



# USAID DONALD M. PAYNE FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023



## SUMMER 2023 IN REVIEW

This season has been marked by remarkable achievements and inspiring stories from our talented fellows and dedicated alumni. Our commitment to fostering excellence in international development remains unwavering, and this newsletter showcases the incredible work of our Payne Fellows.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## THANK YOU!

### **Hello Fellows, Alumni, and Friends of the Payne Fellowship Program:**

Hello Fellows, Alumni, and Friends of the Payne Fellowship Program: The Payne Fellowship Program had another amazing year for which we are very thankful! We are proud that our Fellows reflect the mission of the Payne Fellowship Program to promote excellence and diversity in the Foreign Service of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). A key highlight for us in 2023 was the increase in the Payne Fellowship from 15 to 30 Fellows. This 2023 cohort includes several "firsts" stemming from academic institutions represented to aspiring backstop selected.

The 2022 Fellows had very meaningful and productive summer placements at USAID Missions where they witnessed firsthand life with the USAID Foreign Service, and some Fellows even worked alongside former Payne Fellows now Foreign Service Officers. We also bid farewell to our 2021 Payne Fellows this summer, and as they onboarded USAID, we learned how much the Payne Fellowship meant to each one and the positive impact the experience had on their lives and their families.

This year, we increased our outreach and recruitment engagement in highly diverse cities across the U.S. with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), including HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and HSIs (Hispanic Serving Institutions), and further developed our institutional relationships that included establishing several new university partnerships. We also ramped up our social media, which increased our LinkedIn presence by 600%! We are extremely thankful to the Members of Congress and their dedicated staff, the Congressional Research Service, the House Democracy Partnership, and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations for their continued support and for hosting our Fellows for congressional placements over the summer.

We look forward to working with the next cohort of 30 Payne Fellows in 2024 to continue to advance our mission and ensure that the legacy of the late Congressman Donald M. Payne, Sr. lives on. Congratulations to the 2021, 2022, and 2023 Payne Fellows on your outstanding accomplishments this year.

*Eurica Huggins Axum*

Payne Fellowship Director



### **Payne Fellowship Program Staff**

**Eurica Huggins-Axum**  
*Director*

**Nijhier-Aleem Jules**  
*Deputy Director*

**Olivia Johns**  
*Deputy Director*

**Eric Rice**  
*Finance Manager*

**Kyeon Clore-Byrd**  
*Program Manager of Outreach and Recruitment*

**Melina Perez**  
*Program Manager for Congressional Placements and Fellow Selections*

**Nia-Melanie**  
*Program Manager of Logistics, Operations*

**Niesha Minnifield**  
*Program Coordinator*

**Michelle Henriquez**  
*Program Coordinator - Finance*

**Gary C. Juste**  
*Senior Advisor*



# VOICES ON THE HILL: 2023 PAYNE FELLOWS SHARE THEIR CONGRESSIONAL PLACEMENT EXPERIENCES

Each year the new cohort of Payne Fellows arrive in Washington DC in mid-May where they embark on an immersive orientation program designed to acquaint them with the Payne Fellowship program and the trajectory of their Foreign Service careers with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Following the orientation, Payne Fellows commenced their Congressional Placements for 9 weeks on Capitol Hill. This year Payne Fellows completed their Congressional placements at the offices of Rep. Lisa Blount Rochester, Rep. Yvette Clarke, Senator Jeff Merkley, Rep. Donald Payne Jr., and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee just to name a few.

The 2023 Fellows also actively participated in engaging professional development opportunities that included public speaking workshops and a networking reception with the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). These experiences provided invaluable insights into the realms of foreign policy development and implementation. On July 28th, the program concluded with a closing dinner where the fellows reflected on their experiences during this past summer.



# Karrington Knight

Working with Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett this summer was nothing short of amazing! Learning how Congress interconnects with USAID and other aspects was informative and gave me a real glimpse into life as a Foreign Service Officer having to utilize the budget and materials approved by Congress to make meaningful impacts in the missions we serve. Through the office, I was provided the opportunity to choose and write text on a resolution that the Congresswoman introduced to the floor of the House. I am grateful for the ability to use my voice to highlight such an important topic as Black Owned Businesses. I look forward to improving my writing and critical thinking skills as I enter my first year at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University and this summer at my international internship.



Representative Jasmine Crockett (Congressional Placement) George Washington University (Graduate School)

# Catherine Stallsmith

This summer I interned with Congressman Dean Phillips. I worked closely with his foreign affairs staffer to support his work on the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia subcommittee. I learned a lot about U.S. foreign policy in places that I have not had the chance to study. I spent most of my time preparing memos for the Congressman - supplying background information and talking points for his meetings with Ambassadors and State Department & USAID officials. I have gained a deep appreciation for the policy-making process and the thankless work that Hill staffers do.



