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November 12th, 2020

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BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ALUMNI**

Inspire. Empower. Connect.

Dear Friends of #ExchangeAlumni,

Welcome to our first-ever edition of the Exchange Alumni Newsletter! We continue to develop and grow our programming as we expand our virtual workspace, and we have several updates and alumni highlights to share with you. If you have questions or content to add, reach out to Emily Rand at [RandEF@state.gov](mailto:RandEF@state.gov). To add someone to this newsletter, email us at [ECA\\_P\\_A\\_Outreach@state.gov](mailto:ECA_P_A_Outreach@state.gov)

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## Recent Events & Programming

### Shaping the Global Narrative on Media Literacy



U.S. and international exchange alumni gathered for the first-ever global **Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminar (Alumni TIES)** to strengthen democracies through media literacy education ahead of Media Literacy Week 2020. Imparted with knowledge to transform their own local communities, participants left equipped with skills and resources to evolve the landscape of media literacy education to be inclusive, far-reaching, and global. Check out the [full story](#).

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## Time Out for Mental Health

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everyday conversations around the world, we teamed up with Sports Diplomacy to host a special [MentorTalks episode](#) October 9th, 2020. Joining us were basketball All-Stars and mental health advocates Chamique Holdsclaw and Kevin Love who shared their stories on seeking help for their mental health, and discussed the importance of maintaining good mental health and reducing the stigma around seeking help.



## AEIF 2020

This year, the U.S. Department of State hosted its 10th annual Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) competition. AEIF supports alumni initiatives that promote shared values and innovative solutions to global challenges. This year's competition focused on the theme of Women, Peace, and Security.

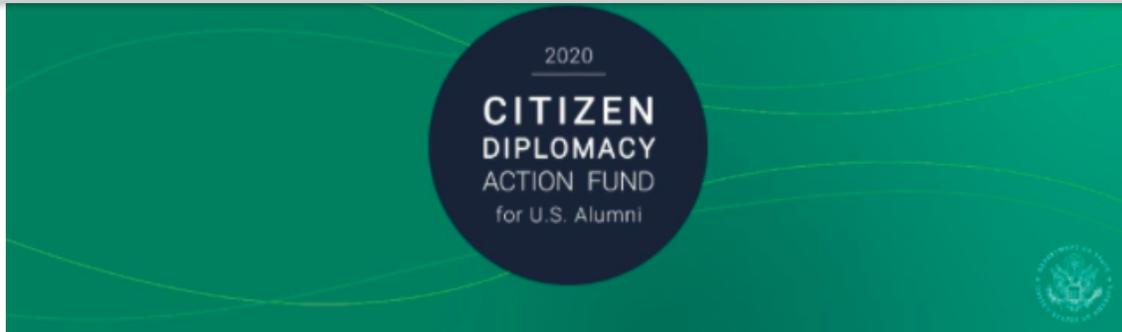
Out of more than 300 project submissions, 81 alumni teams representing 67 countries have been selected as Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund winners!

## COVID-19 Alumni Rapid Response Fund 2020

From April 14th to July 24th 2020, the Alumni Rapid Response Fund provided quick turnaround funding of up to \$10,000 to support post-led and/or alumni-led public diplomacy related projects that addressed COVID-19 and future recovery efforts.

Posts submitted projects that bolstered democratic principles while addressing needs that have arisen due to the current global health crisis including, but not limited to, media literacy, access to education, economic empowerment, and community resilience. Out of the more than 150 submissions, Alumni Affairs supported 101 projects worldwide for a total of \$907,381.

## New Round of CDAF Applications



We have officially opened another application round for the CDAF 2020 grants competition! This \$10,000 grant opportunity is open to all U.S. citizen exchange alumni from programs within ECA as well as other U.S. government exchanges.

We will be accepting applications on a rolling basis until **November 13th at 2pm EDT**. Please feel free to promote CDAF through any and all channels.

An informal webinar discussing grant eligibility and competition guidelines, as well as a list of FAQs can be accessed [here](#). If applicants still have questions, they can submit questions through the [online inquiry form](#).

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## Recent Alumni Highlights



In Mexico City, exchange alumni are drawing on the artistic talent of its youth to respond to COVID-19. **Stay Home do Art**, a virtually-organized graffiti artwork contest featuring 502 graffiti artists, aimed to increase awareness of safety measures and public health protocols through artistic expression.



