

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
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**PATRICK FINE**

*Interviewed by: Mark Tauber  
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Family Background and Upbringing

- 1957 Born in Sullivan County, Missouri, about 50 miles southwest of St. Louis. Fine side of the family came to U.S. in 1732 and some fought with Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys in the Revolutionary War.
- 1960 Patrick's family moved to a farm outside of Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri. Father was first a forester and then Director of Conservation Commission.
- 1960's Early life bucolic; with two brothers and three sisters many opportunities to enjoy rural life. Attended private Catholic elementary school and public junior high and high school in Jefferson City. Patrick's father dies when he is 11 and the family moves into Jefferson City.
- 1969 Both parents die during Patrick's teen age years. Patrick spends a formative high school year with relatives in Annandale, Virginia where he is exposed to counterculture and opposition to Vietnam War.
- 1973 Returns to Jefferson City. Eldest sister cares for younger siblings as Patrick completes high school. Patrick spends senior year independent of family as a ward of the state. Period of rebelliousness. County juvenile welfare officer assumes important role as mentor.

University Studies and Travels

1974 University of Missouri. Works and studies. Takes off during second year to hitchhike around Europe. Returns to school following year, but continues interrupting studies with travels to Europe, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Takes several years to complete college. After college, works as middle school teacher and briefly for CETA – a federal program for youth engagement.

Peace Corps Volunteer in Swaziland

1979-1982

Joins Peace Corps, goes to Swaziland to teach vocational education. Learns how to work within cultural norms to get buy-in for educational programs. Successful training programs lead to greater economic empowerment, including for women. Three years in rural area, one year writing a manual for development of vocational training centers for Swaziland Ministry of Education.

1982 Acquaintance with University of Massachusetts reps in Swaziland helps Patrick get scholarship to go to UMass for graduate school in international education.

1984 After completion of M.S., Patrick takes over as director of Boston neighborhood-based adult education center. Patrick learns how to identify educational needs, basic accounting and fund-raising, and personnel management skills. Patrick marries Susan, an economist.

1986 Patrick and Susan accept jobs from Lesotho government: Patrick becomes education system development advisor in program funded by USAID, Susan becomes an economics instructor.

1988 Patrick's application to USAID is accepted, he enters International Development Intern class in March. He and Susan then go to Swaziland as first assignment.

First USAID Assignment: Swaziland

1990-1992

First son is born.

Susan is hired by USAID and goes back to Washington, DC for one year (1991) for International Development Intern Program. Patrick remains in Swaziland.

Large USAID Mission in Swaziland with regional responsibilities as Apartheid in South Africa is on the wane.

Works with education ministry on human capacity building in adult education (including several exchange training programs in U.S.).

Assists in developing teacher training to differentiate instruction for a variety of learning styles, learning disabilities, slower learners in urban and rural settings, and more effective evaluation of learning objectives.

Also trained Swazi ethnics who were South African citizens but living in Swazi until the end of Apartheid. These trainees acquired education management

skills that would place them in high positions of authority in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Results recognized by congressional oversight committees.

Second USAID Assignment: Kampala, Uganda

1992-1997

Patrick initially arrives in Uganda without family due to post-conflict Initial difficulty in working with ministry of education because prior approaches were not collaborative. Patrick takes considerable time and effort to overcome suspicions and convince minister that USAID education development program can address Uganda's own goals.

USAID's education program in Uganda largest in Africa at that time -- \$110 million. Goal was to rebuild system after civil war using the Pay on Delivery Model. Four goals with funds disbursed as milestones achieved:

Text book correction, publishing, and transparent procurement

Reliable system for teacher salary payment

Updating teacher qualifications

Bringing more girls into education

High level of sustainable success in all four areas.

Patrick would also take overall all portfolios in the Mission outside of agriculture.

Important indicator of increased ability to lead and manage missions.

Third USAID Tour: South Africa

1992-1997

Three years after Apartheid ended, the South African education system needed significant updating, upgrading, and training. Once again, largest amount pledged by U.S. -- \$600 million for education.

Education ministry had many highly skilled officials, finding the right niches for U.S. assistance required high level of expertise. Goals included:

Harmonizing and rationalizing previously segregated schools;

Revising curricula and introducing technology in the classroom;

Providing business and technical skills to integrate disadvantaged minorities into workforce;

Specific exchange programs to provide training in U.S.

Susan and both children also very happy in South Africa both professionally and personally.

Fourth USAID Tour: Dakar, Senegal

2000-5003

Post-Senghor era sees greater opportunities for private sector growth and free market-based ventures. As program manager, this was an important step in promotion.

Need to learn French in order to communicate well. Large variety of projects under a \$50 million USAID mission budget:

Crop diversification away from exclusive reliance on peanuts

Development of information-based small business – relatively largescale  
cellphone penetration  
Continued tourism development  
Clean cookstoves  
USAID regional center for smaller programs in other W. African countries.  
Need to take account of slower pace of implementation – cultural habits.  
Looking for mission director position for next post.

#### February 2004: Trial Period as USAID Afghanistan Mission Director

Need to be part of Ambassador Khalilzad’s team which includes a private sector  
“Afghan Reconstruction Group” that had parallel responsibility for  
development projects – an unusual bureaucratic organization added because  
Khalilah did not trust USAID to move rapidly on his agenda.  
Need to be ready to assist in establishment of an American University in Kabul  
and other infrastructure – a top goal of the Ambassador – even though this  
would not be a typical priority for USAID in an immediate post-conflict  
environment.  
Patrick gains Khalilzad’s trust. Example of management flexibility on the ground  
in a post-conflict environment.

#### USAID Mission Director in Afghanistan

2004-2005

All-of-government effort still smoothing out wrinkles in interagency cooperation.  
Need for both security and program coordination given non-permissive  
environment in some areas. Consideration of casualties and whether some  
casualties are tolerable when working in a non-permissive environment.  
Innovative use of military detailees on USAID staff to help in coordination with  
military.  
Problem of Pakistan creating instability.  
Learning Dari  
Building a staff and creating a habitable, respectful workplace for Afghan and  
other third country Foreign Service Nationals.  
Exhausting, round-the-clock schedule.  
Seeing through the first free and fair elections.  
Difficulties of overcoming clan/ethnic loyalties  
Efforts to end opium poppy cultivation – interagency differences on how to do  
this.  
Accountability for a billion \$ budget  
Building of American University in Kabul  
Handover to successor and question of whether tours of at least two years are  
more appropriate in conflict/post-conflict environments.

#### Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID Africa Bureau

2005-2006

No previous Washington assignments

Job had many responsibilities, especially in resolving human resource problems, but few professional rewards.  
Recruited by NGO and decided to retire.

Retirement: 2006 and subsequent employment

Academy for Educational Development 2006-2010

Moving from being a manager of contractors/grantee to an implementer under contract with USAID.  
Learning Spanish because of company's large portfolios in Latin America.

Millennium Challenge Corporation 2010-2013

Unique approach to development assistance.  
Recipient nation must meet international and U.S. criteria for lending, similar in a way to meeting criteria for a mortgage.  
Milestone-based implementation clock. Possibility of losing funds if milestones are not hit according to agreement.  
Need for assistance recipient to manage the operation and sometimes spend its own money to ensure completion of implementation objective.  
Value to country's reputation by demonstrating success.

FHI360 2013-Present

## INTERVIEW

*Q: It is Monday, December 15, 2015 and this is our first session with Patrick Fine and we always begin with the same question which is where were you born and raised?*

FINE: Alright, well I'm Patrick Fine, currently CEO of FHI 360 and I am going to talk about the journey that led me to the work that I do today in international development. I was born in Sullivan, Missouri, which is in south-central Missouri. I grew up in rural Missouri in the sixties and seventies. I went to university...

*Q: Wait one second. When you say you grew up your mother and father were both in Sullivan?*

FINE: I was born in Sullivan, Missouri, my father was a forester and my mother was a housewife. In 1960 we moved to a farm outside of Jefferson City, Missouri, which is the state capital, and my dad was the director of the conservation commission. He went on to become the director of state parks. For most of my youth through high school I grew up outside of Jefferson City and I went to Jefferson City High School.

*Q: How large a family?*

FINE: I have five brothers and sisters we were three boys and three girls.

*Q: Three boys and three girls sometimes people have traced their ancestry back to revolutionary...*

FINE: We have as well, so our family, the Fine's first came to the U.S. in 1732. There were two brothers one of whom was killed by Indians in southern Virginia in 1734, the other made his way to Vermont and fought in the Revolutionary War with Nathan Hale's Green Mountain Boys. Is it Nathan Hale? No, its...who had the Green Mountain Boys?

*Q: Ethan Allen*

FINE: Ah, right. Anyway, the Fine family made its way west and by the 1840s or so were in Missouri so they came through Kentucky and then they settled in Missouri in the Bootheel. So my father's roots are in New Madrid, Missouri, down in the Bootheel. Certainly I think of myself as having strong hillbilly roots because we grew up not far from the Lake of the Ozarks. I went to university in Springfield, Missouri, at Missouri State University which is the queen city of the Ozarks. My father was a forester so we spent a lot of time camping in southern Missouri. We've got that cultural heritage that is Southern, coming from the southern part of the state but also rooted in the kind of rural hillbilly ethic.

*Q: Have you read Hillbilly Elegy by J. D. Vance?*

FINE: I have yeah, I related to it a lot.

*Q: It's a wonderful book especially for someone who has never been from that area and knows nothing about the area. It really is a wonderful memoire.*

FINE: It's a good reflection on the evolution of American society.

*Q: I assume all of your brothers and sisters also went to the same high school and the same schools that you did? And these were public schools?*

FINE: Yes, public schools, that's right. Yes we did. My oldest sister went to University of Missouri, my oldest brother went to University of Missouri, my younger brother and myself both went to Southwest Missouri State that is now called Missouri State University. My other sister went to Southern Christian, what is that school in Dallas, SMU?

*Q: Southern Methodist University.*

FINE: Southern Methodist University.

*Q: So before we get on all the way to college you are living right outside Jefferson City, what was it like growing up right outside a reasonable sized city?*

FINE: Actually, Jefferson City at the time was pretty small. It was about thirty thousand people population in those days but looking back on it, it was an idyllic kind of childhood growing up in a small rural community where you had a strong sense of solidarity of community amongst the farm families that inhabited that area. We grew up riding horses and doing farm work and spending time out in the woods with very little supervision. I think the amount of supervision we had which my mom would ring a bell in the evening that meant you would have to come in for dinner.

*Q: Like Lassie?*

FINE: Something like that. As an eight-year old or even younger, six- or seven- year old, to go out and be out in the woods just out on your own for hours on end with no adult supervision until you heard the bell ring and you knew it was time to come in.

*Q: Was it still dangerous like bears and things like that?*

FINE: There weren't bears around where we lived. There was once a cougar sighted but, of course, all the kids went out to search for it and we never found it. But no there weren't those kinds of dangers. Like I say it was a safe place and it was a tight community with hoedowns and hayrides.

*Q: What sort of agriculture did most of the people engage in?*

FINE: It was mixed; it was smallholder agriculture so it was growing corn, cattle, pigs and then just chickens and rabbits. Some of the farmers actually lived off the farms; our closest neighbor had Angus cattle. In our case we didn't live off the farm because my dad was the director of state parks and we didn't raise crops. All of our neighbors raised crops we didn't raise crops we had horses and we had an orchard and then we had a huge truck garden.

*Q: So most of the agriculture in your immediate area the families themselves did most of the work they didn't really need to hire...*

FINE: It wasn't that kind it was all done by the families, yeah, although everybody would chip in. At haying time I can remember my dad going, "Yeah, my boys can come and buck bales." Then you'd get sent off to help pick corn or to buck bales. .

*Q: In the Foreign Service I knew one other guy from South Dakota who said his last job before the Foreign Service was putting up hay. In his area, they did not have a private phone line until the 1970s; they were on a party line."*

FINE: So were we, we were on a party line until '68.

*Q: So these experiences that...*

FINE: And also the school this community that I grew up in had been founded by German immigrants who came to the U.S. in 1900 and it was a Catholic community. We went to a small Catholic school that was a four room school with two grades in each room.

*Q: So a small school, the same with the high school?*

FINE: my father passed away when I was eleven.

*Q: While you were quite young.*

FINE: Yeah pretty young and the following year we moved into the city. So for my first twelve years it was a rural experience and then from seventh grade to the time I finished high school we were in the city so it was an urban experience.

*Q: But again relatively small city.*

FINE: A small town but in a government town, it was the capital city.

*Q: I imagine then there would be periods of activity when there were more people in town and then quieter times when...*

FINE: Well it was for Jefferson City if you think of the '60s and then the early '70s when I was there it was I think a pretty typical small midwestern town and because it was the capital government the business and that provided stability in the city. It was before the big boom so during that period there wasn't the rapid development of suburbs and malls and things like that; that came later when I was in college but I had already left the area.

*Q: Wow, interesting.*

FINE: It was I think a very typical kind of mid-American upbringing.

*Q: Was there much diversity in population?*

FINE: Not very diverse. So growing up outside of the city I didn't have any exposure to anybody other than other white kids. In high school there were African-Americans in Jefferson City and in fact, Jefferson City has Lincoln University, which is one of the oldest HBCUs in the country so there was and there is an African community but there wasn't a lot of interaction. I don't recall a whole lot of exposure to any other ethnic or other groups so at least in my house and for my upbringing it was a pretty homogeneous experience.

*Q: Was church a big part of your life?*

FINE: It was. I went to a Catholic School and so we had catechism every day and we went to mass; school started with mass in the morning. But I wasn't Catholic we were Episcopal but because we lived in the community and that was the only school in the community we attended the school and the Catholic liturgy isn't very different than the Episcopal one. So I had exposure to Catholic teaching every day at school and then on Sunday I went to an Episcopal church in town and went to Sunday school...

*Q: They corrected all the...*

FINE: It was so similar I don't really ever recall being conflicted about it. Then I took confirmation classes at the Episcopal Church so in retrospect I realized that I am extremely well educated in Christian theology because I went through twelve years of intense Christian education. I find that it provides a lot of good cultural reference points and historical reference points.

*Q: Wonderful, that's great. Did any of the activities related to the church broaden your horizons because church activities often involve groups outside the state or sometimes even they are in communication with churches overseas?*

FINE: Not really. Again I think again it was just that period it was a fairly contained community that didn't look outside of itself very much. By the time I got to be a teenager and into high school where you might start to have those more external activities then I stopped I wasn't going to church at that time. I stopped going to church.

*Q: So let's turn to the high school. How big was it?*

FINE: Jefferson City had one high school for the whole city. There was a Catholic High School; I went to the public high school. There were two high schools in the city at the time. Because they wanted to maintain their position as a national leader in athletics they didn't want to split the student body and split the talent pool. There were 3,000 kids in the high school so it was like a mega high school in a fairly small town. By the time I was in high school there was a fair amount of controversy because it was recognized that they needed to split it but there were forces in the city that didn't want to because they didn't want to split the athletic talent pool. Jeff City at the time had been the National High School Football Champion for thirteen years in a row and they had like an 86 game winning streak. So it permeated the culture of the school in the city.

*Q: That is remarkable but you are in high school now and with 3,000 kids or so there must have been lots of opportunities for extracurricular activities and so on. What caught your attention?*

FINE: I was involved in theater so I was one of the theater kids. I was president of the Thespian Club and that was my main involvement, I was on the debate team so I was involved with the kids that were in theater and debate and those kind of overlapped. I had kind of a turbulent youth so my father died when I was eleven and then my mother...

*Q: And you mentioned that it was unexpected.*

FINE: Yeah he died of a heart attack out of the blue. We moved into town the next year and my mom got a job and when I was 13, two years after my dad died, she remarried. They went to Texas to get married, they eloped, because they were both recognized figures in the town so they wanted to get away to have a private ceremony. On that trip my mom contracted a rare form of encephalitis, which is a mosquito borne disease. That left her permanently brain damaged and in a sense she died although her body didn't die but she died two weeks after they got back. So now I, and there were three of us still at home, I was the oldest and then my little sister and my little brother. That left us with a brand new stepdad who had an invalid wife. He believed; he was a very devout Christian and also a hillbilly from deep in Southern Missouri, and he believed that if we just prayed hard enough that God would make a miracle and would heal her. So we tried that. It was a tough time at home and then he sent us to live with my aunt and uncle for a year.

*Q: Your fathers...*

FINE: My father's brother who happened to live in Annandale, Virginia, and that was my freshman year of high school. So that was in the fall of 1969 and I came to Annandale, Virginia, and I did my freshman year at W.T. Woodson High School. During that year my stepfather who honestly we knew but we didn't know him that well he believed that he could find a cure for my mom so he took her to the Mayo Clinic and to top specialists around the country. The arrangement was he would have one year to try to find treatment or a cure and during that year my aunt and uncle would take the three younger kids. So we were here and that was '69-'70 and so we came from essentially a rural mid-western environment suddenly into a sophisticated hip East Coast environment. I had a cousin who was three years older than me and one who was a couple years younger and they had a very different cultural orientation than a kid from rural Missouri. That was actually a good experience and it changed me fundamentally opening me up in very profound ways to diversity, to different cultural points of view to what was happening in the world around me. That was when there were big demonstrations against the Viet Nam War and I can remember coming into town with my cousin to march in the demonstration against Cambodia.

*Q: Did you even know where Cambodia was at the time?*

FINE: I'm sure I was studying it because I've always been interested in that kind of thing. I was here for a year and during that year my consciousness was raised as to what was happening, to the whole cultural revolution of the '60s and the '70s

*Q: Absolutely, sure.*

FINE: I was at a pretty impressionable age and so at the end of that year we went back to Missouri and we went to a little town in southern Missouri that my stepfather was from, which is deep in the hills, and my mom was at a nursing home there; she was completely almost in a vegetative state. I went back and now I had long hair and wore bell bottom

pants and was vocally against the Vietnam War, so culturally now I didn't fit in at all because I had gone through this transformation to become a young hippie. And now I find myself in rural conservative Missouri. We are there for about a month and my stepfather, who was a pilot, would fly back and forth between Jefferson City and this little town, his plane crashed and he died.

*Q: You've had unbelievable hardships as a child.*

FINE: Yeah it was kind of turbulent. So that created a kind of crisis for us and there was a period of a few weeks to a month or so where we didn't have a lot of supervision. There was a kind confused period and then my oldest sister, who was living in Illinois at the time, decided she and her husband who were newlyweds, with a ten month old baby, that they would move to Jefferson City into my mom's house and they would take the kids. So they came and I think they were like 28 at the time and they took the kids. Then we were back in our house in Jefferson City now living with my sister and her husband who gave up their whole life to come and take care of the family. This way, I could attend my last three years of high school at Jefferson City High School and that's where I graduated. But those were quite turbulent years because I was an outspoken smart-alecky disruptive hippie in a very conservative town. At the start of my senior year in high school I was expelled from my family and I became a ward of the court.

*Q: This was 16, 17?*

FINE: This was when I was 17 before I turned 18 so it was when I was in my 17<sup>th</sup> year. I was kicked out of the family for being a hippie and smoking pot and generally bringing disrepute upon the family. Again, it was kind of a turbulent time and I stayed with friends wherever I could find a place for a while, I would spend a week with one friend and then I'd go somewhere else and there were nights when I just didn't have a place to sleep and just camped out. I was a ward of the state and there was a juvenile officer named Mr. Kline who took an interest in me and became a kind of mentor, supporter of mine, he felt like I had gotten a bad deal so he helped me get an apartment. I was still in high school completely on my own in my own apartment, which I had for about, which was not a good idea, and that worked for a while.

*Q: In order to afford all this you must have been working at least part time.*

FINE: Oh I always worked, I've never not had a job from the time I was fourteen. I worked at a gas station that was my first job, I mowed lawns and then my first formal job was when I was fourteen at a gas station. I worked at the gas station for a couple years, 2 ½ years.

*Q: Did you actually get into car repairs?*

FINE: I was pumping gas but I tried some car repairs with some unfortunate results.

*Q: Okay.*

FINE: My boss Stan was good hearted about it because he liked me and he knew I was trying. I worked at the gas station and then left the gas station at some point and worked in a restaurant for a while. I just basically always worked because I always had to raise money. About midway through my senior year in February of my senior year I got kicked out of my apartment.

*Q: Because you were smoking pot and the owner didn't like it?*

FINE: That was quite a crazy thing. The apartment was such a mess so a couple of my friends came over and we were going to clean it up. So we were cleaning up the apartment and we were sweeping it and one of my friends took the grate, in the floor there was a grate, and he took the grate and we were just going to sweep all the dirt into the grate. The grate was off and we were cleaning and then another friend walked across the room and he stepped into the grate and his foot went straight through the roof of the store below the apartment I lived in; which was like a sewing shop. There were women in there buying sewing supplies and suddenly a boot comes through the roof so that was the last straw for the apartment. Then I lived the rest of my senior year in the juvenile center.

*Q: What was that like?*

FINE: The juvenile center?

*Q: Yeah, this has got to be at least the '70s in Missouri.*

FINE: Yeah, it was structured the juvenile officer, like I said, was the only adult in the city who had any regard for me and he believed in me. I knew that he saw potential in me and so that meant a lot. I think that was one of the things that helped me be resilient but it was living in an institutional environment. I wasn't under lock and key but I had to be back by a certain time in the evening; I would get up, go to school and then had to be back by 8:30 or 9:00; I can't remember the time but say by nine o'clock; but it was an institutional environment.

*Q: How many kids were in the facility?*

FINE: What?

*Q: How many kids?*

FINE: Oh ten or twelve.

*Q: Oh alright.*

FINE: It was small. I had good relationships with the staff there so it wasn't terrible; it wasn't a traumatizing kind of experience. Then when I graduated from high school the

ceremony was in the evening and after graduation there was a party I went to and then after the party about midnight I got on the road and hitchhiked away.

*Q: Wow, was that just a lark or had you been thinking about it?*

FINE: No, I knew I was going to get out of that town. I hitchhiked out here...

*Q: Oh so back to Annandale or back to...*

FINE: Yeah because I had this link and had a good time and I felt like that is where I fit in. I had my aunt and uncle but I didn't tell them I was coming and I struck out here with the idea that I would go to them and present myself once I got out here. I got as far as Warrenton or close to Fairfax and I got picked up by some other young kids around my age; I was 18 they were 17. They said it was a summer day it was beautiful day and they said, "Hey, we are going to a party do you want to come?" I said, "Sure, of course." I went with them and it was a whole bunch of kids swimming in a quarry. So we are swimming in the quarry and the police come and arrest everybody and take us all to jail in Warrenton. Except for me and one other kid they were all like sixteen and seventeen year olds so they just got released to their parents.

*Q: It was because?*

FINE: Trespassing on private property but since I was 18 I was charged and the bail was \$100 and at the time I think I had a \$1.25 or something on me. They said, "Well you are going to have to stay in jail." I said, "When is my court date?" They said, "It is within 30 days." So I was just stuck in jail and the other guy paid his bail and was gone so I was stuck in jail. There was another, like a hippie, in jail a guy who had been caught for smoking pot and he and I talked and you have these bonding experiences where we talked and connected. He was in for a couple of days and then he finished his sentence and got released. He said, "I don't have \$100 but I'm going to raise \$100 and I am going to come and get you I am going to come bail you out. I am not going to leave you in here." I was sort of depressed looking at 30 days for swimming in the quarry; even the jailers felt sorry for me. This guy, his name was Jay Riley, it took him a couple days but he came back and he bailed me out and he had this group of people and he goes, "This is Mark, Mark gave \$20, this is Fred, Fred kicked in \$35."

*Q: This is like Kickstarter.*

FINE: Right an early form. So this group of kids bailed me out I was a total stranger and then I didn't want to go to my aunt and uncle's and say, "Hey, I'm in jail." So I just camped out in Fairfax County like I constructed a little shelter in the woods and then one of the kids who chipped in money, his name was Steve, he was painting houses so I got a job with him painting houses. So I painted houses and camped in the woods. Then, as I got to know this group of kids I'd sometimes stay with one of them. I hung out with this group until my court date came up and I had to go because they needed their \$100 back. I went to court and when my case came up, the judge asked me how did I plead and I asked

him can you read me the law that I broke? I could see him going through these cases and then I asked him that question and he kind of looks like “Who is this?” He says, “Sure I can read you it.” So he read me the law and remember I had been a debater in high school, right?

*Q: Ah, of course.*

FINE: He read it to me and I said, “Judge, I don’t think I broke that law.” He said, “Well why not?” I said, “Because the law says there has to be a sign every fifty yards and we came in and there was no sign.” There was the arresting officer and so the prosecutor said to the arresting officer, “Sheriff this kid is saying there was no sign, was there a sign?” The officer said, “Yes, there was a sign. In fact, I showed them a sign.” The prosecutor says, “He says he showed you the sign.” I said, “He did. When you put us in your car and you drove us to show us the sign which direction did we turn?” Because we turned to the left. “How far up that road did we drive for you to show us that sign?” He said, “I don’t know a couple hundred yards.” I go, “That’s what I’m saying the law says every 50 meters you had to drive us several hundred meters up the road to show us the sign and we came in at a different point. So there were no signs where we came in.” The judge looked at the prosecutor and said, “Do you have any other questions?” The prosecutor goes, “No Judge, I don’t.” So he dismissed the case.

*Q: Beautiful.*

FINE: At that point I went to my aunt and uncle and presented myself and then stayed with them for about another month and then hitchhiked back to Springfield, Missouri, where I was enrolled to go to university.

*Q: Now in the middle of all this mess you must have had to apply?*

FINE: Yeah, I applied when I was a senior in high school. And Missouri back in those days they had a rule that if you graduated from high school the State universities were obliged to accept you. So as long as you had graduated and you applied they had to take you. They used the first year to weed people out so they had it set up where you’d do these big courses with 200 kids and then if you didn’t pass then they’d weed out people who weren’t really focused on school.

*Q: Oh I see.*

FINE: So I went and I got a debate scholarship because they were desperate for debaters and I had been a debater and I knew how to debate.

*Q: That’s remarkable I mean you were in a juvenal home, you hitchhiked east to Washington but somehow in the middle of all this make your application to university, you let them know that you have a debating background and experience and suddenly it is kind of a life change thing.*

FINE: Yeah there was a lot of turbulence and a lot of like I didn't live in a dorm I just went to the school and said I've been living on my own for the last two years, you probably don't want me in a dorm." They took one look at me and they said, "We don't." I've had all these fortunate coincidences in my life so I found an apartment and I didn't have any income or support from anybody and I got to be friends with a landlord who lived next door; he had two houses and I was in an apartment in one of them. Then I became his handyman and so in exchange for rent I would do repairs around the property like keeping the grounds. Because I grew up in a rural area I knew how to use tools, sort of, I wasn't great but I could fix doors and stuff so I worked as a handyman and I did that my first semester. Then during that first semester I found things and initially a group of us got another place but I had lots of help along the way.

*Q: But now in terms of tuition or fees did Missouri State...*

FINE: You know it was so cheap back in those days so I had the scholarship and I also had a work study job.

*Q: Oh okay.*

FINE: That covered my tuition and between the two of them it paid for my tuition and I can't remember I got \$50 a week or some amount of cash per week for working in the theater because I told you I was a theater guy in school. When I went to Missouri State they were famous for their theater program so that was why I went there. So I joined the theater department and I got a job working in the theater building sets and things like that. That was the start of my university.