Representative Dean Phillips (Congressional Placement) Georgetown University (Graduate School)

# Lindsey O'Neal

My summer in D.C. as a Payne Fellow was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. One of the most meaningful opportunities I had during my internship on Capitol Hill was meeting and learning from a multitude of climate experts. I deepened my understanding of extreme heat and drought in the Middle East, sea level rise and geopolitics in Southeast Asia, and indigenous land rights in the melting Arctic region. As a Payne fellow, I formed long-lasting bonds with my fellow cohort, networked with USAID leaders in my field, influenced policy development, and even met the President! The summer is full of surprises, opportunities, events, and connections and as a Payne fellow, you are in the middle of it all.



Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (Congressional Placement) American University (Graduate School)

[Shamsa Ahmed](#)

[Kelechi Dimgba](#)

[Sonal Lal](#)

[Jonah Phillips](#)

[Nishal Basnet](#)

[Xavier Ibrahim](#)

[Niyonsba Magnifique](#)

[Samar Rawas](#)

[Bree Brinson](#)

[Josiah Jones](#)

[Abigail Martin](#)

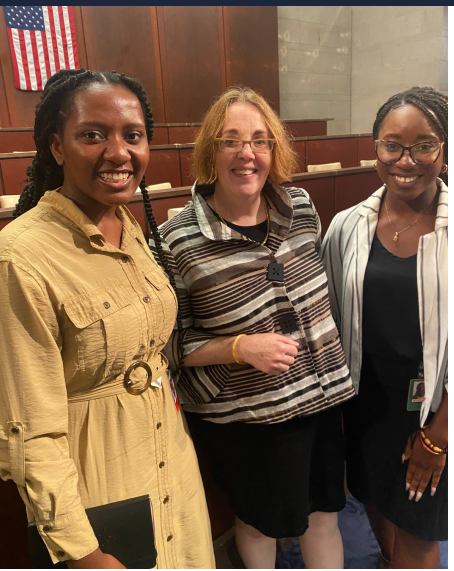
[Jioni Tuck](#)

[Marietou Diallo](#)

[Mona-Mae Juwillie](#)

[Madison Myles](#)





# 2023 Payne Fellows





# LESSONS LEARNED: 2022 PAYNE FELLOWS COMPLETE TRANSFORMATIVE OVERSEAS MISSION IN SUMMER 2023!

During the summer between their first and second years of graduate school, Payne Fellows embarked on a transformative 10-week overseas internship at a USAID Mission abroad. Each internship experience is a unique journey, as Fellows immerse themselves in diverse issues and projects across different sections of the Mission. This hands-on experience equips them with profound insights into international development, specific country conditions, and the roles and lifestyles of USAID Foreign Service professionals. The internship serves as a catalyst for honing their professional focus and elevating their language and communication proficiency.

This year, the 2022 Fellows set off to countries like Azerbaijan, Senegal, Peru, Indonesia, and El Salvador. As 2022 Payne Fellows return to the United States, they will complete their last year of graduate studies. Once they successfully complete the Payne Program and meet all the entry requirements for USAID, they will be onboarded to the USAID Foreign Service.





# Safiya Noel

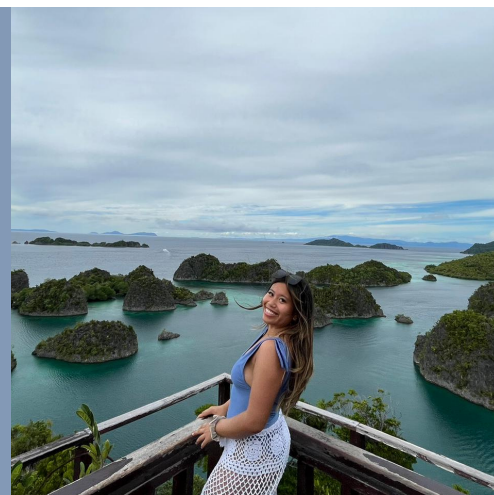
A significant event during my time in Ghana was visiting the Assen Manso Slave River for a last Bath, and then driving down to Cape Coast Slave Castle, which was owned by the British. It was a humbling day, where I felt the pain of my ancestors, but I also felt their sacrifice so that I may see them today as a free, privileged Black woman. This had a lasting impact on me during the summer, both professionally and personally. It highlighted the gravity of the opportunities this Fellowship has given me and the difference I will make with USAID.



