused on finishing their tasks and getting out of Afghanistan.

Q: Who followed you then as AID Mission Director when you became coordinator?

YAMASHITA: Bill Hammink, an exceptional leader. It was great to work with him in my role as Coordinator.

Q: Were there any major changes in the USAID program in the third year?

YAMASHITA: No, I think that more than anything was the reality of the reductions in the budget. It went from $4 billion to $2 billion to $1 billion. That's still a very large number, but when you program for $2 billion, $1 billion is still a 50 percent cut. So there were those kinds of adjustments that needed to be made. It was increasingly difficult for our project managers to get out to the field to take a look at what our projects were doing. How we supervised and monitored our projects was exceptionally difficult and complicated. One of Bill Hammink's excellent contributions is the strategic monitoring and evaluation of our programs in the conflict or post-conflict situations when our staff are limited in their ability to get out to the field. He structured an approach that was layered and included third party players, the host country government, community leaders, and even technology, such as drones. He set parameters for what each could do, and a process by which the information gathered by these sources could be assembled in order to give a comprehensive view of the progress of our programs. As much as we complained, I would add, justifiably so, with SIGAR and their tactics, I am convinced that they pushed us in new directions to think about monitoring and evaluation, which led to this new approach.

Q: So, you're starting your third year, with the budget coming down for all agencies. Did you have a sense of what were you thinking about? I want to ask you a couple of questions, but one was, what were your feelings about your accomplishments during the two years as Mission Director?

YAMASHITA: In terms of accomplishments let me begin by saying that whatever I accomplished was thanks to many excellent directors and USAID teams that served over the years in Afghanistan, and the many that served after I left. In hindsight, in spite of all the changes, arguments, and, controversies, USAID has maintained a steady presence in Afghanistan since 2002 and we have remained true to our core development values of expanding services and opportunities to those most in need and to build sustainable systems. In terms of my personal accomplishment, I feel a bit like Sisyphus, having pushed the rock up the hill a few inches. With this context, two areas that I feel especially good about are energy and women's empowerment.

Since 2002, one of our big accomplishments has been getting girls into school. And I'm sure you've heard about it in terms of girls' education and how we've done so much in Afghanistan to get girls back into school. The Taliban had closed schools and international donor community reopened them. Girls were back in school! Good news, great news, great success! Now, ten years later, in 2012, we still kept touting our great accomplishment of increasing girl's literacy and school attendance. Over that 10-year period, we estimated that USAID could attribute some 300,000 women who benefitted from our efforts to get girls into schools. The question I had was, "so now what? What prospects do the women have? Now that we have educated 300,000 girls, do they have access to banks, finance, and loans? Do they have access to higher education and quality jobs?" Of course, they did not. So I worked closely with other experts on the subject and who were working in the Mission. We came up with a 10-year program; the target was to

reach 300,000 women, the illustrative target being equal to the number of young women we had helped educate. The ten-year number came from my experience in Colombia and the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous project, estimating that that is how long it would take to make a program sustainable. The budget we came up with was $400 million, a very large number but one we thought was reasonable considering the overall budget of Afghanistan and the enormity of the task ahead. Lastly, a 10-year, $400 million program would send a signal about our commitment to women's empowerment in Afghanistan. A year after I left Afghanistan, our Administrator Raj Shah visited Afghanistan to inaugurate the program. He called it the most significant and largest women's empowerment program ever for this Agency. That felt good.

Another accomplishment I feel good about is our support in the energy sector. In spite of all the criticisms, I feel we did accomplish quite a bit, bringing reliable electricity to a significant portion of Afghanistan.

Q: Through construction or through technical assistance? How was that done?

YAMASHITA: Both. The decimation of the energy sector in Afghanistan goes back long before 9/11 and the intervention of the U.S. Afghanistan has lived through decades of conflict, and through each episode the energy sector has suffered, resulting in poor access to electricity by the population. USAID played a major role in reconstructing the energy infrastructure, in establishing an independent electricity agency, and in expanding the access to reliable electricity. During my time as Mission Director, we continued to strengthen the institutions and we provided funding for construction. The electricity agency was the first government agency that received a program assistance grant as they were able to meet all the fiduciary and internal controls requirement of USAID. It was this agency that completed the construction of the Kajaki Dam.