Let me say one thing about my orientation. From a very early age I was fascinated with the broader world. I told you I grew up in this very homogeneous environment which was enclosed and not really outward looking but I was interested in the world. So I was a reader and I read prolifically. My mom encouraged that and she had, I think, a broader outlook. I loved to read books about other countries and about other cultures and about world history. I had this fascination with the broader world. When I finished my first year in university I sold everything I owned to raise enough money to buy a ticket to Europe and I hitchhiked up to New York and went to Europe and then I spent that summer hitchhiking around Europe.

*Q: But before we get to Europe in university were you now really giving much more attention in the classes you took?*

FINE: No, I wasn't academically focused at all I was partying and doing the minimum. Some of the classes were easy for me because I liked to read and was sort of good at school. But I didn't put any real attention into it and pretty much did the minimum. Then as I said I went to Europe on a complete whim.

*Q: And this is at the end of college?*

FINE: No, it is at the end of my first year.

*Q: Interesting, wanderlust took hold?*

FINE: So at the end of my first year I didn't have any real money although I did have a stereo and I sold that and literally everything I owned and with the money I raised from that I was able to buy a plane ticket and as I said I was able to hitchhike to New York because it was cheaper to do it that way. I flew to Luxembourg, hitchhiked around Europe and wound up in Turkey, came back and went to Greece. On Greece I got to the island of Crete, had a wonderful life affirming experiences and really...

*Q: How did you manage to finance it?*

FINE: I was doing Europe on like fifty cents a day and I was actually on Crete, which was like paradise, and I must have been camping out on the beach with all these other young hippies; it was a wonderful scene playing guitar and singing. I ran out of money on Crete so I had enough money for the boat to get me back to Athens. I had my plane ticket from Luxembourg back to New York so I figured okay it's about 1,500 miles from Athens to Luxembourg and it's 1,500 miles or more than that it's about 1,900 miles from New York to Missouri so it took me about a day and a half to get from Missouri to New York so I could from Athens to Luxembourg maybe in a couple days and then once I get there and I'm on the plane they'll feed me. I figured I can go for a couple days without food.

I get back to Athens and I start hitchhiking up and I've always had such a blessed life. I met this one guy who picked me up and he asked me if I'd ever seen the Spring of Athena and I said, "No, I don't know anything about it." He goes, "You can't come to Greece and not see it. I'll take you to it but it's off the path. Do you want to go see it?" "Of course I do." It was like literally a three hour drive off the road. He took me and we saw it and he bought me lunch and so I got fed and then at the end of the day he drove me back to the main highway I was on and my life has been punctuated by experiences like that that really are life affirming. I then got into Yugoslavia and in Yugoslavia there was no traffic. People didn't seem to drive a lot. I didn't know it then, but Yugoslavia was like a third world country. So it took me two weeks to get across Yugoslavia because I couldn't find any opportunities to hitchhike. So I was pretty hungry and was eating out of fields and like traded a pair of jeans for some food. Eventually I got picked up, after walking over 100 miles through Yugoslavia, by an Austrian English teacher and his family who were on vacation. They drove me all the way to Austria and fed me along the way and then eventually I carried on and got to Luxembourg having interesting and more life affirming adventures of basically encountering kind people.

*Q: Incredible and again this is what year?*

FINE: This was '74. I was in Augsburg and I just looked like a bum by this time and it was the end of August and it was like unseasonably cold and it was drizzling almost sleet, and I hadn't eaten in a couple days, maybe three days and I was kind of tired and feeling

a little depressed. I went into a restaurant just to get out of the cold and I was sitting in there and there were two really good looking girls that, of course, at that age you notice things like that, who were at a table close to me speaking in German; I don't speak German. After I sat there for about an hour the owner came over and said in English, "I'm really sorry but if you are not going to order anything you are going to have to leave." I said, "Thanks so much for letting me warm up in here and I understand." I then left and was thinking as I walked out where is my karma, I've helped so many people, so many times I've taken people in and bought them food and here I am starving and here I am feeling sorry for myself and suddenly behind me these two pretty girls from the restaurant go, in English, "Hey, you look like you could use a meal." They took me to a pizza place and bought me a pizza. They were from Augsburg but they had lived in Australia so they spoke perfect English. They said, "Have you seen the sites of Augsburg? This is the most beautiful city in Germany." I said, "No." And they said, "Well, let us show you." So they fed me and then took me on a tour of the city, it was just a marvelous experience. Then that gave me the energy to carry on to Luxembourg. Then I got back to the States and hitchhiked back to Missouri.

But once back in Missouri I didn't go back to school entirely, I worked as well. So I got a job and I worked construction and then I followed this pattern for the next two and a half years where I would work a semester and save up money and then I would travel. So I worked and then the next trip I went to was Afghanistan.

*Q: What drove you there?*

FINE: On my trip in Europe I met all these people who had done the overland trip and they were raving about Afghanistan and so I went to Afghanistan. I traveled around Afghanistan some but I literally got on the wrong bus and instead of going to Kandahar which is where I thought I was going it took me to Peshawar, which is in Pakistan. I just figured okay destiny wants me to go to Pakistan so I'll go with that. In Pakistan I had many adventures that led me up into the Swat Valley and to the Hindu Kush Mountains. I lived up on a mountain for about a month; I was in this community for about two months but I was up on the mountain for about a month. I had, again, many amazing life affirming experiences; some near death experiences.

*Q: Meanwhile your family back home you are still not in touch with them, nobody knows what is going on with you?*

FINE: That's right I'm just completely independent in Pakistan. So I get to Peshawar in summer and it's 120 degrees it's brutally hot and I have almost no money and I go to a hostel and they tell me there is no room and they send me to another place and there is no room; there were no places that cost ten rupees a night, fifty cents a night, they are all booked up. I go back to the original one and I go into the office, which is about a third the size of this room, and I just kind of collapse on the floor and go, "I'm not moving. Call the police or I'll sleep here but I can't move another step." Then the guy found me a bed and I met this French-Canadian that night who had been living in Pakistan for about two years in the Swat Valley and was on his way back to Canada. We stayed up all night

talking and we had one of those bonding experiences that you do when you are young. He said, "You've got to meet the family I lived with they are wonderful people you should go. I've got to take you up and introduce you to them." So he did he wasn't leaving for a week so we just made a two-day journey up to this place. He took me up and introduced me to the family he'd lived with and so I started staying with them. And had these amazing experiences that still leave a deep place of affection for Pakistan in my heart.

One of the things I did was I stayed in this little mountain hovel way far up in the mountains. There was one other family up there that would kind of look in on me and one day I got a really seriously ill and I thought this is it I'm going to die here. I was throwing up blood; I mean I thought this was the end. I was just like in this little hovel with a pine needle bed and was just like on the pine needle bed waiting to die. This little nomad boy comes and there are Kuchi nomads which travel through those mountains and so there was a nomad group passing through and this boy came, maybe he heard there was a white guy up in the area and he just stumbled across him but he came and was staring at me. I had learned enough Pashto to say, "I'm dying. I'm sick and I'm dying. I need help." He goes awhile and a couple hours later these three nomad women show up and with my very basic Pashto I can tell them I am throwing up and I've got a stomach ache and they are feeling my head. So they go and come back some time later and they've picked all these herbs and they start making up herbal remedies and brewing herbal tea and they've got roots that they are crushing up. They stay with me for two days and they nurse me back to health. It just gives you faith in humanity.

*Q: Incredible, I mean this is the mid-seventies you were lucky to be there in the mid-seventies and not a bit later.*

FINE: I eventually did get really sick just with parasites and I got to the point, I was so ignorant back when I was a kid; I was 20 maybe. So I didn't know enough to go to the local health center I just thought I've got to get home at a certain point. I went back to Afghanistan as that is where my return ticket was from. I flew back to New York and hitchhiked back to Missouri and by the time I got to Missouri I went to see Mr. Kline the Juvenile officer and I had brought him a present that I had picked up in Afghanistan. I went in to see him and I had lost so much weight he looked at me and he said, "You are going to the hospital." He sent me directly to the hospital where they treated me for like ten days but it was Giardia and that kind of thing.

*Q: Sure, sure.*

FINE: But those kinds of experiences encountering that human kindness from a good Samaritan who has nothing to offer to you, I was some hobo stupid bum and then to nurse me back to health and take care of me... that really helped to shape my worldview. Then those journeys also reinforced my love of learning about cultures and respecting other people's ways and not being judgmental. As a result, I think I'm less judgmental than almost anybody I know in terms of looking at other cultures and not seeing them through an ethnocentric point of view. These experiences just helped me believe in the capacity of

people for goodness. So I repeated that pattern. After I came back from Afghanistan I was ready to go back to school. I went back and did another year of school. Then I had had enough of school so I got a job again on construction with my old crew and I worked and saved some money and I went to South America because I hadn't been in that direction.

So I did the journey through South America and I came back and went back to school and by that time the kids I went to high school with were graduating and I had like twenty credits and it made me feel bad. So that was when I got serious about school and at that point I started taking big class loads, doing night classes, and, of course, I am always working. Remember I said I always worked; I was working in construction and then when I decided to get serious about school I got a job as a Juvenile counselor.

*Q: What is that exactly?*

FINE: I was working at the juvenile detention center I had lived in one. So I worked for the county court as a juvenile counselor; it was a CETA job. Did you ever know CETA? CETA was like a workforce development program that created entry level jobs in public institutions.

*Q: I have a vague recollection of the program because my mother worked in our county welfare office for several years in the mid-seventies and so it was a federal program and I think she talked about.*

FINE: She probably did because they would have used that mechanism. It was federal funding that came down from the county and municipal level to provide for entry levels jobs in order to do workforce development and skills development. I was always pretty adept at finding opportunities like that and figuring out the system and how I could play it. So I had a CETA job and I did that all the way through the rest of university. That was a full time job that was eight hours a day five days a week. Then I could schedule it so I could either do classes in the day and work evening shift or I could work during the day and do classes at night; I did both depending on the semester and the schedule. I took big loads and I worked through the summer and then I just went through quite quickly. I finished up within two more years.

*Q: What was your degree in?*

FINE: It was in history and education so I got a Bachelor of Science in education and I got a lifetime teaching certificate. I taught for a year at a school in Springfield, the lab school for the university. Then I joined Peace Corps.

*Q: Now a lab school if I understand it right is a school where they actually try out new teaching methods with kids who they...*

FINE: It was a public school that was attached to the university. I taught seventh, eighth, and ninth grade social studies and it was where students would do their student teaching.

*Q: Ah, I see.*

FINE: But it was a regular public school and it wasn't the only place they would do student teaching but it was one of the places you could do student teaching and in my case I just taught there. Then because I had done this traveling through Europe, Central Asia, and a couple times to South America I had encountered Peace Corps volunteers and I had hooked up with and stayed with them so I knew about Peace Corps. I knew that the U.S. government would actually buy your plane ticket and pay for you to be in these interesting places and I had this wanderlust. So I applied to Peace Corps when I was getting close to graduation and I got accepted. Back then it was pretty easy to get accepted to Peace Corps. Last year I think they had 35,000 applications for I don't know 2,000 openings or something like that. You had to be amazingly gifted to get in I don't know what would have happened to me if I was growing up now. But then I got in and I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Swaziland.

*Q: Wow how did you end up there?*

FINE: Back then when you applied they had categories of jobs and so you would apply for a category of jobs and I had a teaching degree so I was a certified teacher and I knew how to use tools. So I signed up or told them that I was qualified to teach vocational studies even though I wasn't. I went into a program called The Rural Education Center, which was basically a rural vocational shop that put together programs for adults; it was completely unstructured they just sort of dumped you there. It was at a high school and the way it was set up was for the adult education program that the Peace Corps volunteer ran. You could use the high school facilities after hours and the high school had a shop like a woodworking shop. I was the coordinator of that rural education center attached to a high school out in rural Swaziland. Then that really changed my life, well, all these experiences really changed my life because I have all these great experiences, as I say, that were really affirming around the capacity of people to do good around the richness of culture, around the importance of language, the value of respecting people for who they are and not try to impose filters on how you see them. Then my Peace Corps service really reinforced that.

*Q: What I'm curious about in this particular job in Swaziland is how did you get students, what did you teach them and how did you decide what you wanted to teach them?*

FINE: There had been a volunteer there that I was replacing and that volunteer was a woman who had a degree in home economics and she had organized a women's group and they did sewing, knitting and cooking and nutrition stuff all of which I wasn't very prepared to do; I wasn't a home economics teacher. I got there and the next day the woman's group was meeting and so the woman's group came together and I introduced myself and they were so disappointed that they had had this woman who was so skilled and effective and now they got a guy. I remember the chairman of the woman's

association looks at me and she tells me, “Susan was so good she could do so much. What can you do?” That was a little intimidating but I said, “I can make a shirt.”

*Q: Could you?*

FINE: I had sisters so growing up we had sewing machines so I knew how to do some basic sewing. I said, “I can make a shirt.” They were like, “Okay, you show us.” So I went immediately to town, which was a two hour trip away, I got on the bus and went to town and bought some material. Two days later the group meets again and they come in and I have my materials and I lay it out and I cut a simple African shirt which is basically just a sack with sleeves. I just lay it out, cut it out, sew it together on the sewing machine and I’ve got my African shirt and that was it. That won them over. It was one of those journeys of discovery of trying to figure out what we can do that has meaning to these people’s lives.

So, back to this women’s group. It continued to meet and it had momentum and activities but then I worked with them to try to figure out is this knitting really bringing any benefit to anybody? Should you continue that because a lot of people now know how to knit. What is it that would enrich people’s lives? Then I organized the farmers groups and then I started some vocational classes like woodworking and I was writing grants like mad to get the resources. I got resources to actually build a separate center on the school grounds of the adult education building and set it up as a little workshop and then would teach some woodworking, welding and metal work; none of which I was very good at but I could do enough of it to get people started. I then had the woman’s group and they worked with the farmers associations around what kind of crops they should use and what seeds and fertilizers. I had some orientation to it because of my upbringing but mostly I was learning reading prolifically trying to figure this stuff out. In the end I figured most of the stuff I did. I did that for three years, and there was very little that we did that offered real value to the participants other than the sort of social value of having a group, the solidarity.

*Q: Okay but if very little was offered then why what was the mission?*

FINE: Because for the most part none of it met the needs. What people wanted was skills that would help them earn money.

*Q: Sure, okay.*

FINE: Not even earn the money but get a job. So one I couldn’t teach them to a level where they were apprentice quality trainees I couldn’t get them trade certified and in this rural community after you train two carpenters well they don’t need more than that.

*Q: Exactly, precisely.*

FINE: So yeah we trained some carpenters and that was it. Yes, the training might help them fix things around their homestead or put a window into one of their huts but it is not

going to be an income generating opportunity for the vast majority and the same thing with the women and their sewing and needle work and the traditional stuff that women did. By my second year I recognized this and I didn't want to deceive people and have them spending their time. I felt guilty like people are spending their time thinking this is going to lead somewhere and it doesn't really lead anywhere. So one, for me, it was a great learning experience about development particularly about rural development. Two I had been shifted into thinking that I need to identify skills that empower people and by empower it means it gives them more control over their circumstances. So there were a few things that we did that did succeed.

One was I started teaching people how to drive because that was a skill that gave them more control over their circumstances. It was at a period when vehicles were just starting to come into that community so there was one person who owned a tractor, one person had a little pickup but cars were starting to come in. So I started doing driving lessons, I started doing maintenance lessons, how do you set the points, and how do you change the oil and that sort of thing. Then English was another empowering thing because most of the people did not speak English; the adults didn't so I started English classes. Literacy for the literate adults was an empowering thing so we did that. Typing was an empowering thing and those were all sort of unconventional at least to the way that program was set up. It was set up with a vision of we are going to teach people to be carpenters and metal works and women to knit and sew.

*Q: But if there is no market...*

FINE: Right, there was no market. Then we tried somethings that were terrible failures, i.e., a T-shirt business and that didn't work, we raised chickens and that did work. One of those ladies who was one of the members of the chicken group still raises chickens in the community 35 years later and she's got like a commercial operation now.

*Q: But how would you have found marketable skills for these rural people in Swaziland in the mid or late 1970s view the larger situation of apartheid and everything else going on.*

FINE: Yeah it was very constrained and that was when I first started to understand the concept of markets and looking at things from a more business point of view. What is the market and then seeing very quickly that we can't produce t-shirts you've got South Africa they can produce t-shirts at a fraction of the cost that this woman's group can do it. And, we could buy their t-shirts and bring them up here for 20 percent of what it would cost us to get the material and make them ourselves. I always knew I was getting a lot more out of it in terms of my learning than I was contributing. The main thing I think I was contributing was my respect for the people and my collegiality of being a member of the community.

*Q: Well you know there is a certain value in teaching people how to cooperate for marketing so that when they are ready they can find the products to scale up for successful businesses.*

FINE: Well there was that I mean looking back on it now I think gosh if only I knew then what I know now.

*Q: Yeah because it means cell phones were still ten years away.*

FINE: More than that they were 20 years away and it was very traditional community right onto the cusp of trying to modernize so you still didn't have roads, you didn't have developed roads, you didn't have water systems, there was no communication no telephone lines, no electricity and now its modernized with rural electrification so every homestead has electricity. There are water systems, there are paved roads, there are feeder roads, public transportation, architecture has changed, social patterns have changed, and commercial enterprise everything has changed. I was so fortunate to have had this blessed life, I was so fortunate to be there at a moment when it was still traditional and be able to witness that traditional way of life before it disappeared and then be part of that movement towards a more modern way of organizing society and community.

But now I lived with a Swazi family for the three years that I was in that community and that's my family. Oh, there is an interesting story about that family. In Swaziland the convention is teachers live in housing at the school so there is teacher housing on the school grounds and that is one of the perks of being a teacher is that you get a modern house. But the school housing they are always in short supply. So the day I arrived I told the headmaster I am going to be doing this rural adult education and I would like to live in the community with a family. He was like thrilled with that prospect because then he didn't have to house me. So he said, "You have to talk to the chief."

A couple days later the chief and his sub-chief, assistant chief, were at the school and the deputy chief was this classic old African patriarch, very conservative, not modern in any way and the chief himself was more educated having gone to technical college so he was more educated and could speak some English. He was still not completely modern but he was more sophisticated. So I went to the chief and I said, "I am asking your permission to live with a family." He said after talking to me about it, "Okay, if you want to live with a family we'll see if somebody will take you." So he tells his deputy chief, "See if somebody will take this white boy." So a couple weeks pass and I see this deputy chief again up around the school and the school is the only infrastructure in the entire community so if there are meetings they take place at the school grounds. I see him and I go over to him and my Swazi was really bad at that time so I don't remember exactly but probably with an interpreter I said, "Did you find me a place?" He said, "Oh, nobody wants you." Then in a purely classic Swazi way he said, "It's too bad I live so far from the school because if I didn't live so far you could stay with me." I said, "Well you aren't that far, I could walk it." He lived about three miles away. He said, "You think you could walk every day back and forth every day to my place?" I said, "Yeah, I could do that." He said, "Okay, sure, if you want to do that come on."

Now in Swazi culture that is a fairly common thing to do to be polite but you don't in your wildest dreams think somebody is going to take you up on it. Also, he would not have believed that a white boy would be able to do that kind of walk. So the next day I show up with my duffle bag and I walk into the homestead and the whole family, it is this big extended Swazi family they all just let their mouths drop open. They are not sure what to make of this and I settle in and over like the next three months as I learn to speak the language and get...

*Q: It's a click language.*

FINE: It is a click language, yes.

*Q: That's remarkable.*

FINE: As I learn to speak the language and we get to know each other we really come to like each other. So they truly adopted me as a member of family. Then the name of my Swazi family is Bulunga and it was about six months before I realized in the Swazi and Southern Bantu Zulu, it's very close to Zulu, it's a language made up of roots and prefix roots and suffixes. You have a root that is the core meaning and then you have a prefix and the prefix determines the quality of the word. So some words might be like natural phenomena like trees or grass, things of nature and they'll have a certain prefix. Then some will be sort of people oriented or human associated they will have a certain prefix. Some are just things or objections that have a prefix. And then there is one category where the prefix denotes the quality of so it is like the nature of. An example of that which I loved is buntu. You sometimes hear that Zulu term *ubutu* which ntu is the route for human and bu is the suffix of quality of so the word is the quality of being human, humanness. They talk about *ubutu* which is this quality which one strives for and it connotes being kind and compassionate. So Bulunga the root lunga means to be okay or to be fine. Bu is the prefix which means the quality of, so the best translation of that name is Fine.

*Q: Oh that's funny.*

FINE: The ancestors or destiny lead me there. So I lived with that family and I've remained a part of that family ever since.

*Q: Absolutely lovely and I guess you've seen the changes through their eyes.*

FINE: Yeah. Both the good and the bad. Now when I go and visit the homestead there are some cultural practices and some social practices that have faded away that I really miss. I'm like an old man, well I am an old man, but I really feel it when I go there.

*Q: You're from an older generation.*

FINE: I'm from an older generation, both in my language because my language hasn't evolved, so when I talk I am talking in an 1980 deep siSwati using words that people just

don't normally hear and using phrases or assemblies that sound like stuff from their grandparents. I can see those things that are lost as culture evolves and I have a sense of nostalgia and sadness about some things that are lost and then I can see things that are gained but it makes me feel kind of like an old codger when I visit. Now my parents have passed away and most of my siblings have passed away because AIDS hit there very hard so it is now mostly family members like the kids of my siblings so my nieces, although in that culture they would be considered children and their kids.

*Q: In essence grand nieces and nephews from the cohort you were in.*

FINE: That's right from the siblings so the character of it has changed tremendously along with all the features of the community, the physical features of the community as paved roads and now has infrastructure, has commercial activity. There is like a whole commercial district where there were just trees before. Again, my experience in Peace Corps both was formative in terms of understanding and encountering and trying to understand development issues. It was formative in terms of my exploration of culture and language, it gave me a deep abiding love for African culture and it really launched me on my professional career in international development because that was when I first started to seriously figure out what value do I have to add. I always felt I was taking more than I was giving and concerned about that wanting to make sure that I was contributing at least as much as I was taking.

*Q: Throughout all this all the background that you had growing up near forests on a farm and even the hitchhiking experiences gave you a lot of self-reliance.*

FINE: Yeah, I think I'm a pretty self-reliant kid.

*Q: That, of course served you well in this initial period. But the other interesting thing that I see is that you also learned how long it takes to get something done. This helps you later as you plan projects, to know what it takes, not just the materials, not just the plans, but getting the actual people to do things and do them on a certain schedule.*

FINE: That's true.

*Q: That's quite valuable.*

FINE: Yeah, I've been very fortunate to have those kinds of opportunities. I think Peace Corps just provides Americans with an amazing opportunity both to develop skills and when you are young experiences and perspectives that you can build on through the rest of your life. If you enter when you are older you can still acquire skills and perspectives that will enrich your life.

*Q: Now you had three years in Swaziland?*

FINE: Actually I had four years. I was three years in this rural community and then the rural education center that I was running was considered the most successful and I had over that period built a strong network with the people in the ministry of education. So

they asked me to come and work in the ministry of education to help with the overall national program and specifically to help them develop curriculum for the program; that was more codifying what I had been doing. That turned out to be writing a manual where I took the stuff that I had been doing, everything from keeping accounts to how to do community needs appraisal, to organizing classes to recruiting teachers so I spent a year writing this operating manual for a rural education center. That was interesting because in Swazi culture the normal thing is in the rural areas kids they grow up and when they become young men they go off to the city to work. I followed that same pattern so I grew up and I was there for three years and then I went off to the city to work. So the fourth year we go back and visit frequently, it's a small country, I go back often but from the family's point of view it was just the natural progression of things.

*Q: Interesting. And you fit in in with the ministry culture, the way it did business?*

FINE: Yeah that was a great experience and good also from a learning point of view because I was working now in the ministry as a kind of technical advisor and interacting with not only the ministry officials like the heads of departments and so forth but with other external technical advisors and with the international community in the capital. That gave me real insight into that world and because I was fluent in the language and I was really immersed into the culture I was one of those resource people. The USAID people or even the Brits and members of the international community if they wanted a resource person to explain something to them or to talk about how do we present this to the ministry or how do we look at this problem. So like World Bank teams they would find their way to me because I started to be known as somebody who had this experience in the country had and had a fair bit of knowledge about the place. So then I played that role of like the ministry would put me on these committees or task teams to do a needs assessment or to work with the ILO team that was coming in and that was somebody who they could say, "Okay you go attend those meetings and work with that group." I was a pretty good writer so I could write stuff and write up the reports. Again, that was good sort of entry level development work and exposes you and gives you visibility into how the UN works, how the donors work, the experience of individual technical advisors, what that looks like from their perspective.

I did that for a year and that was really valuable in building up my body of knowledge and skill set to do development work and helping me see things from different perspectives. If you think of this story I've told you I find it easy and natural to operate across a wide spectrum of people and places and situations. So I'm very comfortable with hillbillies because I have that in my background, I've very comfortable with highly-educated people, I'm comfortable in rural settings, can relate and get along with rural folk. I'm comfortable with Evangelicals because I've got that in my background, I'm comfortable with people from all different cultures because I've lived and traveled and relied on and been saved and helped by Kuchi nomads and Greek cave dwellers and a wide variety of people from different backgrounds. It has provided me with capacity to relate to understand, to respect and be able to communicate with people from all social classes, from all religious backgrounds and from all ethnic and national backgrounds. That, if you are working in international development is an asset.

*Q: Absolutely. Now as you are approaching the end of four years with the Peace Corps what are you thinking about for the future?*

FINE: Yeah, so one of the people I worked with was an Irish Catholic priest in Swaziland who I did some projects with. I got funding from him to build water systems so that was one of the projects to protect springs. I got money from the Salesian Order (a Roman Catholic order dedicated to education and care for children, especially poor and orphaned children) to do it and the head of it was a guy named Father Summers, so we became friends. Father Summers, as I was sort of nearing the end of my Peace Corps service and by that time I was 29 he said to me, "You know you're old you've got three years to get a career." So I took Father Summers advice and followed a pretty common pattern where I did my undergraduate but as I told you it took me a long time so I didn't do it in four years I did it in seven years but I had all these study abroad opportunities along the way. Then I was in Peace Corps for four years which was unusually long but I guess I loved that experience. One of the things I did in the last year in Peace Corps was a project from the University of Massachusetts which had a project in Swaziland working on adult education. Because I was the guy who was doing the curriculum for adult education and was a good resource person for Swaziland I fell in with their team, which was in country, and did stuff with them and helped them with stuff. So I got a scholarship to the University of Massachusetts through them and went to graduate school; that's a pretty normal progression. So undergraduate, Peace Corps, graduate school I just took a little longer to do it all. Then I was fortunate from the financial point of view because I had gotten to know this U. Mass team. They recruited me and helped me get a scholarship from their department and so I went to U. Mass and did a master's degree there.

*Q: In what?*

FINE: In international education. So I still have a BS in education and I have a MA in international education. But I didn't do a PhD which would have been the normal course because I'm just too impatient and I'm not really a scholar I'm much more of a practitioner. When I was in Peace Corps I met another Peace Corps volunteer and we got engaged so that was another big factor in staying a fourth year. We got engaged but I came back before she finished, she came back and then lived with me until I finished grad school and then we got married. Then it was her turn to go to grad school and she went to Harvard so then we moved to Boston. Then I looked for a job in international work and couldn't find one and wound up with a job that was amazingly similar to being a rural education center coordinator but it was an urban international education center coordinator in the poor part of Boston as the deputy coordinator of a community school. The community school was set up just like the rural educational center so it was housed in a public school, we were allowed to use the facility when the school wasn't in session and it was an interesting hybrid because it was a public school program, a city of Boston program but it was also a 501C3 non-governmental organization simultaneously. So the city of Boston would provide three staff positions, coordinator, deputy coordinator and a program assistant. It had a community board and those three staff had to create programs

and raise funding for the programs so the city gave three staff positions and access to a facility and then you were on your own.

