The Capable Partners Learning Agenda on

Local Organization Capacity Development

Barriers and Bridges

USAID Office of Human Resources

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INTRODUCTION

In any organization, people are where the "rubber meets the road." Moreover, no part of an organization comes as close to managing as many issues that affect all the people in it as the Office of Human Resources. As in most organizations, USAID's Office of Human Resources oversees the human resources function of the Agency.

> *"The goal is to get the right people in the right place, doing the right work at the right time, with the right skills to create a more secure, democratic and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community*."[1]

Early Learning Agenda research findings pointed increasingly to the critical role played by the Office of Human Resources and its effects not only on employees, but on the programs and projects they run. Therefore, a deeper understanding of USAID's HR policies, programs, systems and plans was seen as important for the Learning Agenda, writ large.

This chapter aims to appreciate USAID Forward from the perspective of the Office of Human Resources and take into account the extent to which the Office of Human Resource functions in alignment with USAID Forward's emphasis on partnership with local organizations and systems; particularly, the links between workforce planning, position descriptions, recruitment and selection, orientation and training and staff development and performance evaluation. We reviewed USAID's Human Capital Management and provide recommendations intended to support future workforce plans. Currently, USAID's Office of Human Resources is applying to Congress for approval to reorganize and some information cannot be shared until final approval (which may take quite some time). However, as outlined in this report, USAID has a history of issues that impact USAID Forward's emphasis on partnership with local organizations and work with local systems. These issues affect reputation, trust and communication and thus are connected to Human Resources.

At times, working with the Office of Human Resources at USAID to prepare this report was frustrating. There were a number of people who were helpful in many ways. And they are to be thanked. But it was easy to get the impression of an Office that is circuitous and opaque. Is this by design or is it due to the "fit" for the jobs? Analysis of data for this research points to a bit of both and helps clarify some underlying reasons for the poor perception of the office as expressed in several surveys and by people we interviewed for this report: weak design; layers of procedures based on 30+ years of reaction to problems; some 29 modes of employment entry; employee turnover (derived from a combination of productive employees leaving and the Office of Human Resources as a dumping ground for displaced employees); and, lack of accountability (from basic manners to cancelled meetings and abandoned projects). It is also worth noting that USAID's Office of Human Resources received a 49% "poor" service rating on the latest American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Employee Survey with around 500 respondents. The score improved 10% from the previous year when HR received a 59% "poor" service rating with 800 respondents.[2]

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[1] USAID ADS Chapter 101

[2] While 500 is a respectable response, there is something of note in that 300 fewer people answered the survey, that being many apparently felt it either wasn't worth their time or didn't matter because things stay the same.

All that being said, no one knows these things better than the Office of Human Resources. It appears that layers of policies, procedures, rules and regulations applied to and by the Office of Human Resources over the years – either in reaction to an investigation an issue, a problem, or to patch the system – have resulted in significant disarray.

As demonstrated in this report, USAID's Office of Human Resources faces a number of substantive challenges related to both structure and alignment. Task assignment, resource allocation, coordination and supervision and approaches to policy, procedures, rules and regulations play their part and have an effect on the organizational culture, values, employee morale and job satisfaction. It appears that insufficient attention to the fundamental links between job analysis and design, recruitment, selection, orientation, staff development and performance appraisal and management confounds any systematic approach to effective organizational behavior and undermines global management of human resources.

The good news is that systems can be fixed provided, as one person said, "*someone is listening*." As mentioned above, the Office is undergoing reorganization; hopefully, this report and subsequent recommendations can help sort through the pertinent issues, particularly as they relate to Local Solutions.

DATA COLLECTION

A wide and varied group of individuals contributed to the data collected for this research report including: Civil Service Officers, Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Nationals, Foreign Service Limited and political appointees; contractors, managers, staff; those newly hired; those retired; people working in the field and at Headquarters. Methods included a literature review and qualitative and quantitative analysis using interviews and survey techniques.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews included approximately 35 managers and staff from USAID in Washington DC and at Missions, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and Government Accountability Office (GAO). While many interview requests were granted, it was very difficult to obtain input from USAID leaders regarding present or future plans for HR, despite numerous and persistent requests to meet by telephone or in face-to-face meetings. We did meet with the Human Resource Deputy Director for Foreign Service after several months.

SURVEYS

Three surveys contributed to the analysis for this report:

USAID Federal Viewpoint Survey (Appendix 1)

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is an annual review of employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. The survey provides information specific to USAID as well as how USAID compares with other US government agencies.
www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/federal-employee-viewpoint-survey

American Foreign Service Association Survey
www.afsa.org/Portals/0/vanguard0313.pdf
www.afsa.org/Portals/0/vanguard0212.pdf

Gap Analysis (Appendix 2)
N = 30/41 Response rate = 73%
Gap analysis is used to study what an entity is doing and where it wants to go in the future, as well as the means it uses to improve, such as investments of time, money and human resources. The gap analysis used for this study examined two areas: 1) links between job analysis, job design, recruitment, selection, training and performance evaluations; and 2) job requirements for building partnerships. Information from this gap analysis can be used as a foundation or baseline for measuring and planning.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned above, the Learning Agenda research pointed clearly to the critical role the Office of Human Resources plays in determining the effectiveness of programs and projects, morale, perception and reputation – indeed, the success – of USAID.

The Office of Human Resources is multi-faceted and performs and manages a number of activities, processes and functions. Basic functions for a typical Office of Human Resources are shown in Figure 1 below. The point in showing this generic chart is to illustrate how particular functions and procedures fit together. For example, staffing involves job analysis, job design and job specifications before recruitment and selection; orientation precedes training; staff development includes career planning, performance reviews and performance management; succession planning uses exit interviews and other survey information to enable the next iteration of staffing.

In order to understand adequately how units within HR collaborate to support the USAID Forward agenda, particularly as it affects civil society and the long term goal of country ownership and development, we reviewed the history and current organization of the office. We then examined links between job analysis and job design, recruitment, selection, training, development and performance reviews. As mentioned in the data collection section for this report, we spoke with dozens of people who validated our own observations and experiences. We wanted to better appreciate ‘what’ the office does and ‘how’ they work to enable the many people who work at and for USAID.

Figure 1: Generic overview for an Office of Human Resources

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Compared to international organizations with personnel scattered across the globe USAID's structure is not unique. Foundations, nongovernmental organizations – indeed, most businesses – operate in a global environment. However, when compared with other U.S. government bureaucracies USAID is different.[3]

It is difficult to say the exact number of employees in the USAID workforce as the count varies according to the report. The 2013 Federal Viewpoint Survey reports 3,703 employees.[4] The Office of Personnel Management reported 2,349 direct hires in 2013.[5] Some of this variation is due to different definitions of the terms and whether the Office of Inspector General (IG) is included in the count. USAID's definition of its core workforce consists of four distinct groups:

[3] The U.S. Department of State is the parent of USAID, but they have separate Human Resource offices.
[4] The Federal Viewpoint Survey does not include temporary staff in their count. Available at: http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/federal-employee-viewpoint-survey
[5] U.S. Office of Personnel Management Available online at: http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/ See scores, trends, rankings and demographics for USAID at http://bestplacestowork.org/ Accessed February 10, 2014.

(1) U.S. Foreign Service direct hires; (2) U.S. civil service direct hires; (3) U.S. personal services contractors; and (4) foreign nationals and third country nationals.[6]

The reality of the USAID workplace does not fit tidily into these four categories. There are some **29 different modes of hiring** and **multiple entry streams**, each with unique rules and regulations. People are categorized as **competitive** or **non-competitive**, **permanent** or **temporary**, **direct** or **non-direct**, **U.S.** or **foreign national**. This kaleidoscope of categories prompted us to look at USAID through different lenses: 1) USAID as a workplace, as an organization; and 2) the Office of Human Resources for its support systems, design and infrastructure. These different perceptions provided an opportunity to observe things "*in the air*"[7] that can either support or disrupt productivity, efficacy, value and achievement. For example, 65% of USAID personnel, many in supervisory and management roles, fall into the "temporary" or "limited" category. This alone has huge implications on workforce planning not to mention more obscure things such as respect, leadership and accountability.

CURRENT WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

In all, 9,421 people worked for USAID in 2013.[8] There are 2,142 Foreign Service Officers (1,747 career[9] and 395 with limited appointments); 1,717 Civil Service (both temporary and career); 912 Personal Services Contractors (340 in Washington DC and 572 overseas); 4,221 Foreign Service Nationals (22 direct hires and 4,201 contractors) and 429 Other[10] (295 in Washington and 141 overseas). An additional 50 to 80 percent of its workload (comprising between 4,710 and 7,537 workers) is contracted out to businesses and non-governmental organizations.[11] In 2013, 177 employees joined the Agency and 167 employees left the Agency. The "Rookie Ratio" of employees with less than three years at the Agency is 12.20%.[12]

Personnel are delineated by funding source, either **Operating Expense** (OE) or **Program Funds**.[13] In addition to salary, resources for technology, office supplies and travel fluctuate by funding source.

The distinction between operating expense and program funds is a distinction not replicated in other foreign affairs agencies.

> "*It reflects a lack of trust by Congress, a failure to appreciate that much of USAID staff are part of the process of delivering development (not just overhead), and significantly constrains operational flexibility*."[14]

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[6] U.S. Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Committees: GAO-10-496 p.4
[7] Steele C. M., Aronson J., (1995). "Americans". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69:797–811
[8] Semi-Annual Workforce Profile Report dates September 30, 2013.
[9] This number was access on the American Foreign Service Association website on February 11, 2014 at: www.AFSA.org
[10] Other includes interagency employees, Fellows and consultants
[11] GAO-10-496
[12] "Rookie Ratio" is defined as workforce with three or less years at the Agency. Available at: http://bestplacestowork.org/
[13] Direct hire staff are funded usually through Operating Expense (OE) monies; however, "limited" staff are hired through Program Funding. Program funds are in nominal appropriated dollars.

The numbers for the USAID workforce by employment category since 1995 are shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1: USAID Workforce by Employment Category FY 1995-FY2010 and FY 2013

Employment Category	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2013
Foreign Service	1337	1176	1092	1043	1017	996	992	990	986	1000	1040	1016	1019	1098	1305	1628	1747
FSL											71	181	211	201	183	183	395
Civil Service	1427	1202	1143	1109	1044	951	959	1006	1002	1036	1100	1026	998	1068	1112	1353	1717
FSNs	5211	4622	4253	4079	4205	4400	4585	4725	4852	4936	4902	4766	4657	3890	4207	4487	4223
USPSC	591	509	490	490	544	613	631	628	596	623	583	547	628	576	591	703	912
PASA/RSSA	155	125	124	137	153	144	141	172	164	164	167	171	139	124	143	137	173
Other	156	153	156	183	180	171	171	163	135	136	141	89	141	100	138	119	263
Grand Total	**8877**	**7787**	**7258**	**7041**	**7143**	**7275**	**7479**	**7684**	**7735**	**7895**	**8004**	**7796**	**7793**	**7057**	**7679**	**8610**	**9430**

Other includes: Inter-Agency Personnel Agreement (IPA); Fellows; Expert Consultants and others
Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

MODES OF HIRING

In the years when USAID direct-hire Civil and Foreign Service staff declined[15] missions relied on alternative mechanisms to handle mission operations and oversee development activities implemented by third parties. This staff is mainly foreign nationals and personal service contractors. In addition interagency agreements were established to obtain U.S. direct-hire employees from other federal agencies in order to meet management responsibilities. Fellowship and intern programs were set up to obtain personnel from universities, state and local governments, private voluntary organizations, and private-sector entities. Modes of hiring are listed in Table 2.