Q: Who were your AID advisers on the energy side?

YAMASHITA: We had an entire office dedicated to energy and infrastructure and was separate from the office of economic growth and private sector. I was fortunate that the team on energy were dedicated, persistent, and patient. One of the individuals that I consider an outstanding professional and was a mentor to me on all things energy, was Roseanne Casey. She taught me everything I know about the energy sector. She was patient as I asked some pretty basic energy concepts. In addition to access to electricity country-wide, she fought with me as we battled Washington over the Kajaki Dam.

Q: Now for your year as Interagency Coordinator. Tell us a little more about your dealings with other agencies. Did you find generally there was an understanding about what AID was going to be doing versus State and the military? Were there problems in agreeing upon activities and programs?

YAMASHITA: In terms of USAID, there was great appreciation for and understanding of what we were trying to accomplish. We were held in very high regard. For example, because the Embassy Country Team was so large, the Ambassador would have daily

"small group" meetings. These constituted the other four Ambassadors, the office directors of Management, Public Affairs, and Security, plus three others – a representative from the intelligence community, one from the military, and, USAID. Not only did we have a major seat at the table, we were trusted and consulted on virtually all matters affecting Embassy policy and operations, not just those that related to USAID. It was also a learning experience for me in terms of how an interagency can effectively work. I needed to leave my USAID hat at the door and think in terms of the best interest of the Embassy team overall.

Now in terms of my role as Interagency Coordinator, I decided that my principal role should be to coordinate the actions, but not direct them. When I met with the entire interagency for the first time, I shared with them a little bit of my experience under PEPFAR, and how USAID was micro-managed. I told the group that that was not what I wanted to do. In fact, what I said was that "coordination from one side of the fence looks like micro-management from the other." I also said that I saw my role as serving as a communications link between the Ambassador and the agencies. The agencies needed to be straightforward, clear, and timely in their messages to me so that I could carry them forward to the Ambassador. In return, I promised them that I would communicate the Ambassador's directives and intent. There was a lot of nuance. For example, one of agencies would present a proposal for a night-time operation. It would involve the Afghan military and U.S. Special Forces. I would hear about the details of the operations, including when and where it would take place and how many American servicemen and women would be involved. Such an operation had huge risks, including casualties to our men and women in uniform as well as the civilian population especially if the operation was going to take place in an urban area. My job was to know how the Ambassador would react to such a proposal, and, give guidance to the agency. I needed enough information to ease any concerns the Ambassador might raise. I always told the agency involved that I would do my best to advocate for their proposal, but in the end, it would be the Ambassador's decision. I would say that overall this type of partnership worked very well.

Q: And during the third year the drawdown continued?

YAMASHITA: Yes, the drawdown continued, agencies started to leave. Several of the agencies did not want to be in Afghanistan. They were a domestic agency and had competing requirement in the U.S. They also had staffing shortages, and they did not feel that working in Afghanistan was part of their mandate. But the White House had mandated a "whole of government" approach to Afghanistan with a motto that said, "one country, one team. In together, out together." The Ambassador was not pleased that agencies were leaving prematurely, so, one of jobs was to smooth the transition process for the agencies. I spoke often with the heads of agencies at Post as well as their headquarters in Washington. There were some negotiations about how small the agency presence in Afghanistan could be and still be worth their while. Many of these agencies were operational in nature and not in an assistance mode. In other words the agencies brought in their teams, carried out their mandate, and left. This was interesting because at USAID we think about sustainability in terms of institutional capability and systems

strengthening. We think about long term presence and support to counterpart institutions. That was not the case for many in the military and civilian law enforcement.

Q: Can you give an example of an agency that did not want to be there and who you had difficulties working with?