*Q: Now what was the goal of this particular community? Was it adult education?*

FINE: It was everything so we had a preschool, we had afterschool programs, we had adult literacy programs, and we had GED programs. I started an alternative high school when I was there. We did outreach and work like parenting classes for women in the projects. I started an anti-gang program there, we did youth activities it was like full spectrum and we even had line enrichment programs like calligraphy and sports activities for kids. So it was just full spectrum whatever we felt there was demand in the community for. That was another serendipitous, fortuitous experience. We moved to Boston Susan started school I was looking for a job and couldn't find a job in anything I was looking for stuff with refugees that's when Asian refugees were coming into the country or any other international oriented work and couldn't find anything. So I was substitute teaching because I had a teaching certificate and was applying for all these jobs and not getting them and I applied for a job as an ESL, English as a Second Language, for refugees because I figured I can teach anything even though I was not an ESL teacher that wasn't my field. So I went to the interview, they interviewed me and asking me all these technical questions about teaching ESL and I didn't know the answers. I was honest and told them I don't know but I can learn and relate to people and I will be a good teacher for you. They said, "We just don't think you are a match for this job but we need somebody to run the school. Why don't you apply for that job?" So I did and the way that was set up there was a coordinator who was a member of the community and in this case she was brilliant woman, a wonderful woman who was wonderfully wise, capable and competent but she had never gone to college and the board over time the composition of the board had changed and the area was starting to gentrify a little so you had people come on to the board who were professionals, lawyers and accountants.

*Q: This was the early 1980s?*

FINE: This was '84.

*Q: Oh wow so yeah, sure.*

FINE: So you had this board that wanted somebody who was educated, they wanted a professional, so they created this position of deputy coordinator and I got it because I had recently graduated with a master's degree and I had this experience of running community programs. The coordinator, Janice, and I, we made a perfect pair. I loved her and she was so capable and she appreciated what I brought and we made a really great team. That was a really great experience. They gave me this whole spectrum of experience in U.S. community development, everything from senior centers to getting public health centers into the community to working in the projects (low-income housing developments), to working on education issues and gang issues. It was a full spectrum job that also gave me a taste of what working with a community based organization in the U.S. was like as opposed to working with a community based organization in Africa.

Those two experiences -- the African one and then the Boston one -- provided sound foundations for human development work and experience across a wide range of issues. While I wasn't an expert in those issues I'd had experience with them. I knew some of the dynamics and I certainly read literature on the different facets of the program that we were implementing. I was the grant writer. That forces you to do extensive research.

*Q: How did you identify the populations or the groups that you wanted to work with and then determine what they most needed?*

FINE: When I got there it was a growing concern so there was a preschool and there was an after school and those were primary funded and most of the kids in those two programs were kids that were referred from the Department of Social Services and that was the base revenue for the organization. From that we had the community board that would say, "Hey, you know there's a real need for people to get GEDs, there is a big population of people that need GEDs so we would go out and test it. We'd do surveying and we'd do some research and then we'd say, "Yeah, there is a need for a GED program here. So then we would raise money for it and it might be federal funding through block grants, it might be city funding that was competitive so you were competing with other organizations for it.

*Q: Foundations?*

FINE: It might be foundations and corporations so that was a good experience in terms of just learning about managing a diversified organization and then fundraising for it. Then there were things like accounting. I didn't have any accounting background and when I took over the school, this is not an exaggeration, I asked to see the books and understand the budget. They literally brought me shoe boxes full of cancelled checks, they didn't have an accounting system at all, and they had a part-time bookkeeper. I turned to Boston University for help. They physically located right down the road from us, so we were in their neighborhood and they were running advertisements on TV at that time about their community involvement on how they were engaged in helping the community. John Silber was the president then and I called him up and I said, "Look, I'm at the school just down the road from you and could you give me an intern from your accounting program who could come and help me figure out the finance system because, basically, we don't have one."

Eventually they referred me to the community engagement office and I told them what I needed and I never heard back from them. Then I called them again and still didn't hear back from them. So after a couple of weeks of getting the runaround I called John Silber, the president of the university, and I got to him. I said, "You know I am watching these ads on the TV where you are say you help community organizations and you are engaged in the community I'm going to ask you for help with an intern to help us with our accounts and your community engagement office won't even call me back." He said, "So what is it you need?" I said, "I need to figure out the finances of the school." He said, "Okay, I guarantee somebody is going to call you back." About an hour later the CFO of the university calls me and says, "What do you need?"

*Q: Now that's service.*

FINE: I told her and she said, "Okay I'm going to come down and I'll take a look." And she came down. The Chief Financial Officer of Boston University actually came over and I showed her what we had. Then she became my personal advisor and even though I didn't know accounting, getting her advice was like the equivalent of doing a degree in accounting. Over the months I recreated the books, did ledgers, and set up a chart of accounts and put a double entry accounting system in place and she was teaching me how to do it personally like after hours. She'd come down a couple hours a week and that was a great education. And we found that the part-time bookkeeper had been embezzling money.

We really started to reconstruct stuff but that was a good lesson in just organizational development in management. We would identify needs through talking to people, through reading articles in the paper, watching the news through issues raised by our community board, through stuff the city would sometimes say, "Hey, there is a growing gang problem in your area what are you all doing about it?" And then just through opportunity as you start doing things then you find other opportunities. Sometimes it might be finance driven where the *Boston Globe* wanted to do, they funded a summer camp, so we went after the summer camp monies so we could provide summer camp opportunities for the kids in our neighborhood.

*Q: So with these skills, are you now thinking about applying to USAID?*

FINE: Okay I was at the community school and my wife and I, she was finishing her master's degree at Harvard and we both had great job offers. She had a job offer with the Massachusetts Water Authority and I had an offer from the city to become the head of alternative education for the city because our community school was by far the strongest community school in the system. We looked at these opportunities and said what do we want to do with our lives and we both wanted to work overseas. We had been in the U.S. for three years and we both thought we want an international life so we got jobs at the University of Lesotho and we moved to Lesotho. I got the offer from the university and my job was on a USAID project so it was from the university but the funding came from USAID. I knew about it just through my network because I had worked in Southern Africa and once I got that offer then, Susan who is so much more accomplished than I am, applied and she got a job teaching macroeconomics and econometrics.

Now, months before I had indeed applied to USAID when Susan's school graduation was approaching and we were talking about what we wanted to do. We knew we wanted to go back overseas. So around the same time as the Lesotho job came through I got a letter from USAID that said, "You meet our eligibility requirements but we are not hiring right now and we may get in contact with you in the future but there is no guarantee." So months pass and you forget about that. I get the offer from the University of Lesotho, I sign the contract; in those days you had to telex your agreement that you are accepting the contracts and the telex office was across from the school that I was working at. So I

crossed the street, sent the telex off saying, “Yes I accept the offer and we’ll be there on such and such a date,” and I walk back into my office and the phone rings. It is on a Wednesday and it is USAID and they say, “We want you to come for an interview on Friday. This is it you can either accept or we take you off the list.”

I went and did the interview and the interview went well and at the end of the day they were making encouraging statements like, “You have the kind of experience we are looking for,” and, “We really enjoyed the conversations with you and I said, “Look, I’ve got to tell you, I just, on Wednesday, signed a contract to go teach at the University of Lesotho. It is a year-long contract.” The guy who was leading the panel goes, “Oh, that’s fine it takes a year to get a security clearance anyway. So by the time we get through this process and you have a security clearance that’s going to take a year and this just makes you a stronger candidate.” So we went to Lesotho and we worked for a year and then toward the end of that year USAID called and said, “Okay, come.”

*Q: Aight and what year was that?*

FINE: That was at the start of ’88. So they called and I guess the application was in ’86 and then the interview was in ’87 and then I actually joined in March of ’88.

*Q: So this was the period when USAID was using the program of International Development Interns to train new employees?*

FINE: That’s right, but to finish with Lesotho, I worked in the faculty of education for a year helping to design a new continuing education course or what was called a part-time degree in education. It was the first part-time degree that the university was offering; it was an innovation for the university. That was a very positive experience and at the end of that I got the actual offer from USAID to join as an IDI and I moved back to Washington, DC and I started as an IDI at the end of March 1988.

*Q: Did your wife accompany you?*

FINE: She did. In Lesotho they needed someone to teach econometrics and so, given how talented she was in that field, she was a more valuable asset to the university than I was for sure. So we had a very good experience in Lesotho during that year, that was ’87-’88. Then, as I said, at the end of March I came back and got started in the IDI program. I was based in Washington and the way that program worked was you would go through a few weeks of orientation, I think it was three weeks of orientation and then you would rotate through offices so you could get a sense of the agency and what the agency did. You were expected to rotate in offices other than your own backstop. So my technical backstop was education so I came in as an educational officer. I then did rotations in the policy bureau, and these would typically be for a month or six weeks. In the gender office, in the contracts office, and I loved contracting, then you could also do specific structure courses. So you were allowed to define your own curriculum and you were supposed to do this for a year.

*Q: Now when you say to define your own curriculum you mean within the rotations that you are doing within USAID?*

FINE: That's right the way the IDI program was set up when I joined was you were expected to stay in Washington for a year and during that year you were to rotate through different parts of the agency and to learn the ropes.

*Q: Now how would you decide how long you would want to spend?*

FINE: In a rotation?

*Q: Yeah.*

FINE: You would negotiate it with the office. So you would go to the office and say, "I'm an IDI and I am interested in getting an experience in your office and then sometimes they would say, "We don't have any real need for you right now so maybe come back in the fall." Or they might say, "Yeah we could really use an extra pair of hands but you have to commit for at least six weeks or you might say, "I have four weeks I need to fill would you take me for four weeks," so it was a negotiation. I did that and I loved USAID, I loved the idea that that was a Foreign Service officer it was so exciting to get a diplomatic passport and having done a lot of travel that seemed like a real status symbol to me at the time having a diplomatic passport. I enjoyed the people I met and I would say I just flourished in the different offices I worked in including my home office, which was the education office; it was call S&T, Science and Technology at the time and that's where education officers had their home. I was assigned pretty quickly about three months into the process we got our assignment, where we would go at the end of this year period and I was assigned to Pakistan. This was in the period of support for the Mujahedin who were fighting the Russians.

I had been to Pakistan, I spent time in Pakistan during my travels so the idea of going to Pakistan was attractive to me, and I thought that was great; I love that country. I also had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa so I was also wanted to do work in Africa. Then two things happened that changed the course of my career. The first was that Pakistan had a rule that spouses of Foreign Service officers were not allowed to work on the local economy, I think they were only allowed to work in the U.S. embassy. And we had just got married a year earlier and my wife's position was, "If I can't work then I am not going." So that created an obstacle. I contacted the Pakistan mission to see if there were any jobs for a very well qualified economist and they said, "No, they weren't but maybe they could find something in the mailroom. I knew that wouldn't fly so that was an issue we confronted. The second thing that happened is I had said when I put in preferences for what region I would like to work in I had specified Africa. I got a call out of the blue from the African bureau's Education Office that asked me to come and talk to them. So I went and met with them and they said, "We are having a crisis, one of our education officers has fallen ill and has been medevaced and the program is at a critical juncture

and we need to get somebody out on a TDY basis immediately. We see that you've been assigned to Pakistan but you are interested in Africa. So if you can drop everything and go out there next Tuesday then we will bring you into the Africa bureau. We can get your assignment changed and we will bring you into the Africa bureau.

*Q: Assuming you say yes you would also be ending your IDI program early?*

FINE: No, I had to get permission from the IDI managers to do a TDY but that wasn't so unusual so that was seen as another rotation. This was probably four and a half months into my time with USAID. I got permission to do this TDY, it was a one month TDY to go and cover for this person who had been medevaced. It so happened it was in Swaziland where I had been a Peace Corps volunteer, I spoke fluent Swazi and I knew that country well and the Africa bureau didn't know that. So when they first talked to me they were trying to persuade me to accept this assignment on an emergency basis and they were saying, "Such a nice country you'll really love this country and it's very interesting work." I didn't let on that I had spent four years in the country I just said, "Okay, I'll do it." Then a couple days later when they actually handled my paperwork and my CV I remember the head of that office laughing and saying, "I see you know this country." So I went to Swaziland in this TDY capacity and I stayed there for a month and then they wanted me to stay longer so I stayed for a second month. Then the IDI office said, "He can't stay any longer, he's got to come back." So I went back and then the mission in Swaziland offered me a full time position immediately, which I wanted to take because I loved the country and they offered a job to Susan, my wife, so they said, "If you come there is a position in the program office for an economist." It seemed like the stars were aligning in this country we knew well where there were good jobs for both of us at this early stage in our careers. The agency wasn't very happy about it because it broke the rules of the IDI program. I was now only about six months in and the rule is you had to stay for a year but the Africa bureau was able to swing it so we moved to Swaziland; that was our first tour and we did a four-year tour in Swaziland. That was a great experience and it was particularly good because the mission at that time was '88-'92 was run by Roger Carlson, he was the mission director. He was a very good manager and it was a very well run mission.

*Q: How large?*

FINE: It was big because it was during the period of Apartheid; there was a state of emergency in South Africa. They were just starting then the negotiations on trying to move to some sort of brokered peace agreement with the ANC. So a lot of U.S. assistance in the region was run out of Swaziland. It was a big mission relatively big. It had well developed systems and it had been there for a long time so it was a mission that had well developed systems, it had protocols in place, it had a very good leader in Roger Carlson who was a great example of what an effective mission director should be in the way he managed the mission, in the way he mentored people, the way he interacted with counterparts in the government and civil society. So it was really fortunate for both Susan and I to be in a mission that worked so well and that was in a sense well established. We were there for two years and toward the end of the second year Susan was doing a terrific

job and was recognized as a real talent. The folks in HR, human resources, were very supportive of us to help us become a tandem couple. We had advice and support and people pulling for us so she applied and was accepted as an IDI. She joined as an IDI in '91 and went back to Washington for her year as an IDI so we were separated during that year. In the meantime in 1990 we had our first child...born in Swaziland, so I have all these landmarks in my life associated with Swaziland. I was a Peace Corps volunteer there, I really developed a clear view of what I wanted to do with my life as a Peace Corps volunteer, started to understand development as a professional discipline, started to develop the entry level skills to work in that discipline, met my wife who was a Peace Corps volunteer and then we wound up going back there for our first posting in the Foreign Service and our first child was born there.

*Q: Now take a moment to talk about what you did, what your job was.*

FINE: So my job was as an education and training officer and it provided great breadth in that discipline, in that sector because we had two types of programs we were doing. We were doing a large scale scholarship program, a participant training program that did both long and short-term training. That was during the period when the U.S. government put a lot of money into scholarships for leaders at the bachelors, masters and PhD levels. So I learned a lot about higher education using training as an institutional development and mechanism. About the different ways of using capacity building, human resource development to advance a broader national development agenda and using different types of short term training travel to the U.S, postings to the U.S., an internship with an institution in the U.S. or a focus force in the U.S. long-term degree programs in the U.S and then short-term training programs in country. That experience with all three of those in mixing and matching in order to meet the institutional needs of a partner institution.

*Q: And the goals of the training were done in concert with local ministry or how did you determine the goals?*

FINE: Yes, the goals were negotiated with the government so it was a bilateral program and the objectives of the activities were to build capacity within the country to grow its economy. So we aimed to strengthen systems both in government so some of the training was for government statisticians or for specific technical areas in agriculture, health or education and in the private sector. And we also had a program of developing management capacity so that Swazi's could take on management positions that up to that time had been held by expatriates or South Africans. So that was a great grounding in human resource development and also in institution and capacity building with a lot of lessons learned about how to embed different capacity building and training approaches into and institutional social system to get sustainable outcomes.

*Q: Is this a good place to reflect on the effect that South Africa and apartheid had in general on Swaziland? Or was there no significant effect?*

FINE: Oh yeah, South Africa casts a shadow over everything in that part of the world. Swaziland was historically very canny on how it managed the politics of colonialism. So

from the 1880s and 1890s they were able to play the British and the Boers or the Afrikaners off against each other. In that way they maintained their independence as a country. In Lesotho, they maintained their independence because they defeated military both the colonists who were British and Afrikaner. There are only two examples on the continent of an African group that actually militarily defeated because they were up in the mountains; they had the terrain on their side.

In Swaziland they did it not through military prowess but through diplomatic prowess and so they were able to maintain their independent status and then eventually in the '20s or '30s became a protectorate of Great Britain which protected them from encroachment by the Afrikaners and then they maintained their own local government stature so it is quite unique that they've preserved their traditional government structures far more than maybe any other country in Sub-Saharan Africa, maybe with the exception of Ethiopia. That was a source of strength for them during the colonial period. It's not so much a source of strength for them today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So South Africa did have a huge impact on them in multiple ways so in some ways they benefited. They benefited by having this economic power house next door. They sent thousands and thousands of uneducated laborers as migrants to work in the South African mines and that provided a source of employment and income into Swaziland that contributed to its development. Of course there is a lot of social downside to migrant labor so there are pros and cons to it, but there was definitely an economic advantage that they gained from that.

When I was in Swaziland in the '90s with USAID, South Africa had changed its policy and was no longer recruiting non-South African migrants. That had a negative effect on the Swazi economy particularly on the rural economy because for many uneducated rural men that was a failsafe kind of job. In the family I lived with the uneducated young men just expected that they would go to the mines and work, and they did; it's tough work. It had the effect of providing some economic stimulus. But there was also a customs union with South Africa which also provided a modest amount of economic stimulus. Also, the proximity of South Africa stimulated educational development so that was a positive and some of the early Swazi leaders once were educated at Fort Hare which was a university for Blacks in South Africa.

But there were also big downsides. By the '80s Swaziland was serving as a hub for the ANC or an operational base for the ANC and you had some conflict with assassinations of ANC cadre who were hiding out in Swaziland. The one thing you had was you had a lot of black South African middle class families that either moved to Swaziland because it didn't have apartheid or sent their kids to Swaziland and placed them with relatives or friends. So you had a whole cadre of young people who were ethnically they were Swazi but their citizenship in terms of where they were born was South African.

*Q: Roughly how large was the Swazi population in South Africa?*

FINE: Bigger than the Swazi population in Swaziland.

*Q: Interesting, okay.*

FINE: And the Swazis are very close to the Zulus. So you had the Zulu, you had people coming from Zululand, and you had people coming from KaNgwane, which was the Swazi homeland in South Africa. The middle and upper middle class parents would either move themselves or send their kids because they didn't want them to grow up in an apartheid system. So that had a significant impact that I didn't realize until apartheid ended and all these people moved back to South Africa. All these people who I had always taken as Swazis and when apartheid ended they all went back to reclaim their South African citizenship -- and this was a lot of the talented people in Swaziland.

It was interesting especially for the ethnically Swazi people who had left South Africa in their youth, been educated in a non-apartheid society, and now were going back to a non-apartheid South Africa. I should note that, at least as South African apartheid reckoned it, there were white Swazis and black Swazis. So during the apartheid era you had Swazi nationals leaving a non-apartheid nation to work in an apartheid nation where they were looked down on. And you had social influence like all the migrants who had been discriminated against in South Africa or just merchants or others who when they traveled in South Africa would be treated as second class citizens and then bringing those attitudes influenced relationships in Swaziland where you didn't have legal apartheid and the Swazis were in charge of Swaziland from '68 when they got independence. So it was a completely different environment and it was interesting when people, like Americans, would go from South Africa and cross the border into Swaziland they would very often comment how it felt like they had just gone into a completely new environment and that crossing the border was like a cloud lifting.

So it was interesting the when the South African kids who came over for school in Swaziland had grown up and now were college graduates and went back to South Africa when apartheid fell, they had a whole different outlook on life, and it was one that wasn't as deeply scared by the discrimination and the abuse that black South Africans and colored and Indian South Africans had endured. I noticed it when I was in South Africa with USAID that a lot of people who were ethnically Swazi, but citizens of South Africa, who had been educated in Swaziland without apartheid were now rising as managers in organizations in both public and private sector organizations. They had a different less scarred, less traumatized outlook on life.

*Q: And they had decided to go back to South Africa because they saw there better economic opportunities?*

FINE: That's where better opportunities were. I think many of them had family there as well and they had loyalty and a sense of citizenship there. Because I had been running a big training program in the '80s in the late '90s is when I was in South Africa I would run into people who were in my training program and they were now professors in South Africa or managers at Anglo Gold or in other leadership positions so it was a great example of the impact of USAID and of U.S. foreign assistance in developing the leadership cadre in an area where opportunities for black South Africans and even in Swaziland opportunities to get high quality world-class education were limited in South

Africa limited by law and in Swaziland limited by economic constraints. We had a huge training program over a ten year period of over 500 people in degree programs mostly masters programs. That cadre became leaders both in Swaziland and in South Africa. So it really impressed on me the power of that kind of intervention -- the impact of using foreign assistance to build human capital through degree programs in particular. We had to identify the talent because it was highly competitive to get those scholarships and then we had to develop that talent. To see the result in these two countries where I had the opportunity to work manifesting itself as the leaders of institutions in those countries is very gratifying

*Q: To what extent was the fact that Swaziland was more or less ethnically homogeneous, in other words, did not suffer from tribal or ethnic or linguistic competitions, contribute to its success?*

FINE: I don't think that was reason for the success of the human resource development program, which was one of the two areas I worked in. Homogeneity is a strength that benefits Swaziland nationally because it is not only that they are homogeneous ethnically and culturally but that has allowed them to preserve a very strong sense of identity much stronger than you see in most other African countries. Although, if you go to Tanzania and Kenya, they began emphasizing a common language back in the 1960s with Swahili, and they've been able to create a national identity. But you still see in Kenya you look in four years ago when they had the presidential election or maybe six years ago when they had those terrible ethnic divisions and conflicts you don't see the same thing in Tanzania except between Zanzibar and Tanganyika; the mainland and the island. I wouldn't say that had a big impact on the actual training program but it did have a big impact on Swaziland's national development.

The other area that I worked in was the primary and secondary education systems, schooling for young kids. We had a great relationship with the ministry of education to work with them to develop their educational development program to improve the effectiveness of their schools to increase the number of kids to receive an education, so to focus on access and quality of education. There again because it is a small country you can do a lot and you are by definition working to scale. That's a very powerful learning environment for any young professional because you can implement policies fairly directly and you can execute on your plans.

Because the Swazis were wonderful and talented people we were able to do really interesting, often cutting edge, work because you could broker agreements. So we introduced programs in a collaborative manner with the Swazi ministry. I knew how to do this because I'd worked with the ministry of education as a Peace Corps volunteer, I knew the language and could move easily in the society. I understood the mores of how to operate in that society and was able to work with colleagues from across the education sector from the unions to the ministry to the academic institutions, to introduce some really interesting innovation. Now, with USAID, I was able to bring resources and my accumulated to make significant innovations in their education system that were sustained, that just became part of the way they approached education.

*Q: So what were some?*

FINE: One was the idea of what was called continuous assessment which essentially is to move from a system where you teach and then at the end of the quarter or semester you give one test and instead you teach each week you are giving quizzes and you are giving chapter tests and you're using the information not to just fail kids out of school or weed kids out you are using that information to then remediate so that you see some kids aren't learning certain concepts so you can spend more time with them on those concepts. So it introduced the idea of using continuous feedback on student performance, we developed and introduced tools so that the teachers could do that and manage that additional workload because it was an additional workload. Then we worked on strategies on more individualized instruction so if you had students who didn't get a concept you wouldn't just leave them behind you would work with them and give them special assignments. Again we worked to develop the materials to make that possible in that environment which was a fairly low resource environment. We did a lot of work on how to create learning environments that encouraged and facilitated learning in rural schools. A lot of mentoring and coaching for teachers, shifting the attitude of how you supervise a teacher from one that was an enforcement approach to a coaching and mentoring approach. Those were significant shifts in attitude and it's so interesting having worked at a secondary school there as a Peace Corps volunteer and then worked essentially as a policy advisor with USAID helping them design and implement education reform programs and then going back and visiting just as a visitor but as a fairly senior visitor. I still do, even as recently as earlier this year, I'll go and visit a school and just observe what the school experience looks like today. To see some of those seeds that we planted in those innovations just as part of the standard way that education is done is very rewarding.

*Q: Did you run into a problem that you needed to overcome in the implementation of the program that dealt with cheating or of taking liberties just to move things along?*

FINE: Not in Swaziland. The Swazi educational officials were very professional and committed. Again, being in a country where you are working with a group of committed professionals it is a homogeneous group, it's a small country so you are working at scale and it provides a very clear sense of what success or what affective delivery looks like. Not that we didn't have all sorts of challenges and problems, and yes you would have an ineffective district educational officer or you would have somebody who couldn't really keep up with reforms that were being done. So, of course, you have the normal operational programs, but it was an environment that provided a very strong baseline for what effective program delivery could look like and how to translate policy into action. And to do it in a very collaborative manner where it wasn't the U.S. imposing a view where it was really the U.S. and USAID being a valued partner that was helping the Swazis implement their vision as opposed to trying to give them a vision. We were never giving them the vision we were helping them to implement their vision and finding that alignment. Because, as I mentioned I worked on the human resource development high level skills piece, and then also worked on the school system piece. It was a great

opportunity to see how those come together to form a continuum of continuous education.

*Q: Was the success well known in Washington not just in USAID but in Congress?*

FINE: I don't think that the Congress would have known that much about the program in Swaziland in part because it was such a small country. Congress would care about the fact that Swaziland was its proximity to South Africa because apartheid was coming unraveled at the time. Mandela had been released from prison during that period so that is where the attention would have been, but Swaziland did get recognition within USAID. In both of those programs we did a retrospective evaluation to look at what were the outcomes of the people who went through this high-level training went and were able to document a very significant portion of them, like 98 percent of them, had returned to Swaziland so they didn't stay in the U.S., which was one of the fears for those kinds of programs. They returned to their country and they were in leadership positions they were ministers, they were managing directors, they were bankers, they were educators they were the leadership that was running the country. Then, as I mentioned later on, went over and had a noticeable impact on South Africa. So that was recognized and it was also the education programs that a few years later USAID wanted to identify as success stories and it included one of those education programs that I had designed and worked on with the Swazis. It was an example of foreign assistance that really produced positive outcomes.

*Q: Positive outcomes not just in Swaziland but also in another very high visibility target country -- South Africa.*

FINE: Right.

*Q: Interesting.*

FINE: Yes, I think they were recognized as effective programs. I was there for about four years so by '91 or so after being there for maybe two and a half years I became head of the general development office. That included non-educational activities as well in particular things like village banks, which were picking up steam, and small business development; so enterprise development kind of work. Again, it was because of the environment -- we had significant resources to work with relative to the size of the country. It was a great way to get experience and build knowledge and understanding of how those kinds of development programs in enterprise development and finance worked. When you combine the program piece, great, authentic relationships with your counterparts, and a well-run mission, you get a first tour experience that really teaches you what good development looks like.

*Q: Meanwhile your wife goes through her IDI program and what happens to her?*

FINE: She finishes and she comes back to Swaziland now as a program officer. She gets posted to Swaziland and that was only a year but that was an example of the agency

making it work for us. So instead of sending her to Pakistan they sent her back to Swaziland on a short tour. It wasn't an ordinary thing they had to do some bureaucratic innovating to figure out how can we send this first time Foreign Service officer on a tour that is one year long, but they figured out how to make it work.