Accra, Ghana (Overseas Placement) Columbia University (Graduate School)

# Leigh Mante

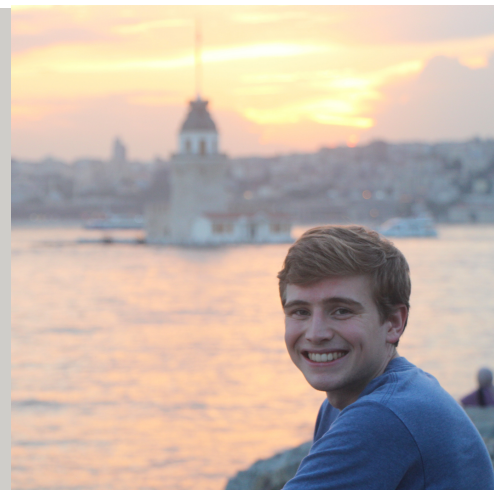
While working at USAID/Indonesia, I had the wonderful opportunity to accompany our Mission Director and Environment Team to West Kalimantan where we interacted with implementing partners representing seven USAID activities that are co-located in the region. During this site visit, I was also able to meet with leaders and local fishing village representatives at a focus group discussion event where I learned about their experiences in fisheries management within their respective villages. Meeting USAID partners and passionate leaders on the ground allowed me to experience USAID's mission to pursue localization and collaborative development to achieve common goals.



Jakarta, Indonesia (Overseas Placement) Columbia University (Graduate School)

# Ryan Sheets

My summer internship with USAID/Syria was an incredible introduction to the immense challenges and opportunities that Foreign Service Officers face each and every day. Engaging with the complex Syrian portfolio gave me an appreciation for the collaboration and coalition building required to support communities in need, wherever they might be. Though I conducted the majority of my work from the U.S Consulate in Istanbul, I also had the incredible opportunity to meet with teams supporting USAID's Syrian response in Adana, Gaziantep, Amman, and Frankfurt. The most impactful opportunity of the summer was meeting the incredible people serving on these teams that took me under their wing and gave me an invaluable introduction to life at a Mission and the work of USAID Foreign Service Officers.



Istanbul, Turkey (Overseas Placement) Johns Hopkins SAIS (Graduate School)

# Varun Thampi

This summer, my field visit to a region with emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC-4), and interactions with internally displaced persons in the region left an impression on me. Observing inaccessible health systems and inadequate safe water, and understanding community needs and coping mechanisms demonstrated the multi-sectoral nature of the problem, as well as reinforced the urgency to save lives and alleviate suffering through USAID humanitarian assistance. I am grateful to my team at BHA for making this visit happen!



Nairobi, Kenya (Overseas Placement) University of Chicago (Graduate School)





# 2022 Payne Fellows





# 2021 FELLOWS: REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY

The Payne International Development Fellowship is delighted to present that the 9th cohort of Payne Fellows have all been sworn in as USAID Foreign Service Officers.