YAMASHITA: We had U.S. Department of Commerce, for example. I won't say difficult to work with because it was not an issue of difficulty. We had one commerce person who was an excellent professional and easy to work with. He felt that the most important thing he could do was to improve Afghanistan's opportunities in the private sector, expanding export opportunities and providing a platform for external investors to invest in Afghanistan. But in carrying out his work, he also realized that Afghanistan was not a priority for American investors. His headquarters saw this and objected to his work. Remember that the core business of Commerce is to support American businesses overseas. Since there was little to no interest in Afghanistan by American business, Commerce felt they should not be in the country.

Another agency we had an issue with was the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). They proposed to establish a state-of-the-art laboratory facility to for research. They claimed that the Minister of Health personally gave the approval to proceed. I did not agree. Afghanistan had no infrastructure, no trained professionals, and no funding to commit to such a project. I also spoke with the Minister, who fully agreed with me, saying that she was just being polite to the officials from DHSS. I had several conversations like this one, not just with DHHS. As soon as I objected, they would invoke the magical Washington leadership. So I also spent some time talking to the headquarters of these agencies.

Q: Did you have to deal with conflicts between agencies over programs or budgets?

YAMASHITA: Not really. There were enough resources to go around and enough work for everyone. All agencies were focused on their job and did not have to fight over turf or budgets. The conflicts I had were more about program direction or specific actions, such as the ones I mentioned. In these tussles with the various agencies and their headquarters, I was fortunate that the Ambassador supported me at every step. I feel good that he trusted my judgment to make the call and carry it out.

Q: Your third year must have been quite the learning experience.

YAMASHITA: It was a huge learning experience. First of all, there were truly wonderful committed, competent professionals in every single agency. They were focused on their task, they appreciated what I was trying to do, and they understood the broader policy issues that the Ambassador was dealing with. It really gave me a whole new perspective and respect and admiration for our colleagues on the law enforcement side that we'd normally not engage with, and what they're trying to do. I learned about their agency culture, especially the State culture. I became good friends with many of my State colleagues. Several were instrumental in my success in my third year, making sure I did

not make any blunders. My team included Debra Fillips and Chris Dunnett. Perry Holloway, the Director of Political and Military Affairs, and Baxter Hunt, the Director of the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, INL, were great mentors.

In working with our law enforcement colleagues, one of the many things I learned was their focus on training for tactical reasons. In other words, they were training police to be better police officers. Their mandate did not include improving the systems of civilian law enforcement, such as strengthening the internal systems of the Ministry of Interior, where the police are housed. In the world of USAID, that would be similar to saying that we train teachers to be better teachers but we are not going to strengthen the education system nor the Ministry of Education. We would consider it short-sighted. I would discuss this with my law enforcement colleagues. They would not disagree, but they would say that their mandate is limited. That convinced me that as USAID we should get into the act, that is, become more involved in the security sector from a development perspective. I spoke about this with Raj Shah, but he disagreed. The idea did not go anywhere.

I also learned about being a leader in an interagency context, the first lesson being how to stop being a USAID Mission Director and becoming a Coordinator. I was helped by Bill Hammink and his leadership at the Mission. I felt I did not have to engage with USAID except for a few policy matters. Bill kept me abreast of the most important matters as they came up. Years later I think about one of the challenges for new Mission Directors being the ability, or not, of leaving behind their role in their backstop. For example, I have coached Mission Directors who were once Program Officers and can't stop acting like one. As I learned in my Coordinator role, leaving the Program Officer hat aside and becoming a Mission Director is not easy.

Q: So you left in 2014?

YAMASHITA: Yes but once again, it became complicated. As my third year was coming to an end, Ambassador James Cunningham left and was succeeded by Ambassador Michael McKinley. Ambassador McKinley had already been there for a year as the Deputy Ambassador when he was appointed to be the Ambassador. Both suggested that I apply to be an Ambassador, which I did. When that did not work out, Ambassador McKinley asked me to stay a fourth year.