*Q: As you approach the end of your tour in Swaziland how does it work now in terms of how the decision gets made of where you go next?*

FINE: For us we are a tandem couple and we have to find a mission that is big enough for two positions. Now we were fortunate in that we worked in different areas. Susan was an economist who was a program officer and I was a technical education guy. That made it easier because we weren't competing in the same office. Nevertheless, we had to find a place that had two openings at the same time. In our case, it worked out across our entire career that we had a good reputation, Susan is an extremely talented officer and I had a good reputation for the technical work that I was doing so we were able to find positions. In the case of our post following Swaziland that was Uganda. The USAID mission in Uganda contacted us and said, "We want to launch an education program and we are looking for an education officer. We hear you are a good education officer and by the way we have an opening for a program officer too. Would you bid on it?" In the Foreign Service there is a bid system where you bid on assignments but when you do that there is a lot of effort that goes into trying to make arrangements so that the post you bid on is the one that you are going to be selected for. In that case it is especially good if they contact you and say, "We really want you to come and if you bid on us we will pick you." That was the situation we had so it was a very smooth process for us to go from Swaziland to Uganda and I'll tell you about that.

*Q: And this was what year again?*

FINE: This is '92, 1992. We were scheduled to go in June or July and our son was now about 18 months old. A couple weeks before we were to move to Uganda the post issued a ruling that barred any babies from coming to post because they were having a malaria epidemic. No child who weighed less than forty pounds could go to post. We had to recalibrate and Susan and Joshua, our son, went back to D.C. and I went to Kampala. I went to Kampala to start a new education program so the mission had been identified as a focal country for a new education program. They had not been working in that area for years so there was nothing to build on. It meant starting from scratch, which for a young educational officer is an ideal situation. You can't have a better situation than to say we've got \$ 110 million that we want to invest in education and it's going to be the biggest education program in the agency and it's greenfield, so go up there and figure out what needs to be done and how to do it. So it was just a terrific opportunity.

I went there with this experience of having a great working relationship with Swazi ministry of education and with Swazi civil society and having in some ways almost having been a Swazi because of my Peace Corps experience. I get to Kampala, to the AID mission, and they said, "There are real tensions with the ministry of education here. We've reached out to them but we have a real tense relationship with them." So my

approach was just to go over there and talk it through. So I started going over to the ministry of education like immediately to see if I could set up meeting with the head of primary education with the permanent secretary and with other directors there. Nobody would meet with me. So I couldn't get a response I couldn't get meetings and so I just started camping out there, I would just go there early in the morning and I'd just sit and wait to try and get a meeting. After like the third day of camping one of the officials came out, a lovely, lovely man named Sam Onak who was the director of primary education. He said, "Look, I'm sorry I can't meet with you." I said, "Why not?" He showed me a circular and there was a circular from the minister that said, "No official is permitted to meet with anyone from USAID." That's how upset the ministry was because their perception -- which was an accurate perception -- was when Uganda was selected for this big education program the mission didn't have an education officer and they had just started to plan stuff without consulting the Ugandans.

The minister of education at the time was a man name Amanywa Mushega who had been one of the original rebels who had gone into the bush with President Museveni and so he was a soldier and he was the head of discipline for the Army during the struggle years. So he was a very stern character and he had a view of the U.S. and the UK and a very colonial, anti- imperialist view shaped by schooling in Tanzania and by an African socialist perspective and a dependency theory view of the relationships between the former colonial powers and African countries. So he had a really hostile view towards the U.S. and it just got exacerbated because now the U.S. was saying it was going to do an education program and they hadn't ever talked to him or anybody in the ministry. I spent my first months repairing that relationship and building a relationship and working on trust. A lot of it was just spending time over at the ministry of education. I got to the point where they were allowed to talk to me and it was spending time talking to them. One of the things that I am very proud of is that I went from that position of the minister having sent this internal circular to his officers saying, "Nobody can talk to USAID." That was the first week I arrived to about a year and a half later the minister would regularly just call me up to get advice or talk through an issue because within the donor community I was the person he trusted.

*Q: Fascinating. But it is surprising that the USAID office in Uganda could begin an education assistance program without consulting the corresponding Ugandan authorities.*

FINE: Yeah, it was a giant faux pas on the part of USAID that was made in part because they lacked staff but had the sense of urgency that we've got to do something.

*Q: To show a response.*

FINE: Right so they just started to plow ahead in a very thoughtless way but they weren't trying to get somebody who could come up to lead the process it was just that they had taken some preliminary steps before they got an educational officer there who could then formally lead the process. So when I got there I found this tense situation but again Uganda was at a very interesting place in its history, it was the start of March 1992 and

the country and the city of Kampala were really coming out of civil war so there had been active fighting going on between '86 and '90. Then by '90 most of the active resistance was over but you still had lawlessness and the government hadn't fully reestablished security. So when I got there in March of '92 there was still no nightlife. There wasn't an official curfew but nobody went out at night. When the sun went down you were in your compound locked in.

There was also a huge hijacking problem. I remember the embassy had a chart on the wall with the number of vehicles hijacked each month. At night you would hear gunshots and wonder who's shooting at who, was it the remnants of rebel groups or was it just criminals or bandits. I never knew the answer to that but I think it was mostly just bandits or scared watchmen shooting their guns off in the night. But you had no nightlife; there were no restaurants except there was one in the hotel and you didn't have modern restaurants. There were like food stalls open during the day, but nothing at night. The roads in the town were literally impossible. You couldn't take a car on them because they were so cratered. The buildings didn't have glass in the windows. But it was right at this point, literally almost to the month when things began to shift. So from March until say October you had this nightlife starting to come back. People started to feel secure going out at night, you had small restaurants starting to open up because they could stay open at night. You had rehabilitation work going on so buildings started to get painted and glass started to be replaced in broken frames. You just had society moving forward together and that creates a sense of hope.

I remember asking a taxi driver in maybe September or October whether he liked the Museveni government. He told me, "I like the Museveni government." I said, "Well what do you like about it?" He said, "We can go out at night again." So you had that point where the country has moved from conflict to post conflict and it's now starting to move into a development phase where businesses are beginning to open up and people are going out. It creates a sense of hope and momentum and joy in some cases and mostly the sense of possibility. If you are a development worker that is the ideal time to be in a place when there is that sense of possibility and in this case of rebuilding and Uganda had in its education ministry a good cadre of capable people. It wasn't very deep, but the heads of departments tended to be technocrats, well-educated and competent and committed and that was again just a wonderful experience of being, in a sense, at the right place at the right time.

We had huge resources for the time, the biggest education program on the continent. I was working with really wonderful, committed Ugandan educators and officials in a period where there was a sense of hope and possibility. I spent the first five, six months or a year working to design a program with the Ugandans and traveling all over the country to understand the context and going with the ministry to talk with the communities. This created a bond of trust between me and the people I was working with because when you go up-country and you are almost camping out and you are working to identify issues and raise awareness and possible solutions with the local communities those are bonding experiences.

It gave me the opportunity to really show that USAID and the U.S. government could be a trusted partner. Again, it was an environment that permitted me to play a facilitating role where we weren't trying to dictate to the ministry what its program should be. Instead, we were very sincerely saying, "We are here to work with you to implement your priorities." It was a very innovative program in that it began with a traditional technical assistance plan to help the ministry to improve its systems, manage teachers better, get them paid on time, map where new schools should be built -- all basic functions of a ministry. But it also had a big component that was non-project assistance where we established policy reform objectives with the ministry. This was a process of listening to their articulated goals and then helping them translate that into a policy statement and incentives for the institution -- for officials, communities, school principals --the whole system how do we create incentives in the system to implement those policies?

In the end, the policy had four areas. One was getting textbooks into the schools and to do that it required ending a very corrupt procurement system that they had, which was a big policy battle because it hit certain people in their pocketbooks. But it required replacing a corrupt monopoly system with an open market based system. The right materials got to schools with the right financing mechanism to pay for those materials.

*Q: Okay, while we are on the materials and textbook question did you run into or were there ever issues about the content in the textbook because in some African countries Muammar Qadhafi was taught as a hero and I can't imagine the U.S. would find that...*

FINE: No, we didn't there were issues with curriculum content and we worked very closely with the National Curriculum Center but we didn't have that kind of issue. There were Ugandan issues around things like how do you present gender roles and the Ugandans themselves were debating that. So you had the emergence of strong women educators who were saying we need to change the way women are represented in our textbooks. That was a discussion amongst the Ugandans. You had sensitive issues around ethnicity because there you do have many different ethnicities that in some cases have really bad histories of conflict with each other. So that was an issue so how do you treat the history of the relationships between the different groups, how do you present colonial history so there were issues like that but those were able to be addressed through curriculum panels and they weren't political for us they were political for the Ugandans.

Back to our programs.

One had to do with setting up a system that would get materials into schools, and I mentioned that we had to reform the textbook acquisition system.

The second had to do with paying teachers -- they were paid about \$8 a month which was not enough to buy one bag of the staple food so they couldn't possibly survive on that. As a result they would work multiple jobs and there was chronic absenteeism so one of the streams of work had to do with increasing teacher's pay to a living wage. A lot goes into that with reforms and the teaching service commission and reforms to how teachers get

recruited and reforms to how schools are managed their financial and payroll issues that come up. So that was another stream of work.

Another was the question of teacher qualifications.

The final one was girls' access to education.

These were priorities that the ministry itself had identified and the next issue was how to set goals and policy benchmarks. So we said alright: to get to this objective of say, having equality between girls and boys in primary school, what does the system need to do to achieve that objective. So we would identify indicators and we did that year by year and in all those four areas. Then we instituted the pay on delivery model where if the ministry met the measurable indicator that we had agreed on then we would disperse \$10 million to them. We would disperse it as a cash transfer and have it just go straight to the treasury of Uganda and we didn't track it they could use it for whatever they want.

*Q: Interesting, but before they get the \$10 million was any seed money given in advance?*

FINE: What we did was the first year the indicators were easy indicators so there were things like develop a plan, or pass a piece of legislation that will allow you the authority to take certain actions needed further down the line. The first year's benchmarks were all sort of planning and the documentation was that they submitted the approved plan. This plan has been approved by parliament or by whoever the approving authority was. Then we'd disburse. The later years and it was a seven-year program, which was unusual because it was longer than USAID typically allowed, the later benchmarks were far more demanding. These would be, for example, teachers' salaries have to go from \$8 to \$45 and that required the finance ministry to allocate funds and required parliament to approve those funds as well as very detailed, technical fixes to multiple systems. But that worked very well and it was a very empowering program. So again, it was the confluence of a propitious environment for conducting development work, some really extraordinary Ugandan counterparts who were not corrupt and were very committed to their country, and who had sufficient political leadership supporting the whole thing. This made it possible for the U.S. to play the facilitating role of being a true partner.

*Q: So the first let's say \$10 million goes into their treasury and you had really no way of being absolutely sure that they would spend enough of the \$10 million on the agreed goals for education?*

FINE: They weren't required to spend that \$10 million and we were paying on delivery so we didn't say, "Here's \$10 million use that to raise teachers' salaries we said, "When you accomplish this objective then we will disburse money to you." There was a kind of cash flow issue in the sense that the first set of objectives were relatively easy to meet because they were just planning documents but after that they were policy actions and resource allocation decisions and changes in systems that the government had to take, changes in rules, changes in their management procedures that they had to take before we would disburse the funds. When they could show that they cancelled the monopoly

contracts with the one publisher that was paying these kickbacks and now we have opened up a provision of textbooks to all publishers and were receiving their proposals and we set up the institutional mechanisms for reviewing proposals for developing the curriculum then we would disburse.

Some might argue that this policy conditionality was set by an external donor and could be seen as insulting to the national sovereignty and dignity of the country. In essence, Ugandans might ask, “Who were you to impose stuff on us? That’s the way the education minister first understood the proposal. It would set him off. So I figured out immediately that we are not going to use that term. As the program got designed and put in place and started to operate and the minister saw this was actually helping him achieve his own objectives, this wasn’t something imposed by the U.S., this was really supporting him to achieve his own objectives, he came around. We had some high-level visitor from Washington and we took the visitor to meet with the minister and the person asked, “Well you know what do you think of this education program?” I remember he said, “You know when Fine first came with this idea of policy conditionality I was totally against it. Now that I see how it works and you are supporting our priorities it’s as if you’ve put the wind in our sails.”

*Q: You can’t get a better endorsement than that.*

FINE: It was a great comment. Then that program because it made some fundamental systemic improvements in planning, in textbook and in instructional material, procurement in management of teachers and then in instructional improvement the ministry made it a kind of foundation for Uganda’s educational reform efforts and it became a framework that Uganda could plug other donors into. So then you had the Swedes who had education money. So now the ministry, because we had created this framework for reform, was able to say where and how additional funds could go. And then the World Bank came in. So we had a very productive partnership with the World Bank because their program started at the same time so at the same time I was there designing the USAID program there was a World Bank team designing a World Bank program. So we were able to collaborate and work together from the get-go. Instead of have two parallel efforts we had very well coordinated collaborative efforts that strengthened the overall engagement with the government on educational reform and our efforts reinforced each other. This cooperation, in particular, was seen as a real success in terms of the improvements that it brought to Ugandan education, the modeling of good donor coordination, and as a USAID officer involved in it it was a really great experience.

That was ’92 to ’97. So for a five-year period I was in Uganda and that program took up my full attention during the first three years. The program was known by its initials -- TDMS and it continued long after I departed post. Some 10 years later I visited Uganda -- in 2008 -- and went up to the ministry of education, to the planning department and there was a whole new cast of players. I used to know every single person in there and now there is a whole new cast of people. I’m working for an NGO so I asked for a meeting with the head of the planning office to talk about their plans and what they are doing. I

meet with the head of the planning office, whom I don't know and he doesn't know me, he doesn't know I have a history in Uganda education planning, and so I ask him tell me about their education system and what their objectives are. So he starts to describe the TDMS system to me. He's going, "We have this system here and it's called TDMS," and he starts to describe it to me. As he is describing it to me and I'm listening politely a woman comes in who was part of the old team and we greet each other. She is listening to this now young director of planning telling me all about TDMS and how it works and what its objectives are. Then she stops him and she goes, "You don't understand this is the father of TDMS you are talking to here." But what was wonderful about that experience was that it was a great example of sustainability which so often you don't see on our programs. But here was something that had become so appropriated by the ministry of education that now here is a senior official who comes in years later and for him that's not a USAID supported program, it's not a donor program this is the Ugandan way of education, this is the Ugandan system for education that we called TDMS. So it was a nice reinforcement, a very rewarding moment for me to see something I worked on having been sustained in that way.

*Q: Okay this is March 7, 2017, and we are resuming our interview with Patrick Fine at the end of his tour in Uganda.*

FINE: If the last story I told you was about visiting Uganda about ten years after serving there in the Foreign Service when I was now working with a U.S. international NGO that would have been around 2007. I continued working with the Academy for Educational Development as their head of education programs until 2010. In 2009 when President Obama took office I was recruited into the Obama administration.

*Q: Now at the end of your tour in Uganda you are still in USAID.*

FINE: If the story was was I still in Uganda as we last left off?

*Q: Yes.*

FINE: As a Foreign Service officer?

*Q: Right.*

FINE: Oh okay. Then I was just fast forwarding to going back ten years later.

*Q: Yes.*

FINE: Oh I see, sorry. Following five years in Uganda in 1997 In the second half of my five years there I worked on other areas because I became head of the office. As office director I had education, health and private sector programs in my portfolio. In short, I had all the technical programs except agriculture. Then I was working across sectors. And this was also helpful preparation for more complex assistance projects that would come shortly in my assignment in South Africa in 1997.

In South Africa I was to head up the education program. At that time it was three years after apartheid had ended. It was a very exciting time to be in South Africa because it was the new South Africa. You had a democratically elected government, there was a sense of possibility and freshness and vitality within the country. The U.S. government was partner to the South Africans and was working hard to develop a strong relationship with the country both on the government level and in terms of our commercial relationship. You saw many U.S. businesses investing in South Africa because it had opened up and in terms of our diplomacy and our political relationship with the country. USAID was a part of that and that was during the Clinton Administration.

President Clinton had made a pledge to invest \$600 million in South African education; it was called the Clinton Pledge. So the largest program that USAID had, the largest single initiative, was in the area of education. I went to South Africa after Uganda to lead that program and I joined an amazing team of USAID officers; it was led by Aaron Williams. He had assembled an amazing group of people, a group that was a great privilege to be part of, to lead USAID's efforts to build and support a strong and diverse democratic society so we had programs in governance, we had programs in health, we had education programs and then programs in urban development. It was a diverse portfolio and that was a bigger stage, in a sense, than Uganda had been, it was a much more politically prominent for USAID program at the time.

The education program was, I think, the most prominent program in Africa and it was a great time professionally because the South Africans were demanding counterparts so they didn't suffer fools easily they were very accomplished professional. They would judge a person and if they felt you had something to offer they would include you. They would invite you to meetings, they would give you opportunities to provide input into policy dialogue. But if they thought that you didn't have anything to offer or that you weren't up to their level -- and there were some folks who weren't -- then they would just freeze you out. So you had to really be on top of your game to be effective in that environment. If you were and if you could, in a sense, run at the same speed that they were running at and you had something of value to add intellectually then it was just a great professional environment. From a professional point of view I had a very positive tour in South Africa and was able to participate in the revitalization of higher education, in the development of a very sophisticated workforce program aimed at bringing blacks into the economy and development skills for the historically disadvantaged majority of South Africans. So it was professionally rewarding.

*Q: Now take a moment and describe the overall plan that you had for project development when you arrived.*

FINE: I was mentioning the positives of working there. There were also some real challenges working there and the challenges were more inner personal in the sense that the USAID mission had been troubled and Aaron had been brought in to revitalize it and get it back on the track. But at that point in South Africa the whole society was scarred by apartheid and so while it was possible to have pleasant superficial relationships with

people, when you started working and getting into longer term and deeper relationships there was a lot of baggage associated with the racist policies of the apartheid regime that influenced the ability to build trust with people, influenced the ability of people to collaborate and that was within South African society and then certainly between South Africans and the Americans.

When I arrived the first task I had was to establish a functioning team within USAID within my scope of operation and it wasn't a big group. We had probably fifteen or twenty people on the education team and there wasn't trust between the groups, it wasn't working as a strong team. It took several months to create a sort of environment where people could speak candidly, where they could air grievances, where we could work collaboratively, where there was enough trust. I recall that one of the South Africans who was on the team, told me years later, "You know when you came and you had this participatory approach and you were encouraging all of us to speak out and to voice our opinions I just thought you were crazy and it made me uncomfortable and I didn't like it. It took me months to get to the point where I felt comfortable in that environment." That was just a fact of life in working in South Africa.

*Q: Now on your team how many Americans, how many South Africans roughly?*

FINE: We had counting me maybe five Americans and maybe 15 South Africans. But by the end of a year we had created a very positive environment; a team that worked well together that trusted and supported each other that were able to do good problem solving that was able to do a strong outreach to the South Africans. I mentioned that it took time to create these relationships with trust. In Uganda where it was very easy or relatively easy if you wanted to meet with the minister or with the head of department you just made request and you went in and met with them, or you might just show up. In South Africa I requested the meeting with the head of the education department whom I saw as my counterpart and was told I had to submit a request in writing. So I submitted a request in writing and a week or so later when I followed up they said, "Well you weren't clear enough in your explanation as to why you want the meeting." So then I presented a more elaborate description of why I wanted the meeting. Weeks passed and they finally said, "Okay, we'll see when we can fit you in." It took over three months before they granted me a meeting.

*Q: Meanwhile during the three months you're also working with your own staff to make them feel that they are more part of a collegial team?*

FINE: Right, yeah I'm doing team building and trust building. Also understanding the portfolio and assessing where can we make the best contribution. Eventually I get a meeting with the director general in the department of education and that meeting felt like an interview. It felt like an interview where one of his first questions was to ask me what did I think about recent education legislation that had passed in the U.S. By some fortunate twist of fate I had not long before read an article about it so I was able to answer that question. Then he was asking me technical questions like, "Right, you're an educational guy?" So he started asking me technical questions about curriculum

development about student evaluation and about controversies within the education sector. We had a very animated lively discussion back and forth about sort of specific technical aspects of education policy. My sense was that I passed the interview because I was able to carry on a professional conversation with him and I, in part, almost by luck had background information that was relevant to the conversation. So then I started getting invitations, then if I asked for a meeting I would get the meeting and in fact started being invited to serve on a task force. I would say, "Wait a minute, I'm not a member of the South African government I'm representing the American government and this is a South African task force." They'd say, "Yes, but you've actually got something useful to contribute so we don't mind having somebody from USAID participating, we know what your status is but we are inviting you as a professional educator." That is what I was referring to when I said it took time to establish trust. If they felt like you didn't have anything to add then you wouldn't be included but if they thought you had something of value to add then you would be included.

*Q: Okay then take a moment to describe how the new South Africa had organized its education system. Was it very top down or more decentralized?*

FINE: It was very definitely more on the decentralized side. They had a system with nine provinces and each system had its own education department and then they had a federal department which set standards. But about 80 percent of the funding was collected nationally and transferred to the provinces. So we had a very diverse program we had a program that worked with higher education and that was at a national level so we worked with the department of education on its policy for the development of higher education. Then we worked with individual universities, some 15 or 16 individual universities.

*Q: Were most of the universities state run?*

FINE: Yes, they were all what we could call HBCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities. They had a different term for them but they were the institution that had been created by the apartheid state for black and colored and Indian students and now they were being integrated into the higher education system. But because they had historically been under-invested in and developed in a way that was intended to isolate the students, there was a lot of development work to do with those institutions in terms of capacity building and training and systems development and then just integration in what was their role in the system. Then administratively, structurally how did they fit into the national higher educational system. It required legislation, it required restructuring, it required a lot of organizational and institutional development.

So we had programs that worked both with the institutions on nuts and bolts things like: how do you develop a strategic plan for an institution? And then we would have to look at the national level where we would work with the department of education around what's the most effective and efficient structure for the higher education system. If you've got three institutions in the same area, one for whites, one for coloreds and one for blacks, does that make sense? How do you harmonize institutional arrangements in geographic areas? The South Africans were doing that but we were providing some

support to their efforts to do that. And they accomplished it beautifully so that now, in retrospect looking back twenty years later, it's amazing how much progress and how successfully they harmonizes that system and how they achieved the objectives that were being set up at that time.

We also worked on primary education in specific provinces, some way out in all parts of the country. We did it in the provinces where there was the greatest need in terms of educational achievements where you have the largest populations of disadvantaged students or poor students who were black and the colored and Indian students where student achievement was lowest. So we worked in KwaZulu Natal, we worked in the Eastern Cape, we worked in the northern Cape provinces and that was done with provincial departments of education and that would be working on everything from curriculum development to, at the time, introducing technology. Again, it wasn't USAID coming in and suggesting what the South Africans needed to do; they didn't need anybody to do that. They were sophisticated planners. It was helping them to implement their own plans.

*Q: Once you won the trust of the federal-level planners, was this enough to gain the trust of provincial authorities as well, or was that another hurdle to overcome?*

FINE: We had to establish trust with each province, with each director of education for each province. I mean there were connections between the national department and the provincial department but in that decentralized system the provinces really ran their own shows. So it would mean going out and spending time in the province and creating relationships and understanding where, if at all, we had value to add and what kind of relationship the province would want. Then, designing programs in partnership with the provinces to meet whatever needs were identified. So in the Eastern Cape one of the priorities was to bring technology into the schools. For KwaZulu Natal the technology they needed was in creating systems for managing teachers, for example. So you had different priorities in different provinces.

Then we worked on workforce development. For post-secondary job training and we worked in conjunction with provincial governments, the department of labor and private corporations, because they would provide the training and that was part of a policy program with the department of labor to encourage the business community to create opportunities for historically disadvantaged populations. An example is helping black South Africans get the skills necessary to get into the career tracks within the businesses.

Mine was a diverse, professionalized portfolio working at different levels of government on different kinds of challenges. It was at scale so it was a large scale program. It was working with these amazing South African educators and policymakers who were inspiring people to be around. And, as I said, they forced you to be on your toes because they were so capable. I was there for three years so that was a three year posting. Just a really tremendous professional and personal experience so again I think I've mentioned to you that I've had the good fortune in my life to be in places at interesting times. In Uganda as the civil war there came to an end and the country started to put itself on the

development track and to reconstruct and grow. In South Africa three years after the end of apartheid, which actually was good timing, because the dust had settled and now they were really into the business of governing and building institutions. It was a good time if you wanted to do that kind of work, to be there; better than being there right at the very end of apartheid because you still had a lot of churning going on. Now they were down to business so it was possible to be part of that effort to build this more just society.

*Q: Now once you developed the relationship that you needed and demonstrated your expertise, what would you say was the biggest challenge you had to overcome in terms of the actual program execution?*

FINE: Well these were complex programs because it is a sophisticated society and so they were the same kind of challenges you might face if you were working in the United States with a state department of education. You had to be concerned with timeliness of delivery, with insuring procurement and the financial management and the personnel systems were working effectively. A lot of it, just as in the U.S., comes down to the effectiveness of key decision makers and leaders. In some provinces you had really great leaders who could make things happen and then in other provinces you had people who were either less committed or distracted or less capable so those were the kinds of challenges. But in general, in South Africa, foreign assistance made up a very, very small part of their resource base. Maybe three percent of their budget was in the form of foreign assistance and the rest was their own domestic resources and private capital. That was another reason you really had to have something of value to offer because they didn't really need you.

Looking back, maybe the biggest challenge was to figure out what the value proposition was that could align what the U.S. was willing to finance within the parameters of our political mandate with South African priorities because if there was no alignment then they simply would tell you, "Well we are not interested, go." That was healthy and a good experience. Coming from Uganda where donors have so much relative power in the relationship because 50 or 60 percent of the Ugandan budget is donor financed they don't have a lot of power in that relationship and they are not typically willing to say, "Well, just never mind we don't want that and you can keep the resources," because they are resource starved. Whereas in the South African case because, your money could play a very strategic role in meeting a particular gap or leveraging domestic resources or catalyzing some domestic initiative it was helpful but not essential to them.

*Q: Was school attendance a big problem?*

FINE: Not in South Africa, and, as I recall nowhere else in Africa either. Kids wanted to go to school. For the most part their parents wanted them to be in school. It's just the barrier was either lack of schools so there weren't schools to send the kids to or lack of money because they charged fees and the parents could only afford to send two of five kids to school. It always impressed me and moved me the degree to which families sacrificed to send their children to school. I did a study in Swaziland in the early '90 and

figured that a typical rural family spent about 60 percent of its disposable income on education.

*Q: So the uniforms, books, equipment...*

FINE: Fees.

*Q: Fees and transportation if there was any.*

FINE: Usually there would be but in most cases the kids would walk to school but it would be school fees first and foremost and then uniforms and supplies, yeah. So yeah, this amazing commitment and desire for education and recognition that education was the key to social mobility. That was South Africa.

In my third year, usually they are four year tours, but in my third year I had an offer to go to Senegal to be the deputy mission director so that was good step career-wise, to move from a technical role into a management role. Within USAID that is an important career step to make.