The sheer number of entry streams creates a "*maze of work-arounds*"[16] and has **strong implications for the Office of Human Resources**. All human resources work side-by-side and Civil Service and Foreign Service have separate and distinct personnel systems and guidelines, and the HR work is conducted by different units. "*The two sides do not interact*," a senior-level HR officer with 12 years' experience said. "*Units work in isolation. People don't ask nor do*

[14] Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing http://otrans.3cdn.net/69253eb7082d6dd339_5gm6i2nqp.pdf
[15] USAID's U.S. direct-hire workforce decreased from about 8,600 in 1962 to 4,300 in 1975, to 3,600 in 1985, to 3,000 in 199, to 2,900 in 2009, to 2,349 in 2013.
[16] Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing p.3.

they receive input. This isn't just in HR, but across the Agency." This is particularly problematic for recruitment and selection of people working on cross-cutting issues.[17]

Table 2 Modes of Hiring
Foreign Service (FS) Career Foreign Service Foreign Service Limited (FSL)
Civil Service (CS) Competitive Service Exempted Service Senior Executive Service (SES)
Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) Direct Hire Contractors
Fellows **American Association for the Advancement of Science** (**AAAS**) Jefferson Global Health Ben Franklin Presidential Democracy & Governance Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Population Fellows Programs
Inter-Agency Agreements Participating Agency Services Agreement (PASA) **Participating Agency Program Agreement** (PAPA) Resources Support Servicing Agreement (RSSA) Cooperative Administrative Support Unit (CASU) Intergovernmental Personnel Act employees (IPAOs) Technical Assistance Services Agreement (TASA) Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) Joint Career Corps (JCCO) Technical Advisors for AIDS and Child Survivor (TAACS)
Consultant
Contractor: Personal Service Contract (PSC) or other
Inter-Personnel Exchange Agreement (IPA): university or other agency
Details
Political Appointments

While the Civil and Foreign Service tracks comprise the main concerns of the Office of Human Resources, the other modes of employment require coordination. The Office of Human Resources may handle some activities (such as security badges), but many HR functions are scattered and collectively fall under the Administrative Management Support (AMS) officer who

[17] For example, job design related to competencies required for a job. This topic is discussed below under Competencies.

resides within the bureau or office and liaises with HR. For example, interagency personnel work through their home agency. PASAs receive performance evaluations from USDA although they rarely, if ever, interact with that agency. Fellows have said they have no point of contact in HR. *"This is by far the most dysfunctional place I've worked and I've been in the workplace for over thirty years*," said one Ben Franklin Fellow. Another Fellow said "*They really don't know what to do with us. It can be really awkward at times*. *Unwelcoming*."

It seems that in many instances the disparate streams of entry may have gotten ahead of the HR infrastructure and contribute to the confusion many employees expressed to us.

U.S. CIVIL SERVICE

U.S. Civil Service (CS) staff — those with career contracts — are "direct-hires" who generally work in Washington DC. This workforce is made up of both permanent and temporary employees and there are three types of service: Competitive Service, Excepted Service, and Senior Executive Service. Civilian positions are generally in the competitive civil service. Excepted service is used to fill special jobs in unusual or special circumstances (including political appointees). Senior Executive Service (SES) executives are transition appointments selected for leadership qualifications and serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees.

There are about 1,717 civil service workers at USAID, and all but one are located in Washington DC. Civil service jobs are increasingly difficult to come by and those with permanent civil service jobs either start at another agency or work their way up. **Internal recruitment** dominates recruitment and selection at USAID. Analysis of the Job Vacancy page on the USAID website over a four month period showed upwards of 90% of the job announcements are "Agency Only" or "Status Only" meaning the position will go to an insider. On one hand internal recruitment has positive aspects: it saves money; provides advancement opportunities; and boosts morale for those aligned with the people who get advanced. On the other hand, internal recruitment can have negative consequences: it can lower creativity and innovation; it reinforces conceptual in-breeding and lowers morale for those not aligned with the people who get advanced.[18] One external entry stream is the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF), a leadership training program for graduate students interested in a government career. PMF slots are highly competitive and only a few are hired each year at USAID.

U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE

U.S. Foreign Service (FS) employees are "direct-hire" career appointments who rotate their positions around the world serving one, two or three year tours of duty in the field or at Headquarters. **The Development Leadership Initiative** (DLI) was created in 2010 to double the size of the USAID Foreign Service workforce and approximately 780 new Foreign Service

[18] Janis, Irving L. (1972). Victims of groupthink; a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin.

officers were hired over three years.[19] Junior officers have five years by which to earn tenure by demonstrating foreign language proficiency and successful completion of at least three years with the Agency, of which 18 months have to have been on a permanent overseas assignment in one of USAID's field offices.[20] Newly-hired officers receive training orchestrated by the Office of Human Resources and Civilian Military Affairs to introduce them to USAID processes and procedures. Although original DLI targets and budgets targeted 1,200 officers, the program is currently on hold although we were told attrition rates are higher than expected.

While Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) hiring has helped the FS numbers and reports show the agency will only hire to attrition (50-60 a year), foreign service officer numbers have just reached levels of 20 years ago when programs were fewer and smaller in both funding and scope and USAID continues to face workforce gaps and vacancies at most missions. Many junior officers are being "*rotated back to Washington DC*" according a senior FSO with 25 years at the Agency. At the same time, "*FSOs report being overworked and, the Critical Priority Countries (CPC) missions have diverted a large number of staff from typical development missions*."[21]

It is important to note that the DLI program was started before **USAID Forward with its emphasis of working more directly with local organizations**, especially where civil society is concerned. A Mission director said:

> "*The substance of USAID Forward creates the need for personnel with skills beyond the technical. We hired for technical, not with USAID Forward in mind. For example, alliance building is an attitude. The same skills are required for working with civil society as for alliance building. These are functional roles and we don't hire functional people*."

A former mission director said "*there was no job analysis*" and, according to a senior HR manager:

> "*No one actually calculated where we were at during the surge of DLI hiring. Originally, we were to hire 1,850 new employees under DLI but only 720 were, in fact, hired before the program just stopped. Some Backstop coordinators were cautious in their hiring while others took advantage of the opportunity. As a result, we have shortages in certain areas such as Health. The emphasis now is to hire for those backstops*."

The influx of junior Foreign Service officers has one clear result: the core FS workforce at USAID has grown radically younger. The 2012 American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) survey confirms the trend toward a younger cohort and there is still a way to go to achieve a

[19] With regard to diversity in the Foreign Service, 83% classify themselves as Caucasian. The most underrepresented ethnic group, when compared to national civilian labor force (NCLF) levels, are Hispanic Americans at a 6% level (NCLF 14%). Black/African Americans in the Foreign Service are at an 8% level (NCLF 12%) however ,when Civil Service direct hire employees are included Black/African Americans stand at 25%. American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Survey, 2012.
[20] The three-year JO training program is included in the five-year tenure requirement.
[21] AFSA S012 survey; 2011 AFSA survey

diverse workforce. According to the survey, the majority (approximately 63%) of USAID Foreign Service officers are under 45 years of age.[22] As one pundit put it,

> "*The agency's direct-hire staff went from 2,077 in 2001 to 3,466 in 2012, an increase of more than 68 percent. This also meant that USAID grew radically younger. Now two-thirds of USAID's staff has less than five years on the job, and the relative dearth of middle management has forced the agency to more rapidly promote junior staffers to fill these positions.*"[23]

Promotion is a big deal in the Foreign Service. More than two-thirds of FSOs said transparency in assignments and promotion procedures was a high priority. One manager explained the process in the following way:

> "*The (FSO) Board meets in the basement to decide who will be promoted. Recorded criteria include number of years overseas, gender, sterling AEFs, and service in a critical country. Lawyers are on a fast track. Education is the slow track. This may explain the number of finance and legal professionals at the top levels.*"

Given the age and other issues, USAID could face workforce problems over the next five years. "*Due to lack of workforce planning there will be a cohort with unrealistic expectations,*" predicts one Mission director. She may be right. Generation X has a different profile than generations before it[24]; and their current concerns include child care, jobs for spouses and work-life balance. They are more likely to walk away from their current job if flexibility isn't available.[25] According to an AFSA representative:

> "*FSOs are very concerned about work-life balance and may make career decisions based on that including the option of leaving the agency. More than 67% feel they are underpaid.*"

If, as the Learning Agenda research showed, longer-term, more trusting relationships with local organizations are what is wanted from USAID by the developing countries in which it works, such concerns by a younger workforce have obvious negative implications.

FOREIGN SERVICE NATIONALS

Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) are foreign nationals and other locally resident citizens (including US Citizens) employed at missions overseas who are legally eligible to work in that country. They may be considered "direct hires" but typically host-country employees receive one-year contracts that are renewed annually. In many ways Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) are the reason behind a donor agency's involvement in development: it's their country. FSNs stay when others leave.

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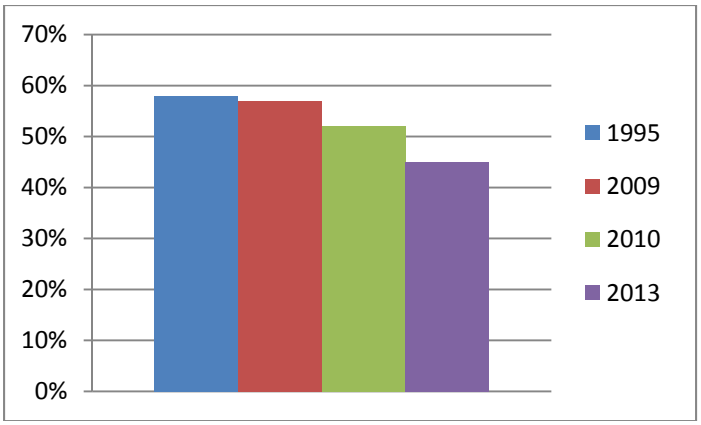
[22] 2012 American Foreign Service Association Survey. Available at: www.afsa.org
[23] The Crucible: Iraq, Afghanistan and the Future of USAID by John Norris, 19 Nov 2013, World Policy Review.
[24] Generation X can be classified as the cohort of individuals born between the years of 1960-1979.
[25] Ernst & Young LLP Talent Survey Available at: http://www.ey.com

FSNs made up 45% of the Agency's global workforce in 2013 (4,221 FSNs) as shown in Figure 2. This number is down from 58% in 1995 (5205 FSNs).[26] The biggest decline in FSN workforce was in the midst of the Foreign and Civil Service surge from 2009 when FSNs comprised 57% (4,227 FSNs) of the Agency's global workforce to 2010 when FSNs comprised 52% (4487 FSNs). The composition of the USAID FSN workforce is discussed below under Adjustments to the Workforce Profile.

Figure 2: Percentage of Foreign Service Nationals in USAID Global Workforce



1995	2009	2010	2013
58%	57%	52%	45%

Foreign Service Nationals are:

> "*the continuity staff of our Missions abroad. They provide the institutional knowledge and professional contacts…. FSN personnel perform vital mission program and support functions. All USG agencies under Chief of Mission authority depend heavily on their continuity staff, frequently delegating to them significant management roles and program functions.*"[27]

In a system where most U.S. personnel are assigned to a post only for two or three years, "*FSNs become the institutional memory of the embassy*."[28] FSNs are the:

> "*long-term keepers of the contacts with the host country government and… introduce their new American bosses to the people they need to know in the government to get their jobs done*." [29]

"*FSNs are often some of the most talented, best educated people in the country*."[30] After working for the U.S. government for 15 years, FSNs are eligible to receive green cards. FSNs earn considerably less than FSOs and "*they have not received raises for a long time*," according to one HR official. Even though the U.S. government is considered a good employer, USAID

[26] Source: Update to the Five-Year Workforce Plan: FY 2011 – FY 2015 December 2010
[27] Available at: http://careers.state.gov/local-employment
[28] Corinne Thornton (Jan. 1999) Helping Put Dar Back on Track, State Magazine Accessed at: http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/publications/statemag/statemag_jan99/feature1.html
[29] Fred Burton and Scott Stewart. (2008) Counterintelligence Implications of Foreign Service National Employees Security Weekly October 29, 2008, p. 13. Accessed at http://www.stratfor.com
[30] Dave Seminara, FSO

Mission officials say that "*the salaries set for Foreign Service nationals make it difficult to recruit and retain the country's top professional talent*."[31] This is particularly true in the poorest countries with limited human resource capacities.

> "*Mission directors have pointed out that it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete with other donor organizations and international financial institutions for a country's most qualified professionals*."[32]
>
> "*FSNs are positioned to develop the 'sustainable' part of a partnership*," according to one FSO. "*Any security liability is offset by the utility they provide and the systems put in place to limit the counterintelligence damage they can cause*."[33]

FSN issues were brought to the forefront of the Agency in 2010, and:

> "*were made more of a priority than ever before…. to better support and address issues impacting this important segment of USAID's workforce*,"[34]

For example, the Agency developed the FSN Fellowship Program to provide developmental opportunities for USAID FSNs to apply their technical knowledge and professional work experience in temporary rotational assignments. "*Things did not go according to plan*," according to one observer. For one thing:

> "*there were issues with security. The Fellow who came to work in our office couldn't get access to our floor. Another FSN left after three weeks for similar issues. She had commitments at home and she felt it was a waste of her time*."