Q: A fourth year?

YAMASHITA: Yes. He wanted me to serve as the Ambassador for Management. I was elated and honored that the Ambassador would ask me to stay. However, there was no way I could stay a fourth year and remain sane. As I looked back at USAID I found a very supportive team in Washington, especially the Counselor, Susan Reichle, and, the Special Advisor to Raj Shah, Michele Sumilas. The Mission Director position in Mexico was open, and it was offered to me. Again, I was honored and elated, and accepted. That was in the fall of 2013. Unfortunately in late 2013 my brother-in-law passed away from a

sudden heart attack. But this was not the only family tragedy. My mother-in-law passed away while we were in South Africa, another brother-in-law while we were in Peru, and, another while we were in Kosovo. So, with my wife, we decided that the time had come for us to be back home, in the U.S. Our overseas adventures were over. I went back to Susan and Michele and discussed various possibilities. In the Spring of 2014, I received a call from Aaron Williams and Stacy Rhodes. They were both wondering what my plans were after Afghanistan. When they heard that I did not have one yet, they asked whether I would be interested in Peace Corps. For the third time in my career, Aaron Williams played a central role. I accepted, and that's where I went after Afghanistan.

Q: Before we go too much into the Peace Corps side, I've met some people myself who've come back from three years or less in Afghanistan who had to deal with some PTSD problems; some had issues related to the pressure as well as the violence of Afghanistan. Were you affected by any of this?

YAMASHITA: I'm sure I was. I won't say that I wasn't. I'd like to think I adjusted reasonably well, but there were little things that I found interesting. For example, one of the aspects about Afghanistan is that your life is totally managed and circumscribed so in a way it's a very easy life. You don't have to think about what to buy or eat for your meals because it's just there. You don't need to think about paying utilities or mortgage, because it's all there. You don't need to think about commuting or the cost of your car or the cost of metro because it's all there. So life is all about staying safe and doing your job and not going crazy. It's not about the day-to-day life that we have here in the United States. You don't have to worry about cleaning because you can just get somebody to come and clean the apartment. You don't have to worry about laundry, you don't have to worry about the internet, or utilities, or hot water; you don't have to worry about any of those! So one of the adjustments for me coming back, is that I have to worry about that stuff! And how do I worry about internet service when in the last three years I've never had to worry about it, that kind of thing. Oftentimes you hear this legend about the foreign service officer that goes into a supermarket and looks at the cereal aisle and starts to cry because there are so many choices of cereal, and he doesn't know what to do.

In my case it was not about cereal. You have heard the frequent shock by many foreign service officers that return to the U.S., and then remain catatonic in the cereal aisle because of the huge selection. Not in my case, because I knew which one or two brands I liked. It was something else; it was about deciding which store to go to. As I left our house in Maryland, I had too many choices. If I turn right, down the street was a Giant and a Safeway and if I turned left there was a Trader Joes, and if I went straight there was a Whole Foods. I had so many options about where to go shopping. I would stop at the intersection and freeze.

When I was in Peace Corps, one of my first field visits was to Fiji. I was visiting a volunteer who lived in a village and taught at a school that was down the road, maybe a kilometer or so. We walked with them from his house to the school where he teaches, and it's a walk that he does every day, a very pleasant walk along the path. In the midst of it I had a sudden sense, I thought to myself, "Wait a minute, I'm walking by myself without

my security detail. This is not correct!" And it was a moment, and that moment passed, but I thought to myself how interesting that this thought would even creep into my mind! I felt dislocated because when I walked with my security, I don't have to think, they think for me. They say, "Come here, go there, stop, turn around, sit here, and don't sit there." I didn't have to think any of those things and now suddenly I have to think about these things and that was strange.

The Peace Corps offices in this downtown DC, and like so many parts of downtown DC there's always construction going on. A lot of times the construction crew would tear up the street during the night and during the day they would put a huge metal plate on the road. When they put it down they would just drop it, making a loud, banging sound, not too different from an explosion. The first few times I heard that bang, I reacted, expecting the duck and cover alarm to go off.