*Q: One last question on South Africa before we leave. Did your wife work and was your family very comfortable there?*

FINE: Yeah, so we were a tandem couple I think I mentioned that and my wife was in the program office and also had a very positive professional experience. She was also challenged by a higher level of sophistication, it was a more demanding environment and there certainly it required a lot more political sophistication in terms of having presidential visits and there was the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission that Vice President Gore and Deputy President Mbeki co-chaired. And working as the staff to that commission it just brought us into a realm of policy making and to policymakers closer than we had been before. We were becoming more senior so instead of being the junior staffer now we were the control officer for these interactions. It was a nice career progression for both of us and our two sons, one was just two years old when we went there and the other was 5 ½; they had good experiences as well. So it was a comfortable post but it is also, living in Pretoria, would be a lot like living in Washington, D.C. So, unlike Uganda, where you have this tight international community and your social life is within an international community that also has local counterparts in it. But there is a built in support system and you are doing things like going to movie nights and sort of making your own entertainment within the international community or with your Ugandan colleagues. In South Africa it's a modern urban setting where you aren't socializing with the people you work with nearly as intensely you don't have that built in support network. It's like you finish work and you go home and have the kind of isolation that one experiences in an American community, this is part of modern-urban life. In many ways while it was from a creature comfort point of view it was a comfortable post, there were malls and shopping centers and movie theaters which you didn't have in Uganda at all. Socially it was not as engaging.

For us, South Africa is a wonderful country. It's got beautiful places and interesting things to do. We hiked in the Brackenfell Mountains and then visited Cape Town and we went up the Garden Route on the coast and went on safaris in Kruger Park. So we did those kinds of things in our free time but just from a purely social point of view or sort of life satisfaction point of view it was very satisfying professionally, it was less fulfilling in terms of community because there was less of a sense of community because you were in this modern-urban environment.

We moved from South Africa to Senegal in 2000 where I was offered the position of deputy mission director, which was a step up for me into a senior management position. My wife was offered the position of head of the program office which was a step up for her; this was a great opportunity for us. Neither of us were French speakers so we saw it as an opportunity to learn a new language so we took that opportunity and it was also an opportunity to go back to a country where the development challenges were more traditional. In South Africa you are really dealing with sophisticated modern systems, it's an urbanized society. I can remember going to a school in the Eastern Cape Province and they were showing me one of their poorest schools, they wanted to shock me with the poor conditions of this school. I was coming from Uganda and the school they took me to had linoleum floors and it had ceilings and it had electricity it would have been the nicest school in all of Uganda, Uganda didn't have any schools that met that standard other than a couple old famous private schools. So going to Senegal was going back in a way into the developing world. We welcomed that opportunity.

Our arrival in Senegal coincided with the aftermath of a historic election. We arrived in June and just three months earlier the Senegalese had elected President Wade who was the head of a conservative business oriented party. The country had been ruled by one party -- the Socialist Party -- for forty years prior to this.

Q: *Senghor's Party?*

FINE: Senghor's Party, right, and Abdou Diouf was the last president. So it had been one party rule, a Socialist rule for forty years, and they had never transitioned to an opposition party in the history of the modern era. So when President Wade won in 2000 it was the first time that they had free and fair elections and a peaceful transfer of power to the opposition party. At that time the cri-de-coeur of President Wade's party was *sopi*, which was the word in Wolof for change. So it was the period of *sopi* and that was a very exciting time to arrive so just as that government had come into power and this sense of change and momentum and of new possibilities and President Wade at that time was really a very dynamic leader. Again, we arrived at an inflection point in a country where there was a real role for U.S. assistance and where USAID had the potential to do really interesting things. And again it relied on the ability to create relationships and to work collaboratively, to understand what are the priorities, what are the needs to be able to assess those so critically not just to accept things but also to be collaborative so that we could build authentic partnerships where the U.S. was supporting local priorities and finding the alignment again between what our interests were and what we had funds to support with the interest of our counterparts. Senegal is a very special country. The

Senegalese people are a beautiful, kind people and most societies have kind people and traditions of hospitality. In Senegal it is particularly pronounced. Their emphasis is on human decency and on *taranga*, which is the Wolof term for hospitably. It permeates the society. So interestingly, in Senegal you have many different ethnic groups but you don't have ethnic competition whereas in Uganda you have many ethnic groups and you had conflict between those groups that played itself out in professional settings. So in Uganda, when people would disagree, you often had the assumption that the disagreement stemmed not from policy or principle, but from the interests of the ethnic group to which they belonged. In Senegal you just didn't have that kind of tension in their society even though you had different languages and different ethnic groups; people accepted each other. That appeared to go back into their history whereas if you looked at the history in Uganda you had ethnic groups in conflict at war with each other in pre-colonial times; in Senegal you didn't.

*Q: What do you suppose that was due to? The culturally knitting force of Islam since it is majority Muslim? Or...*

FINE: I don't think it was Islam because Islam came in later. It didn't really get in there until the 1800s and didn't really become fairly prominent until the 1800s in part as a response to French colonialism because Islam did provide a basis for resistance to the French. I've asked myself that question before and I don't know the history well enough or the sociological and anthropological explanations but it certainly is a fact that you have this amicable environment there amongst peoples and it creates a very interesting cultural tapestry. A special environment that results in and it is pretty common to find Americans who go there and never leave and especially among the French. But to find Europeans or non-Senegalese who just settled there because it's a lovely place is not generally the reason. Physically, Senegal it is the Sahel, so it is kind of flat and scrubby with lots of Baobab trees. The topography is interesting but not particularly beautiful. The beauty comes from a cultural and a human terrain point of view -- very welcoming.

Getting back to the business of assistance, as I said, we arrived at this interesting inflection point and it was again an opportunity to deal with a different set of development challenges related to governance and economic growth but in a different context and to do it in a different language and learn about not only the Senegalese culture and history but also learn about French colonial culture in history and how those two interact and get to know that region. So both from a professional and a personal point of view that was a wonderful opportunity and another example of just how blessed we were and what a wonderful life the Foreign Service provides for people who take advantage of the opportunities and the potential that's there.

I mentioned the need for French language fluency. Neither Susan nor I received any language training before we arrived at post. The USAID mission wanted us immediately and we said, "We don't speak French." They said, "Come and you can do a month of one-on-one intense instruction and then you'll just pick it up." So we did that, we arrived

and we each had our personal Senegalese French instructor who would come to the house and spend each day with us for a month. We made a little progress but not a whole lot in a month's time. French is not an easy language, if people think it is easy they are mistaken. Then we were just thrown into the pool of operating at an all French environment and that for me was a challenge and in some ways the most difficult year of my life because I naturally like to talk to people and I like to engage in conversations and I like to get into technical discussions with counterparts and I couldn't do that. I was in a position where I was having to make speeches and my French was so poor that I would go to work for that first year and have this sense of dread because I knew that I wasn't able to competently carry out my responsibilities because of my poor language. But it was a great incentive to learn French and I did and we became a Francophone family, Susan I think leaned faster and with a better accent than I did but we both learned it so by about a year and a half, I think I came back in maybe 16 months after we arrived, to do the French test at the Foreign Service Institute where they are pretty strict.

*Q: Oh yes, I took that test twice before I passed it.*

FINE: I passed that test and I can remember that was like a day of great relief and of a sense of satisfaction and success when I passed my French test. The time in Senegal was also, from a professional point of view, quite fortunate in that our boss, my boss the mission director, was a wonderful mentor who really gave me broad scope to serve as a manager. He delegated a lot of the responsibilities for running the mission to me.

*Q: Okay so pause for a second and describe the size of the mission and the budget.*

FINE: So at the time we had about \$50-55 million in different types of funding from food aid to HIV funding to development assistance money. We had major programs in health and natural resources, some conflict resolution funding for the Casamance because there had been a long running rebellion, a little conflict, in the Casamance region which is the southern part of the country directly south of The Gambia. We did some education funding and we did some civil society programs so we had a diverse portfolio.

*Q: In governance, had the Senegalese adopted a French style of government?*

FINE: Yeah.

*Q: Okay so it had not changed that very much?*

FINE: No, no it was completely based with the prefects.

*Q: And the judicial system was...?*

FINE: The same. So we had to learn that whole system and in the mission itself we had about 120 local employees when we arrived and then I think about 16 Americans so about 140 people. In West Africa, as a posting, you can't do much better than Senegal. We ran into people who were West Africa hands who had spent there all their lives in

West Africa, who had started in Mali or Burkina Faso and then Cote d'Ivoire and eventually got a position in Dakar; they worked their whole career to get to Dakar and here we were, we didn't speak French, we just showed up and we were in Dakar and sometimes you could feel this sense of resentment like you've come to the capital of West Africa.

It was an interesting time. It was when the Civil War in Cote d'Ivoire broke out so there was an evacuation of expatriate personnel from Cote d'Ivoire mostly to Dakar and many organizations moved to Dakar. As I mentioned, there was this new government in Senegal that was pro-business and was moving quickly to change the whole system from one that was a Socialist system with heavy patronage, corruption, and stultifying policies to a more open and dynamic and private sector, commercially driven economy. It was a time of growth and vitality, a very exciting time to be there. You had lots of investment coming into the country. You had buildings going up everywhere, you had infrastructure being put up. Wade himself was a builder so he had all these ideas. If you went to his office he had all these maquettes, all these little models, of different infrastructure projects many of which he got built or that he started and were completed after he left office.

You had new blood in government sort of like in South Africa. You had the people who had been in power for forty years were now out of power and you had this new and dynamic group of people coming in to run the ministries with things they wanted to do. So it was engaging and challenging and professionally very satisfying.

*Q: As much as it is nice to see infrastructure upgraded, Senegal for a very long time had been a country with only a few sectors of economic activity. Were you beginning to see diversification?*

FIEN: Yeah, yes you were. So you had the tourism trade that was growing rapidly. You had the agriculture economy had been based on peanuts and the second year we were there the government moved to diversify that and it was actually very messy. It ended up in diversifying it and they broke the monopoly of peanuts and they changed the State owned peanut company. It didn't roll out well because you had all these farmers who only knew how to grow peanuts and now the State wasn't buying peanuts and wasn't providing seeds and fertilizer and the whole package in the agriculture campaign as they had done in the past. So there was some real disruption there and that disruption did result a couple years down the line in less dependence on peanuts and a more diversified agriculture sector. You had a lot of urban growth so you had a lot of small businesses like the service sector. Telecommunications came in and Senegal did something very smart. They cabled the country early on so in 2000 or maybe 2002 they had the second or third largest penetration of Internet in Sub-Saharan Africa...

*Q: Impressive.*

FINE: ...because they had tapped into the fiber optic cable that went down the coast and that created an explosion of tele-centers, internet cafes and created tens of thousands of

jobs. Then they sold multiple licenses so they created competition for the telecommunications licenses. None of this was done without drama and there were steps forward and steps back and it could be very frustrating because the Senegalese political business class are very sophisticated, well educated, articulate people, far more articulate than the typical European or American that was working there. There was a very common pattern that I saw, we were there for four years, and that was somebody would arrive and they would start to meet their Senegalese counterparts who were very welcoming and gracious inviting you to dinner and very open, super articulate, and impressive with very interesting and impressive ideas. So people would start off with this sense of well you've arrived in a place where great things can happen. This sense of optimism and enthusiasm for what you were going to accomplish with your counterparts but the Senegalese were not very good at implementing. So they were brilliant at talking and describing the problems and proposing solutions but there was a huge gap in execution. By about six or nine months into an ex-patriots tour in Senegal they would start to become disillusioned because things just didn't move at the pace they thought they should and at a pace you would assume they would given the capability they had with the caliber of the people you were dealing with.

A very predictable pattern took place with two possible outcomes to it. One outcome was that the ex-patriot assistance or commercial actor would just become cynical and pessimistic and sort of defeated by the relative slowness in implementation. The other was that the ex-patriots would modify their expectations and they would figure out what they could get done and they would get on the Senegalese rhythm of things and they'd adjust and then they could have productive and satisfying experiences, do interesting things and get things accomplished. It's not that nothing could get accomplished it's just it was an expectations issue where people would be so impressed with their counterparts and then that expectation wouldn't be met with actual implementation. Maybe the Senegalese do that on purpose in order to keep things under control.

For us it was a wonderful period. Our kids learned to speak French, they both still think of Dakar as their hometown. There was a very supportive community that was a wonderful mix of local Senegalese colleagues and counterparts and neighbors and members of the international community. So it was a good time and then much as we've done in other regions we took advantage to travel around the region to see and we did a trip through Mali and Mauritania. So we learned about the region and got a sense of what West Africa is like and the vibrancy in that part of the world. It was so different from either Eastern or Southern Africa. Each region has its own character. To have lived in and gotten to know the character of West Africa was just a great privilege.

*Q: Was the USAID Mission in Dakar also a regional mission, responsible for other programs in other countries?*

FINE: Yes, to some extent. Mali had its own mission but we covered Burkina Faso, we covered Niger and we covered the food programs across multiple regions. We covered the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone at one point because that is when the U.S.

started to do programs in Sierra Leone again, so yes we did have regional responsibilities and Cape Verde as well.

*Q: Did that bring you to those countries as well?*

FINE: Yeah. So I visited those countries.

*Q: I guess by comparison Senegal was a number of steps ahead.*

FINE: Well, it was the metropole for the region and continues to be; Dakar is far more developed now than 16 or 17 years ago. When I visit now or the last time I was there maybe two years ago there is such a difference in terms of the amount of infrastructure, the amount of commerce, the growth of small businesses, services, just really a picture of rapid development. I think if you live there it doesn't feel rapid but if you go back every ten years and you compare the difference or in this case I've been back every two or three years I've had occasion to go back. You can just see the physical change and the economic change.

*Q: With all those changes have the Senegalese managed to balance modernization, globalization with their culture?*

FINE: I think so I think they've done a good job of preserving their character and that sense of *taranga*, of hospitality and human decency. It's interesting that Dakar was a city of about three million people in a country of about twelve million people when we lived there so about a quarter of the population lived on this peninsula and Dakar is on a peninsula so it's a contained small geographic space. It was densely populated and yet the crime rate was very low. Our son at that point was twelve years old and he was at the point where he was starting to become independent, wanting to go out. He would just take a taxi downtown and we didn't have to worry in this metropolitan area of millions of people a twelve year old kid just like going in a taxi going downtown on his own to wander around the market; you knew that was safe.

*Q: Remarkable.*

FINE: I can remember thinking if anybody ever tried to harm him or assault him or do anything there would be a whole community that would come, everybody on the street would come to his aid. It's not part of the culture there. Or we would run the Hash, do you know the Hash?

*Q: Oh sure.*

FINE: We would run the Hash and the Hash would go through different parts, different neighborhoods and including the poorest neighborhoods in the city. This for me was a good example of the character of the Senegalese people. So here is a group of foreigners running through your neighborhood and in what we might call a slum area. Here is a group of foreigners who are running through it and even like running through people's

yards or compounds in some cases and the people living in that neighborhood don't know who these foreigners are or why they are running through, it looks kind of crazy. They are all in shorts and t-shirts and so we are running thought this one quarter and I was well behind the pack so the pack is maybe 100 yards in front of me and I'm like puffing behind them. People are stopping and watching and they are seeing these foreigners run in a pack and then here I come 100 yards later on and what do people say? They are waving and encouraging me.

*Q: Cheering you on?*

FINE: Yes. You can do it, you can do it." So imagine that it wouldn't happen in a South African township and there are very few places I can think of where if a group of foreigners were suddenly running through your backyard the reaction would be to shout encouragement to them.

*Q: Well, it sounds like you were able to develop the professional relationships you needed to get the programs on track. Were there any major challenges that were difficult to manage when you were over there?*

FINE: Not really. The major challenge was that sense of unfulfilled expectations, things moving slower than they should, of not achieving the full potential that was possible that I described. But in terms of the program it was an effective program and produced some really transformative results. For example, we supported the introduction of clean cookstoves.

*Q: Yes, even when I was working in Latin America we received instructions from Washington to promote this program.*

FIND: It was a design that didn't exist and it was very simple it was simply taking the traditional tin cook stove and lining it with a clay liner. By doing that you could reduce the coal consumption by two-thirds, you could reduce the smoke that was given out so that it improved the air quality so it was cheaper, it was cleaner and they were more expensive they cost twice as much as the traditional stove but they were like \$5 or something like that it wasn't like it as super expensive and they were still affordable for a common family. We introduced that and now those are the only stoves that exist in Senegal; that is the traditional cook stove now. If you talk to people now they wouldn't know that there was ever a stove like it and if you talk to younger people that is the only stove they've ever known. It created a whole industry so you'd had kilns that sprouted up around the country to produce the liners and then you had workshops that developed a new product. They may have made the old stove but now they made the new stove. For me that was a great example of commercial development where you introduced a new product, it was a foreign design but used local materials, it was adopted and gave rise to a local industry that upgraded the skill level of the producers to produce a still appropriate but slightly more sophisticated product that had big environmental and economic impact. So yeah Senegal is a place that you can do really interesting things. The challenge is really that it seems like you are not making as much progress as you should.

*Q: Often, western media would report on health issues, HIV/AIDS, endemic diseases like Malaria... Were there major programs in that regard?*

FINE: Yeah, we had major health programs. We had guinea worm eradication, which was successful. We did health system strengthening so just around providing a basic package of services in communities. We had an HIV program but they had a very low HIV rate and that has stayed low so they have controlled that. This wasn't when I was there but when the Ebola epidemic broke out in Guinea, there were a few people who traveled over I think four cases, the border into Senegal and Senegal was organized enough that it found the people, it tracked them and it contained them. So they never had an outbreak in Senegal so that would be an example of just the capacity that that country has say relative to Guinea.

*Q: Interesting.*

FINE: We had a great four years in Senegal and then I was getting towards the end of my tour so I was beginning to look at bidding for my next assignment. So I was ready now to be a mission director. It was the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 and the U.S. is now involved in Afghanistan in defeating the Taliban. By March 2002 you have a civilian presence starting to go in and by the end of 2002 you've got the first USAID people on the ground who are doing sort of emergency assessment about what kind of civilian projects could go in to support the effort in Afghanistan. As that was happening while I was the deputy director in Dakar, I was aware that USAID was starting to look at what it could contribute to the effort to stabilize and reconstruct Afghanistan after the Taliban's disastrous rule. So I was very interested in contributing to that but wasn't really in a position mid-way through my tour in Dakar to do much and the U.S. effort was just getting underway. But by the end of 2003, I think around November 2003 USAID had set up an initial mission which had been set up by Craig Buck who had gone in as the first mission director. But Craig became ill and another USAID officer came in to cover temporarily while USAID started to recruit for a mission director.

A notice went out seeking volunteers. Because I was very interested in contributing to the U.S. effort there I applied and was fortunate in that I was coming to the end of my tour in Senegal and was already in the process of looking at my next assignment so I was already being considered for senior management positions. So I expressed interest in the Afghanistan job and had a couple of telephone interviews with senior people. Recall that this was now the second largest mission in the world, it was one that had tremendous political importance so it was very high profile. I was not well-known to the senior echelons of USAID, to the administrator and the deputy administrator, or the head of the Asia Bureau, which was managing that portfolio. I was a deputy mission director so I was still relatively junior although I was in the senior management group and I was ready to move up to a mission director position. But they didn't know me and they didn't want to send out somebody that they didn't know. They needed to have full confidence in whoever they selected so I did a couple telephone interviews and then they invited me to come back for an in-person interview. So I came back and I did a series of in-person

interviews with the head of the Asia bureau and the deputy administrator. Then I went back to Senegal and they said, “Okay, we’ll let you know.”

I went back to Senegal and did another telephone interview with the administrator of USAID. On that basis they essentially said, “Alright, we will try you out. We will send you out to Afghanistan and you can interview with the ambassador.” This was not the typical way, of doing personnel placements within the USAID system. USAID assigns a mission director and then they notify the ambassador and the ambassador has a kind of veto power and can say, “I don’t want this person.” But in this case because the ambassador himself was a very powerful figure and because of the high profile nature of the job, the ambassador would get to interview the candidate.

So I went out in February for about six weeks, from the beginning of February into March, on assignment essentially to interview for that position as a trial run, sort of. I got there and at that time it was a very exciting post; we had just gone into Iraq so this was the first really post-conflict experience where the U.S. government was standing up a complete civilian operation since the Vietnam War. There was a real sense of righteousness of the effort, this was a justified intervention, a real sense of mission to help the Afghanistan people, a real sense of being welcomed by the Afghan people. Everywhere I went during my posting there I was greeted with open arms by the Afghan people in the sense they were really appreciative of the U.S. presence and the work we were doing. It was a very positive period to be there and it was a time of hope where there was real momentum. The Taliban had been defeated, they were very unpopular throughout most of the country, not in the entire country, but in the vast majority in the country they were very unpopular. Their rule had been despotic and oppressive so there was a sense of liberation.

There was a provisional government that the Afghan’s had put in place through what they called a loya jirga or great council of all the traditional and tribal leaders. They selected Karzai toward the end of 2003. So you had this legitimate government that had popular backing and you still had a conflict situation but it was at that time still quite permissive in the sense that there was an ongoing conflict all over the country. There was a real sense of hope that things were getting better and that the U.S. government and the international community more broadly was really there to assist the Afghan government and the Afghan people to rebuild their country to consolidate peace, to end the civil war that had been going on for 25 years. So it was just an extraordinary environment to go into and a wonderful opportunity as a representative of the U.S. government’s civil development work. But it was also a time of intense action in a very demanding environment.

So I went there, as I said, at the beginning of February on this trial run. The ambassador was Zalmay Khalilzad who is an extraordinary individual. He was a unique pick to be ambassador because he is a naturalized American citizen of Afghan heritage. So he understands the country on a very personal level. He grew up in Afghanistan and had gone through high school and then was an exchange student in high school to the U.S. He then went to the American University of Beirut and then came back to the U.S. for

graduate school and became a professor at Columbia University and then went on to work in think tanks in academia and in government. At one point he was the head of strategic planning for the Department of Defense, so he had a defense connection. But he also had this deep connection to country. He spoke both Pashto and Dari and he knew all of the power brokers because in his career in the U.S. he had been a person who had worked with the U.S. government during the fight against the Soviet Union. So he knew all of the traditional leadership and could talk to them as an Afghan. He was an amazing patriot and representative of American values and American interests. It's impossible to imagine a person better suited for that position, for that work at that moment in history. It was a great privilege to work with him he is a brilliant person intellectually, a brilliant strategist and tactician and diplomat. Also he was completely committed to our country and also committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Now, that is not to diminish the fact that Ambassador Khalilzad was also a demanding leader. He did not suffer fools gladly and he pushed his staff hard because he pushed himself hard; he demanded a good product. He was unconventional in the sense that because he was an innovative thinker he would come up with ideas that often times the first reaction from the State Department or from the U.S. government was, "Well you can't do that or, we don't do that or that's not practical or that would be impossible to do." And he is not the kind of person to take no for an answer. So there was a situation where both the intensity of the demands on the mission both in terms of military demands on one hand, and on the diplomatic and development. And then you've got this extraordinary individual whose got better information than anybody else who has great visibility about what is going on in the country, who understands it at an intimate level and is very demanding and himself performs at this extremely high level and expects either you work at that level or you aren't useful and you need to go.

That was the kind of environment I stepped into when I arrived and I went into the USAID office. At first I worked there just getting the lay of the land. And as I got to know the embassy, most people, not just in USAID, but I'd say across the entire embassy were intimidated by the ambassador because he was so demanding and he was really tough on people. He knew more than anybody else so he could very quickly put an individual off guard because he could get to a level of detail on any subject, not just cultural subjects. He had a low opinion of USAID because, frankly, USAID was not able to respond to the kind of demands that he was placing on them and sort of took a traditional point of view and often times that response was, "No, we can't do that or we don't do that kind of thing or that won't work." So he said, "Hey, let's do this, this is what's needed, this is what the people are asking for let's do this." Then the answer he'd get back was, "No, we don't do that or we can't do that." So he didn't see USAID as really fulfilling its responsibilities or stepping up in this emergency situation. I sized up the situation and I independently came to the same conclusion. USAID wasn't pulling its weight, we weren't being innovative, we weren't daring ourselves to accept challenges, it was more playing it safe. We had a limited capacity there but we weren't even using that as effectively as we could.

*Q: At this moment can you give an example of the kind of thing he would ask for that USAID would just say, "Oh no that's impossible?"*

FINE: Yeah there were lots of things. He wanted to do urban housing and he wanted it to be decent urban housing. he had a vision as to what it would look like and USAID's response was, "No, we don't do that." He wanted to do an American University of Afghanistan so he wanted to build a higher education system and build the education and health systems. These objectives USAID was more or less okay with although he wanted to do infrastructure because that is what they needed. There was some reaction from USAID that infrastructure was not what we do but they went along with that kicking and screaming in the beginning but they got on board.

But on higher education they said, "Oh, no, we do basic education. He said, "Yeah, but what we need to do is create the conditions for the Afghan Diaspora who are capable and skilled people to come back to the country. And one of those conditions is for them to have a place for their children to get higher education." So he had a strategic vision that I believe was right and that was a particular issue during that first trial period when I was there when he was asking for an Afghan American University and USAID was resisting it. Again, I came in more or less with an open mind and thought that the kinds of things he was asking for were not the traditional things they weren't part of USAID's normal work but this wasn't a normal situation. There was a justification for then.

*Q: Just a very quick point here. As I recall, in USAID's early years it did do infrastructure projects like universities or large infrastructure projects.*

FINE: It did yeah.

*Q: But then at some point it found that doing infrastructure ended up not being as effective but I don't recall the exact reasons for this.*

FINE: The problem in the 1960s and 70s was that USAID did a lot of infrastructure and it wasn't maintained and in some cases, that was the Cold War era, a lot of these turned out to be vanity projects that were responding to the demands of whoever our client was. Mobutu in Zaire was one example. Then there was a reassessment starting in the late '70s and into the '80s that said, "We've spent a lot of money on stuff that wasn't maintained, it wasn't sustainable, current costs weren't taken into consideration or these were white elephants that were vanity projects they were just a whole series of bad examples and there was a whole literature that critiqued this approach to assistance in the '70s. I remember one example was a road that went to a river but then didn't build a bridge so it was like a road to nowhere. They just didn't have a very good experience with it and it soured them on it and then they turned from infrastructure to building capacity, both human and institutional, and then let the governments themselves invest in infrastructure because then they would be stakeholders and have skin in the game and hopefully maintain what they start.. That was sort of the trend and right now it is actually reversed and there is a recognition that now, in the 2000s, that there has been a systematic under-investment in infrastructure, in transportation and electricity in particular, power grids,

and the lack of these basics are now constraining economic growth. But now there has been some 30 years or more of institutional capacity building so there is more capacity to enable the infrastructure investment to be sustained.

Anyway, back to Afghanistan. The ambassador was asking for things and generating lots of ideas. He's an ideas guy, he's impatient, he wants to see action. So he was generating an idea a day for USAID that it didn't have either the capacity and in many cases the inclination to respond to. There were things that were not in the USAID playbook but my assessment was this guy knows what he is talking about, he's smarter than the rest of us, he understands the situation here and his ideas, many of them, have a strong rationale. So rather than rejecting them we should be doing the due diligence on them and then taking forward the ones that are doable.

So in that trial period, one of the hot controversial issues was this idea for an American University of Afghanistan. There had been a bunch of resistance from USAID. I remember that, given this resistance, I couldn't get an appointment with him. I was there essentially to be interviewed by him, he didn't have much use for USAID so he didn't have time for this guy who had shown up. So I would go in every day and ask for an appointment and they'd say come back tomorrow. Then he finally had time to see me; I'd been there for maybe two weeks. He asked me, "So what do you think of this idea about the university?" I told him, "Yeah I think there is something to it." My background is education so I was able to have a conversation with him and say, "Here is how you might go about it. Then he would say, "Well USAID doesn't like this idea." I would say, "Yes but here is how we could approach it and you could work it through the bureaucracy." He said, "Okay, write something up." So I drafted something and it so happened that that second week I came down with this terrible flu so I was sick as a dog, all stuffed up in the head but the next day I drafted a seven or eight page concept paper and sent it to him. I suspect he thought okay, at least this guy is not just trying to stonewall me and two, he has come up with something.

