Q: What is your role at USAID?
A: I have the pleasure of serving as a Senior Innovation Advisor in the Global Health Bureau’s Center for Accelerating Innovation and Impact (CII). In this role, I work with and learn from an inspirational and diverse group of innovators, partners, team members, and investors to catalyze, support, and accelerate groundbreaking innovations for global health. We all share the common goal of employing innovation to dramatically reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and stillbirths around the world.

Q: How did you end up at USAID?
A: As a former Peace Corps Volunteer, I had seen the impactful work of USAID on the ground. I was drawn to the breadth of their work and influential role. After my Peace Corps service, I went on to work for an international nonprofit and finished graduate school, always keeping open positions at USAID on my radar. One position in particular caught my eye. I interviewed with our former Director, Wendy Taylor, whose passion and drive for new ideas and models was infectious. She hinted that something big was about to happen at USAID. I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I started a week before USAID’s first Grand Challenge for Development, Saving Lives at Birth, was launched. Seven cohorts of innovators later, I’ve been fortunate to oversee a program that still continues to push boundaries.

Q: What makes you passionate about your job?
A: I’ve been fortunate to live and work in many different countries. I am driven by the belief that health is a fundamental human right and that new approaches and ways of thinking will accelerate progress towards this goal. But what gets me out of bed in the morning is the people I work for and work with. It’s the mother in Ethiopia that I witnessed give birth on the floor of the hospital waiting area because the facility was too busy to admit her. It’s the woman in my Peace Corps village who labored for hours in her hut only to give birth to a stillborn baby boy. It’s the physician-turned-innovator in Uganda who proves that great ideas can come from anyone. And it’s the USAID colleagues who bring critical business expertise to help successfully launch key health products and medicines.

Q: What topic(s) in global health interest(s) you the most and why?
A: I’ve always been drawn to maternal and reproductive health. I passionately believe that all women—regardless of religion, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.—should have access to quality health care. Working at CII has exposed me to how diverse actors and areas of influence can all positively impact this space.