

Contact

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Top Skills

International Relations

International Development

Strategic Planning

Margot Ellis

International development and humanitarian response executive. Strategic leader, problem solver, coalition builder, and compassionate mentor

Washington, District of Columbia, United States

Summary

EXECUTIVE PROFILE:

Accomplished executive with more than 30 years of experience in international development and humanitarian response with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations. Strategic leader and manager generating measurable results in large multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural organizations. Coalition builder in the interagency and among U.S. and international bodies. Highly-respected mentor to next generation of international development and foreign affairs professionals. Broad expertise in all operational areas and in Europe/Eurasia, Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

SKILL HIGHLIGHTS:

- # Decisive, compassionate, collaborative, inclusive, energized leadership
- # Dedication to mentoring early career Foreign Service Officers and development professionals
- # Proven talents in managing in uncertainty
- # Political acumen and diplomatic skills
- # Problem solving and consensus building abilities at the strategic, policy and operational levels
- # Operational and financial management expertise
- # Proven delivery of strategy, design and implementation of impactful, sustainable development and humanitarian assistance interventions

Experience

USAID

2 years

Senior Advisor to Senior Leadership Group/Foreign Service Center
May 2024 - Present (7 months)

Provide leadership and direction for the effective utilization of Senior Foreign Service personnel worldwide. Responsible for recruitment, staffing, assignments, deployments, support and counseling of members of the Senior Leadership Group.

Senior Advisor, USAID Mission to Belarus

December 2022 - Present (2 years)

Virtual and Vilnius, Lithuania

Provide intermittent advisory support to the Mission to guide their work to advance the Belarusian democratic opposition. Navigated very sensitive political and policy issues since the mission relocated to Vilnius, Lithuania.

Senior Advisor to USAID/Moldova

June 2023 - August 2023 (3 months)

Chişinău, Moldova

Provided senior level support to advance Moldova on its western trajectory toward EU membership, improve the country's energy security, resign malign Kremlin influence, and encourage catalytic partnerships with the private sector.

USAID

7 years 2 months

Acting Assistant Administrator - Europe & Eurasia - USAID

January 2021 - March 2022 (1 year 3 months)

Washington, DC

Supported U.S. foreign policy through strategic oversight of USAID programs in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Greenland, and a non-presence program in Russia. Collaborated at the senior-most levels with the National Security Council, the Departments of State, Energy, Defense, Treasury, and Commerce, with the Office of Management and Budget, the White House and key Congressional foreign affairs committees, as well as with senior-most ministers of E&E countries. Also held this position from January 2017 - January 2018.

- Chaired USAID Administrator's Crisis Action Team for Ukraine and led Agency's contingency planning as part of high-level interagency planning process in advance of the Russian invasion.

- Established new USAID representative office in Nuuk, Greenland to contribute to rebalancing power competition among Russia, China, and the U.S. in the Arctic.

- On-going mentorship of new foreign service officers and emerging leaders.

- With an increasingly non-permissive environment in Belarus, strategized and implemented an alternative presence in Vilnius, Lithuania to support the Belarusian democratic opposition in exile and those remaining in Belarus.
- As Acting Mission Director in Moldova during a coalition between Russia-backed socialists and a reformist, western-leaning bloc, re-oriented the portfolio to push back against oligarchic interests.

Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator/Europe and Eurasia Bureau
August 2016 - March 2022 (5 years 8 months)
Washington, DC

Acting Assistant Administrator, USAID/Europe & Eurasia Bureau
January 2017 - January 2018 (1 year 1 month)
Washington, DC

Deputy Assistant Administrator/Bureau for Food Security
February 2015 - August 2016 (1 year 7 months)
Washington, DC

Provided senior leadership for Feed the Future, the US Government's global hunger and food security initiative involving 11 federal departments and agencies. BFS managed an annual budget of \$1 billion, programming in more than 40 countries plus strategic partnerships with South Africa, Brazil, and India.

- Played critical role in institutionalizing Feed the Future Presidential Initiative through passage of the Global Food Security Act, to improve agricultural productivity, advance climate smart agriculture and improve nutritional outcomes to decrease poverty and childhood stunting.