*Q: It's a point of departure.*

FINE: Right, so I stayed for another few weeks working on different initiatives mostly generated by him and mostly ones that I was trying to advance. I knew how to advance stuff within USAID. I was experienced enough to know how to make that organization get things done; that was my orientation you know. I liked to get things done and so yeah, "This guy will do." That will do. So then I went back to Dakar and packed up. I went to Washington for a couple months of orientation in the spring and then I went out to Afghanistan.

*Q: And you went out unaccompanied?*

FINE: Yeah, it was an unaccompanied post. My wife is a Foreign Service officer also with USAID and she was reaching the end of her tour as well that year so she took a position in D.C., and moved our family back to D.C. That was when we relocated here for the first time. We had been overseas for 16 years at this point. So I went out and got

to Afghanistan in June and it was an amazing opportunity to work, to learn about reconstruction and stabilization, to learn about both the challenges and the advantages of working in an interagency team because in the other posts where I had been a USAID officer we collaborated but we were pretty much our own operation as did other representatives of the federal government like the FAA or DEA. We would talk to each other but there wasn't deep collaboration because it wasn't necessary or expected.

But in Afghanistan it was necessary. This was an all-of-government effort. We had to figure out how to make it work with all the different agencies in a dynamic environment that still had active military operations underway. So you had to be up on what was happening on an almost day-to-day basis in order to collaborate with the large military operation that dwarfed the civilian side of things.

*Q: And other donors?*

FINE: And other donors, yeah, and the whole international community. That was a really exciting, but challenging, and invigorating type of work.

*Q: At this point, could you describe the size of the USAID team and its basic assignments.*

FINE: It was tiny when I arrived and when I arrived the entire U.S. operations in the embassy and USAID there were not that many agencies at that time. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Legal Matters was there. USAID was physically located in the old embassy building, which was a kind of bombed out building. We had one large room and then we had a container outside. So we had one room and everybody was in that room. We had 35 people when I got there, that included drivers and local staff and there were maybe eight Americans and we were managing a billion dollar budget. So it was just an extraordinary situation. During that time we moved into a new office which was made of containers but it was a more dedicated and bigger space for us and we expanded. So during the period I was there from 2004 until 2005 we went from 35 people to about 135; still not a big operation but bigger. We completely synchronized our work with what the military was doing both in terms of the combat units or ISAF, which is International Security Force, which was led by the U.S. and mostly staffed by the U.S. but included other elements from other allied staffers as well and with the Army Corps of Engineers because they were there.

I was able to do some really interesting things in terms of the interagency. The commander of the military was a guy named General David Barno who had a very instinctive feel for civilian-military affairs and for community development. So he really could understand the perspective that we as USAID brought and he valued it and he supported it and so we were able to have what I think was a very effective partnership with the military where instead of competing with each other or undermining each other we really worked as a team. An example of that would be that they had a lot of planners and they had a hundred times more capacity than we did in terms of planning and monitoring; we needed a capacity in that area. So I went to General Barno and said, "Look you've got hundreds of planners here. How about assigning some to work in

USAID? My conditions are that they report to me, so if they come to work for me then they are not working for you. It's not that they are working for you and just sitting in my shop you have to actually give them to me and I will rate them, I will become their commanding office." That had never been done to anybody's knowledge and Barno was a creative thinking person, he was an innovator, and he said, "Yeah, I'll do that."

So he assigned us some majors and lieutenant colonels and it worked so well that later on we did it in my engineering section and then we set up a section to work with provincial teams and we got officers there. Later on I had lieutenants and captains and majors and lieutenant colonels. We had maybe fifteen or twenty in total starting with three guys in our program office to help with planning and monitoring. That made for a very good fit and it helped from a corporate culture point of view for the USAID people to understand the military more and relate to them because they had these colleagues in uniform sitting with them in their office. It was also useful for the military guys who get a better understanding of the civilian component of the mission. Logistically, it was also valuable for the USAID mission because the military had a full country presence and we could plug into that to channel with information and ideas and resource requests in a more effective way. The military officers who worked for us were seconded, true, but they still knew who to talk to in the military chain of command to get things done. So it just made for a much more effective team.

*Q: How did you handle the issue of security for your personnel?*

FINE: At the beginning it was quite a permissive environment so we could go out of the embassy, we weren't confined to the embassy, and you could go upcountry. We would check and we would say we want to go to this district. They might say, "No, don't go to that district this week because there has been some activity up there. But for most of the country at that time it was permissive and we could go without escorts. We would go out into the city and around the city without escorts. You would tell people where you were going so there was like a sign out procedure. We had armored cars but until I arrived in June 2004 I would say until March 2005 it was quite permissive and we were able to travel and do site visits through big swaths of the country. There were some places we couldn't do it but I would say at least 75 percent of the country we did.

*Q: So General Barno understood your basic areas of operation and the basic goals you had and matched the talents he had to those areas?*

FINE: Yeah, and the ambassador played a big role because he was also a former DOD guy. He wanted to see that partnership work effectively. General Barno was a terrific collaborator and a visionary, just a wonderful capable leader. So I was so fortunate to be there at that time with such capable and admiral leaders. They were patriotic, they were mission focused, they were practical, and they were willing to do unconventional things, I mean from the military point of view General Barno agreed to things that I'm sure he got flack for it because they were out of the ordinary.

*Q: Merely having somebody else write the evaluations of his people...*

FINE: Yeah.

*Q: ...is pretty huge in the military.*

FINE: Yeah, that was like an innovative nonconventional thing. His willingness to agree that the chain of command would be through me was, I think, maybe unprecedented at that time. It worked really well.

*Q: Can we follow a particular project that you began as an example?*

FINE: Well, the big projects were building a road from Kandahar to Kabul, the Kabul to Kandahar road, which was well underway when I arrived but it was completing that road; that was one. That required coordination by the military both in terms of a security presence and by the civilian side in terms of building it and working with the communities.

*Q: And the workers were principally Afghan?*

FINE: Yes the workers were Afghans almost entirely, I think. There was a major program to build schools and clinics and then to supply education and health care so it was both the infrastructure component and the service delivery. That also required some military participation in terms of a security aspect but more that was where we did joint planning so that when we were thinking about what areas to focus on it was part of a strategic plan that included the whole of government approach. There was the counter narcotics program that tried to try to reduce the cultivation of opium. There was a program to establish provincial reconstruction teams, PRTs, which were essentially outposts in the district some were insecure and some were security districts but it was an outpost from which you could do a variety of both military and non-military actions or work with communities, work with local governments to address a whole community of needs. It might be addressing health needs or local government planning or it might be reforestation, or it might be anti-opium works, anything that the local government would do. Those PRTs were essentially forward operating bases with a military component on them. And of course all those lines of action we built and we actually put it into place so I played a part in that, my team played a part in that, General Barno and his team, the embassy.

The ambassador had some senior advisors that he brought in called the Afghan Reconstruction Group which were primarily retired senior business executives to advise because, as I said, he didn't have confidence in USAID. So he had assembled this Afghan Reconstruction Group, he had hired retired or semi-retired business executives who for the most part were people who wanted to contribute to the war effort and saw this as a way of doing it. They were technically employed by the Department of Defense as civilians but assigned to the ambassador. The traditional parts of the embassy the economic section, Narcotics and Law, the consular section, the military operations and USAID we built a really, I think, effective team that all pulled in one direction and I credit

Ambassador Khalilzad for having the vision for it and then enabling it within the post. The leadership that he and General Barno brought was critical.

As I said, the ambassador didn't have a lot of faith in USAID at the outset so he, along with his Department of Defense colleagues, put together this idea of having a separate set of senior advisors who would advise on reconstruction and they set up a sort of mirror structure to the USAID mission. So where the USAID mission had an agriculture advisor the ARG had one, where the USAID mission had a private sector development person, an economic growth person, they were all represented in the ARG as well.

*Q: Bureaucratically that kind of arrangement would be something that anybody looking in would say you are asking for trouble.*

FINE: Yeah and so that was set up in late 2003 so before I arrived. It immediately created the sense of animosity and hostility between these advisors and the USAID mission because the advisors who were for the most part, quite accomplished business people looked at the USAID people as like government bureaucrats who were more junior than they in the hierarchy, not nearly as accomplished in their careers because they were at much earlier stages in their careers in most cases and they looked at them as just bureaucrats getting in the way and they kind of looked down on them. USAID people looked at this group as illegitimate, you don't even have a role here, who the hell are you? We are Foreign Service officers, you are interlopers.

Not only was it set up to almost guarantee conflict structurally, there was tension on a personality basis. Again, fortuitously for me, about the same time I arrived a new leader of that group arrived. So there had been a leader and that guy had a major conflict with the mission director in USAID, they were not on speaking terms, but he left a couple weeks after I arrived. I met him and I didn't have any axe to grind so we established some rapport and his deputy was a judge from Florida but was also in the reserves, a brigadier general in the reserves. His name was Pat Meany and a great guy, absolutely a straight shooter. I think when I arrived he saw USAID as uncooperative and unreasonable but was open-minded. He saw it because he had reason to draw those conclusions. To my great good fortune right after I arrived the Afghan Reconstruction Group got a new leader who was the former head of General Motors international operations so a very senior executive, like the number two person in General Motors. He had retired and then was the CEO of Martin Marietta and he had retired from that and he was looking to do public service. We both arrived approximately about a couple weeks of each other, his name was Lou Hughes, and he absolutely had no interest in any bureaucratic intrigue or any great bureaucratic competitions, he was just interested in the mission; as was Pat Meany, as were most of the other members of that group. I didn't come in with baggage regarding the ARG, I had an open mind for it. It took me all of 30 minutes to realize that these guys had real capacity. I mean these were accomplished professionals and they were compared to people I had on my team in the similar sector areas, these guys were much more senior, much more experienced, so I just saw them as a resource and I very demonstrably rejected the competition or the hostility. Instead I told my team, "Look these guys want to do the right thing. They aren't coming here gunning for us, but there is

a structural tension here that we have to deal with that. The best way to deal with it is to see them as allies. They've got tremendous experience, knowledge and skill that we need. So rather than excluding them from things, I want them included in everything. I want you to see them as partners." I gave these very explosive orders to my team and it took a while, weeks, to get my instructions to stick. For his part, Lou and the members of his team saw that I was taking a different approach, a more inclusive approach. That led to a very strong partnership and it required me a couple times very publicly, to reprimand my people, because they were continuing this kind of competitive or non-collaborative mentality and I just wouldn't have it and I didn't accept it.

*Q: So from a practical point of view how did the two groups lace up? In other words did the senior executive say, "Alright, do you want to build a university, let me tell you these are the elements you are going to need in this particular situation based on my experience,? Or, you want to build road from the clinic to the town or whatever, this is what you are going to need." How did it happen?*

FINE: What we did was put in place a structure that was a management structure that Lou the head of his organization, and I co-shared. So we had a weekly meeting and we created some structure that didn't exist before and then we formalized it with the ambassador into a structure. We had regular meetings and we would then say, "What to do in agriculture?" and there was an agricultural specialist in their organization and I have an intercultural specialist then those two guys are going to work together and then they will bring in other elements from our teams as needed; but they are going to work it. So we just kind of paired people and we had them work together. I had a rule that you can't ever have a meeting on a program topic without inviting your counterpart. You've got to see them as your counterpart. You can't have a discussion unless you invite them and that was my first directive early on. Then I would go to Lou and I'd say, "Well where is the agriculture guy?" They'd go, "Oh, he didn't come." I'd go, "Well did you invite him?" "They'd go, "Yeah, we sent him an email and he didn't respond to it." Then I would find out that yeah they sent that email fifteen minutes before the meeting or something. It wasn't a sincere effort to include the person so then I said, "No, you guys are not reading me." Then I made a rule that the meetings can't take place unless the person is there or explicitly agrees that it should take place without him because he or she can't attend. Over a few weeks people forgot the public scoldings and I remember one time in particular where I went in and I just lost my temper and said, "This meeting is not happening reschedule it when you can get all of the participants here." People got it and it worked and it meant that the two groups started to build an esprit de corps with each other. While we didn't agree on everything there were some areas where they were completely in sync they were in complete agreement on strategy and tactics and then other areas where there were disagreements but they were professional disagreements they weren't personal disagreements. So that worked and that went a long way in the mind of, I think, the ambassador and the embassy, helping to secure greater respect for USAID and see how USAID was now as a contributing member of the team. Then in building this team, in which we were all integral players and it wasn't different competing centers with everybody following the ambassador's leadership.

*Q: Now, as you built up the members of USAID staff did they also get assigned to Provincial Reconstruction Teams?*

FINE: Yes, we made a conscience effort to have in the beginning one development specialist at each PRT and so we did a whole recruitment and placed people in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) as they opened; they were just opening.

*Q: Was it USAID that also was in charge of the whole mapping operation with the PRTs because part of the problem was simply getting an accurate idea of what was out there after the war?*

FINE: Yeah, during the time I was there was during the start of the PRTs so we were doing community mapping, if that is what you are talking about.

*Q: Yes, efforts to determine how well assistance programs were going down to the community level and building conclusions about how to continue the programs.*

FINE: We were doing that and we introduced that methodology which the military wasn't familiar with, at least at that time, at least the folks who were there during that time didn't have that approaching to their operations. So we did introduce the idea of doing community mapping. I remember in one forward operating post in an area known as still vulnerable to the Taliban, I sent a very capable development professional and he did community mapping. What he found was that the community perceived the foreign operating bases as the biggest threat because it attracted the Taliban and it put them in a position where either they would be seen in opposition to the Americans or they would be seen in opposition by the Taliban. The fact that this development officer could get the community to articulate that fact was an amazing feat of what the military calls 'human terrain work'. He also did some really great maps of community perceptions in both development needs, opportunities and threats and the biggest threat was the proximity of forward operating bases. Would you believe there was a lieutenant, I think he was the commander of that base, and he just got furious when he saw these results because he had really tried providing medical care, they'd been trying to conduct outreach with protection and help the area with transportation. He had been so sincerely invested in the work that his troops were doing to be good neighbors but it was like a slap in the face to him when he saw these results and he was mad at us. He was like, "What, you don't need these civilians coming here and stirring up these people against us." So he went to General Barno with the maps, I think they were visual, the graphics and this story. It burned him completely down but I understand I got it to, I understand it to and his point of view but Barno also got it. "This is the kind of information we've got to understand."

*Q: After having seen or heard the stories of the mapping results were they able to do anything to take account of them as they went forward?*

FINE: Yeah, they were great partners and they were a great organization. What I saw was that over time, we are talking months, not years, and in all the months they were able to process information and learn from it and understand development dynamics and

understand where they had made mistakes. I had some great development professions experienced people decades of experience who understood community dynamics and who were able to make clear presentations to describe, "Look, this is why this didn't work or this is about practice and you shouldn't repeat that." With Barno and his command force, his leadership, we were able to reach agreements on protocols for ensuring that development evaluations and outcome measurement were brought to bear in the military's community outreach. They came to us and solicited our input. We really built a strong partnership on the development side of things.

We wanted sustainable development and so did they. From a whole-of-government approach, our job was to help enforce legitimacy of the Afghan government and to help it expand its reach across the entire country because you are in a stabilization operation. During that period we had positive moments and moments where efforts degraded over time in part because I think those missions, if they go too long, they begin to look like an occupation force, it doesn't look like you're there to be their friends. Then in the Afghan case it's spoiled or disrupted by Pakistan as well. So Pakistan has a vested interest in keeping Afghanistan weak and in delegitimizing the government there for its own interests. So Pakistan's interest is sort of in a weak unstable Afghanistan and they continue to do many things to bring about that outcome. So if you have a civilian stabilization operation, but you've got a neighboring country that has an insurgent destabilization operation, then you are never going to get that stability. I think if Pakistan hadn't continued to be an active destabilizer and became an active supporter of an insurgent operation to keep Afghanistan weak and unstable I think that our mission would have accomplished a much stronger, much more secure, much more prosperous Afghanistan than you see today.

So if you use insurgency or wanton, indiscriminate violence as a way of delegitimizing the government, even though the government is trying to stop that violence, people say, "You can't protect us so there you are not legitimate because you can't carry out the basic function of the government, which is to protect the population." That's a really hard thing to stop unless you can stop it at its root and the international community was not prepared and up to today it has not been able to stop it at its root in Pakistan because Pakistan is a nuclear country and has what 175 million people so there is a way the population has a bottomless reservoir of young men it can mobilize. It's got nuclear weapons, there is the whole relationship with India and subcontinent geo-politics and all of that outweighed the interest of Afghanistan.

*Q: Right. When you were there did Iran have any importance?*

FINE: Not a very big one. I mean it would meddle a little with Iraq on the western border but it was not that engaged. One of the things I do remember that came from Iran was the Kabul Zoo. You have to remember that when I arrived there were parts of Kabul that were pretty much completely leveled. It looked like Berlin in 1945. Rubble everywhere. It's rebuilt now, parts of the city are completely rebuilt and you can see a lot of progress. But if you were there in say 2003 and saw what it looked like then compared to now there's just a massive amount of progress. But there is a zoo and the Kabul zoo was on

the edge of this area that has been completely destroyed and it was a forlorn place where the animals were barely surviving and it was just a mess. I went back in 2008 or so three years after I had been posted there and I went to the zoo and the zoo had been refurbished, rebuilt. It was amazing it was like this island of civility where you had all different ethnic groups secular and religious. The whole cosmopolitan society was in the zoo looking at the animals mixing in a free way that you don't see in many parts of the country or in many parts of the city. So it was like this island of civility and it was the Iranians who refurbished the zoo. There was a sign with thanks to the people of Iran. After touring through there it wasn't fancy but it was delightful to have this place of civility and people could go with their families. I thought why didn't I think of doing this!

*Q: Now when you were in Afghanistan, how long was it understood you would stay?*

FINE: A year. I went there in February, 2004, I was there for six weeks and then I was assigned as mission director but I spent a couple of months in D.C. doing orientation. Then I went out in June and I returned and finished the end of July 2005.

*Q: As you approached the end you knew who your successor was going to be?*

FINE: Yeah, he was the Washington office director in USAID so he was quickly up to speed. We hit it off immediately

*Q: And at that point did you feel that all of the innovations you made could be sustained?*

FINE: I thought they would, but the innovations that we had done they weren't dependent on USAID. They were dependent on the ambassador, General Barno and the whole leadership that the U.S. had in place. These included the ambassador at the head, a terrific commander of the military operation, and this amazing person at the ARG -- the Afghan Reconstruction Group. I was just lucky to be with these guys and we all left in about a month or two of each other. In retrospect I think that was a huge mistake from the U.S. government point of view. If you are really being strategic as a government, even though we were on tours of duty and our tours were ended, the U.S. government should have said, "Look, this is working this is a leadership group that is working and you've got these different pieces working pretty well together even in this enhanced demanding situation, overcoming some inherent structural tensions, you guys can't go." In retrospect I can see I should have stayed but even more so the U.S. government, if it was more serious, would just say we've got a leadership group in place that is working and we are not giving them a choice. They have to stay. But that was not the way it was approached at the time. Since then in Afghanistan there have been USAID directors like Ken Yamashita, I think he stayed four years and I think he is terrific, very capable, just a super development professional as a USAID leader. He provided real continuity I have a regret that I didn't stay longer, I shouldn't have left, but I did.

*Q: Before we leave Afghanistan, I wanted to ask if the language issue created difficulties in carrying out your mission goals.*

FINE: Yes. So I had a routine where I would for four days a week from 7:00 in the morning until 8:00 in the morning I went to Dari classes. I just did that personally because I am interested in language and culture. So I really worked to learn the language and by half way through that year I was able to do meeting in Dari. I'm sure I sounded like a three year old but I could meet with a minister who didn't speak English, I would have an interpreter but I could do a lot in Dari and understand a lot. Of course they were dumbing down their talk to me and if I needed to get more detailed I could use the interpreter. One, I think it was good for me but two it was good for the relationship so that these ministers, some of them were not like traditional friends of America, they weren't people who would look to the Americans as their buddies, but they could see that I was making an effort and respecting their culture and language. There were a couple who had reputations for being anti-American who I had particularly strong relations with, and I think they didn't expect an American to do that, to put that kind of effort into learning their language and then to go in and meet with them and speak to them in their language.

*Q: And did you have to spend a lot of your planning time on how to safely get out to sites?*

FINE: A lot. I was fortunate because Ambassador Khalilzad knew the country because he grew up there. He knew all of the players in every region in the country. He was a very activist ambassador and so he went all over the country and he would take me with him so he could say I've got our AID director here. The first trip he took me on he would have these public meetings where all the elders from that locale would come to meet with him. He would give a speech in whatever the language they were speaking and then they would get up and make statements. Their statements would be we need roads, we need schools or we need better health care, what are you doing about some development problem or the flooding along the river. He turns to me and it is like a test and he goes, "Well I have my AID director here so I will translate." He acted as the translator. "I'll translate and he can answer your questions." Well I had been an AID director and worked there, I was an experienced Foreign Service officer, I was used to answering questions like that in a diplomatic way so you don't go making any promises but you respond to the persons question. The first time he did that it was like he had this mischievous look in his eye; I could see it was like a test to see how this guy can handle this. So I got up and I was able to answer the questions in respectful, responsive ways that didn't make promises we couldn't keep because I knew how to do that. I could see the ambassador saw oh, this guy can handle himself in a situation like this. Then he starts inviting me whenever he goes out he takes me along with him and most of the situations you had that point where he would say, "Okay the major person will answer these questions."

*Q: What's fascinating about this first tour of yours and essentially it is the first tour of any USAID mission director in that situation is that you needed to demonstrate to the ambassador that USAID was capable of carrying out his mission.*

FINE: Right, that's correct.

*Q: Its' not a typical kind of thing you were expected to do when you were at post because I think most ambassadors would understand okay we have to have a discussion about what you are going to be doing but we know about USAID and we assume that you'll do more or less what is expected of you but this was...*

FINE: Well here is the thing. USAID hadn't been in that position since Vietnam so there was nobody in USAID that knew what was required and so it was new territory for the leadership of USAID. Now we had Andrew Natsios as the administrator, he's terrific. He was a civil military officer in the Army so he got it and he was frustrated that his Foreign Service officers weren't stepping up to the plate, weren't able to deliver what was needed. He just took a gamble on me; he didn't know me from Adam. But I guess I could say I liked the work, I liked the challenge, somehow I had an inclination or an aptitude for that kind of environment. I guess I have a lot of stamina. I could get up at six in the morning, knock out some emails, study Dari from seven to eight, and then work until midnight or one in the morning.

*Q: That is no small thing.*

FINE: And do that more or less seven days a week because it is not like you have downtime in countries like that. Then the ambassador also had this amazing work ethic where he would almost work 24 hours a day so there came a point after we really had become close collaborators where he was super busy, just getting time with him was an effort because everybody wanted to see him. So we just fell into a pattern where I would go at midnight or 11:30 at night and I could get him at that time. We would then have time to talk about what the issues were and how to approach them.

*Q: The State Department recently began examining how to ensure better resilience in officers' lives, especially when working in and returning from a conflict area. I don't think there are a lot of people who could have kept up your schedule without burn-out.*

FINE: The folks who were more successful were the ones who could drive themselves over a sustained period of time at that pace. I had been going at that pace for about three months without a break and then I had a meeting that was taking place in Dubai or someplace; so I left to attend the meeting in Dubai. I got on the plane and it was ten in the morning and I just felt normal when I boarded the plane and before it took off I was asleep. I slept all the way to Dubai and we arrived in Dubai about two in the afternoon. I get to the hotel and I'm thinking I hadn't been to Dubai before should I go out and walk around and see the place? I'll just lie down and doze a little and then I'll get up and go out. I lied down and I woke up and it was like eleven o'clock in the morning the next day. I'm completely disoriented and I'm thinking how can it be light outside if it is eleven o'clock? I thought, "Oh, my gosh, I've slept all the way to eleven o'clock." It took me quite a while to realize that I had slept almost 24 hours but it was just the release of going

at that pace and suddenly not having to go at that pace. Then I got up and went straight to the airport.

*Q: How about the need for local staff and leveraging their skills, were you able to build up a cadre?*

FINE: had amazing local staff there.

*Q: Can you talk a little bit about the role that they played in that first year?*

FINE: As we grew the size of the mission when we grew it was mostly recruiting local officials and then added great depth to the work we were able to do both in terms of how we understood problems, our ability to communicate with counterparts, our ability to network within government and more broadly within society. So when I first got there we had a cadre of professional Afghan employees, but very few, and they were doing things like monitoring evaluations and site supervision because they could travel more freely than we could and they could go out and spend a week on the road which we weren't going to be spending time at a local village.

As time passed one of my priorities was to build up the professional capacity within the mission of local professionals. We did that and then Afghanized, in a way, our ability to carry out the work and it was something that I was proud of. One of the things they were building this new complex which was basically containers that were joined together into an office like a sprawling office complex across the street from the embassy building. It was under construction when I arrived and about maybe about two months after I got there we moved into it. By that time I was beginning to hire Afghan staff and I wanted to ground our work in Afghan culture sense abilities. One of the first things I did when we moved into the new complex was there was one small room and I got the senior Afghan staff together and I said, "Let's make this into an Afghan room," because all the rooms looked like offices. So I said, "What would we need if we really wanted to make this an Afghan room?" They said, "Well you know carpets, textiles for the walls and pillows to sit on." I said, "Okay, let's do it." I told my executive officer, "Alright get these guys the money they need, go out and spend a couple thousand dollars, and outfit this room as an Afghan room. This is when we have meetings with Afghans; we will do it in this room. So we will have the meetings in an environment that is familiar to them instead of in an American environment."

That was a small act that didn't really cost anything in the scheme of things and yet that just created tremendous good will both with the Afghan employees, who saw this as an affirmation, and act of respect to their culture for Afghan visitors. When we would have tribal leaders come in or community leaders or government officials we would always have these meetings in what we called the Kandahar Room. Even today, just a couple months ago I saw somebody and they were talking about the Kandahar Room and it was a small thing you can do that makes an impression on people and that supports mutual understanding and respect and collaboration which makes your work on sensitive issues easier to accomplish together. That was one small act that we did.

Another thing we did with our Afghan employees on Ramadan you know you slaughter a lamb. So I was thinking it's a big expense for Afghans to purchase a whole sheep and with Ramadan approaching I was thinking maybe we could buy a sheep for each of our employees. But that was just not going to work. We couldn't justify it. So what I did was I got one big comfy looking ram and we did a raffle amongst the Afghan employees. That was again, and I paid for that myself, I just bought the thing but it was a small thing but it was affirming their culture, it was showing concern and a gesture of friendship with the Afghan employees. Years later I would run into somebody and they'd remember that time there was that raffle for sheep. So there are things that make an impression. I also fast during Ramadan and I do a full fast. I started that when I was in Senegal because I didn't want the employees to say, "We are fasting so we can't come into work."

*Q: Right, you didn't want to eat or drink in front of them.*

FINE: That is just rude. In Senegal my first year there the FSN (Foreign Service National employees, now called LES or Locally Employed Staff) community employees committee came to me and said, "Ramadan is going to start so we have to fast so we would like to end work at three o'clock because by that time people just don't have the energy." I said, "I will tell you what. I won't ask anybody to do anything I don't do myself." They said, "Okay." That was my first year and I did the fast and then I just worked through the day. As I said, I have a fair amount of stamina and then I just continued it for the four years I was in Senegal and then I went to Afghanistan so I was already in the mode of fasting during Ramadan but it was something that surprised the local employees and they appreciated that their leader, their director who was not a Muslim but was fasting along with them.