There were other signs that told me that I had been affected by Afghanistan. For example, during my third year in Afghanistan, I started watching old classics. Some we would consider "tear-jerkers." Or, I would listen to some song. Or I would watch a silly clip on YouTube. When I did that, I would notice that I was crying. Now that surprised me. It also convinced me that it was definitely time to leave Afghanistan.

Q: Do you still follow what goes on in Afghanistan?

YAMASHITA: I do. Obviously not in a lot of detail but I still get calls from colleagues who were once involved in Afghanistan. Karl Eikenberry, who is now on the faculty at Stanford asked me whether I would be willing to give a talk to his graduate students on the civilian reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. He wanted me to focus on the many challenges we faced. That was a lot of fun, engaging with knowledgeable students and some faculty. I tried to emphasize that so many of our challenges we faced were not insurmountable, but, our own internal systems, not just of USAID but of our government writ large, were hampering our efforts.

Q: Have you been invited to go back?

YAMASHITA: On a couple of occasions. But I made it clear that my time out in the field in Afghanistan was over. I have been invited on other occasions to go to seminars and conferences on Afghanistan, but, except for the one time in Stanford, they have all been in Washington.

Washington, Peace Corps, and Political Appointee under Obama Administration: 2014 – 2016

Q; Now, let's shift to Peace Corps. What was your motivation to take on this new challenge?

YAMASHITA: As I was completing my tour in Afghanistan, I began wondering about the future of our foreign policy. I wondered whether we had the staff and the skills

necessary to address the current and future challenges. It seemed to me that changes were happening ever faster than before. The reality of our agency, following the end of the cold war, globalization, and 9/11, was that we needed to be nimble, flexible, and resilient. I wondered whether we would have the leadership that would take us to that next level. I thought about where our future leaders would come from. I did consider some kind of teaching position, whether it be at the National War College, or at a university as a visiting scholar. In midst of those thoughts, Aaron and Stacy called. It dawned on me that the Peace Corps Volunteers were a great source of future leaders for our foreign policy generally and USAID in particular. I thought perhaps I could add my two cents towards preparing Volunteers for that future.

Now mind you, it was not wholly a high-minded, values-based, decision. There was the other half, which was whether I wanted to go back to USAID at headquarters. There was definitely a part of me that said I should go back to headquarters. As you know, they are always in need of staff. But there just did not appear to be a good fit. Plus I still remembered the hard fought battles with OAPA and even with Raj over issues in Afghanistan. I'm not sure I was welcomed. did not know who the President would be, I did know that the years leading up to the transition would be increasingly chaotic. Plus there would be unfinished business from this administration to complete. In fact, I received some calls from USAID calling on obligation to serve USAID at headquarters. Even after I was at Peace Corps, I kept receiving calls asking when they could expect me to return to USAID, reminding me of my obligations.

Q: I understand you remained as a USAID employee?

YAMASHITA: Yes, I did. I was on detail to the Peace Corps. So, for my last three years with USAID, I was on detail to State, as the Interagency Coordinator, and then to Peace Corps. But like so many things, it was a complicated process. The position that I held at Peace Corps was a political appointee position. Which meant that I had to interview at the White House and get their concurrence. That was an interesting experience. Then, I had to get the agreement from USAID to be on detail. Susan Reichle and Michelle Sumilas were a great help in moving the process.

Q: Stacy was still chief of staff at that point?

YAMASHITA: Stacy was Chief of Staff and Aaron was the Director when I was recruited. But by the time I got there, they were both gone. Carrie Hessler-Radelet came in as Director, and Laura Chambers was the Chief of Staff. When I started my detail at the Peace Corps, I was the Regional Director for the Inter-Americas and Pacific region. Yes, the Pacific was part of my responsibility, more a quirk of organizational size than anything else. About a year later, I was moved up to be the Director for Global Operations, which meant that all of the Regional Directors reported to me. I was responsible and accountable for operations in all our countries. It was quite the privilege.