United Nations
UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General
January 2010 - January 2015 (5 years 1 month)
Amman, Jordan

Served as an Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN). As second most senior leader of this regional UN organization with 30,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$1 billion, advised the Commission-General on all aspects of the Agency's strategies and policies, management and operations, including external and donor relations. UNRWA responsible for relief and human development needs of five million refugees in its five operational fields: West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Directed Agency's programs (Education, Relief & Social Services, Health, Microfinance, Infrastructure) and all headquarters departments (Finance,

Planning, Audit, Human Resources, Administrative Support, Enterprise Resource Planning, Emergency Preparedness).

- Led UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Syria Task Force responsible for protecting 540,000 Palestine refugees in Syria impacted by civil war and those fleeing across borders.

- Built critical alliances with UNRWA staff, donors, UN Country Team, and host countries, in successful negotiations with unions, unlocking a stalemate with striking union in the West Bank.

- Galvanized support to diversify UNRWA's funding sources to include private sector, foundations and individual contributors and then built capacity to manage these new partnerships.

- Led UNRWA's three-year reform program, focusing on improved services for refugee population, strengthened results-based planning, structural reforms in resource mobilization and the modernization of its business processes.

USAID

4 years 6 months

Acting Assistant Administrator for Asia

July 2008 - January 2010 (1 year 7 months)

Washington, DC

Responsible for programming in 22 countries run from 17 bilateral and two regional missions in Almaty, Kazakhstan and Bangkok, Thailand. FY2008 program budget was \$3.8 billion, with 60 Washington-based staff and more than 1300 field-based employees.

- Undertook foundational work for USAID's return to Burma (Myanmar) and the South Pacific.

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia

July 2008 - January 2010 (1 year 7 months)

Washington, DC

Mission Director, USAID/Uganda

August 2005 - June 2008 (2 years 11 months)

Kampala, Uganda

Led one of the largest USAID programs in sub-Saharan African, with annual budget of \$300 million, 145 person staff, and large HIV/AIDS, malaria, education, and agriculture programs. Reorganized mission to address Uganda's vulnerability to crisis, including mitigating the causes and consequences of conflict and increasing accountability and broadening participation in political processes.

- Pioneered new cooperation in Uganda's conflict-affected districts with Department of Defense.
- Developed a strategy to transition from relief to recovery in northern Uganda, including strategic communication about the return process, youth employment opportunities, and strengthening local governance and infrastructure to ensure a more durable return for Internally Displaced Persons.
- Successfully elevated the scale, breadth, and profile of conflict programming by the U.S. Government in Uganda by creating a cross-sectoral team and launched new satellite office in northern Uganda.

USAID

18 years 1 month

Deputy Director/ USAID West Bank & Gaza

July 2003 - June 2005 (2 years)

Tel Aviv, Israel

Served as alter-ego to the Mission Director and as Chief Operating Officer of the Mission, whose program advanced USG's foreign policy priority of promoting stability as a necessary ingredient for an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. Mission staff of 121 employees included 19 foreign service officers. Directly supervised 11 senior staff members and oversaw a portfolio involving more than 50 direct contracts and grants with more than 800 implementing partner field staff. Total program obligations in FY03 were \$174 million. Mission's efforts were challenged by working in an ongoing conflict situation, characterized by an unending cycle of suicide bombings, Israeli incursions into populated Palestinian areas and periods of perceived calm. Closures and curfews, checkpoints and roadblocks and the logistical and political ramifications of a separation wall further complicated the Mission's ability to implement its assistance program.

- In West Bank & Gaza, led Mission in planning in uncertainty and developing innovative mechanisms to provide project oversight, despite travel restrictions on American staff.

- Led Gaza Rapid Response team, which developed quick-mobilizing, high impact programs for a \$50 million Supplemental Appropriation in July 2003.

Director, Private Sector Office, USAID/West Bank & Gaza

July 1999 - June 2003 (4 years)

Tel Aviv, Israel

Director, Private Sector Division, USAID/South Africa

August 1994 - June 1999 (4 years 11 months)

Pretoria, South Africa

Program Office, USAID/Zimbabwe
July 1988 - July 1994 (6 years 1 month)
Harare, Zimbabwe

International Development Intern
June 1987 - June 1988 (1 year 1 month)
Washington, DC

JP Morgan Chase; General Motors; Ford Motor
Corporate Finance Positions
July 1977 - January 1987 (9 years 7 months)
NY; Detroit

Education

Columbia University in the City of New York
Master of Business Administration (MBA), Finance

Cornell University
Bachelor's degree, Economics and Public Policy