*Q: Now I had mentioned in passing the challenge of environmental conditions and I want to return to that. Afghanistan is, in many places a difficult terrain with extremes of weather. Did that affect your work significantly?*

FINE: Afghanistan during the winter of 2004-2005 was the worst winter in living memory. Many people were saying that so I actually asked NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) to research whether this was indeed the worst winter ever. They had records for Afghanistan that went back to the 1930s and then there were records for Pakistan and Iran that went back to the 1890s. Using those records they did confirm that this was the coldest, highest snowfall winter since the 1890s in that region. So that created a lot of challenges in terms of villages being snowed in, the requirement for humanitarian assistance, the requirement to get fuel to refugee populations because at that time you had the influx of refugees from Pakistan, three and a half million people moved back to Afghanistan as the situation stabilized and improved there.

*Q: These are Afghans who had been living in Pakistan...*

FINE: In Pakistan for a generation since the '80s. So it was a busy winter, it was a cold winter...

*Q: Did that affect AID projects throughout the country or just principally in the north?*

FINE: Pretty much throughout but not in the Kandahar area, it wasn't as bad. It was cold there too but it wasn't as bad; the snow fall went as far south as Ghazni. That put a lot of demands on the Afghan government and on us as one of its development partners. There was also very interesting work during that period around building the institutions of the Afghan government. In November of 2004 they had their first democratic election in more than a generation and maybe ever in their history. Hamid Karzai, who had been in a leading a transitional government elected as the president of an elected government. That was also a very exciting and edifying experience because the elections were well organized, they went off with very little disruption. The Taliban claimed they would murder anybody who tried to vote, but in the end I think there were only seven cases of polling places actually being attacked. There was an overwhelming outpouring of people to vote. So that was a real affirmation of the Afghan people's desire to elect their leader and to have some say in their government, to have that democratic ability.

*Q: Even recalling this some 12, 13 years later I remember the media images showed all these Afghans with purple ink on their finger...*

FINE: It was really heartening. of course we did election monitoring and so were visiting polling places and to see the lines of people wrapping around the block. I went to one polling place in Kabul and you got this diversity of people from young to very old, men and women in all types of dress from traditional tribal dress to modern dress, and I remember seeing in one line there was a minister, I can't remember which minister that I knew, who was lined up with everybody else one hundred yards from the polling place waiting his turn to vote. In the polling places it was interesting seeing many older Afghans, who had never voted before, and the excitement that went with it. So that was a very good day and encouraging day it was a repudiation of the Taliban's threats and bullying of the Afghan people and you got a credible government that for some time functioned, I think, reasonably well.

Later on in Karzai's tenure, the next election in 2009 was not done as well. I think, was very problematic and it didn't have the same level of credibility so the government lost legitimacy. Part of that had to do with the fact that it performed worse as time passed, which eroded its credibility. But in that first year it was in an exciting time to be there and there was a sense of real potential and promise and hope and the international community as a whole, and the U.S. contribution, in particular, was very significant in supporting that sense of positive momentum in working to restore services or start services that hadn't been delivered for decades. As a former education program officer, it was great to see an influx of kids into school across the country including in remote rural and tribal areas. You had improvement in health services so that literally hundreds of thousands of people per month, millions over the course of the year had access to health services that hadn't been there before. Electricity was being restored in cities and in some rural areas, the supply lines just to move commerce, move foods and to move products were being restored as roads were built or improved as areas became more secure. So

there was this period of growth, economic growth was up, a period of rebuilding as you saw devastated areas not only in Kabul but in other cities as well being rebuilt by the residents not just government action but people's action as well. You saw businesses starting to come alive, industrial parks, you saw educational institutions being established and there really was a sense, for me at least, of a kind of rebirth. You had the refugees voting with their feet. Those Afghans who had been in Pakistan and Iran since the '80s coming back, so that was a very exciting time to be there.

The U.S. government played a critical role in particular. Ambassador Khalilzad in reinforcing the security environment that allowed all this to happen and in partnering with the government of Afghanistan to reestablish the legitimacy of the government. There were multiple initiatives everything from natural resource management and reforestation to economic development activities like industrial parks to institution building to telecommunications; programs which actually was a very big success.

*Q: Telecommunications? Did access to cell phones expand significantly?*

FINE: That was introduced so you had the government let two licenses for cell phone operators and during that period 2004-2005 they were installing their towers they were expanding coverage, and people were getting cell phones. I don't know what the actual penetration or coverage rate was but it was growing rapidly and that has all sorts of effects, both positive and negative and during the period I was there from 2004 to 2005. Using cell phones for mobile money transactions or for mobile medical counselling or for SMS messages to people for security issues wasn't happening yet. We were thinking about it and we could see the possibility of it but those programs came really in the 2006-2007 period and they've had a big impact. Some of the digital finance stuff was pioneered in Afghanistan even before the example in Kenya. By 2005, as we got into the spring of 2005 you started to have political storm clouds gathering -- there was a renewed insurgency by the Taliban. So this forward momentum that was, I think, motivated by the successful elections then started to lose speed by April or so as you had a renewed insurgency and that really was and I think still is, the result of Pakistan wanting to see a weak Afghanistan.

Pakistan's own government was divided with some elements that, for ideological or for religious reasons, supported an extreme form of Islam that the Taliban represented. There are also historical reasons. The Pakistanis had been working with the Mujahideen against the Soviets. They had these long established relationships between the ISI (Pakistani Military Intelligence) and the Mujahideen and the Taliban networks. So by the spring of 2005 the defeated Taliban had regrouped, they had been rearmed by the Pakistanis and Pakistan absolutely didn't want to see Afghanistan emerge as a strong sovereign neighbor. So you started to both have more attacks by the Taliban like burning schools and attacking construction crews which required from our side a lot more emphasis on security, a lot more spending on security. Successful programs that had been started in 2003 and were successfully being implemented in 2004 like demobilization and disarmament of the militias started to now get reversed because you could demobilize the militias if there was a secure environment but as soon as the Taliban came in and started

attacking, then communities wanted and needed militias to defend themselves. So that put the brakes on the demobilization program and the disarmament program so you started getting in 2005 slowdowns and maybe even in 2006 just the slowing momentum and by 2007 it starting to be a reversal of momentum.

An example of that is that we put, when I was there, a lot of effort into building up the capacity of border and custom service in order to facilitate domestic resource mobilization or effective taxation and a lot of work with the ministry of finance, which was well run, and which first doubled its domestic revenue from something like \$150 million to \$300 million and then doubled it again up to \$650 million so they were making some real progress in reducing corruption at the border, collecting duties, reducing the smuggling, having just more control of their borders in terms of what commercial products were coming in and going out and taxing them and collecting taxes and getting those taxes to the treasury. That didn't start to get reversed until 2006 and '07.

In the spring of 2005 another big issue that we had started working on during the winter but became a preoccupying issue was the production of opium. So the production of opium was skyrocketing and it was expanding its geographic footprint across the country so there were real concerns about the drug supply going into Europe because the heroin gets processed in Pakistan and maybe Kurdistan and Tajikistan and then it goes through the Soviet Union into Europe. So it doesn't really come to the U.S. But there were two concerns. One was the flow of drugs into Europe the other was that in 2005 the Taliban had started to use opium production as a way to finance its operation, so it was really a terrorist financing that was the biggest concern.

*Q: Just what efforts or what was the approach of trying to I guess switch the opium producers to other...*

FINE: High value crops. Well there was a campaign that USAID put together on producing that but we worked with the British as they had the lead in the international community on the anti-narcotics program. Within the U.S. government, efforts to support the government of Afghanistan and the international community in stemming the flow of opium and heroin, USAID had the lead but we worked very closely with the embassy because the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Legal Affairs (INL) and the USDA were also involved. The issue was highly controversial, particularly within the U.S. government. State INL Department and the DEA advocated aerial spraying of opium fields to destroy them and the government of Afghanistan was adamantly against doing that. So that caused an argument between the U.S. and the government of Afghanistan. The debate was just as lively within the U.S. government. Some groups said "Let's go in and rip out the opium poppies, let's spray the opium poppies, let's treat this as a criminal act, versus the other parties, not just USAID but others as well who replied that these are just poor peasant farmers, "If we treat them like enemies then we are just making enemies. If we are trying to stabilize the country we don't want to turn the populace against us. They've been growing poppies for a thousand years here and if we rip out their fields we are impoverishing them. So what we need to do is have a program that gives them alternatives to growing poppy that are meaningful

alternatives. So you can't say you can earn \$200 an acre off of opium poppy production and we are going to give you an alternative that you can earn \$25. There has got to be some economic incentive to switch to and it should be phased so that you don't disadvantage the poor peasant farmer." This group recommended going after the processors, the people who buy up the opium and then market it and process it and the distributors, but leave the peasant farmers alone and help them over time to switch over to higher value crops that are licit crops; so that was that debate.

There was one incident maybe in March in 2005 or April where there had been this argument going on between the U.S. and the Afghan government about whether there should be aerial spraying with elements in the U.S. saying that was the only way to really reduce the production of opium and that it worked in Colombia. Colombia had been on board with it and I think they sent some Afghans to Colombia to see the anti-narcotics program there. President Karzai said, "Absolutely not you cannot spray we absolutely do not allow it and that is the end of the conversation."

*Q: Why did he oppose it?*

FINE: It was deeply opposed by the population so he was really representing his population's point of view. Then somebody sprayed there was an area in the east of the country that got sprayed. The U.S. denied that it was responsible. We said, in essence, "No, we didn't do that and maybe that was just a lie maybe that's Taliban propaganda," and then it wasn't clear what had happened but something happened that the U.S. never owned up to and I don't know even being right in the embassy and at a pretty high level in the embassy I never knew whether the U.S. or maybe the British sprayed; maybe the U.S. asked the British to spray, maybe it was a rogue sprayer, maybe the Taliban made it up as propaganda but there was this big incident that soured the relationship. It was an early incident that soured the relationship between the Afghan government and the U.S. government. Not hugely significant at the time in terms of our relationship but I think it was one of the early things that eventually led to what was a breakdown in that relationship by 2011 or 2012.

*Q: So in the end, really no significant progress was made in reducing production of poppy?*

FINE: No and in fact, I think in 2005-'06 I think they had a bumper crop so production actually increased and I think to this day opium production continues to be high. So that is an issue that was never resolved.

*Q: As the effort to scale up the development assistance to Afghanistan continued while you were there, can you describe how the USAID mission grew and changed.*

FINE: It did grow. When I got there we had 35 employees including all local employees, drivers, clerks and senior professional FSNs and that was in June of 2004. When I left in July 2005 we had about 135 so we had expanded both in terms of our U.S. staff but more so in terms of our FSN staff and we had brought on more Afghan professional staff. We

had built out that professional cadre and I'd also restructured the mission to have clearly delineated sector offices and educational offices, health office, a big infrastructure office and then we had our enterprise offices like the finance and the contracting offices and we had the DG we had democracy in governments which was an important part of what we were doing. Both in terms of number of staff and just the structure of the office it became more formalized. We had a very strong program office it grew in capacity. The capacity of the USAID mission to respond to the demands being placed upon it grew and it was a marvelously high-performing mission.

*Q: And you brought the USAID auditors with you?*

FINE: We didn't at first. And this was also before SIGAR (Special Inspector-General for Afghanistan Reconstruction). We had USAID's IG, and they were based in Bangkok but they came regularly. In fact, I called them in on a number of occasions. It wasn't until 2006 that they actually moved in and set up a residential office there. From 2004-2005 for probably 80 percent of the time we had at least one investigator who was on the premises on TDY because we had issues we were bringing to them. That relationship was a very constructive one, it became adversarial later on, but during the time I was there we had a very constructive and I think productive relationship with the inspector general and I think we did identify a number of cases of abuse and fraud. There were some prosecutions where people went to jail.

*Q: Are you talking about financial crimes among the Afghan staff?*

FINE: No, they were Americans. For example, I had one guy who provided security for the road projects, and this was a huge operation that employed hundreds of security guards, like 1,500. I became curious about just how we were doing the timekeeping, It wasn't that I suspected fraud, I just wanted to know what are the procedures to use to ensure that the number of people we are paying for are actually there and that we have the controls to know if we are being charged \$6 per day that the employees are actually receiving \$6 per day. So I was asking, really from an administrative point of view, "Are there internal controls, what are we doing to review, what are the payments we are making, how are we tying those payments into actual practice on the ground?" So we just started to look at it and then we started to see fishy things that just didn't seem to add up. At that point we called the IG. The IG came in and they did an investigation and that guy who was an American and his wife went to prison.

*Q: They were contractors?*

FINE: They were contractors.

*Q: As you addressed all these needs and projects did the Washington authorities, USAID headquarters, Congress, OMB, etc. give you the flexibility to move money around if you needed to?*

FINE: You always need more flexibility but that wasn't our big constraint. There were some programs that were underfunded so we were doing a big program to bring electrical supply from Tajikistan down to Kabul and also to build out electrical supply in the west and in the south of the country so we had a certain budget for that. It was sufficient to accomplish the objective so we fought for resources in order to do what we were tasked to do or the anti-narcotics program was woefully underfunded so what we were being asked to do...

*Q: And the expectations.*

FINE: Right, we just didn't have the resources so there was a disconnect between the objective and the expectations that were being set and the resources we were being given to achieve those objectives. So there were examples of that but in general we were pretty well funded. The problem with the funding was that in 2003 it had been high, 2004 it dropped down, 2005 it went back up again so it was uneven making it difficult to do the planning especially with the government of Afghanistan but resource availability was not the big constraint. Over time the financial constraints became less important in this permissive environment and the larger problem became just the lack of capacity within the government of Afghanistan and more broadly within the country to do things quickly and with a high standard. But the 2003, 2004 and 2005 time period saw progress in the country a real sense of things getting better in the economy, infrastructure, and in social services, in government institutions so it was a wonderful time to be there and USAID played a very significant role in that. It was intense. We were working literally 16-hour days. There was such a sense of camaraderie and solidarity within the mission; it wasn't a huge mission 135 people managing more than a billion dollars. It was amazing the level of productivity that crossed so many sectors and the collaboration within the U.S. government and between the civilian and the military agencies and then more broadly within the international community and with the Afghan government. We had good leadership with Ambassador Khalilzad and with General Barno so they set both a demanding and positive tone at the top.

One of the things that struck me when you are under that kind of pressure and you are working those kinds of hours and whenever you have a group of people that are over 100 people there is a certain amount of your time that you spend on personnel matters, on interpersonal conflicts, on poor performance, on misbehavior and that period of time we spent almost zero time on any personnel issues. Personnel matters like misbehavior, poor performance, and interpersonal conflicts and between members of teams that just wasn't part of what we were doing. We had all sorts of problems to deal with but that wasn't one of them. There was such a sense of camaraderie. And to this day the people who were working together during that time still have a bond which was developed by that extraordinary period and the contributions made by USAID. Andrew Natsios was also the director of USAID at the time was very personally involved in monitoring what we were doing both in terms of putting demands on me and the mission but also providing the support and really anything we needed we got priority to be able to deliver on our commitments. So again you had this very important leadership component at the top of USAID from Andrew Natsios, Jim Kunder was the AA for Asia and he later became the

deputy administrator. Anyway, the leadership of USAID was aggressively supportive of our operations there so it was an environment that allowed our team and USAID to make a really positive contribution in terms of human development in the country.

*Q: Now you had mentioned one of the problem in the early days at least the early years was the lack of trained Afghans to take things over. I imagine USAID had programs and to help train or develop those skills. What did you see in terms of those aspects of things?*

FINE: Because my tenure there was relatively short I couldn't give a definitive reply. We did have scholarship programs, we did have short-term training programs and so did other members of the international community. I didn't actually see the fruits of this training. I wasn't on the ground when those people returned. What I did see, and a what was a valuable source of expertise was the return of skilled Afghan professionals. The returned from the diaspora in U.S., France, Germany, and they did provide a good skill base for a lot of the positions like engineering positions and senior leadership positions, and we encouraged that. We had programs to provide incentives for the Diaspora to return.

*Q: Thinking of those kinds of incentives it sounds like most of the local employees that you needed you found locally or did you need to recruit from other USAID missions, in essence foreign talent to come?*

FINE: A number of our FSNs were Afghans who had grown up in Pakistan as refugees and by virtue of growing up in Pakistan they spoke English and they were educated and a little more worldly. They hadn't grown up under the Taliban where you couldn't go to school so some of our Afghan FSNs were members of refugee communities who had returned when the Taliban was forced from power.

We had some people who had worked for USAID in the '70s who had been in Afghanistan all along and who came back. Others were people who had worked for international NGOs like IRC and International Red Cross in the region. So they hadn't left the region either, and had even been working during the Taliban years in Afghanistan. Clearly, these people, based on their experience and skill set were ideal candidates for us.

But you had this influx of both other international agencies from a whole bunch of countries as well as the nascent Afghan government itself competing for these people so we did have to go out of the country for some our FSN positions. USAID has in place a program for FSNs in USAID missions in other parts of the world to be detailed and deployed to Afghanistan. One of our key finance people was from another mission., We had a woman from Albania who had worked at the Albanian mission and maybe one from the Ukraine so we did have a variety of current USAID employees who had either left their mission and were working for us on a personal services contract or had been loaned by a mission for say six months. One of those people was our main IT guy and at one point the embassy was constantly borrowing him because he was such a skilled and good person to work with, such a competent employee. He now works for me here at FHI

360. I didn't play a role in his hiring here, but was pleased to learn he had joined our organization at one of our quarterly "meet the new employees" events. But back in Afghanistan I also recall that our human resources director was from one of the USAID missions in India. In fact we had several people from India. We had one from El Salvador too. I'm sure there are more that arrived after I left because the recruitment and deployment program was at its inception when I was there. The same program was used for Iraq in that 2006 and '07 period.

*Q: Remarkable. So now looking back what did you and USAID in general learn in this situation of working in a conflict/post-conflict environment?*

FINE: Well, first remember that in both Afghanistan and Iraq we were essentially relearning what it meant to work in these settings because prior to Afghanistan, USAID hadn't really worked in a conflict setting -- other the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) providing humanitarian relief -- since the Vietnam War. So you didn't have any experience in the agency in stabilization and reconstruction programs. True, we a few people who we recruited who had been with USAID in Vietnam. Now they were older men at the end of their careers but they had started their careers with USAID. But a whole generation of USAID officers and the institution itself had the dual challenges of immediate development goals and longer-term development goals that had to be done at the same time in sometimes permissive and sometimes non-permissive environments.

So there were debates. How do you do both these things in terms of building institutions, creating capacity, delivering services, doing that in an emergency setting in a conflict setting and increasingly in both Afghanistan and Iraq in non-permissive settings where you can't travel out. So lessons addressed how do you program funds in areas where you can't send your direct hire staff to visit or use other typical monitoring mechanisms and strategies. How do you work with local actors to achieve agreed development objectives in non-permissive environments? Debate touched on whether it is even possible to do development in a conflict setting. I don't think that debate is complete.

I think there are still opposing points of view as to how conduct development in these long-term conflicts that civilian operations or development work whether its capacity building or democracy in government and or rule of law work or just service delivery that has to be part of the solution. A military solution is not sufficient in and of itself and so recognition by the people, and often by the military, that there has to be a civilian component in order to have a long term solution. But then you have to confront both the cost and the difficulty of adding a civilian component when there is a hot conflict going on. I do think it's an unresolved debate within the development community with strongly held views and you just have to get to some sort of resolution of the conflict to allow the civilian component to operate at least in some minimal level of permissiveness to travel around versus those who say, "No, you need the civilians and the development peace there before that."

So I think USAID has learned a ton about working in those environments and it's developed the capacity in terms of people with experience working in those environments and the appetite to work in those environments.

One of the things that was most frustrating for us when I was there was that Afghanistan was still quite a permissive environment. I could travel outside of Kabul up country. I could travel around the city at will. And I could travel up country with one escort of security personnel. But as the conflict heated up it became less and less permissive. There was a huge frustration with the security restrictions placed on us. So my staff position and my own position was that we understand the risks and that is why we volunteered to come here. We are willing to take those risks because unless we can go out and talk to people and gain their trust, spend time with them, be in their communities, we can't be effective.

As time went on, travel was less and less permitted and some of my fiercest bureaucratic battles were with diplomatic security over the increasingly tight restrictions. My people, the USAID people, said we can't do our job with these restrictions and I remember one RSO saying to me, "Look, I don't care if you get killed in fact I'd like you to get killed, but what I don't want is for you to get kidnapped and then I've got to see your people on the TV every single day." So there were real intense battles over that as we tried to preserve our ability to operate and tried to make the case that we should be treated more like the military. We are on the ground and we need to be on the ground and we need to have that kind of rules of engagement for us to travel out and recognizing that we may lose some people if we do that.

In fact, we did lose people during the time I was there, but that, in my view, raises another unresolved issue. Over time, the U.S. government has lost its appetite to put diplomats in harm's way so you have a contradiction where you are saying we need to have a diplomatic and development effort in a conflict zone in order to achieve our objectives but we are going to impose a zero risk tolerance policy so we are unwilling to suffer any casualties or to allow these workers to take any risk whatsoever. So you end up just locking them down in a secure compound where they can't possibly be effective. The view of the diplomats and the development workers that I worked with, and my own view, was that if we are serious as a nation about a strategy that employs diplomacy and development to resolve conflict and achieve our objectives in a country that is in conflict, then we should be able to tolerate and be willing to accept some losses. We should deploy people who understand the risks and are willing, able and skilled enough to take those risks because you don't want to send out people who don't know what they are getting into or are stupid and take stupid risks. But you want to send out people who know how to operate in those environments and can do so and then be willing to take some losses.

But if you look at what happened in Libya with Ambassador Stevens, that just reinforces the view from the government, driven by the politics, which now is more widely shared by the population, that there should be no risk suffered by our diplomats and our development workers. My own view is: if we are going to have a strategy that uses

diplomacy and development we need to think of those people more as we think of our soldiers and we need to be willing to accept some level of casualties and then just like in the military if your casualty rate is too high then you change your strategy. But going in with the idea that we have to have a diplomacy and development component, but we are not going to allow them to do their work in a way to be effective, we won't achieve our goals. In some cases we do that to our military, but I think we do it a lot less to the military while we completely hobble diplomacy and development.

*Q: So to take your idea one step further, for those who do go into these conflict areas should they be trained in arms?*

FINE: No, not in arms I think they should be trained in how to operate in a conflict setting but they should be the civilian component. In my view there should be a very clear distinction between the military operation and the civilian operation. So for example, when the terms of engagement for say, Kandahar province are set by the post it says that both military and diplomats, when you go into, say, a rural area, which was kind of a hot zone, you wore body armor. I refused to wear body armor because if I'm the civilian and representing the civilian side and saying I am here to reach out to you as a civilian partner to address human development problems, if you see me in body armor then I just look like another soldier. And since none of the people I'm talking to are wearing body armor, I would prefer to either wear traditional Afghan dress or regular American attire. I remember I went out to one remote site with a U.S. colonel who was the regional commander. We helicoptered out to this community. I had my body armor I took it on the helicopter but I didn't put it on and when we landed he said, "Okay, put your stuff on." I said, "I'm not going to wear it." He said, "The rules are you have to wear it." I said, "I actually outrank you so I'm making the rules and I'm not going to wear it because I'm a civilian here and I want to be clear what our roles are." I remember him saying, "Well I'm not going to wrestle it on you but I sure the hell hope you don't get killed because if you do it's the end of my career."

Along similar lines, another one of the controversies and the dilemmas that come up in doing development work in conflict settings is that you do have an active military operation going on with shooting and you also have NGOs or other civil society actors who want to make clear that they are not part of the kinetic action. They want their clients to know that they are not part of that armed action and the lines can get blurred and certainly to the population or to different factions in the population it can be impossible to distinguish. So you have some civil society groups saying we don't want the military to come in here, we want to operate without the military. I think that pretty much stopped as the conflict got very hot. In 2005, the Taliban declared all civilian organizations as combatants and as enemies, as legitimate targets. So that attitude changed.

But you still hear this debate over combatant/non-combatant roles in different conflict zones like in the Central African Republic or other places where there is this need to distinguish who is a non-combatant from a combatant. It remains unresolved, and it has to be situational, but we need to be clear if we are playing a civilian role, and then, if we are civilians, we have to assess what the risks are and then how do we manage those risks

so that we are not taking foolish risks but by the same token we are not putting so many constraints on our work that we can't be effective. If we determine that well you simply can't operate in that area then don't ask us to go in and don't pretend like you can have a civilian component if it's not possible to have a civilian component.

*Q: Up to now you've talked about the security aspects for civilian, USAID, the U.S. military, and the interface between the two. Does it become more complicated when security services are provided by a private contractor?*

FINE: It doesn't get more complicated but I personally have less confidence in mercenary operations which is what you are talking about when you are talking about contract security. I've certainly dealt with security personal who were from Nepal, or South Africa or from Peru who were professional and capable and good colleagues but again I think there can be a role for those elements in a broader campaign plan but I felt like at least when I was in Afghanistan that too much work was being contracted out to security components, and in Iraq, when I was in both places that you have a lot of diplomatic security arrangements being contracted out to security companies that recruit from foreign militaries; these are essentially mercenary operations. I thought that it went too far. Again, if we have a real national commitment to security and development, and we have objectives that we think are in our vital national interest, then we should apply the resources necessary to achieve those interests. If we judge that the interests aren't that vital then we should have a different strategy.

*Q: So now we are approaching the end of your tour in Afghanistan. What is AID talking to you about in terms of a next assignment or what are you thinking in terms of a next assignment?*

FINE: Yes, that's a good question. First they asked me to stay but really for family reasons I turned that down and said I can't stay. Actually, on the one hand I wanted to stay because I'd never have another job that would equal this one in terms of the ability to have impact and just to practice my profession and I was at that point where I was getting traction in the language and building out and solidifying my networks with counterparts so it was a terrible time to leave. I was deeply conflicted about leaving but for family reasons I did and in retrospect I look back on that and realize it was a good decision for me from a personal point of view but it was a terrible mistake for the U.S. government. I think the U.S. government should have just said, "No, you can't leave. You are a Foreign Service Officer, you are a commissioned officer, you must stay you don't have a choice." But at that time and I think still today it was on a voluntary basis so that's another critique that I have. I don't think those positions should be purely voluntary. I don't think we should send civilians who, because of their personality or outlook are unable to do that kind of work, but I also don't think it should be purely up to the determination of the individual officer whether they take the assignment or not. So I think if you've got somebody who can do the work that just like in the military you don't tell a soldier, "Hey do you want to go to this place?" You assign them as a Foreign Service officer is commissioned officers so...

*Q: And the short tours that became the standard for this place -- people also questioned whether that was a good way of doing it.*

FINE: It's a terrible way of doing it. To USAID's credit and to the credit of many of my successors and mission directors and other office directors, Foreign Service Officers, in both Iraq and Afghanistan you had many who stayed for multiple years like Kim Yamashita. He was a USAID mission director in Afghanistan for four years. When I was there we still thought this was a short term crisis and that the Afghanistan situation would normalize and you won't have these short terms. As I was leaving, I had made a proposal to USAID to have a minimum of two-year tours, everything should convert to a minimum of a two-year tours and just find people who are willing to do that and provide incentives to people who are willing to do that. They may have taken some steps to create incentives but to USAID's credit and the credit of its officer corps many of them opted for multiple year tours. I think that speaks to the kind of culture you have in USAID and I regret that I didn't do it.