Another report from the Global Health Fellows Program found the FSN Washington Fellowship Program was a resounding success.[35]

An earlier study[36] cites:

> "*FSNs performing administrative functions in USAID missions have been reduced in numbers as a result of Consolidation of Administrative Services*."

Also, "*direct hire FSNs have no reemployment rights if they leave for national service or serve USAID as Third Country Nationals (TCNs)*."[37]

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[31] Foreign Assistance: USAID Needs to Improve Its Strategic Planning to Address Current and Future Workforce Needs," Report GAO-10-496 June 30, 2010.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] This according to USAID's Update to the Five-Year Workforce Plan: FY 2009 – FY 2013 (dated December 2009).
[35] USAID Update to the Five-Year Workforce Plan: FY 2009 – FY 2013 p. 50
[36] Didier Trinh, Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing. Available online at: http://otrans.3cdn.net/69253eb7082d6dd339_5gm6i2nqp.pdf
[37] Ibid.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

Temporary employees are hired for shorter periods, typically one to three years, through personal service contracts, inter-agency transfers, and other mechanisms and they make up a significant portion of the USAID workforce.[38] Some temporary employees (i.e. Exempted and Senior Executive Service and Foreign Service Limited) are "direct hires" and enjoy the same benefits as tenured staff. **Foreign Service Limited** (FSLs) are non-career officers hired for specific appointments (in Washington DC or Critical Priority Countries) for one to five years. FSLs cannot be promoted or moved to other offices or departments.[39] They often hold supervisory and management positions.

> "*Some would opt for permanent status if given the choice but USAID lacks Operational Expenses and/or conversion authority, and they would have to compete for their current positions*."[40]

From 2001 to 2009 USAID's permanent workforce declined by 2.7% while program funding almost doubled during this same timeframe from about $9.3 billion to about $17.9 billion.[41] Conversely, the Agency's direct hire staff increased by more than 66 percent over that same period – largely because of massive reconstruction efforts that followed the U.S. military invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq.[42] In many ways, USAID rebuilt its hollowed-out workforce through "limited" contracts in order to face the challenges represented by Afghanistan and Iraq (and to a lesser extent Sudan and Pakistan). USAID has deployed more than 2,000 "direct hires" in Iraq and Afghanistan and there are currently about 150 USAID direct-hire staff in Afghanistan.

Metaphorically, **political appointees**[43] "steer" at the behest of the president, and the permanent staff "rows." Some say that staff support to political elites who set and manage policy relegates the Foreign Service officers to a secondary status.

> "*For all their merit, political appointees are short-term officials, subject to partisan, personality-specific pressures. They do not notably contribute to the institution's longer-term vitality, and their ascension creates a system inherently incapable of providing expert, nonpartisan foreign policy advice. When the bulk of leadership positions are held*

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[38] About 65% of the USAID workforce is under a limited or temporary appointment.

[39] Gordon Lubold, (September 5, 2013) A Death in the Family. USAID's first known war-zone-related suicide raises troubling questions about whether America is doing enough to assist its relief workers. Available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com

[40] Didier Trinh, Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing.

[41] John Norris (Nov. 19, 2013). The Crucible: Iraq, Afghanistan and the Future of USAID, World Policy Review. According to Norris, America's assistance programs in Afghanistan and Iraq wasted staggering amounts of tax dollars and cost political capital in developing countries. Further, the U.S. can't want development or counterinsurgency more than the host government with which it is working. Available at: http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13380

[42] Ibid.

[43] The Plum Book has a listing of over 7,000 civil service leadership and support positions (filled and vacant) in the Legislative and Executive branches of the Federal Government that may be subject to noncompetitive appointments. These positions include agency heads and their immediate subordinates, policy executives and advisors, and aides who report to these officials. Many positions have duties which support Administration policies and programs. The people holding these positions usually have a close and confidential relationship with the agency head or other key officials.

by transient appointees, the Foreign Service is undermined. This situation spawns opportunism and political correctness, weakens esprit de corps within the service and emaciates institutional memory. Long-held concepts about the disciplined, competitive, promotion-based personnel system are being called into question."[44]

There are frequent calls to reduce the number of political appointments that are doled out as political patronage citing appointees' lack the specialized knowledge and executive skills, and positions often go unfilled for long periods of time without consequence. According to Foreign Service officials there is an "overwhelming and growing presence of transient political appointees in mid-level and top leadership positions."[45] They complain that:

"*Civil service has grown at the expense of the Foreign Service* [and] *if this trend is not reversed, the United States will lose the invaluable contribution of people with overseas experience*."[46]

Members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) fill in capably but positions are temporarily filled by appointees who lack Senate confirmation and full authorities.[47] Data shows somewhat improved representational balance in USAID senior management over the years (Table 3 and Figure 3); however, a full 54% are non-career, administratively determined (AD) or executive appointments (EX).[48] A Program Officer with over twenty years at USAID opines that:

"*With the exception a few Congressional and Senate committees and the assortment of USAID's beltway bandits many Americans don't know USAID…. what it does or should do. So, it has been left pretty much undisturbed to be tinkered with by the occasional political appointees who also often don't know or understand development and how it operates*."

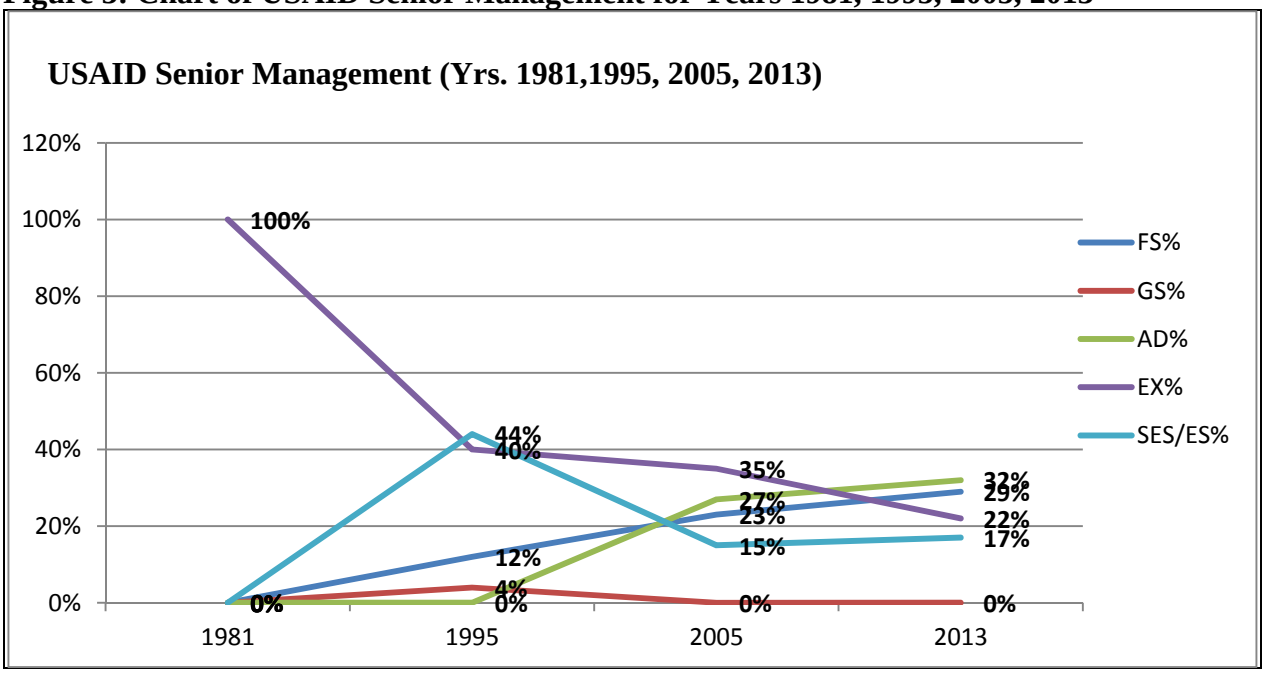
Table 3: USAID Senior Management for years 1981, 1995, 2005, 2013

USAID Senior Management (Yrs. 1981, 1995, 2005, 2013)

Year	FS	FS%	GS	AD	EX	SES/ES	Total	FS%	GS%	AD%	EX%	SES/ES%
1981	0	0%	0	0	4	0	**4**	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
1995	3	12%	1	0	10	11	**25**	12%	4%	0%	40%	44%
2005	6	23%	0	7	9	4	**26**	23%	0%	27%	35%	15%
2013	12	29%	0	13	9	7	**41**	29%	0%	32%	22%	17%

[44] *Presidents are breaking the U.S. Foreign Service* Washington Post, Opinion by Susan R. Johnson, Ronald E. Neumann and Thomas R. Pickering, Published: April 11, 2013.
[45] Ibid. Susan R. Johnson is president of th**e** American Foreign Service Association**.** Ronald E. Neumann, a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, is president of the American Academy of Diplomacy**,** where Thomas R. Pickering, a former undersecretary of state, is chairman of the board.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Anne Joseph O'Connell, Vacant Offices: Delays in Staff Top Agency Positions. Available at: http://www.law.yale.edu. Accessed on February, 10, 2014.
[48] Source: American Foreign Service Association, 2014.

Figure 3: Chart of USAID Senior Management for Years 1981, 1995, 2005, 2013



Personal Services Contractors (PSCs) are individuals who enter into a contract that establishes an employer-employee relationship with the Agency. The individual appears, in many respects, to be a Government employee; however, USAID's PSCs are legally not USG employees for the purpose of any law administered by the Office of Personnel Management. Personal services contractors declined from about 72% in 2004 to about 63% in 2009 and 55% in 2013; yet, U.S. and foreign national personal services contractors still comprise the majority portion of the USAID workforce. The Foreign Service Act restricts USAID to only 25 PSCs in Washington.[49] Contract personnel lack "*inherently governmental authorities and are treated as lower-class employees*."[50] This sentiment was observed while researching for this report; for example, when introducing herself in a meeting one woman said "*I'm just a PSC*."

USAID enters into a number of **interagency agreements** with other federal agencies[51] for non-direct-hire technical or service personnel. These agreements have a broad objective but no specific readily measurable tasks to be accomplished within a set time. Most common are **Participating Agency Service Agreements** (PASAs) or **Participating Program Service Agreements** (PAPAs) which effectively replaced the **Resources Support Services Agreement** (RSSA); however, there are also Technical Advisory Service Agreements (**TASAs**) and **Cooperative Administrative Support Units** (CASUs). CASUs can provide services in the areas of administrative support, financial and procurement management, human resources, light industrial, mail management, professional and technical, and training.

[49] Didier Trinh, Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing
[50] Ibid.
[51] Most common are the Departments of Agriculture, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Interior, Labor, and the General Services.

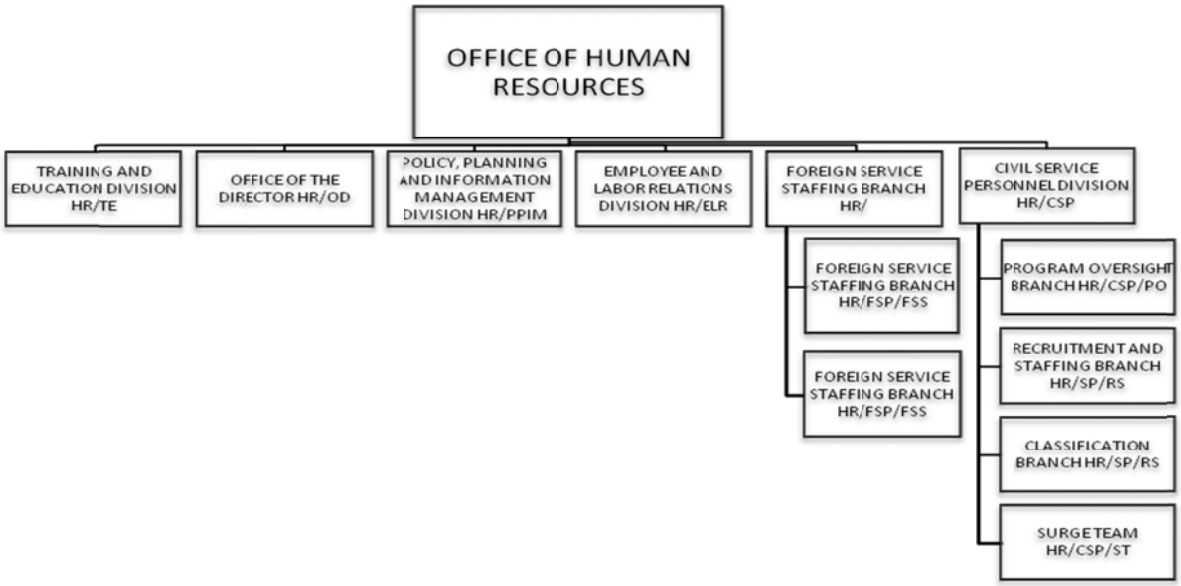
The Office of Human Resources estimate overhead costs for interagency agreements range from 25% to 60%.[52] Nearly all interagency agreements are supported by Program Funds.

