

CHERYL WOJCIECHOWSKI

2006-08 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Agency for International Development
Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade

Cheryl Wojciechowski's decision to pursue a AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowship and leave her positions as adjunct biochemistry professor at the Harvard University Extension School, and health science program manager at the Museum of Science in Boston was spurred, in large part, by her earlier trips to Africa. "As a volunteer with the African Health Foundation in Kenya, and Build-a-School in Mali, I saw how education, science, and research can impact communities," she says. But Cheryl also saw a gap between what was happening in her scientific world and the people the research was intended to help. "I was tired of just talking about science and wanted to apply my skills someplace where I could make an impact and reach people internationally," she says.

She accepted an assignment in the Bureau for Economic Growth's Agriculture and Trade Division at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where she worked with the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) and Cooperative Development Research (CDR) programs, which fund international research collaboration that addresses problems of importance to developing countries. To date, her work for USAID has taken her overseas to Jordan, Israel, Egypt, and the Republic of Georgia. While there, Cheryl met with scientists who receive MERC and CDR grants, reviewed their successes and problems, and interacted with researchers to help them maximize development impact. "Science is challenging enough. Doing it across borders in regions such as the Middle East adds another level of complexity," Cheryl says. "I've been fortunate to witness firsthand how these grant programs work to bring needed technologies and resources to communities, all while learning about the grant review process and the process of funding scientific programs."

When Cheryl learned that grantees in Jordan weren't familiar with each other's work, she created a scientist grantee network that included a private

Internet chat group for the scientists to discuss ideas and field questions. "They had questions about the grant process, travel between Jordan and Israel, and how to best utilize available resources, but they weren't using one another's expertise to guide them through the process. The network bridged that gap," Cheryl says.

Cheryl received her PhD in biochemistry from Boston College and completed her postdoctoral research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute at Harvard Medical School. She renewed her fellowship at USAID for 2007-08. "The AAAS Fellowship opened a door into career opportunities that I didn't know existed," she says. "I hope to use these years to accumulate experience in dealing with community leaders, scientists, policy workers and implementers, in order to help community leaders in developing countries figure out the best ways to utilize scientific research for the betterment of their communities."

