About Uma Lele

Dr. Uma Lele, now Independent Scholar, is a recognized international leader, thinker, and policy analyst with extensive research and operational experience; her areas of work include food, agriculture, health, environment, global public goods, science and technology, external assistance and partnerships. With a Ph.D. from Cornell University, Ms. Lele began her career as Economist at the World Bank; and later served as a Research and Operational Manager and Policy Advisor in the World Bank’s Development Economics Department, the Africa and East Asia and the Pacific Regions. Advisor in the Operational Policy Staff and as Senior Advisor in the Operations Evaluation Department now called the Independent Evaluation Group (1971 – 2005). Her early work focused on African rural development followed by macroeconomic work on Indonesia (as Senior Economist), followed by work on various facets of aid and development effectiveness. While on leave from the World Bank during 1991 – 1995, she was a Graduate Research Professor and Director of International Studies at the University of Florida. She co-chaired (with Dr. Ronnie Coffman of Cornell University) an international taskforce on Global Research on the Environmental and Agricultural Nexus (GREAN) to promote partnerships among the CGIAR centers and science and technology institutions in advanced and developing countries to achieve sustainable development. While at the University of Florida she established and directed the Global Development Initiative of the Carter Center and the Carnegie Corporation, served on the CGIAR’s founding board of the Center for International Policy Research, and later on the CGIAR’s Technical Advisory Committee now known as the Science and Partnership Council. On return to the Bank in 1995, she led the Bank’s work on Brazil and China on issues of Agricultural Science and Technology and conducted quality assessment reviews. As Senior Advisor for the World Bank’s Operations Evaluation Department (now IEG), during 1998 – 2005, she led complex evaluations of the World Bank’s Forest Strategy, Global Partnership Programs, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) addressing issues of deforestation, food and agriculture and the Bank’s approach to globalization in health, environment, finance and trade. She also co-chaired an International Taskforce of the China Council on Environment and Development (CCICED) for which she recently attended its 20th anniversary celebrations.
Upon leaving services of the World Bank in 2005, Uma Lele was a member of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s External Independent Evaluation Panel (2006-2007). She led the first retrospective evaluation of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in India (2008 - 2009) while continuing work in the areas of deforestation, climate change and global and regional health. Most recently she led a global team of authors in the preparation of the central theme paper entitled “Transforming Agricultural Research for Development” for the first Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD), held in March, 2010, in Montpellier, France. She also co-authored a paper on Global Environmental Governance for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, MA (May, 2010). Her numerous advisory services include the IFAD’s Quality Assurance Panel, the High Level External Advisory Panel on UNICEF’s Evaluation of Global Program and Partnerships, work with the MacArthur Foundation, the Global Environmental Facility’s External Advisory Group, the Technical Advisory Committee of the Global Water Partnership, and the World Bank’s High Level Expert Group on Knowledge Partnerships, and Cornell University President’s Council of Cornell Women. She currently serves on the board of directors of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (Chennai, India), the Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, UK), and ENGENDERHEALTH (New York, NY). She has mentored students at Cornell University (1973 – 1974), University of Maryland (2006 – 2008) and in India. She is Fellow of the American Applied Economics Association, and has been recognized as an Outstanding Alumnus by Cornell University. She has published extensively in professional journals including most recently in Science. Her book length publications include Addressing Challenges of Globalization: The World Bank’s Approach to Global Programs, An Independent Evaluation (2005), Global Public Goods, Global Public Investments, and Global Public Policies: Some Initial Findings from a World Bank Evaluation (co-written with Christopher Gerrard, 2003), and The CGIAR At 31: An Independent Meta-Evaluation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (2003). Her books include Food Grain Marketing in India: Private Performance and Public Policy (1971), the Design of Rural Development: Lessons from Africa, (1975), Aid to African Agriculture: Lessons from Two Decades of Donors' Experience (1992), Transitions in Development: the Role of Aid and Commercial Flows (1991) among others. Her most recent work is focusing the Emerging Economies and the Rapidly Changing Aid Architecture.

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