

# Gari Mayberry

Geoscience Advisor & Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Team Lead  
at USGS and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance



## **What is your current occupation?**

I'm the Geoscience Advisor and Natural Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction Team Lead, US Geological Survey and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA). I am a geologist/volcanologist who provides guidance and technical assistance on program development, disaster response, and mitigation activities in the fields of earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, and tsunamis to USAID/BHA, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations, as well as other bureaus in USAID. I serve as liaison with the US Geological Survey (USGS) scientists and assists in managing two interagency agreements between OFDA and USGS. I also explain complex technical information for USAID/BHA and a wide variety of humanitarian organizations.

## **What is your educational background?**

BA in Earth and Environmental Sciences from Wesleyan University  
MS in Geology from Michigan Technological University  
Center for the Study of Volcanoes Field Training

## **A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?**

My career has certainly been fluid. I started my career working for the USGS at the Smithsonian Institution with their Global Volcanism Program. My first job was to develop and write the [Weekly Volcanic Activity Report](#). I then transitioned to my position at USAID where I lead

efforts related to mitigating the impacts of natural hazards worldwide. I find myself working across several different disciplines, sectors, and professions. I have adapted as new, interesting opportunities have become available and have tried new things that I hadn't necessarily planned to do. If it seemed interesting and I had the bandwidth, I'd try it.

**Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?**

I think there will be even more blending of disciplines and fields. It will be important to show the ability to work with diverse groups in various fields to reach goals.

**What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?**

I think networking is important in all sectors. The best way to get a foot in the door is to take every opportunity that is of interest to them whenever possible. If a project, internship, etc... seems interesting it's good to give it a try to obtain exposure to different topics and people.

**What does a "typical" day of work look like for you?**

A typical day includes working with colleagues both at USAID and USGS to address the latest and impending natural hazards around the world. This includes collaborating with the USAID-funded and USGS-implemented [Volcano Disaster Assistance Program](#) and the [Landslide and Earthquakes Disaster Assistance Teams](#) to address geological hazards, working with staff to address hydrometeorological hazards, and tackling issues related to disaster risk reduction including the drivers and impacts of climate change.

**What is the best part of your job?**

One of the best parts of my job is having the opportunity to work with scientists to find real-world applications of the important hazard reduction work that they are doing. Finding innovative solutions to problems, such as developing low-cost earthquake monitoring equipment using cell-phone technology for earthquake early warning, is incredibly rewarding. Another great part of my job is getting travel around the world and meet interesting people who are going amazing work to address the natural hazards and risk their communities face.

**Do you have any other comments or advice for students looking to enter your sector of the geoscience workforce?**

For students interested in working on international natural hazards, I recommend finding a niche that is the most interesting to them and then engaging internationally when possible. The Peace Corp is a great opportunity to delve into international work and there are some nongovernmental organizations that work in the sector too.

**Connect:**

Contact info is available on my [USGS bio page](#).