Details are another means by which USAID may obtain services from, or provide services to, another Federal agency. Details may be established on either a reimbursable or a non-reimbursable basis to: 1) Meet short-term staffing needs; 2) Help mount special projects or initiatives, or 3) Provide professional development opportunities for staff. According to one HR official, details are "*grossly misused as a means to get rid of unwanted employees*."

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The current **organizational chart** for the Office of Human Resources divisions is shown in Figure 4. There is no scheme for units or teams within HR and their functions.

Figure 4: USAID Office of Human Resources Organizational Chart



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

USAID's Office of Human Resources organization is outlined in ADS 101; policies and procedures are documented in the ADS (400 Series).[53]

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[52] USAID ADS Chapter 306 Interagency Agreements available at: http://www.usaid.gov/

[53] They include: Human Capital Accountability (401); Performance Management (421, 425, 461-463, 489); Compensation and Benefits (442, 443, 467, 470, 471-478, 496); Personnel Operations (Staffing, Recruitment, Appointments); (412-415, 418, 422, 423, 432, 434-437,440, 456, 468, 469, 495); Professional Development Programs (458-460); Terminations and Furloughs(446, 450-455); Disciplinary Actions and Grievances (485-487, 490); Awards and Other Recognition Programs (491, 492); Leave (480-482); and, Miscellaneous (405, 407, 408, 410, 479, 494, 499).

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

SOME OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

There is a definite pecking order at USAID. Even though CSOs, FSOs, FSNs and contractors toil away side-by-side there is ranking based on grade, series and type of contract. USAID has a brigade management system[54] at its core and hierarchy can get in the way of "teamwork." People chiefly communicate and work with their immediate superior and immediate subordinates. Such division of labor and social stratification[55] are very common features of the modern workplace structure and to a large extent inevitable, simply because no one can do all tasks at once. Also, it is widely agreed that "*the most equitable principle in allocating people within hierarchies is that of true (or proven) competency or ability*."[56] The problem with brigade systems is the tendency to "work upward" meaning personnel are in response mode, continuously reacting to requests of the person the next level up. Of course the ways hierarchies are structured are influenced by a variety of different factors; and such things are not decided consciously.

Hierarchy and stratification lead to greater status, social power or privilege for some groups over others. This affects who talks to whom; who has access to information and technology (i.e. some get remote access, cell phones, blackberries or computers while others do not); who has the rights to raise issues (i.e. complaints, supervisor access); and who is eligible for training (i.e. some get orientation and training, others do not).

One important point is that hierarchical systems are antithetical to transformational systems. One (hierarchal) requires a vertical approach while the other (transformational) requires a horizontal approach.[57] Several implications for management stem from these contrasting management philosophies such as the ability to be creative and innovative to understanding where one's job begins and ends. As well, the inconsistency between management rhetoric and management actions may likely explain what one PSC expressed as

> "*...poor communication, tension and confusion, lack of productivity or bungled projects. There is no organization or leadership and not even an appearance of a career plan. People are always coming and going, working on a project and then not working on it. It's like I'm day labor for a Kelly Temp service*."

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[54] Barker, Chris (2004). Cultural Studies: Theory and practice. London: Sage p. 436.

[55] Ibid., Division of Labor refers to the allocation of tasks to individuals or organizations according to the skills and/or equipment those people or organizations possess vs. Division of Work refers to the division of a large task, contract, or project into smaller tasks—each with a separate schedule within the overall project schedule.

[56] Adams, J.S. 1965. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 67(5), Nov 1963, 422-436. Industrial and organizational psychologies have long followed the primary principle of equity theory whereby participation relates directly to reward for effort and sacrifice.

[57] Literature on vertical and horizontal approaches to management, communications, health delivery, education and other areas are widespread. Two articles are: Mills A. Mass campaigns versus general health services: what have we learnt in 40 years about vertical versus horizontal approaches? Bull World Health Organ.2005;83:315–316. Pollitt, C. (2003), Joined-up Government: a Survey. Political Studies Review, 1: 34–49.

A**ctivity consolidation** combined with layers of idiosyncratic detail hinders responsiveness.[58] Often a single person is responsible for an HR action – sometimes like a single person handling a customer query and only that one person is familiar with the customer's details – and the number of personnel system "workarounds" – including the 29 different modes of hiring and variety of entry streams – create inefficiencies and are costly.[59] For example, employees wait several months and sometimes over a year to be brought on board. We heard several examples of areas in need of improvement: activities that take too long, people who don't know their jobs and unanswered emails or phone calls that slow progress and generally get in the way of doing a good job.[60]

"*Renewing a security badge can become a monumental effort*," said a person with 30 years at USAID.

> "*They (HR) don't seem to know their job. It's exhausting to deal with simple things that become monumental. You can't do your job. It's time and effort. When you add the emotional energy spent it is disabling. There have been strong people at times in HR, but I don't know if they've replaced them*."
>
> "*People don't know what a process line is*," said a division chief with 18 years at USAID: "*They don't know how their own job works. Analysis is held up because transcripts or criteria are unavailable. We have the software, but I can't use it because I can't get the data*."

Is this by design or is this because people don't know their jobs? "*It's a little of both*," according to an insider; however, by far most of those interviewed tend toward the latter when asked that question.

Multiple hiring schemes create a sense of insecurity and competitive atmosphere that is difficult to work in. One contractor with six-and-a-half years with the Agency (working under different contracts) said "*You never know when the hatchet will come down*." Another contractor left the Agency after six months, for a job with another donor group. She said her work suffered from lack of direction. She wasn't issued a blackberry because she was a contractor. Her computer was barely functional while others had state-of-the-art technology and two large computer screens. "*My work was made difficult*," she said. "*But, the thing that bothered me most was being treated as a second-class citizen*."

Furthermore, **time limits** and **lack of job security** result in a pool of employees who are continuously looking for another job. "*I've been here six-and-a-half years*," said one contractor, "*and I spend half my time looking for a job*."

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[58] Jeffrey L. Rummel, Zhiping, Walter, Rajiv Dewan, Abraham Seidmann (2005). Activity consolidation to improve responsiveness, European Journal of Operational Research, 161, 3, pp 683-703.
[59] Didier Trinh, Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing.
[60] Federal Viewpoint Survey available at: www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/federal-employee-viewpoint-survey and American Foreign Service Association Survey available at: www.afsa.org/Portals/0/vanguard0313.pdf and www.afsa.org/Portals/0/vanguard0212.pdf

Division of those who "have" and those who "have not", inconsistent practices and personnel systems that range from the tightly controlled CS and FS positions to the unregulated FSL and political appointments, emphasis on compliance and security, as well as shortages on supplies undermine the overall development objective. According to one HR official,

> "*there is a big concern about losing high performers. And exit interviews point to supervisors as the biggest (non-health/retirement) reason for people leaving*."

Another manager said,

> "*Top performers are leaving. We should be figuring out how to keep top performers. Instead we are doing things to drive out our top performers. For example, the RIF threat….*"

The question becomes: *Who will stay and who will leave*?

Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other **hardship posts have altered the face of development** at USAID and the Office of Human Resources is facing problems it never had to face before.[61] In addition to a large percentage of new employees starting in conflict posts, terms of assignment have been reduced to 1, 2 and at the most 3 years.

"*This hasn't always been the case*," said a senior employee.

> "*Terms were always two to four years. It's only now with the need to feed the beast of hardship posts that tours were shortened and new people were thrown at them. You can't even learn your backstop let alone interact with civil society. Maybe they interact on the phone. Certainly, they aren't interacting at the project level*."

ACCOLADES

"*There are two things that the office of HR has done well*," according to a 15-year veteran who started as a Presidential Management Fellow and has won a Distinguished Employee Award:

Staff Care was established to enhance work/life balance, resilience, and wellness for all USAID employees and their families. For example, Staff Care employs an emergency locator database, important in locations such as Sudan. "The idea is to treat people on the same level – whatever their category – contractors, FSOs, Civil Service," according to an organizer. Staff Care has received good ratings from employees[62] and employees told us the unit is "*very responsive*" and "*they really do care*."

Other praise was for the **Foreign Service National Advisory Council** that helped advance FSN issues (as related to the Fellowship program mentioned earlier) related to salary caps, feeling valued and security. "*The thing that made the difference*," according to the 15-year veteran, "*was leadership… You need that kind of commitment not just a lot of lip service*."

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[61] Statement by the Office of Inspector General: USAID's Most Serious Management and Performance Challenges. Memorandum for the Administrator, IG Report, April 2011.
[62] AFSA Survey 2012

Despite these efforts, there appears to be a divide between workers and their perception of leadership in terms of integrity, communication and motivation (down 5% from 2012 to 2013); likewise, there is a divide between supervisors in terms of feedback and assessment of training needs.[63] The 2011, 2012 and 2013 Federal Viewpoint Surveys are telling:

USAID employees say they are "*willing to work harder than originally expected*" and it appears most employees are willing to forgo financial compensation (satisfaction level down 6% from 63% in 2011 to 57% in 2103) and promotions based on merit (down 5% from 41% in 2011 to 36% in 2013) in order to work at USAID. In a way, USAID is lucky and as one Mission Director observes

> "*people who come to work here have a mission. Their tolerance level is extremely high. People are willing to put up with a lot. The leadership goes through a lot of form over substance but ultimately it's just not real*."

The devil is in the details and it appears people like the work, but they are not happy working at USAID. "*It isn't the decisions that are made, but the way decisions are made*," said one PSC. "*Policies, procedures, rules and regulations are filled with potholes. Confusion reigns. That's what is happening at USAID*."

HIRING HISTORY

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO) AND OTHERS SAY

During the Vietnam era, the number of people working for USAID numbered approximately 18,000.[64] By the Reagan administration, its numbers had fallen to approximately 9,600. Between 1995 and 2000 severe budget cuts triggered layoffs that resulted in a 29 percent reduction in staff at USAID. By 2001 USAID's direct-hire staff was about half the size it had been 20 years earlier and more than one-third of its foreign service employees were nearing retirement age.[65] With foreign assistance programs in more than 100 countries, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) shifted from conducting its own activities to managing acquisition and assistance (A&A) instruments – contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements with implementing organizations.[66]

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation into A&A started in 2003.[67] Among other things, the investigation uncovered a "*lack of Human Resource management systems and capacity*" and identified "*competency gaps*," "*insufficient data on staff levels*" and "*ad-hoc*

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[63] FEV Survey 2013
[64] From an interview with Richard Blue, now retired. This number includes direct and non-direct personnel.
[65] GAO-10-496 reports that USAID's U.S. direct-hire workforce decreased from about 8,600 in 1962 to about 2,900 in 2009.
[66] From fiscal years 2002 through 2008, USAID's A&A obligations increased from about $5 billion to about $11 billion. A&A staff—contracting officers (COs) and A&A specialists—are primarily responsible for managing A&A instruments.
[67] GAO-08-1059

approaches to workforce planning." Around the same time, the American Academy for Diplomacy criticized USAID for "*lack of technical management capacity to provide effective oversight and management for its projects*" citing, for example, "*USAID employs only five engineers worldwide, despite a growing number of activities in that sector*."[68]

GAO opened a separate review of USAID's human capital management in 2010 noting "*serious workforce gaps and vacancies* (the workforce decline of 2.7 percent from 2004 to 2009[69]) *despite increased funding levels*."[70]

> "*While the decline is primarily due to decreases in the number of U.S. and foreign national personal services contractors, these staff continue to comprise the majority of USAID's workforce. Over the same period USAID's program funding increased 92 percent to $17.9 billion. USAID also faces some workforce gaps and vacancies at the six missions visited by GAO. Mission officials cited recruiting difficulties and the need for staff in priority countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, as factors contributing to these vacancies. According to mission officials, it is not uncommon for positions to remain vacant for a lengthy period. During this time staff may assume multiple responsibilities and accept additional workload, which present some challenges in the agency's ability to manage and oversee its activities. For example, workforce gaps and heavy workload may limit mission staff's ability to travel to the field to monitor and evaluate the implementation of projects.*"[71]