Q: In your Peace Corps responsibilities, your role gradually became more important but you were again, part of a Stateside bureaucracy, people who were not pure bureaucrats, although some of them did stay five years. Did you enjoy your work at Peace Corps?

YAMASHITA: I think that you hit the mark right on. On the one hand, I did enjoy my time at Peace Corps; on the other hand, one of my learning experiences is that headquarters is headquarters regardless of the organization. I think one of the things that I knew with AID, and confirmed with Peace Corps, is that I am a field based person! Whereas I enjoyed my work with Peace Corps, a lot of my enjoyment with Peace Corps was to be the contrarian in our headquarters, constantly raising the issues that were being raised in the field.

Q: And you got to travel quite a bit?

YAMASHITA: Yes, quite a bit.

Q: What did you feel about the Peace Corps volunteers you ran into? Where they the same quality as you remembered as a young person?

YAMASHITA: I am not a returned Peace Corps volunteer; I was never in Peace Corps.

Q: I'm sure you ran into them in Peru and other places.

YAMASHITA: I did meet a few when I was with USAID. But, when I was at USAID my interaction with Peace Corps was primarily at their country office level, with their Country Director, and other staff. We met often to discuss the possibility of USAID funding the small programs that Peace Corps was carrying out. We did fund quite a number of such programs, something which USAID has done and continues to do. With respect to volunteers, I met many once I was at Peace Corps. I would say that as a group, having met them, I leave my 27 years of government very optimistic about the future of our country and our foreign policy leaders. The quality of our future leaders embodied in many of our Peace Corps volunteers is exceptional.
They are bright, resilient, engaged, passionate, thoughtful, willing to take risks. Perhaps what I am saying is a surprise, given the negative stereotype of the millennial generation. One simple example: I remember meeting a group of volunteers that were near their end of service. This was in the remote highlands of Peru. We met in a local coffee shop at a small town near their village where they served. There was no internet service in this small town, never mind in their village. In order to use their cellphones, they would have to travel hours. The Peace Corps office would communicate with them by satellite phone for emergencies or by local phones that were frequently out of service. I asked them how they felt about being disconnected. They told me that at the beginning it was quite the shock. They were not sure they were going to be able to get through their service. However, they persevered, and now, as they were ending their service, they felt quite comfortable not having any connection. They were resilient, and they adapted to their situation. At the same time, I have many stories of how volunteers took the initiative to find solutions to vexing problems facing people and communities. The volunteers were

sometimes surprised that they had made an impact in the life of people. We can point to many big impacts, such as a beneficiary of volunteer support becoming the President of a country, or the first female supreme court justice of their country. But perhaps more heart-warming are the small impacts, such as a teenage boy saying that he wants to grow up to be like the volunteer because of the way he treated his wife with respect and as an equal. I have often told volunteers that perhaps the most important impact they have had on lives of ordinary people is to unleash a potential that always existed.

Q: Well, that's very good to hear. Anything else you'd like to say about your experience with Peace Corps?

YAMASHITA: I think that it was another aspect of development that was very useful for me to see. With my decades at USAID, my engagement with State and by experiences with the military, and, lastly with Peace Corps, I feel like I have a pretty good idea of our foreign policy engagement, from development to diplomacy to defense. I also feel like I have tasted the different types of engagement, from the policy and politics of Washington and the interagency, to the Peace Corps Volunteer who reaches the very last of the underserved populations. In Colombia I was part of an interagency effort that worked at the highest levels, working with the President of Colombia to address some vexing problems of violence and insurgency that had rocked the country for many years. And, with Peace Corps, some of the most remote and forgotten villages, from the Pacific Island country of Vanuatu to rural communities in El Salvador. In fact, one of the comments that I heard that I will never forget, was when a community leader in El Salvador say, "With the Peace Corps volunteers here, we know that the United States cares about us. You care about us enough to send to us your young men and women to our community in the middle of nowhere where we have no other services." To me, if ever there was a definition of why it's so important that we do what we do, that's it! You call it exceptionalism or whatever you want to call it, but certainly that heartfelt statement with tears in their eyes, I will never forget.