*Q: What happened next?*

So then I knew I wasn't going to have a position nearly as compelling as what I was doing so I came back to Washington. My family had moved to Washington it wasn't time to bid on overseas posts so I came back and I took the position of senior deputy assistant secretary in the Africa bureau. This was my home bureau because I had spent my whole career in Africa. It was like going home. I knew the people in that bureau and they knew me so that was a natural place for me to go.

This Senior DAS job was primarily administrative, a very drastic change from the work I had been doing in Afghanistan with this extremely intense, round-the-clock pace where you had a real sense that the stakes were high and what you did mattered and you could see an immediate impact of your actions and decisions in the programs that were being implemented on the ground. So in a sense you got constant reinforcement either positive or negative in that position. Then going back to Washington the pace was much slower, the sense of immediacy was different in Washington. I found myself doing lots of what felt like mundane kinds of tasks like arbitrating over who got which office and doing a lot of personnel actions. I spent a lot of time reviewing basic reports or talking points for the administrator or talking points for the secretary that just didn't provide the same sense of reward that I had experienced so intensely in Afghanistan. So at the time I was doing that there was a senior career person in the Africa bureau, there were lots of significant policy and programmatic issues that I was engaged in that didn't provide the essence of doing important develop work.

On balance, I didn't feel very satisfied and in retrospect I think a significant portion of that was just a kind of culture shock. I had been overseas for 18 years and had never worked in Washington. I had been both in Senegal where I was the deputy director of a regional office and then in Afghanistan running the agency's second largest program. The transition from that kind of pace and, as I say, the immediacy and the sense of importance of the work you are doing, was just very different when I got to Washington. And in

Afghanistan, because of the intensity, the fact that it was a conflict setting and the political stakes especially in that early stage in U.S. engagement was so high, it just was a big letdown in Washington, so it wasn't very satisfying to me.

After nine months in this position I was recruited by an NGO. I didn't actually go out and seek work outside the agency, but an NGO contacted me and recruited me to come to their education sector office, which was the biggest part of their business. That seemed like it would be more rewarding work. I really felt like I was at a point where I didn't feel I was contributing that much, I didn't feel like I was being as productive as I could be on the things that I care about, which is to do good development work and I was eligible for retirement. One of the pitches that this organization made and it was the Academy for Educational Development, AED, was that I was still young enough that they were interested in me for a senior position in part because I still had many years of working life ahead of me. So that just seemed like a great opportunity for a second career. So the combination of that opportunity presenting itself and my sense that I wasn't being as productive as I wanted to be on the issues I cared about came together and to make me feel that it made sense to retire.

*Q: And what year was this?*

I retired from USAID in 2006 went to work for AED. I had a very good experience at AED, it was a very good organization and I worked there for four years. It was educational because while the issues were essentially the same issues as those I worked with in USAID both in management, design, and country interface issues; it was also quite different because you are on a different side of the equation. So I learned a lot, a huge amount about development work by seeing these issues now from the point of view of an implementing partners. It's a different perspective and you encounter different challenges and you need to develop different skill sets and expand your knowledge base on a professional basis to do it well. So that was very engaging from both a professional point of view and from a development impact point of view. A very good experience.

*Q: Where were the projects that you were in charge of?*

FINE: They were from all over the world. One of the things that I liked about this position was with USAID I had worked all over Africa and I had worked in Afghanistan. With AED a lot of our work was in Africa but a lot of it was in Eastern Europe, a lot in Central America and South America and a lot in South East Asia. So in that job it really broadened out my regional knowledge and familiarity with other countries. I had to come up to speed in Spanish because we had programs in Spanish speaking countries so it provided a lot of opportunity for professional and personal growth which I really valued. I did that for four years

*Q: And that is from when to when?*

FINE: I did that from 2006 to 2010. Then I joined the Obama administration where I was appointed to a political position at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. That also was

a terrific experience because it provided me with a different view of development assistance. So I knew USAID's approach inside and out and I knew MCC because when I was with USAID I interacted with them in Senegal we did quite a bit of consultation with MCC as it was designing a program.

*Q: Take a moment to describe what MCC is because it is an unusual alternative organizational model for development assistance.*

FINE: Right, that's why it was a particularly good opportunity and a very rewarding experience to work there because USAID is an organization that has its roots back in the '50s and it has really been the way the U.S. approaches using development assistance and development programs as a tool of influence and power and partnership. The Millennium Challenge Corporation was established in 2004 under the Bush administration as an alternative approach to developmental assistance and in many ways a sort of modernized approach so taking best practices from around the world and trying to incorporate those into a new bilateral development agency. So the U.S. now has USAID as its flagship development agency. It has MCC a separate independent agency set up along very different lines from USAID because it has a more business-oriented operating model. Then you also have a couple other agencies like OPIC, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the trade and development agencies so some private sector deal-making organizations that formed the core of the U.S. government's development instruments.

So I went to MCC in 2006 as the vice president for compact operations which was the position that oversaw all of their programs worldwide and accounted for about two-thirds of the staff. So the majority of MCC reported to me in that position. That gave me a great picture of how that non-traditional approach worked both its weaknesses and its strengths. Compact operations didn't refer to the size of the programs, it referred to the type of agreement signed with a partner. They signed a compact in which they undertook several actions to qualify for funds.

*Q: Take a moment to describe what was non-traditional about it.*

FINE: The MCC has some characteristics that make it very different from our traditional and a bilateral development program. To receive development assistance through MCC, first, countries have to qualify to be eligible. The MCC's motto is 'Development through Economic Growth' so it only focuses on economic growth. Everything is seen through the lens of economic growth so that's a narrowing or focusing approach. Second is that to qualify a country has to be a low income country so only countries with per capita GDP below approximately \$2,000 are eligible, so that also limits the pool of countries. Third, there are a set of, it used to be 16 and now it is 20, criteria. The criteria are grouped into categories of good governance, investing in people and good financial management. Those criteria are independent of the U.S. government. They are used by credible international embassies. For example, several of the criteria are measured by the World Bank Institute; Transparency International has indices related to the perceptions of corruption, those are some of the criteria. There were criteria from the Heritage Foundation and other third parties that measure countries' performances on different

things like the World Bank's Doing Business Index or the Nature Conservancy has an index and those indices or data points that are collected by these independent parties independent of the U.S. government form a scorecard. Every country in the world gets rated on this score card and they get a score. They have to be in the top half of countries performing for their income class in order to be eligible to work with MCC.

So Kenya would be an example of a country that met the income criteria and it passed enough of the other criteria that it could have been eligible, but it failed the corruption criteria so it was never eligible and still is not eligible. So that's the first big difference countries have to qualify and countries, especially poor countries like Sierra Leone or Benin would really seek to qualify and they would take and they do take many actions in order to qualify. They change policies, they make investments with their own resources, and they change their state behavior in order to improve their scores on that scorecard so they can then be eligible for an MCC grant. And in many cases not primarily for the money but that scorecard is a kind of seal of good governance. On several occasions I would walk into a president's office and the president would be holding the scorecard and would either want to show me how they had improved their performance under his administration or to complain that they were being unfairly being treated, that they were actually better than the score which was now a year old. But the fact is that countries pay attention to those scorecards, they influenced behavior of governance, and that is a really significant thing because there are very few instruments of influence that actually change another country's behavior. In this case, the use of the scorecard changed countries' behavior without the U.S. investing anything.

Sierra Leone worked for five years to improve their scorecard. They put together cabinet committees, they changed laws, they changed policies, they made investments, they hired a consultant from Cape Verde, because Cape Verde was a very good performer, to come and help them figure out how they meet the criteria. It was phenomenal to see how much influence that had on a country's behavior, how many positive steps and how much influence it gave the U.S. So that is one powerful example of the difference between MCC and traditional development assistance.

Another huge difference is that MCC looks at its funding as a specific investment in a country's economic growth. That is, a discrete time limited investment is provided so there is no possibility of thinking that they are in a long-term relationship. They look at it like a bank that would make an investment in a country to, say, build infrastructure. But the bank that makes the loan for building infrastructure isn't thinking well this road is going to lead to other roads and we'll have an unending relationship. MCC looks at it as if you are eligible and you are selected for a relationship and we agree on an investment then when that investment is over that is the end of the relationship unless you qualify again and get selected again and we negotiate with you again. But that might be typically seven years later so that could be on a completely different thing. So the idea of follow-on projects is not possible in the MCC world, in its business model.

The other big difference with MCC is whether the country can maintain the criteria. If the country does not, then MCC pulls out. Countries understand this is not an idle threat. The

U.S. government might have a \$400 million agreement and they may have spent maybe \$180 million and then the country does something like they change their constitution or if the president refuses to step down when he is supposed to, MCC will just close the program and leave. Arguments of well you've already spent \$180 million they'd say, "Yeah, but we aren't going to spend the rest of it because you've broken the compact that is why they call them compacts, the programs compacts. You've broken the contract we had with you. So MCC's mentality is: we have an agreement, we each have responsibilities and commitments in that agreement. If you violate the agreement we leave. So in Mali it was a heartbreaking case when the coup happened in Mali in the beginning of 2013 MCC was about six months from completing a program and had spent \$400 million. It was building an airport terminal and had over a million dollars' worth of equipment ready to be installed just sitting outside on the building site. When that coup happened that program was shut down, contractors were terminated and they just walked away because they broke the contract. So there is a level of discipline there that doesn't exist in the traditional models.

The other thing is that MCC programs that the compacts have to be completed in five years, that's the deadline. That also creates a very different kind of approach from the one used in USAID projects. USAID you can get extensions, there can be mitigating circumstances, etc. With MCC, in the law that created it, it's not possible to give an extension. So in the first round many countries didn't really understand that. They thought well no I mean of course we can negotiate something, well no, you can't negotiate anything. You have to stick to the terms of the contract. So with MCC they have one thing that is very wise that USAID could do but doesn't which is they have a start up period because they have a clock. Literally in MCC offices you'll see like a countdown clock for years, four years 25 days 16 hours.

*Q: Wow like CNN.*

FINE: Yeah. But before they start the clock there's a period before in which MCC agrees with the country on a program. The program is designed and MCC gives a small amount of funding to put the administrative machinery into place to hire staff, to rent offices, to get your business practices in place and these are implemented by the government so that's not a major difference from USAID; USAID uses implementing partners. MCC like a multilateral development bank gives the money directly to the government and then the government does its own procurement.

*Q: There is a level of trust there that's...*

FINE: An intense level of oversight.

*Q: I understand but even that initial amount of money there has to be some trust that the government will actually use it according to the contract.*

FINE: Yeah.

*Q: One could imagine that some deputy minister gets the money, a deputy minister of construction or plan or whatever and goes to Saint Trope with it.*

FINE: You could imagine that but MCC has multiple layers of supervision. The government in order as part of the negotiation of the agreement has to establish a separate authority and in almost all cases that requires the parliament or the general assembly to pass a law that establishes this authority and that authority is like a project implementation unit in World Bank terms. So it's, separate, outside of the civil service. They recruit the best and the brightest there. They've got resources to pay international salaries so it attracts high local talent and then they can and do hire international talent as well. So you get a level of quality and then with the oversight the MCC provides I'm not aware that that scenario of misuse of funds ever happening.

*Q: Fantastic.*

FINE: So the smart thing that they do is instead of eating up implementation time with the start up processes they count that as pre-implementation and it doesn't count against the clock. Think about on average a year for start up before the country actually starts the clock then once that clock starts nothing can stop it. There are no pauses and if the government doesn't complete the work on time then the work is just not complete and they get a black eye. It's interesting how presidents and prime ministers and ministers of finance and leaders in the countries stake their prestige on the big flagship projects that the MCC finances.

*Q: What's the top level of loan?*

FINE: It's not a loan it's a grant. The largest one was \$699 million in Tanzania, Indonesia was \$600 million and they vary from about \$350 million to \$700 million. So that clock really changes management behavior. So, in comparing USAID local counterpart managers and those selected for MCC is telling. In USAID it was not uncommon that you would have a local project manager like your government counterpart who was the government's manager on a project who was not effective, or who was maybe even was obstructionist. I mean to paint them with a broad brush. I worked with dozens of wonderful competent local counterparts. But I've also encountered ones who were not competent. In some cases they were not even honest. They got their jobs as a result of patronage and even if other members in that government recognized that there were real problems and the project wasn't moving they were afraid to challenge the person because of their connections. They would be honest privately about his incompetence, but not publicly.

That doesn't happen with MCC because the president or prime minister or other leaders have staked their prestige on success and they know that if it is not done by the end of the five years then they are left with half a road or half a water treatment system or a university that is not functioning and they are accountable for it. So as a result there were a number of cases where we would be two years into the project, it would be way behind schedule, we would go to the government and say you just don't have the right guy

managing this. You will never going to finish this project with this guy in charge or this woman in charge. In one case I'm thinking of it's not because the person was incompetent they just didn't have the skill set to drive that kind of program. Within a week the government had changed that person. So you get, again, a different kind of psychology and the differences are there is much more ownership on the government's part and much more accountability about the government than with a typical USAID project because with a USAID project USAID acts as the fiscal agent, it acts as the procurement agent and then it provides technical oversight. With MCC the government is its own fiscal agent, its own procurement agent and MCC watches that stuff like a hawk. They even have people imbedded to watch but they are not the ones who are accountable. The government is accountable and governments take that seriously. It's a high profile activity. They make a lot of public statements and they use it for electoral advantage. They campaign on, "We secured this and we are going to deliver this infrastructure," so they are on the hook for it in a way that is not the case with most USAID programs. So it changes their behavior.

So the country ownership, the time clock, the fact that it's a discreet relationship, it's not something that automatically turns over and the eligibility requirements make this a unique model. Also, while it is in many ways more powerful than a traditional development bilateral relationship, it is only applicable in a narrow set of circumstances.

So for me, I now had a clear understanding of both USAID and MCC I could see how these two don't compete with each other. It became very clear to me how these two instruments of national power, of influence, and of achieving development results complement each other and don't compete with each other. They have different models, they address different needs and together they can be super effective. You can get great synergy and get more than the sum of the parts putting them together.

*Q: Is another motivator to complete the MCC compact the fact that a country that is seen to fail may not be considered a good risk by other international donors?*

FINE: Yeah, in my experience during the time I was there, we had some cases where countries were behind schedule; Ghana was one case. About six months before the end of the compact, our projections were that they were not going to finish this work. So I went to the president and I said, "At the rate you are going it's not going to be possible to finish this work and it is going to make you look really bad, it is going to make us look bad and you are not going to be eligible for any future work within MCC. You are going to have a half built road and some of these other projects are going to be incomplete. You need to come up with a plan." There is another difference I didn't say here is what you need to do I said, "You need to come up with a plan or it is going to be a bad outcome for all of us."

That was when President Mills was our compact guarantor. To ensure he did not fail he actually used some of Ghana's own money and they went to a 24-hour work cycle. So they set up lights, they had three shifts that worked around the clock including working over the Christmas holidays which was something thought to be impossible to do in

Ghana because Ghana like lots of countries closes down at Christmas. I think they gave them Christmas Day and New Year's Day off and other than those two days those construction crews worked straight through and they completed a week before the end date. They completed right on time and that was at a huge additional expense, right? It was a big cost overrun because you are hiring extra crews, you are working over holidays, you are paying premium time to people but the government of Ghana paid the additional cost because there is no possibility of getting extra funds. That's the other thing. Unlike traditional arrangements where you run into obstacles and then you go to the donor and say, "Look, we couldn't have foreseen the ground conditions were going to be this way or that there was going to be this national strike, or whatever the problem is so we need additional funding there is a cost overrun." MCC just says, "There is no provision in the law to provide additional finding. This is the only funding. So you have three choices. You can declare failure and we can pack up and go, you can cut back what you are going to do so if you said you were going to do 500 kilometers of road you can only do 200 kilometers of road you just acknowledge that and change your plans and scale back what you are going to do to, or you can use your own money. Those are your choices."

In Tanzania, which was one of the earlier compacts, the cost guesstimates for the work that was to be done were not well done. So there were huge overruns. At one point we estimated the cost overrun to do the work to be \$180 million. Gosh I learned a lot about cost overruns and the whole literature about why projects often have big cost overruns. But in that case in Tanzania we met with the government and said, "Look we think this is what it looks like now that we have better estimates. And during that period there was a tripling of the cost of cement and building supplies; it just so happened. So Tanzania got caught up in this massive inflation in building supplies which drove up costs which was out of their control and not really foreseeable in the estimates. But it was what it was. So we said, "You are just going to have to eliminate some of these things that haven't started yet because this was still two and half years in and there were still segments of the work that hadn't started. We said, "You are just going to have to give those things up." President Kikwete said, "No we are not going to do that. We promised this stuff and we have to deliver on it so we will make up the difference. We will put in the money." We said, "You do understand that there are contractors that have to be paid so this can't be like you are telling the donor we can come up with the money. You actually have to deposit cash in this bank account on this date or we will stop work." He said, "Yeah, we are going to do that." We worked out a schedule so they didn't have to come up with it on the same day; we worked out a schedule over a two-year period of quarterly deposits to cover the shortfall and in fact the shortfall in the end was more like \$112 million, I think. It wasn't that worst case scenario it came down some but they came up with that money and deposited it in cash to finish those projects. So again I just had never seen that kind of behavior from governments in their relationships with the World Bank or with bilateral donors in my 25 years of experience prior to that time.

That was a great experience and I did that. I did that through the first Obama Administration and then at the start of the second administration the whole management team that had come in as political appointees in the first administration we all left and I

think we all felt like we made our contribution and that it was time to do something else. In my case, again, although I was thinking it might be time for me to move on to something else I wasn't actively searching. I actually had a chance meeting with the head of FHI 360, which led to an offer to come and join them and that is where I am now.

*Q: Okay, so take a moment to describe what your duties are under FHI 360.*

FINE: I'm the chief executive officer and I oversee the organization. It's a large U.S. based international non-profit, we are very diverse so we work in global health and that accounts for about 70% of our total work. But we have a number of subsectoral activities in, for example, everything from clinical testing to HIV Aids care, prevention, and treatment, to nutrition, to working on neglected tropical diseases, to doing health system strengthening just a complete gamut of public health programs. We also work on education from early childhood education in the United States to higher education in universities and development countries and vocational development programs as well so a bigger range of programs. Then we work on economic development mostly in community development, civil society strengthening, good governance, and creation of livelihood programs. We then have cross-cutting things we address so we have a whole group that is devoted to technology for development and have done a lot of amazing stuff with mobile money. For example, I'm very proud of the fact that our team worked with USAID funding worked with the government of Liberia to move payroll systems for teachers and health workers into a mobile money platform.

*Q: That is in essence something where the cash is delivered via cellphones?*

FINE: Yeah, they get paid through their cell phone through an SMS text message. So now, instead of paying money the old way where the head teacher would have to travel to the Liberian county capital where the county education office was, and there were all sorts of leakage and then lots of payments to ghost teachers. Also, if teachers were going their own, then they had to pay for transport, they had to be away and it would take them out of the classroom for days often. That's all gone now. Now the money has been deposited in your bank account and because they have a money mobile network in Liberia there are agents, which might be a shop keeper, who are certified agents. So they go to that local shop and they say, "I want to withdraw \$40 Liberian so they do it all via text message. So they transfer the \$40 from their account to that shopkeepers account. Then the shopkeeper gets a message that says the \$40 has been deposited and then he gives them \$40 in cash because from the point of view of the shopkeeper their problem is that they accumulate cash which becomes a security concern and a cost for them to get cash to a bank. So it is good for them because it is a way of ridding themselves of cash and having an electronic transfer of their cash into their bank account in their bank. Then it is great for the teachers and the health workers because it's secure, there is no leakage, they don't have to travel, and accountability is easier.

We also have cross-cutting programs addressing youth and gender where our tagline, our motto here is The Science of Improving Lives. FHI 360 brings a very rigorist approach to the work it does. We take the view that we don't want to just use knowledge. We don't

see ourselves only as implementers using knowledge. We see ourselves as knowledge creators in a scientific tradition that documents and shares knowledge. So last year our staff had over 180 articles published in peer review journals.

We operate in 70 countries, we have about 4,500 staff around the world, about 1,000 in the U.S. between offices in our headquarters in Raleigh, our office here in D.C., we have an office in Atlanta and then we have remote workers across the country. It's a wonderful organization in terms of its commitment to addressing the most pressing human development challenges to do so in a rigorous and professional way to use a global platform for knowledge exchange and to do our best to promote and make use of development practice.

*Q: Looking back on USAID from this vantage point, are there any recommendations you would make to improve its work today?*

FINE: Yeah, so I have to say that I've worked at USAID and MCC and in the non-profit sector and at heart I'm probably a USAID guy at heart. I mean that's where I really started in development. I've started in Peace Corps but USAID is my home in a sense. I have great respect for the work that USAID does and I think it often gets the short end of the stick in terms of not getting the recognition it deserves for what it has achieved, for what it has contributed to improved living standards including: improved nutritional status, better health status for people, combating HIV/AIDS, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. USAID is a very effective developmental organization.

Then because I've seen development organizations both from within and from outside the United States around the world and have a pretty good basis for comparing again multilaterals and other bilateral organization even adjusting my bias I'm comfortable saying that USAID is the most effective bilateral development agency in the world and that its workforce is extremely committed to good development practice.

So that said the period that I was in USAID -- mid-'80s to 2006 -- was a period of sort of decline because you have a reduction in force in '95 and '96 when you lost the senior echelon of the Foreign Service officers. You had a decrease in foreign assistance after the end of the Cold War, so this idea that well those relationships aren't as important as they used to be because of the competition with the Soviet Union is now over and we won and there was the peace dividend and the peace dividend was reducing the number of people at USAID. So you had a kind of stagnation there particularly of staff because of a hiring freeze that decapitated the senior leadership and the not hiring people for years gave it a kind of distorted personnel profile. By the time the U.S. realized that, oh my gosh, we do need this instrument, it was already 2001.

Then we have 9/11 and the U.S. realizes that we need this instrument in order to protect and advance its national interests. And although the program funding did ramp up, the number of people managing it didn't increase at all. And yet even in that situation, USAID, I think, stepped up to the challenge and met the challenge in admirable ways. I say that very conscience of all the mistakes and the examples of poor judgment, but if

you step back and get some perspective, you see that the agency did a heroic job in responding to the demands placed on it by successive administrations with limited resources and they did it with ingenuity and with commitment and achieved results.

In retrospect, from where we are now, I can look at that period and see that as a difficult period for the agency in terms of political support. It had to update all its systems -- personnel, communication, financial, etc. -- even as it was ramping up to provide management and versatile development implementation for complex, and often hostile environments like Afghanistan and Iraq.

I do give some credit to the Obama administration. They established a goal of making USAID the premiere development agency in the world and they put resources behind that. Actually it started at the end of the Bush administration with Henrietta Fore and her launch of the Development Leadership Initiative. That was designed to start restaffing USAID officers but that was like the last year of the Bush administration. To his credit President Obama adopted a policy position that we need a strong development agency and we want it to be the best in the world. So you have a modernization organization effort that takes place over the Obama years with a clear vision premiere development agency in the world and you have a very effective leader in Raj Shah who did bring a modernizing vision to USAID.

*Q: When you say modernization vision what do you mean exactly?*

FINE: I mean bringing more transparency to the organization's activities. Complying with standards that are best practices amongst the donor community. Putting a new focus on local partnerships, opening the agency up to new relationships, establishing the global development lab; bringing in a whole lot of research and development as part of their mission and putting real money like \$175 million behind it, putting real money behind it because some of this is stuff that USAID had always talked about but they might have spent \$15,000 million on and now they are spending \$275 million, they are staffing up they are doing something that we would talk about and wish we could do that but we didn't have the resources or the political mandate or the backing to do it. Now you have a leader there saying, "We are going to try new stuff, we are going to experiment, we are going to adopt best practices instead of just following the current we are going to lead the current. You have a whole new approach towards public-private partnership terms again building on stuff that had been done in the past but taking it to a different level. I think a lot of it goes to Raj's credit because of the vision he had and then he brought in people who were outsiders, and, in a sense, were disrupters. Some of them were successful and some of them not, but he brought in a new cast of characters. Monitoring and evaluation was another area of improvement, just energizing that as a function within the organization.

*Q: And here you are talking about monitoring development programs.*

FINE: Programs, yeah. So you see USAID during those years really modernizing its systems, investing in people bringing on new talent, trying new things and taking a

leadership role and becoming a leadership voice in a stronger way than had been the case back before that.

*Q: I want to go back for a second to the period of time you talked about where there was stagnation where it was immediately following the end of the Cold War and sort of going up to the beginning of the...*

FINE: 9/11, yeah.

*Q: That was the period when Jesse Helms was at the height of his power in terms of creating difficulties for the residence...*

FINE: Right, so that was when there was the plan to abolish USIA and to abolish USAID.

*Q: Correct, yeah.*

FINE: To USIAs disadvantage the head of USIA at the time agreed.

*Q: Right and also because there is one more element back then, which was reinventing government.*

FINE: Right but I think USAID did have the good fortune to have Brian Atwood as the administrator at that time who was a shrewd political operator. He came from the Hill so he understood how the Hill worked and he was also an outstanding manager and was very committed to the mission of USAID. So he fought tooth and nail and he brought Jesse Helms to a standstill and if you remember during that period even Warren Christopher, who was the secretary of state, was advocating that USAID should be folded into State.

*Q: And subsequently Madeleine Albright neither of them was willing to stand up for any of these smaller organizations because from their point of view they had bigger fish to fry and they didn't really care.*

FINE: Right or didn't recognize the importance of it. There was just a paper published last week by CSIS called Lessons From USIA, basically saying that was a colossal mistake. We can look at that in retrospect and see that U.S. public diplomacy has never really recovered from abolishing USIA. Let's not make the same mistake now with USAID, because there is this talk of consolidation. But USAID back in the mid-'90s during that period had Brian Atwood and he was able to fight that to a standstill and ultimately to protect the independence of USAID.

*Q: Which was no small thing given what was going on at the time.*

FINE: That's right and he paid a price because at the end of his tenure he was nominated to be the ambassador to Brazil and Jesse Helms blocked it.

*Q: He was not the only one that got blocked by Jesse Helms but...*

FINE: Jesse Helms was clear. He stated on the record he I'm doing this because that son-of-a-bitch Atwood prevented the merger of USAID. So that's what I mean. That period of time posed the agency with real challenges. And yet, in spite of those challenges it still delivered on its mandate and it really deserves credit. I was recently talking with some colleagues about the criticism of development assistance because right now, today, in June of 2017, there is a lot of criticism of development assistance. The current administration has made clear that it is ambivalent about whether this is an important tool or not and there is another active conversation going on about consolidation. What is clear to me, from my 35 years of experience, is that there is plenty to criticize about the conduct of foreign policy. If you think of that as including defense, diplomacy and development, we've made lots of mistakes. We've continued them, that's just life but what I've seen and what I think continues to be the case is that many of the successes you can trace back to our development work like PEPFAR would be an example but rather than USAID getting the credit for that, diplomacy takes the credit. Similarly, with defense, there are examples where development has made a huge contribution to stabilization or to avoiding conflict. Instead of being recognized as a development success, it is credited as a defense success. And vice versa where there are cases where there are failures, oftentimes it's a diplomacy failure but development bears the blame. So again, in that kind of situation USAID deserves a lot of respect for the contributions that it makes and for not being a complainer and for being true to its mission and serving the American people.

*End of interview*