NGOs were not the only organizations that benefited from the increased use of contracts and grants. From fiscal year 1996 to fiscal year 2005, "*the share of funds awarded to for-profit contractors rose from 33 percent to 58 percent*"[72] creating a development industry.[73]

In a 2008 U.S. Senate hearing Senator Patrick Leahy said:

> "*USAID's professional staff is a shadow of what it once was. We routinely hear that the reason USAID has become a check writing agency for a handful of big Washington contractors and NGOs is because you don't have the staff to manage a larger number of smaller contracts and grants. Sometimes these big contractors do a good job, although they charge an arm and a leg to do it. Other times they waste* piles of money *and accomplish next to nothing, although they are masters at writing glowing reports about what a good job they did. Meanwhile, the small not-for-profit organizations are shut out*

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[68] A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness The American Academy of Diplomacy, October 2008. Accessed at: http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/

[69] The number of direct hire employees dropped from 4,300 in 1975, to 3,600 in 1985, to 3,000 in 1995 according to the Obama Biden Transition Project: USAID Staffing available at http://otrans.3cdn.net/69253eb7082d6dd339_5gm6i2nqp.pdf

[70] Foreign Assistance: USAID Needs to Improve Its Strategic Planning to Address Current and Future Workforce Needs," Report GAO-10-496 June 30, 2010.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Rachel M. McCleary and Steven E. Levingston (2010) The Virtues of Non-Profits Humanitarian Aid, Washington Post, September 2, 2010. Accessed at: http://voices.washingtonpost.com/political-bookworm

[73] Thomas W. Dichter (2003) Despite Good Intentions: Why development assistance to the third world has failed. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

of the process. This is bad not only for U.S. taxpayers but also for the countries that need our help."[74]

GAO recommended a strategic approach to workforce planning to identify the right skill mix to carry out its programs and a USAID plan to collect, analyze, and maintain sufficiently reliable and up-to-date data on its staff levels and comprehensive information on the competencies of the staff including a major portion of USAID's workforce – U.S. and foreign national personal services contractors. USAID's Five-Year Workforce Plan for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 (written in 2010) lacked several key elements that GAO has identified as critical to strategic workforce planning. A revised USAID Five-Year Workforce Plan for fiscal years 2011 through 2015 (December 2010) outlined USAID's commitment to rebalance the workforce with intention to: 1) Prioritize recruitment of technical staff with a focus on key initiative areas such as global health and food security, as well as science and technology, democracy and governance and entrepreneurship; and 2) Prioritize the recruitment and retention of contracting officers.[75] GAO allows about four years to complete the processes and said they will continue to monitor human capital issues through audits of USAID programs and projects.

In 2011, the Inspector General closed the GAO review of USAID human capital management noting some actions were taken and others are planned.

> *"We no longer consider human capital management a serious management challenge because USAID has addressed Government Accountability Office (GAO) findings regarding USAID's Five-Year Workforce Plan for fiscal years (FYs) 2009–13."*[76]

It appears from the research for this paper, USAID has taken significant steps to improve the Office of Human Resources as outlined in the next section.

I. WHAT WAS DONE: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Reaction to the Inspector General recommendations resulted in a few developments in the Office of Human Resources including:

1) Adjustments to the workforce profile
2) New Structure for the Office of Human Resources
3) The Consolidated Workforce Planning Model (CWPM) Web-Tool
4) Employee Training and Education
5) Competency Management System (CMS)

Each is discussed further below:

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[74] Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), State, Foreign Operations Subcommittee Hearing On Fiscal Year 2009 USAID Budget Request March 4, 2008.

[75] Controllers complain they lose because many contract officers switch backstops once they receive tenure.

[76] Memorandum for the Administrator Fiscal Year 2011 Office of the Inspector General SUBJECT: Most Serious Management and Performance Challenges for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in closing USAID Needs to Improve Its Strategic Planning to Address Current and Future Workforce Needs,‖ GAO-10-496, June 2010.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT #1: ADJUSTMENTS TO THE WORKFORCE PROFILE

USAID's workforce profile changed following GAO and others' recommendations. The Agency's workforce declined by 2.7% between 2004 and 2009;[77] yet, agency's civil service direct-hire workforce grew by about 7% and the agency's Foreign Service direct-hire workforce increased by approximately 49% over the same period (with the largest increase occurring since the start of USAID's initiative to expand its Foreign Service with the DLI program in 2008).

Since 2009 USAID's total workforce increased by 27% (from 7,481 in 2009 to 9,430 in 2013). A comparison between the workforce profiles from 2009 to 2013 is displayed in Figure 5.[78]

Foreign Service National jobs decreased by 10% and U.S. Personal Services Contractors decreased by 2%. Over the same time period, Foreign Service Officers increased by 3%; Civil Service increased by 3%; and Others[79] increased by 2%.

The numbers are presented in Table 4.

Figure 5: Percentages for USAID Workforce Profile 2009 and 2013

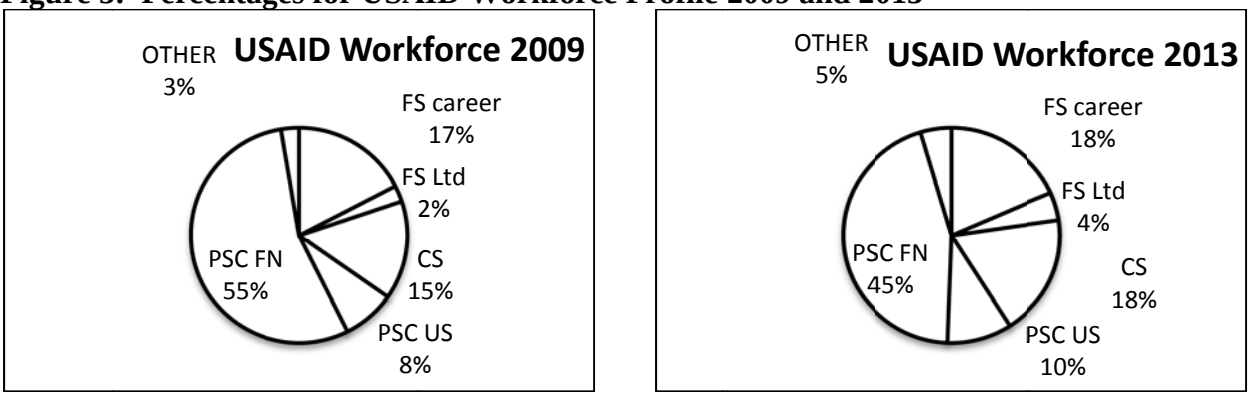


Table 4: Numbers for USAID Workforce Profile 2009 and 2013

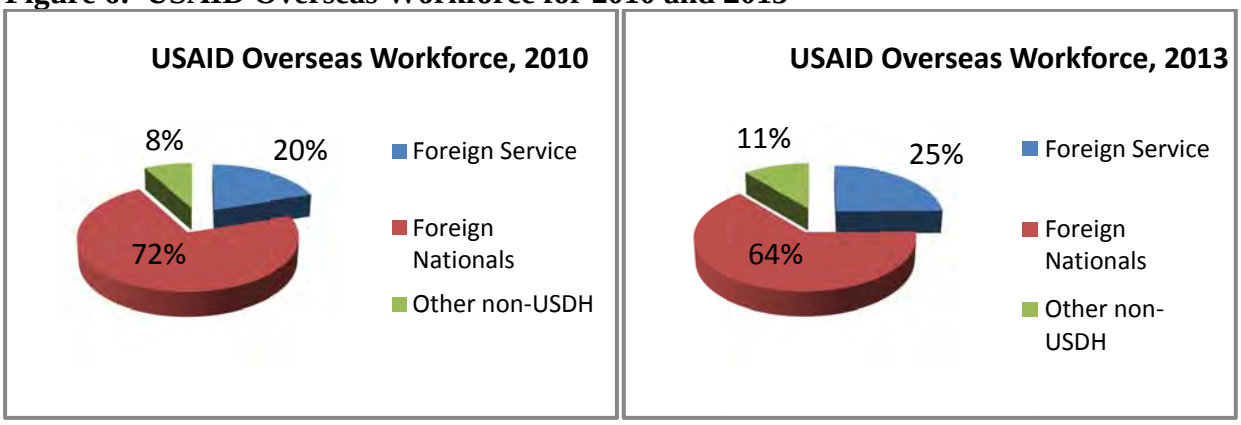
Category	2009		2013
Foreign Service (career)	1301		1747
Foreign Service Ltd.	183		395
Civil Service	1113		1717
US Personal Services Contractors	591		912
Foreign Nationals	4093		4223
Other	200		436
Total	**7481**		**9430**

[77] The total number of USAID staff went from 7,626 in 2004 to 7,421 in 2009.
[78] Data for 2009 from GAO-10-496.These figures exclude the staff of USAID's Office of Inspector General: 92 FSOs and 110 civil service staff. Data for 2013 from Semi-Annual Workforce Profile Report, USAID, September, 2013. It isn't clear is Office of Inspector General staff are factored in the total number.
[79] Other includes Interagency Agreements (i.e. PASAs, etc.); Fellows; consultants and other extraneous personnel.

OVERSEAS WORKFORCE

Currently, USAID has 6,559 employees overseas. The chart in Figure 6 compares the overseas workforce composition according to employment category. Between 1995 and 2013 FSN positions decreased by nearly 22%: 14% by 2010 (when FSNs comprised 72% of the overseas workforce) and an additional 8% by 2013 (when FSNs comprised 64% of the overseas workforce). Of course, many DLIs have been posted to field Missions and, presumably, DLIs replaced many positions formerly filled by FSNs. Notably, 'Other' types of hires also increased by 3% over the same time, including PSCs and PASAs positions filled by spousal hiring.

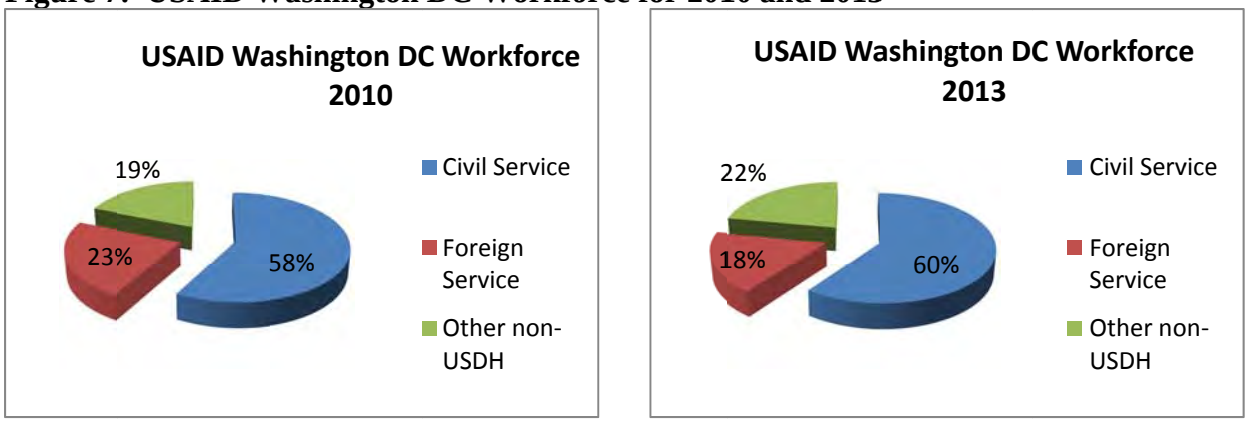
Figure 6: USAID Overseas Workforce for 2010 and 2013



WASHINGTON DC WORKFORCE

Currently, USAID has 2,862 employees at Headquarters. The chart in Figure 7 compares the Washington, D.C. workforce composition according to employment category. During this timeframe, U.S. Civil Service employees increased from 58% to 60% of the workforce in 2013; however, Foreign Service Officers posted in Washington DC decreased from 23% to 18% and non-US Direct Hire staff increased from 19% to 22%. Recall that U.S. Civil Service employees include temporary and permanent positions.

Figure 7: USAID Washington DC Workforce for 2010 and 2013



MAJOR DEVELOPMENT #2: THE CONSOLIDATED WORKFORCE PLANNING MODEL (CWPM) WEB-TOOL

The CWPM is a web-based strategic management tool, created in 2010, that utilizes assumptions based on strategic direction, ratings of diplomatic importance and development need, funding data, and a variety of additional data-driven workload drivers to predict the Agency's future staffing requirements. The CWPM Web-tool is:

- A projective tool designed to analytically determine the number, type, and location of staff needed to accomplish USAID's mission
- A dynamic tool that allows management to easily compare and contrast alternate views

The CWPM Web-tool does not provide right answers nor illustrate any actual decisions; rather it provides reasonable answers based on data-driven assumptions. The tool has been used to develop and justify staffing requests; meet OPM and OMB requirements; inform budget development; and help decision-makers understand and project the potential impacts of resource and organizational changes on staffing in Headquarters and the Field.

