

## Lightning Talks

10:15 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

---

### Room 1

#### Authentic Storytelling

Language has power. It can connote harmful stereotypes about a community, or it can help chip away at structural inequities and injustices.

Too often, when we share stories about the people who participate in our programs, we strip them of their agency and remove their dignity. But we don't have to tell stories like that. By putting people at the center of their narrative, collaborating with them to develop it, and amplifying their voices, we can create ethical, authentic stories. Doing so is essential to growing a more equitable international development field.

This session will explore the meaning of authentic storytelling and equip participants with the tools to tell better stories. Christine Nyirjesy Bragale and Maria Holsopple will share examples from their experiences at FHI 360 and Plan, respectively.

#### Speakers:

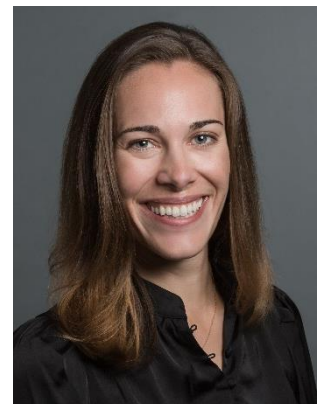
**Christine Nyirjesy Bragale** leads the development and implementation of FHI 360's communications strategies as the Director of Communications. Her decades-long career in public relations includes leadership roles at the Partnerships Incubator (operated by The Kaizen Company for USAID), the News Literacy Project, Mercy Corps, Goodwill Industries International, and TASC, a national security company.

Bragale spent the first part of her career as a television news producer and editor, including at The Associated Press, where she helped launch the global news agency's television arm, APTN, and directed its news gathering operations in the Americas. As a member of the White House and United Nations press corps, she covered politics, diplomacy, and other international news. She has received many awards for communications campaigns, media relations, and print and video productions.

Bragale holds a bachelor's degree in history and a certificate in Latin American studies from Georgetown University, in addition to professional certificates in digital marketing from Columbia Business School and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. She holds certification as an accredited business communicator from the International Association of Business Communicators.

**Maria Holsopple** is the Director of Communications and Creative Services at Plan International USA, an organization that partners with adolescent girls and children around the world to overcome oppression and gender inequality. Plan provides the support and resources that are unique to their needs and the needs of their communities, ensuring they achieve their full potential with dignity, opportunity, and safety. In this role, Maria oversees all aspects of external and internal communications, as well as brand and crisis communications. She works with a team of graphic designers, writers, and event staff to bring Plan's brand to life for a wide variety of audiences, including the U.S. government, individual donors, corporations, and young people.

Prior to joining Plan, Maria supported USAID's Feed the Future program through the Knowledge Driven Agricultural Development project and spent a decade in higher education. She was the



program director for Georgetown University's Executive Masters in Global Strategic Communications and worked for Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Maria is a current board member for TAD PGS, a government staffing agency.

Maria holds a bachelor's degree in visual and communicating arts from Eastern Mennonite University and a master's degree in public relations and corporate communications from Georgetown University.

## Room 2

### Financial Access for NGOs: Sanctions and Bank Derisking

The increased use of sanctions, along with counterterrorism laws and policies and the material support prohibition, have caused many banks to “derisk” – when a bank sheds rather than manages any perceived risk of money laundering or terrorist financing. Bank derisking continues to impact NGOs, two-thirds of which experience financial difficulties, including account closures, refusals to open accounts, transfer delays, fee increases, and more. When NGOs cannot access their program funds, lifesaving work is delayed or cancelled, not only affecting that specific program, but programs for years to come as trust with communities and authorities is impacted.

Join InterAction's Andrea Hall for an insightful talk analyzing current financial access challenges for NGOs, and exploring possible remedies.

#### Speaker:

**Andrea Hall** is the Senior Manager of the Together Project at InterAction, with more than 10 years of experience as a policy advocate, analyst, and organizer at the state and federal levels.

Andrea advocates on behalf of NGOs that face discrimination based on their faith-based status, the populations they serve, or their operating principles. In this role, she works to counter targeted discrimination, disinformation attacks, and denial of financial access. She also advises and provides analysis and input on legal issues related to humanitarian policy and practice as well as U.S. court cases that threaten to close space for international civil society organizations.

Prior to InterAction, Andrea spent six years at Charity & Security Network, where she worked to create enabling space for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding. Before entering the international aid and development arena, Andrea held a volunteer leadership position at Amnesty International USA, where she helped end Maryland's death penalty, and spent 17 years working as a writer and editor.

Andrea holds a B.A. from Trinity University (San Antonio) and a J.D. from the University of Richmond.



## Room 3

### The Big Think: Challenges in Making Agrifood Systems Resilience a Reality

Progress on global food security and malnutrition has rapidly declined since 2015, with over 258 million people facing immediate danger from hunger. Compounding crises are contributing to this unprecedented decline, exposing a lack of resilience and entrenched systemic challenges within the global agrifood system. To overcome these challenges, meet immediate needs, prevent further backsliding, and break the cycle of crises, it is time to reevaluate and recalibrate U.S. global food security and nutrition programming to more squarely focus on resilience. Sit down with InterAction's Jenny Marron and USAID's Dina Esposito to

understand how to effectively and holistically advance food security and nutrition, contribute to more resilient development outcomes, and combat rising humanitarian needs.

### Speakers:

**Jenny Marron** is InterAction's Interim Vice President for Development Policy, Advocacy, and Learning, leading the team that shapes and coordinates coalition policy and advocacy efforts related to the U.S. government.

A seasoned expert on conflict and fragility with over a decade of experience in strategic thinking and problem-solving in foreign affairs, Marron previously served as the White House National Security Council's (NSC) Director for Syria in 2016 and most recently as the Deputy Office Director of Advanced Analytics in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at the U.S. Department of State.

While with the NSC, she provided senior officials with analysis and policy recommendations on critical security developments affecting Syria and coordinated decision-making processes among federal agencies to reduce violence and support negotiations, humanitarian response, and stabilization. At the State Department, she managed multiple teams and oversaw the launch of a new instability monitoring and analysis platform to aid decision-making in complex environments.

Jenny holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Duke University and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

**Dina Esposito** is USAID's Global Food Crisis Coordinator and Assistant to the Administrator for the Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security. In this capacity she also serves as the Deputy Coordinator for Development for Feed the Future, the U.S. government's food security initiative. In response to the global food security crisis exacerbated by Putin's war in Ukraine, Feed the Future rapidly accelerated high-impact activities to offset rising fuel and fertilizer prices, helping farmers with improved seed and agronomic practices.

Previously, Dina served as the Vice President for Technical Leadership at Mercy Corps, leading strategy, program design, and technical support for Mercy Corps' global vision for country teams in more than 40 countries. Before joining Mercy Corps, Dina was the Director of USAID's Office of Food for Peace where she oversaw the Agency's then \$2.8 billion relief and development food assistance portfolio, providing strategic direction for the delivery of life-saving food assistance globally, including in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and the Sahel. She also served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian response overseeing Sudan, South Sudan, the 2015 El Nino agency-wide drought response, and the food assistance portfolio.

Throughout her career Dina has focused on the challenges of delivering relief and development assistance in fragile and conflict-affected states and worked to advance collective action and multi-disciplinary solutions to complex challenges.