Q: That's great! As you look back on your government service, how many years was it in total?

YAMASHITA: Well 27 years as a direct hire. I worked as a contractor for about six years before that. I was an AID contractor since 1984, so that's 33-34 years. Now if I add the years as an undergraduate, when I first came across USAID and later was a beneficiary as a recipient of a fellowship for graduate school, then the total would be over 40 years!

Q: I don't want to get too maudlin here, but as you look back over those years, and if you talk to people who are Peace Corps volunteers and they're coming out and they say what do I want to do next? I like this international work? A lot of things have changed overseas in those 33+ years, both from a security point of view, and from the point of view that developing countries may have their own qualified persons to run programs and do things. What would you recommend to a young returning Peace Corps volunteer in terms of career options?

YAMASHITA: I would start with a story that I heard when I visited volunteers in Ecuador. This particular volunteer had a project working with women who were recycling trash. The women belonged to an NGO, and I had the opportunity to hear from their director. She started as a maid in a house run by an Ecuadorian family, but the conditions in the house worsened and eventually she was fired. She was out on the street with no husband but with kids. She had to make money somehow to feed her family. She was illiterate and had no skills. She felt she had two choices: either she would go into prostitution or she would try to sift through garbage. A friend of hers said, "Let's collect garbage." She agreed but she would do so only at night because she was so embarrassed and ashamed of what she was doing. She would literally go from trash can to trash can, from dumpster to dumpster. In fact they called themselves the Dumpster Divers. She would go to dumpsters and she would literally dive in and pick out whatever she could. She would get dirty, she would get stinky, she would get assaulted, and she would get raped, but she felt that was the only thing she could do, and it was all at night. One day she ran into this Peace Corps volunteer, who started asking her some very basic questions: "What do you collect and who do you sell it to? How much do you sell it for, and do you think you are getting a good price?" And her answer, "I collect anything I can I sell it to whomever will buy it. I get whatever I can, hopefully enough so that I can put food on the table." The volunteer then said, "Well you know, maybe I can work with you, you can work with me. Let's start collecting cardboard paper and let's go to some of the big supermarkets and get all of the cardboard paper. Then let's start selling that. Then let's get organized. Then let's get a license." The woman was excited but fearful. After all, how could she, a dirty dumpster diver, talk to the manager of a supermarket? Well, this is where the fearless gumption of the volunteer comes in. With the women in tow, the volunteer marched right into the first supermarket and demanded to see the manager. After a brief conversation, the manager agreed to allowing the women sift through their trash and pick out the best material for recycling: cardboard paper and bottles. Then the volunteers marched them to the municipality to get them registered as an NGO – today called the Green Recyclers of Quito. With the first profit, they made uniforms, and, the volunteer taught them the basics of accounting, so that they could function as a business. With her voice cracking from emotion, the director proudly said: "There was a time when all I did was collect garbage. I was a poor illiterate dumpster diver. Today I'm an entrepreneur! And this is thanks to Peace Corps."

Q: Oh, wow!

YAMASHITA: I should add that coincidentally with my visit, the volunteer's mother was visiting. I turned to her and expressed how proud we were of the volunteer. I also thanked her for sharing her daughter with Peace Corps, that it makes us who we are, and that it shows that America cares. Then I turned to the volunteer that and said, "you may think this was just a project. But, in fact you have changed the lives of the women whom you have worked with. This director already had the basic instincts of being a leader. You were able to unleash that potential. You have made a huge impact."

Going back to your question, I would also share with the volunteers something else that many do not appreciate. At Peace Corps we host a career fair for volunteers. We advertise the fair and invite government agencies and private companies to take part. Every time we announce such a fair, it becomes immediately oversubscribed. We always have a waiting list. I asked one of the participants why the interest. What they told me is that they look at each hire as an investment. The details of the job, such as specific skills and the internal culture of the organization, can be taught. What is much harder to teach are the leadership qualities such as resilience, patience, willingness to take risk, listening, and empathy. These qualities already reside in the volunteer who have completed service, just like the volunteer I met in Quito.