The CWPM was, according to a senior manager:

> "*…adjusted to adapt recruiting, selection and training to reflect USAID Forward and other agency priorities and new initiatives including increased Mission work with local organizations. But the model was never tested. Proposed field work to document the workforce drivers with the local organization initiative was never approved or disapproved.*"

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT #3: NEW STRUCTURE FOR THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

As pointed out by the GAO, USAID engaged the help of a management consulting firm to analyze problems and make recommendations on how to improve customer service for all. In 2013 a **Chief Human Capacity Officer** (CHCO) was appointed with the responsibility for strategic human capital management. CHCO responsibilities include:

> "*…developing and implementing innovative and transformational human resource policies, procedures, and programs that serve all staff including Foreign Service and civil service.*"[80]

The Agency converted the HR Director position from a Senior Foreign Service slot to a Senior Executive Service (SES) Civil Service position. Up until this time, a Foreign Service Director and Civil Service Deputy Director served at the helm of the Office of Human Resources. The new approach comprises two Deputies: one Civil Service and one Foreign Service who serve under the CHCO.

[80] The Chief Human Capital Officers Act of 2002, enacted as part of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Pub. L. No. 107-296) on November 25, 2002, required the heads of 24 Executive Departments and agencies to appoint or designate Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs). See website: www.chcho.gov

The new 'triad' structure is meant to address a number of issues that fall under the Human Resource domain, including customer service, quality management and low morale. This is a trend in the right direction that may help fix what one person called "*a broken system*."

Analysis for this report found the system is broken in two ways:

1) <u>Organizational Structure</u>

Organizational structure is defined by distribution of responsibilities and activities for different functions and processes across entities such as the branch, department, workgroup and individual.[81] Such activities might include task allocation, coordination and supervision and reactions to new policy.

Organizational structure affects organizational action in two big ways. First, it provides the foundation on which standard operating procedures and routines rest. Second, it determines which individuals get to participate in which decision-making processes, and thus to what extent their views shape the organization's actions.[82] Other research shows organizational structure provides the lens through which individuals see their organization and its environment.[83]

Structure can have positive and negative implications for an organization. On one hand, excessive structure lowers innovation and creativity. On the other hand, lack of structure contributes to low morale and job dissatisfaction.

Among other things, USAID's fragmented structure in the way of excessive outsourcing, layers of procedures, rules, regulations, mandates and initiatives, and inequity – whatever the source – likely result in a negative effect on organizational behavior and management of human resources.

2) <u>Organizational Alignment</u>

Strong global alignment of organizational values and corresponding resources help create a healthy and robust organizational culture, outstanding staff engagement and is frequently linked to sustained superior performance.[84] There is little doubt among experts that there is a strong relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance. Organizational culture is a frequent factor in the success of an organization.[85]

It makes sense that organizations that align objectives, goals and mission statements in tandem with human resources systems create a more viable workplace than those with disjointed systems. Insufficient attention to the fundamental links between recruitment, selection, orientation, and staff development and performance appraisal confounds any systematic approach to organizational behavior and undermines human resource management writ large.

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[81] D. S. Pugh, ed. (1990) Organization Theory: Selected Readings Harmondsworth: Penguin
[82] M.G. Jacobides (2007). "The inherent limits or organizational structure and the unfulfilled role of hierarchy", Organization Science, 18, 3, pp; 455-477.
[83] Ibid.
[84] John P. Kotter and James L. Heskett (1992) Corporate Culture and Performance. NYC: The Free Press.
[85] Ibid.

Such is the case at USAID. The good news is that systems can be fixed providing leaders want to take the time and initiative to re-align the system.

The new structure might help deal with the American Foreign Service Association's call for "*top leadership to address many of the serious problems identified in this and other surveys*."[86] For example, the 2012 American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Employee Survey gave the Office of Human Resources a 49% disapproval rating, although this figure is an improvement from the previous year when the disapproval rating was 59%.

Both the 2011 and 2012 AFSA Surveys are replete with comments and criticism of the Office of Human Resources, nearly all echoed by people interviewed for this paper (a few comments are presented in Table 5 and others are available on-line): Some HR representatives are adept and responsive; however, there are far too many unanswered emails and phones, canceled meetings, missing data and excessive time taken for basic procedures.

Table 5: Comments from the 2012 American Foreign Service Association Survey

"The service of HR is terrible and has an outsized impact on the work experience. In order to protect yourself it is important that you know Agency policy better than they do. It is hard to get attention on an HR-related issue if you are not physically in the building. From overseas it's virtually impossible to get a response."
"HR is non-responsive half the time (ignores e-mails, telephone messages, are never at their desks). Their delay or refusal to respond costs employees hours of their time and effort. It's extremely frustrating and demoralizing. The agency is so focused on streamlining the FS and working smarter, but it NEVER makes any attempt to seriously revamp our HR support services. Where is the accountability? Why is FS held to a higher standard (we get report cards with grades) and HR can underperform repeatedly with no consequences?"
"On the basis of my experience, whenever I deal with HR I assume I am in an adversarial relationship. Top management of USAID needs to fix this. A recent government-wide survey rated USAID 30 out of 33 in terms of employee satisfaction. This unacceptably poor performance is caused by HR."
"While some CS staff is excellent, others are not responsive or communicative: I am treated like a mushroom, not a customer. There needs to be a system whereby there are service standards or whereby customers have the opportunity to provide input into CS ratings."
"I think there has been significant improvement in the services. My experiences with HR on multiple occasions have been positive. I think HR is making a genuine effort to improve services."

[86] http://www.afsa.org/

"Senior leadership really needs to take notice of its own internal problems with this agency – HR being one of them. But it does not appear that senior leadership is at all concerned about our poor quality HR or the needs of the FSO for that matter."
"HR is too complicated for its own good. I believe most of the employees try their best, but are continually swamped, and therefore deliver poor service. Every HR process should be clear and easy. Old HR forms should be updated and made intuitive. There should be a clear avenue for employees to report HR experiences, because there just doesn't seem to be enough motivation for HR to improve itself."

"*The move to consolidate administrative services is causing a lot of stress overseas,*" according to one administrator.

> "*Increased demands from the agency on USAID Forward and, particularly, the International Cooperative Administration Support Services (ICASS) contribute negatively to the low morale.*"[87]

Employees also described a "*punishment mentality in the agency*" and one seasoned officer told us:

> "*people feel intimidated, demoralized and afraid to tell their experiences. They are afraid to speak up. This is true of tenured staff, but especially for contractors, PMFs and consultants. The institutional support isn't there*."

That said, and while a "poor" rating of nearly 50% is unacceptable for any organization, there are signs things are beginning to turn around and it is encouraging that there are positive developments in the Office of Human Resources. For example, USAID ranked 18th on Global Satisfaction for the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey (up from 25th in the previous year). Yet, as a top official explained, "*We are hamstrung because of limited resources and political constraints*. "*Furthermore*", she said, "*funding is disaggregated and HR is understaffed*."

The Federal Employee Viewpoint (FEV) survey administered to U.S. government employees by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)[88] points to other issues that might interest the new administrators of the Office of Human Resources. The survey provides another snapshot of U.S.

[87] The International Cooperative Administration Support Services (ICASS) is a customer-driven, voluntary interagency mechanism for managing and funding administrative support services abroad. ICASS gives posts the authority to determine how services are delivered, at what cost and by whom; has customer standards established by the post, with the service provider formally accountable to the customer; and incorporates a full-cost recovery systems through a no-year working capital fund. The goals of ICASS are to provide quality administrative services and increase customer satisfaction; reduce and contain costs; promote local empowerment; and establish a simple, transparent and equitable cost-distribution system. Agencies include: US Department of State, USAID, Commerce, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Defense intelligence Agency (DIA), Defense Security Service Academy (DSAA), Peace Corps, and Social Security Administration (SSA).

[88] The survey compares and ranks 37 U.S. government agencies along various indices including Strengths & Challenges, Increases & Decreases, Items to Celebrate & Caution Items and Above & Below. Available at: www.fedview.opm.gov

employees' insights across all organizational levels and climates.[89] A separate survey was prepared for Foreign Service nationals but results are unavailable.

The most positive response items for USAID relate to employee efficacy:

When needed I am willing to put in the extra effort to get a job done

98% positive

I am constantly looking for ways to do my job better

93% positive

The work I do is important

87% positive

The most negative responses for USAID relate to pay and supervisory control:

Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs

59% negative

In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve

50% negative

In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way

42% negative

Survey items with increasingly positive responses indicate the success of agency initiatives or plans of action, while declining positive responses may signal areas in need of targeted action (as shown in Table 6). USAID had no items to celebrate. Two items that decreased the most relate to Agency leadership: *I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders* (minus 7%); and, *my organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity* (minus 7%).

Other areas of interest (Table 6) to the Office of Human Resources and for targeted action relate to supervisory controls, training, motivation and communication sharing.

[89] USAID's 2013 response rate is 61% (2,266 out of 3,703 employees responded).

Table 6: Items for Targeted Action from the 2012 FEV Survey

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Items to celebrate and items that decreased from 2012 to 2013			
Decreased the Most Change	**2012**	**2013**	**%**
I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders.	57	50	-7
My organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity.	64	57	-7
My training needs are assessed.	46	40	-6
How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?	46	40	-6
In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	45	40	-5
How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?	57	52	-5
Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs.	20	15	

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT #4: EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The Office **of Human Resources**, **Training** and **Education** (HR/TE) division is responsible for improving individual and organizational performance by supporting the Agency's core values of teamwork and participation, diversity, customer service, results management, empowerment and accountability. The HR/TE budget increased from $10.3 million in 2008 to $20 million for 2009 and $25 million for 2010.

In December, 2013 International Resources Group[90] was awarded a $60 million contract[91] to supply core training over a five year period. Core training falls under the following categories:

1) New Employee Orientation (NEO) for Civil Service and Junior Foreign Service Officers
2) Program and Project Management
3) Federal Acquisition Certification Programs for Contracting Officers
4) Continuous Learning
5) Working Across Cultures (WAC)
6) Security Training
7) Country Learning Resources (Area Studies)
8) Executive, Manager, Supervisor, and Candidate Development Training

[90] IRG was purchased by Engility Corporation in 2013.
[91] Contract Award Date: December 20, 2013; Contract Award Number: AID-OAA-I-12-00005; Contract Award Dollar Amount: $60,000,000.00; Contractor Awarded Name: International Resources Group. Accessed at: https://www.fbo.gov

9) Ethics
10) Office of Civil Rights and Diversity
11) No Fear Act Training
12) Career Development Resource Service (CDRS)[92]

Perhaps HR/TE can utilize the work to be conducted under the new IRG contract to bring training (both core and specialized) into alignment with the tenets of USAID Forward. For example, it would be good for USAID to establish a common understanding among all employees about USAID's "*new approach to development*" and "*transformational development*." This would require development of a basic Development 101 course; however, an advanced curriculum approach could have a multiplier effect:

1) to establish a baseline for each and every employee regarding USAID's mission statement
2) to provide an opportunity for employees to cultivate their knowledge and a skill further
3) to expand the talent pool

Talent management, after all, is anticipating required human capital and planning to meet those needs.

In addition to the information provided in the FEV survey, people interviewed for this report suggested improved supervisor training. A senior HR representative said, for example,

> "*…approximately 80% of supervisor training focus is on documentation of poor performers; yet only one person per year is separated due to performance*."

Another seasoned development officer pointed to a

> *"…critical skill that is not identified is self-directed learning: the ability of a USAID officer to identify learning needs, set precise objectives, identify and use learning resources, practice and master new skills*."

To this end, the Training and Education (HR/TE) unit introduced the **Competency Management System** (CMS) to identify training gaps thus facilitating career development. As part of the **Individual Development Plan** (IDP) employees complete an on-line competency self-assessment for five areas (domains) based on a scale of 1 (novice/beginner), 2 (intermediate) to 3 (expert/teacher). Personal assessments are then matched against supervisors' ratings. The idea is that CMS will help address the fact that 60% of employees perceive their training needs are not assessed by managers.[93]

When done appropriately competency assessment is a useful tool to promote human resource development. Competencies should be based in critical thinking skills, not technical skills. [94] This is an important distinction.