With many businesses impacted by the pandemic, some are using the economic downturn to advance tech innovation and e-learning. Find out how exchange alumna **Jennifer Batumuliza** is equipping girls and women with technology skills needed to succeed [here](#).

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Recognizing the need for improved access to information amidst the coronavirus pandemic, **Shah Nawaz** set out to engage community members and youth alike to bolster public health information and to provide medical supplies to communities in Aishmuqam, Kashmir.



In response to growing disinformation activity related to the pandemic in the Central African Republic, the **CAR YALI Alumni Association** has led efforts to provide access to accurate public health information. Learn how they have ensured communities are informed [here](#).

## Best Performing Social Media Content



Twitter

It's hard to find a job in a traditional news organization, but that means it's more important than ever to develop digital [#medialiteracy](#) skills, says [#ExchangeAlumni](#), Farzana Ali. <http://ow.ly/G8eK50C2JD4> [@ECAatState](#) [@WorldLearning](#) [#democracyinaction](#) [#MediaLitWk](#)

- 6,684 impressions
- 45 likes, 11 retweets

Facebook

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"One of the best defenses against disinformation is a free and transparent news media environment." - [Assistant Secretary of State Marie Royce](#). This is why the U.S. Department of State brings together [#ExchangeAlumni](#) from around the world every year..."

- 42,421 impressions

- 589 engagements

## LinkedIn

We are so excited to have hit 2,000 followers on LinkedIn! Our page is a great way for alumni to learn about upcoming opportunities and connect with one another. We can be found at [#ExchangeAlumni - Alumni Affairs](#).

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## Upcoming Deadlines & Events

**November 12th at 1pm ET:** MentorTalks: Advancing Your Career with Exchange Programs

**November 13th:** Deadline for U.S. exchange alumni to apply for CDAF grant award

**November 20th at 12pm ET:** MentorTalks: Leveraging Your Entrepreneurial Skills Online

**November (TBD):** Career Connections Global+ Webinar

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## Alumni Resources

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## Get to Know Us – Employee Spotlight

We recently talked with Regional Alumni Coordinator and Acting Deputy Director on our team **Sophia Stergiou**, to learn a little more about her work in ECA. Read the Q&A below to find out more about the kind of work we do!



*Q: What is the main focus of your role in ECA?*

A: As a Regional Alumni Coordinator with ECA, the main focus of my role is to provide post with guidance and support in their alumni engagement efforts and strategies, and to share best practices among post and ECA colleagues.

*Q: What programs/initiatives do you work on?*

A: I serve as the Grants Officer Representative (GOR) for Alumni Thematic International Exchange Seminars (Alumni TIES). I am also currently managing our team's budget, while leading the reimagining of the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF), a competition for alumni to implement public service projects that address challenges in their communities. Additionally, I help to onboard and facilitate the transition of new staff members onto our team.

*Q: What region(s) do you focus on?*

A: My portfolio covers all of Europe and Eurasia, which includes over 40 countries in the region.

*Q: What is your favorite part of working on this team?*

A: Working with post and the Alumni Coordinators while constantly learning from them is what I love most about my role. This consistent interaction helps to inform my own work, as I am able to draw on the insights and examples they share with me to inform best practices with post and others within ECA.

## Got an Alumni Story?



Many alumni are creating positive health, educational, and social impacts in their local communities using the diverse experience and skill sets gained through exchange programs. Their courage, ingenuity, and kindness are the threads that we, the Office of Alumni Affairs within the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), pull together to build a stronger alumni network.

But, we need your help. We know alumni are often working across cultures, classrooms, and communities to ensure people are staying strong, safe, and healthy. Encourage the alumni you work with to tag us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) with [#ExchangeAlumni](#) to share out their stories of a brighter and healthier future! If you have an alumna/alumnus you would like us to interview for a story or pitch for a possible guest, let us know at [ECA\\_P\\_A\\_Outreach@state.gov](mailto:ECA_P_A_Outreach@state.gov).

We also encourage alumni to follow our new LinkedIn page, [#ExchangeAlumni - Alumni Affairs](#) to learn more about upcoming networking events, job opportunities, career advice, and more. They can add in a section on their exchange program experience on their work profile to find out who they might know, and to connect with an alumnus who might spark their next big project or idea.

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