Finally, I would share with the volunteers my own story. I think back to Ecuador almost 30 years ago -- my first assignment as the health officer of USAID. We had a water and sanitation program, and we had projects in the highlands. On one occasion I visited a community where we were inaugurating a water project. The Ambassador was there, the Minister of Health was there, my Mission Director Frank Almaguer was there. It was a big deal, my first event with such high level visitors. I was nervous, hoping nothing would go wrong. The community leader started with a speech lambasting and excoriating the government, "We have been ignored ever since the founding of this community hundreds of years ago. We get no services. The government is useless, they're corrupt…" I thought, "Oh my God, here is where my career ends." I felt embarrassed and dismayed. But then this leader said, "It's because of the generosity of the American people that today in this community for the first time in 500 years we have potable water." That was the first of what would be many, many stories that I have collected over the decades that has kept me energized and optimistic.

I think of those two bookend stories in Ecuador, and I think as much as things have change, thing have remained the same. What has not changed is the truly unique way in which the United States provides assistance. Through that assistance, I'm convinced, what we do is we unleash the potential that is already there. There are incredible leaders in every country and every community. Sometimes all they need is just a little push, encouragement, or skills. That's what we do. There's no magic about what we do as USAID or as Peace Corps. It's not some specific potion, but we give the opportunity and sometimes we give the skills and sometimes the self-confidence. Those community leaders have always been community leaders. They may not have known it; they may have been shy. They may not have had the opportunity, but we provide that, and we still do, and hopefully that will continue to do that. I think that there'll always be space for USAID and Peace Corps.

Final Words: Retirement, December 2016

Q: That's a great story. Any other final thoughts?

YAMASHITA: Thanks, John. One perk in being retired is the chance to reflect on life and to put things in perspective. So, at the risk of going from maudlin to melodramatic, perhaps two final thoughts.

First is an experience I had in Afghanistan. I had the extraordinary honor and privilege to give key note remarks at the naturalization and oath of citizenship service for men and women from other countries who had served in a combat role wearing our uniform. By serving in the military, they were eligible for accelerated status to become citizens. So, while there was personal interest in why they had signed up, there was also a noble cause. These men and women were fighting shoulder to shoulder with our combat troops and prepared to die on our behalf. At the ceremony I would share with the candidates a small piece of my story. As part of the Afghanistan assistance effort, we had international donor conferences. There was one held in Tokyo, and I was a member of the U.S. delegation. I had the chance to meet with one of my uncles and over dinner I explained to him what I did and why I was there. He was incredulous. He asked, "you mean to tell me that as someone born in Japan, you went to the U.S, got your citizenship, joined the U.S. Foreign Service, rose to the highest ranks, and now you are representing the U.S., even to the Japanese government, and the U.S. government has full confidence and trusts that you will represent them?" When I replied in the affirmative, he continued to be surprised, and said that such a thing could never happen in Japan. And that is what I shared with the candidates for citizenship. That nowhere in the world, would they have the opportunities that will be afforded to them as citizens of the United States.

My second thought takes me back to the Statue of Liberty and the words of Emma Lazarus inscribed at the base: "Give me your tired, your poor. Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shores…" To this soaring sentiment, I would add that we recognize that for many, coming to our shores is an impossible dream. So to them I would say, "do not despair, for if you cannot come to us, we will go to you. We will go to the far reaches of the world, to the last mile. We will give you sustenance if you hunger, shelter if you are cold. We will educate you if you cannot read, we will cure you if you are ill. We will give you voice if you are voiceless, hope, if you despair."

This is who we are. We are USAID, Peace Corps, State Department. It is what we do. We are an expeditionary force. We are the Foreign Service Corps.

Q: Thank you, Ken

End of interview