There are two major problems with the CMS project: 1) the response rate and, 2) the analysis.

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[92] Training and Career/Professional Development is detailed in ADS 458 and is available at: http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1877/458.pdf
[93] FEV Survey
[94] McClelland, D.C. (1973), "Testing for competence rather than intelligence", American Psychologist, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 1-40.

According to the contractor who led the competency work project the response rate was abysmal:

> "*People did not cooperate. The number of people who responded to the survey varied according to the Backstops we were working with. We did not get a high response rate. We would get anywhere from 15-30 responses most of the time. In some case we got as few as 3.* "

Regarding the analysis, the competencies used for FS, CS and FSN positions are the same, despite different job categories and different types of jobs.

According to several people familiar with the project as well as the analysis for this report, **the competency work needs to be revisited**. As one person said

> "*It was frustrating work. There was no incentive or leadership desire to carry out the work. It is one of two things: either they don't know what to do with the information or they lacked empowerment to make or alter decisions... especially, with employee turnover*."

When the contract ended, information that was available was handed over to HR/TE to create the *Foreign Service, Civil Service and Foreign Service National Competency and Proficiency Catalog*[95] (see Appendix 3) and a website for on-line assessment. The CMS program has mixed response according to the project manager:

> "*Completing the IDP is a requirement, but there are no repercussions if it is not done. The CMS has a negative association, especially where CS and FS employees are concerned. They don't see its true purpose. People say the IDP adds yet another thing to an already full plate and that manager input is not helpful.*
>
> *On the other hand, new employees and FSNs see IDPs as useful. FSNs have a totally different mindset. They have not received a pay raise in so long that they see the IDP as incentive for ways to build a career path that enables job stability and better pay*."

A MISMATCH BETWEEN CURRENT COMPETENCIES AND USAID FORWARD

Competences link maximum performance to a person's capability or talent being consistent with the demands of the job and the organizational environment.[96] Competencies serve as the foundation for all HR activities that follow and there is a specific order to the process: gather criteria through a robust job analysis to determine "what" will be done; then create a job design and job specifications to determine "how" the work will be done. Sufficient and accurate data is fundamental to conduct a quality job analysis which is then used to construct well-defined job descriptions, recruitment and selection decisions, training and development plans, and evaluations with resultant rewards and penalties.

[95] The catalog was published in March, 2013 and lists competencies related to various categories of positions for the USAID workforce.

[96] The concept of competency is well-studied and has roots in several management theories including Contingency Theory, Equity Theory and Attribution Theory

Competency-based human resources concepts have evolved substantially since David McClelland first proposed them as a critical differentiator of workplace performance in 1973.[97] It is a well-known fact that emotional and social intelligence competencies account for a substantial and important amount of the variance in predicting or understanding performance in competency studies.[98] Numerous studies show three clusters of competencies that differentiate outstanding from average performers in many countries across the world:

1. Cognitive intelligence, such as systems thinking and pattern recognition
2. Emotional intelligence, including self-awareness and self-management competencies, such as emotional self-awareness and emotional self-control
3. Social intelligence, including social awareness and relationship management competencies, such as empathy and teamwork[99]

Based on extensive academic research, interviews and our own analysis, USAID would be well-served to return to the competency work in order to align the analysis with USAID Forward. Firstly, nearly all the competencies identified relate to technical skill and knowledge that fall under cognitive intelligence.[100] While these are vital to the job, work in development (perhaps first and foremost) requires affective skills – emotional and social skills – and these are vastly underrepresented in USAID's competency framework.[101] For example, "interpersonal skills" are the *Foreign Service, Civil Service and Foreign Service National Competency and Proficiency Catalog*: once under Leadership/Core Competency Definitions[102] and twice under Backstop 3: Operations / Administrative Management.[103]

A seasoned officer (with 40 years development experience) pointed out:

> *"If the agency's future is towards building more and better relationships with local organizations, values and affective behavior are going to be at least or more important than cognitive skills. I fear that there will be a far greater emphasis given to the technical skills appropriate to each backstop than to the far more important core and cross-functional skills. Unless values – and affective objectives in training – are explicitly incorporated, they won't be uniformly seen in the field*."

Secondly, the few affective competences identified in the USAID framework are written as cognitive competences. The affective domain includes "soft skills" – interpersonal skills, people skills or emotional quotient (EQ) – and are associated with personality traits, social graces,

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[97] McClelland, D.C. (1973). Testing for competence rather than for intelligence. American Psychologist, 28, pp. 1-14.

[98] Boyatzis, R.E. (2008). Competencies in the twenty-first century. Journal of Management Development, 27 (1), pp. 5-12.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Skills in the cognitive domain revolve around knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking on a particular topic.

[101] Affective skills typically target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion, and feelings.

[102] Definition for Interpersonal Skills under Leadership: Works harmoniously with others. Demonstrates empathy and places others at ease. Uses imagination in dealing with problem cases. Uses self-disclosure, feedback, listening, and questions to achieve satisfying work relationships.

[103] Definition under Backstop 03, Intermediate Level Proficiency: Utilizes interpersonal skills to convey accurate advice and guidance to Mission Director on all personnel matters.

communication, personal habits, language and friendliness in relationships with other people.[104] Soft skills provide a critical and critical complement to "hard skills"[105] such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), scientific experience, economic or legal degree (which are evaluated in the USAID competency framework).

Thirdly, competencies define applied skills and knowledge that enable people to successfully perform their work and verify that a learner has in fact learned. Competencies are the basis for skill standards that determine the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success. Words like "familiarity," "understanding," and "know" open the door to great ambiguity.

Finally, extensive research shows competencies for success, particularly management and leadership positions, extend beyond substantive knowledge. USAID can make use of a seminal report by David McClelland – the originator of the concept of competency – that investigates competency requirements of senior and mid-level positions in the Department of State.[106] Among other things, the authors determined emotional and social competencies – not technical skill or knowledge – account for the difference between outstanding and average officers.

> "*We could detect no important difference in the substantive knowledge of policy matters (read as technical areas, policy and regulations) by outstanding and average senior officers. The differences are in all the other types of competencies, particularly in the leadership area." Further, 'leadership is not supervision.'*"[107]

An FSO with 20 years' experience remarked, separately, that many USAID employees are introverts (as opposed to extroverts).

> "*One of my junior colleagues said that he was given the Meyers-Briggs test and was told by his trainers that there were many in USAID that were introverts…and as a result that he had to discipline himself to taper down his being an extrovert*."

While we found no formal study or report that confirms this statement, USAID HR gives the Myers-Brigg test in various leadership courses.[108] Presumably the agency would want to be looking for people who tend to be extroverts.

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[104] Bloom, B. S.; Engelhart, M. D.; Furst, E. J.; Hill, W. H.; Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. New York: David McKay Company.
[105] Goleman, D., (1995) Emotional Intelligence, New York, NY, England: Bantam Books, Inc.
[106] Competency Requirements of Senior and Mid-level positions in the Department of State Final Report Prepared for the Office of the Director General Bureau of Personnel (Contract # 1025-625134) Department of State by David C. McClelland, Ph.D. George o. Klemp, Jr., Ph.D. and David Miron, Ed.D. McBer and Company, Boston, MA June 1, 1977.
[107] The full report is provided in Appendix 4.
[108] We were not successful in confirming this statement but find it interesting to include in this report.

II. JOB-RELATEDNESS

HOW TO BRING HUMAN RESOURCE ACTIVITIES INTO ALIGNMENT

If there is one place where the staffing model must align it is the area of job-relatedness. Ensuring job-relatedness requires the specific identification of success factors that are critical for effective execution of job responsibilities. More importantly, job-relatedness provides the bona fide occupational qualifications for the job used for legal defensibility. Therefore, before any assessment or selection can take place a proper job analysis or competency study must be completed.[109]

The early work of job analysis and job design helps identify the best person for the job; therefore, it is crucial to fully understand the nature of that job.[110] According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) job analysis requires three steps:

1. Tasks and competencies are collected
2. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) rate the tasks and competencies[111]
3. Low-rated tasks and/or competencies are dropped

Job analysis data is then used to:

1. establish and document competencies required for a job;
2. identify the job-relatedness of the tasks and competencies needed to successfully perform the job; and
3. provide a source of legal defensibility of assessment and selection procedures.

Information from a job analysis is also used to determine any human resource activity henceforth: **job requirements**, **training needs**, **position classification** and **grade levels**, and **inform other personnel actions**, such as **promotions** and **performance appraisals**.[112] Any **job change**, **hiring surge**, **reorganization**, **reduction in force** and **merger** is **defensible** only by **job-relatedness**.

It appears that the activities in the HR process used to hire many USAID employees are conducted backwards. This helps explain some confusion about job responsibilities as identified by people we interviewed, but it portends an even bigger problem: a mismatch between the worker and the work to be performed. Hiring the right people for thoughtful development requires considerable attention to the affective "fit" which in many ways may be more important than the technical skill.

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[109] John C. Scott, Douglas H. Reynolds (2010) Handbook of Workplace Assessment. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

[110] For in-depth information on job analysis for U.S. government positions see the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook available at: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection

[111] Definition: Subject Matter Expert: A person with bona-fide expert knowledge about a particular job (first level supervisor or superior incumbents)

[112] Delegated Examining Operations Handbook available at: http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection

The good news is that it is possible for USAID to validate the competency work and then to align recruitment and hiring, orientation, training and promotion with appropriate qualifications for development. However, as a former Mission director observed:

> "*Someone in HR needs to be listening if the agency really intends to return to a learning organization. The HR office might have people with HR experience but there aren't many HR professionals in HR and there isn't a lot of willingness to listen, especially if it means altering course. USAID Forward requires risk and challenge to change. The organizations we're working with are weak. We did this (type of development) before and the new staff we hired doesn't have the skills to manage these types of relationships*."

CLASSIFICATION / POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The government job process is different than that of most businesses because it involves the extra step of **Classification** as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Hiring Process includes Classification

Position Description (PD)	**Classification**	**Job Analysis / Specifications (KSAs or Competencies)**
Management submits Scope of Work to Classification office	Classification assigns Grade / Series / Occupational title	Human Resource Specialists handle process (varies according to position)

Scopes of Work used for **Position Descriptions** (PDs) are good for five years after which "*managers are required to come back to the Classification unit to renew and initial the PD*" said the Deputy Director of Classification. The process is "*completely backward from that used in the civilian world*." The point is to "*keep them honest*," he said referring to managers and supervisors with hiring responsibilities.

The JA/JD/JS is systematic; nonetheless several people interviewed described a cumbersome and muddled process. Positions and jobs are "*parceled out*" according to a senior HR representative (using the CWPM, for example). "*It takes approximately one year to hire someone, sometimes longer*." "*HR has been disjointed for so long, it is incredibly disorganized*," said one person. Another said:

> "*We had three open positions in our unit. After 18 months, we have 0 replacements. In fact, the vacant positions were reallocated to another unit*."

It appears USAID's position descriptions have not kept up with changes in the culture, size, operations, organization and initiatives of the agency. People interviewed cited several examples of confusion as to who is coming and who is going as expressed in the following quote.

> "*We hear rumors of people who are coming to work in our office but they never show up. This happened on a few different occasions. There are names on cubicles but the person never shows up to work. A political appointee shows up at a staff meeting and said she is*

assigned to work in our unit. No one knew how her work connected with ours. She comes to the weekly staff meeting, but otherwise we don't interact with her. I don't know what she does. Not only is it difficult to get anything accomplished, it's absolutely confusing."

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Making sense of how position descriptions relate to **recruitment** and **selection** at USAID is difficult. According to one senior HR official, "*the complexity and range of different hiring mechanisms is incredibly scattered. There is no normal path*."

Civil and Foreign Service positions are "competed" through an electronic process. Qualifications are funneled by Key Words. Human Resource Specialists receive resumes following electronic recruitment. Paper qualifications are the principal selection criteria to advance at this stage. According to an HR manager with 20 years at USAID, "*less than of 1% of resumes are read, and the number of interviews is microscopic*," for competed positions. "*Skill level is often exaggerated on paper*."

It seems the deciding factors to attract, select, and retain the types of people who "fit" the new development roles ought to better align with the qualities emphasized in USAID Forward objectives. Hard skills are well-written into job specifications and codified in Classification (Grade, Series, and Occupational Title); however, as a seasoned development person astutely points out:

> "*We need to bring in thoughtful, humanistic people at Missions who are knowledgeable about development and culturally aware. There is a mismatch in recruitment and selection regarding who is advanced and for what reasons. There is little concern to identify applicants 'soft skill' such as empathy, communications*."