**Nehemia Abel**

**Georgetown University**  
BS-70 Humanitarian Assistance Officer



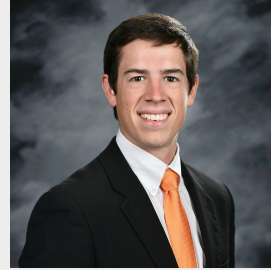
**Sandra Adounvo**

**Emory University**  
BS-50 Population/Health/Nutrition Officer



**Pierina Anton Lopez**

**Georgetown University**  
BS-60 Education Officer



**Jacob Auer**

**University of California, Davis**  
BS-10 Agriculture Officer



**Muska Fazilat**

**Harvard University**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer



**Marieme Foote**

**Georgetown University**  
BS-40 Environment Officer



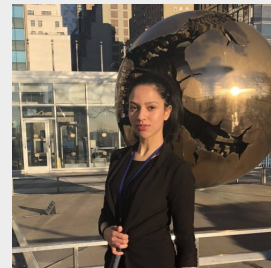
**Austin Fraley**

**University of Wisconsin**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer



**Harrison Fuller**

**Princeton University**  
BS-02/94 Program Analysis Officer/Project Development



**Afshan Kharal**

**Columbia University**  
BS-02/94 Program Analysis Officer/Project Development



**Kate Knight**

**Columbia University**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer



**Lambert Ngenzi**

**Duke University**  
BS-40 Environment Officer



**Na-Yeon Park**

**Johns Hopkins University**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer



**Rene Rosas**

**University of Michigan**  
BS-02/94 Program Analysis Officer/Project Development



**Cecilia Turner**

**Johns Hopkins University**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer



**Emily Wood**

**Georgetown University**  
BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization and Governance Officer





# 2023 Programmatic Highlights





# HUGE THANKS TO ALL WHO MADE THE 2023 PROGRAM A SUCCESS!

## **USAID/HCTM/ PAYNE PROGRAM, SPEAKERS, and WORKSHOP PRESENTERS**

USAID Administrator Samantha Power, Adetola Abiade, Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA), Isaac Blake, George Booth, Tamika Cameron, Alyssa Cody, Christian Cole, Neneh Diallo, Ceci Edwards, Akram Elias, Holly Ferrette, Ambassador Makila James, Gary Juste, Creighton Lee, Ahli Moore, Payne Fellowship Network (PFN), Jay Singh, Eric Smith, Michael Arron Stern, Penelope Thomas, Sharon Welch, USAID Video, & Linda Whitlock Brown

## **USAID BACKSTOP COORDINATORS, FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, AND MENTORS**

### **USAID MISSION STAFF**

Indonesia, Philippines, Azerbaijan, Colombia, El Salvador, Ghana, Kenya, Peru, Senegal, Syria, & Timor Leste

## **CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES, PARTNERSHIP OFFICES, COMMITTEES AND RESEARCH SERVICES**

Rep. Alma Adams, Rep. Lisa Blount Rochester, Rep. Troy Carter, Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, Rep. Yvette Clarke, Rep. Jasmine Crockett, Rep. Steny Hoyer, Rep. Jeff Jackson, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, Rep. Henry "Hank" Johnson, Rep. Kathy Manning, Gregory Meeks, Senator Robert Menendez, Senator Jeff Merkley, Rep. Joseph Morelle, Rep. Donald Payne Jr., Rep. Dean Phillips, Rep. Stacey Plaskett, Lauren Underwood, Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, Rep. Jennifer Wexton, Rep. Susan Wild, Congressional Research Service Africa Division, House Democratic Partnership, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

## **HOWARD UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Anthony K. Wutoh, Patricia Scroggs, Justin Knight Photography, Diplomatic Fellowships Team, Tonija Hope, Ralph Bunche Center Staff, and the Payne Fellowship Team

Special thanks to the 2023 Selection Committee and all our University Partners!



Apply Now!



[WWW.PAYNEFELLOWS.ORG](http://WWW.PAYNEFELLOWS.ORG)

Use your passion and commitment for community service for global change.

# Become a Payne Fellow

## The Payne Fellowship is seeking outstanding Fellows for the 2024 Cohort!

The Payne Fellowship Program selects individuals through a rigorous nationwide competition, preparing them for positions as Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The program specifically aims to attract historically underrepresented groups in international development careers and those with financial need. For the 2024 Cohort, 30 Fellowships will be granted.

### Program Benefits:

- Selected fellows receive support for their graduate studies, totaling up to \$104,000 over two years. This includes \$24,000 annually for academic studies, \$18,000 per year for academic-related expenses, and a \$10,000 stipend annually for a summer placement in Washington, D.C., as well as at a USAID overseas mission.
- Upon successful program completion and meeting Foreign Service entry requirements, participants are offered employment in the USAID Foreign Service, in accordance with relevant laws and USAID policies. Fellows commit to a minimum of five years of service.
- Mentorship is provided by a USAID Foreign Service Officer

### Eligibility Requirements:

- U.S. citizenship.
- Seeking admission to a two-year graduate school program at a U.S. university in the Fall of 2024
- Applicants may be college graduates with years of professional experience.
- Cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or higher.

### USAID Career Backstops Include:

- BS-02 Program Officers
- BS-03 Executive Officers
- BS-04 Financial Management Officers
- BS-10 Agriculture Officers
- BS-11 Economists
- BS-12 General Development Officers
- BS-21: Private Enterprise Officers
- BS-25 Engineering Officers
- BS-40 Environment/Natural Resources Officers
- BS-50 Population, Health & Nutrition Officers
- BS-60 Education Officers
- BS-70 Humanitarian Assistance
- BS-76 Crisis, Stabilization & Governance Officers
- BS-85 Legal Officers
- BS-93 Contracting Officers

Application deadline: October 26, 2023



Donald M. Payne, Sr., was the first African American from New Jersey to serve in the U.S. Congress. He left us a legacy as a peacemaker and an advocate for human rights and the youth. The Payne Fellowship Program is named in his honor because of his long history of service to the nation and the world in promoting international development.



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