Another senior development officer adds a different list of skills she determined as supporting field work:

> "*USAID needs to hire problem solvers instead of just people from NGOs and the Peace Corps. We need to hire people to apply and manage change, to negotiate and to influence, including personnel who can visualize, create, organize, and establish things. There are tons of people and institutions that want to get involved, do good things, contribute, etc. USAID is not stepping up to the plate to create a framework for them to partner with us or share our best lessons learned and practices so they don't have to start from scratch*."

It appears that **reorganization** is a major hindrance, not just in HR but across the Agency. "*In the three years I worked at USAID, I had six bosses and sat in 11 different cubes*," said a person who has since left the agency. "*In those three years we were <u>not</u> reorganizing for only four months, and it's still going on*."

Another person who worked as a consultant on different USAID projects said,

> "*…as long as USAID hides behind reorganization, they aren't accountable for a bunch of stuff, including finding the right people for the job*."

Yet another contractor who has worked on several USAID projects over eight years said:

> "*It's very difficult to build on anything especially with constant reorganization and constant employee turnover. People are continuously reacting and responding to the whim of the person above. It's about choices – which projects to take up and which ones to let go. The private sector has clear financial costs when abandoning projects or rescheduling meetings. The public sector appears to have no accountability for their choices. At the simplest level, it's just plain rude. But the cost to their reputation is pretty significant*."

The above comments contribute a noteworthy point: constant flux, reorganization, shuffling of resources and policy change – call it what you want – result in a chaotic working environment. It is also about accountability. In many ways, as mentioned above, USAID policy got ahead of the HR Office infrastructure. For example, during re-organization or other major adjustments an office is required to conduct skills inventories and match them to the position description and relevant functions. It appears many – perhaps most – supervisors have no knowledge or training about effective job design. A supervisor of two years whose work includes creating work plans for his division said he received no training when he arrived at his new job. "*It's like operating in a black box with no directions.*"

As noted, much of HR work appears to be done backwards. For example, major undertakings such as doubling the Foreign Service staff preceded job analysis; running massive development projects in Iraq and Afghanistan preceded reorganization of the HR Office. The refreshing news is that the HR Office itself is reorganizing. The question is whether those in charge will be able to take the time to analyze current mechanisms, training and tools to align them properly with (said) future needs according to USAID Forward including local capacity development.

This is daunting work and may take more time than people want to spend; however, the **process is more important than the result**. This means employing the right people and examining the building blocks (such as validating the competency work), among other things, to get it right. Otherwise, it appears likely that USAID Forward's objectives may be in jeopardy.

ORIENTATION

All new staff need to be welcomed and introduced into their new work environment in ways that best match the needs of the **workplace** and the workers: reducing anxiety, sharing relevant information, clearly articulating and maintaining the Mission, socializing and building relationships. Beyond providing information about policies and procedures, effective orientation programs make employees feel comfortable, help them to learn their role and the organization's culture and values.

Besides not paying enough attention to the soft skills in its recruitment, the other source of misalignment between HR practices and Forward is the lack of orientation and training around

the *raison d'être* of USAID's role in development. At the core of both orientation and training there needs to be a renewed emphasis on the history of development aid, its failures and successes and the reasons for both, shifts in development theory and the reasons for those shifts, and ALL incoming staff (as well as may current staff) need to have the opportunity to study from this core curriculum.

Having gone through a rigorous security clearance process, most new staff are eager to get to work and, importantly, they want to do a good job. Several people we spoke with expressed "*disappointment*," "*surprise*" and "*confusion*" at the lack of organization around USAID's orientation. People mentioned canceled events, absentee persons-in-charge (POC), uneven procedures and lack of resources.

There is no regular "on-boarding" system to orient all personnel. How much orientation a new-hire receives depends upon the hiring mechanism: some attend orientation and various levels of training; others do not. Some have a desk assigned, others do not. Many, including senior advisors, have no immediate computer access.

Standard orientation consists of a day filling out paper work, obtaining badges and signing waivers. Not everyone goes through it; some people go through it frequently. For example one person (with 15 years at USAID) worked under five different mechanisms and went to five separate days of orientation. One PASA, who has been with the agency over a year, said she never attended orientation. "*I'm amazed and a bit disturbed by the lack of training*," she said. She took the contracting (COR) series of courses on her own initiative. "*I thought it would help secure my place in the office because there are only three others in my office who are CORs*."

A Democracy and Governance Fellow who took a year sabbatical to work at USAID said, "*No one even knows I'm here*." It took over a year to go through the application process and she "*sat in a cube for over a month before anyone even noticed I was in the office*." She was not invited to any meetings and people did not share information. She left after nine months and "tele-worked" from San Francisco for at least three of those months. "*It was an interesting experience*," she said. The fellowship was "*nothing like I expected*" and it is "*disappointing to see how our government is run*."

The above experience is echoed by many academics or similar professionals who take time to work for the government.[113] The woman cited above is one of several people we spoke with who said USAID had no orientation for academic professionals. Another Fellow said

> "*…it all depends where you land. In my case, I grabbed onto someone who was nice enough to let me shadow her. Eventually I just created a project to have something to do*."

Yet another said he "*felt unwelcomed*" and "*distrusted*" and left after five months.

[113] The exception to this is the AAAS Fellowship which seems to have some organization. Ben Franklin Fellows reported the worst experiences.

TRAINING / STAFF DEVELOPMENT / CONTINUOUS LEARNING

It is important to note that training is not conducted by the HR Training division. While this may make sense for technical training, it may make less sense for the core curriculum noted above. One cannot and should not separate, much less contract out the conveyance and reinforcement of the core mission and values of the agency from its HR process.

USAID staff in the training division manages contracts and handle operations: room assignments, record keeping and registration. "*The training unit is not a player in developing curriculum or advancing learning*," according to one HR professional. "*Most training takes place at the office or bureau level*." Design and content is dispersed further among contractors. "*It's important to understand that USAID staff does not provide training*," said one senior officer. "*They receive it*."

Usually training is provided by institutional contractors, many of whom are previous employees and are quite good. According to a training contractor for USAID:

> "*Training at USAID is decentralized. Training is rolled out specific to a job series, foreign officer backstop or bureau. Decisions on types of training to offer are driven by budgets and leaders' or managers' agendas. The first question asked about training is 'Who will pay for this*?'"

It appears training information and budgets are not shared and who receives training and the type of training is dependent on supervisor decision making. That said, anyone can make a special request for courses to improve learning. For example, one person said he requested training in Employee Relations that resulted in a professor from The University of Maryland teaching a course three times per week for college credit over a five year period to several employees.[114]

USAID does not necessarily need more training; rather USAID needs organizational systems to manage relevant training. This includes updating current core coursework to match the emphases of USAID Forward. A thorough Needs Analysis will provide the information on which courses to keep, retire or re-design. From that point it is relatively easy to build relevant curricula to match staff and management needs.

The data base of training courses offered at USAID is unwieldy. According to a DLI:

> "*Topics are repetitive and offered competitively across the Agency. Someone has a good idea. Others learn about it. All of a sudden there are two or three or more training programs under development that deal with the same thing. It's obvious they're not working together. In fact, they're often working against each other*."

Brown Bags

Brown Bags are a useful way to provide continuous learning and disperse information or thinking. The purpose of a Brown Bag is to utilize normal breaks, such as the lunch break, to provide information in a voluntary and informal setting. It is often followed by a discussion of

[114] This was at another federal agency.

the topic. These sessions are common as a medium for knowledge management and internal communications.

The number of Brown Bags (estimated at about 175 annually) appears overwhelming and may dilute their usefulness. Disappointing numbers attend even when presenters are renowned. One employee summed it up saying, "*I intend to go to Brown Bags but then something comes up*." Many told us they are "*continuously reacting to whims of those the next level up*" and "*it is a matter competing interests for my time*." At the same time speakers say they are "*honored to be invited to present at USAID*" whether in a Brown Bag session, conference or any other event.

USAID Knowledge Center

The USAID Knowledge Center (also known as the USAID Library) is instrumental in providing information and learning to USAID workers. The Summer Series hosted by USAID Knowledge Center was canceled in 2012. In 2013 there was a sudden announcement that the Knowledge Center was to close to make space available for another purpose; however a staff petition resulted in its staying open, at least for the present. Currently, Knowledge Center emails are forwarded to the Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Governance and the Center's director has left for another job.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is an important component of job development, yet its precise definition remains elusive. Mentoring provides the opportunity to gain explicit and implicit knowledge, social capital and the psychosocial support between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé).[115] It most certainly involves communication and is relationship based. Research shows that intergenerational mentoring does not always mean the mentor is older than the protégé; and the best programs involve elders mentoring youth and youth mentoring elders.[116]

Two pilot mentoring programs are under development at USAID:

1) A program that connects Foreign Service Officers with volunteers from the USAID Alumni Association. Approximately 20 Foreign Service Officers in E3 are participating in the pilot and feedback has been positive. Alumni expressed a certain eagerness to work with newer employees and provide a sense of historical perspective. But, according to a top official, there is some thinking that "*it's a new day*" and we "*don't need dinosaurs*."

2) An on-line mentoring course managed by Human Resources/Training and Education (HR/TE) is under development. Progress on this course has been slow, according to the person in charge. Significant money was put into the online Mentor Program, and modules were created and tested by a group of three or four people in Washington DC; but the work appears to have been abandoned. "*Originally, three people were assigned to the work*," said an HR insider. "*Two of those people left and were not replaced. Currently, it is a portion of*

[115] Bozeman, B, Feeney, M. K. (October 2007). "Toward a useful theory of mentoring: A conceptual analysis and critique". Administration & Society. Vol. 39 No. 6. pp. 719-739.
[116] For example, young people provide mentor programs for older people in technology and computer skill.

one person's workload." She said she wasn't clear where the program was headed in the future.

Employees appear unclear as to their responsibilities with mentor programs. "*I don't need mentoring*," said a PSC with thirty years field experience, "*though I'd like to provide it. And, even though I'd like to provide it I'd like to know it might make a difference*."

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The goal of any appraisal system is performance management. This is done by identifying, measuring and managing human performance in the organization. Performance appraisals are used to evaluate an employee's current or past performance relative to performance standards and can be used both developmentally and administratively.

The first step for a performance review is to begin by identifying dimensions of effective job performance as determined by the job analysis. Supervisors are asked to make judgments about an employee's performance based solely on performance standards for a job or compared to another employee's performance doing the same job.[117]

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) reveals that employees feel supervisors apply an uneven hand regarding performance reviews. Five of 10 USAID "*Most Negative Responses*" Agency-wide relate to performance:

1) *Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs*
59% negative response

2) *In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve*
50% negative response

3) *In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way*
42% negative response

4) *Promotions in my work unit are based on merit*
35% negative response

5) *Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs*
34% negative response

Research shows that procrastination and jealousy are frequent predicaments around effective performance reviews and good management. Supervisors should focus on job-relatedness as the key to performance. As an example: As part of the USAID Forward precepts, USAID says it

[117] Bias, Halo Effect, Leniency, Similarity Error, Central Tendency, Organizational Politics and Legal issues are common errors in performance reviews.

wants employees to build sustainable partnerships with local entities. It follows, then, that in some way 'partnerships' should be built into the performance review.

Yet, a mix of people interviewed for this report provided the following quotes about job-relatedness and partnerships:

> "*There is a whole lot of lip service [paid] to creativity and innovation, but the space isn't there for creativity*."
>
> (CSO with 15 years at USAID)

> "*There are three or four competencies related to partnership but they do not tell you anything about how the work is to be realized*."
>
> (DLI with three years at USAID)

> "*There are no AEF precepts for partnerships*."
>
> (FSO with 10 years at USAID)

> "*Alliances are not a part of the job. Mission Directors usually concentrate on normal contracts and agreements. Whichever way USAID wants to go, it should clear up confusion for staff in field or at the very least define, organize and open up the avenues for development*."
>
> (FSO with 13 years at USAID)

> "*Partnerships are a 'nice to do' not a 'must do.' "*
>
> (CSO with 14 years in government, not all at USAID)

> "*Some are rewarded for risks they take to implement USAID Forward... But, to get there you have to go through middle resistance. If you're lucky, someone at the top hears about it and then you may succeed*."
>
> (CSO with 12 years at USAID)

> "*Data shows that the fast track to advancement is a law degree. The slow track is Education. No data supports the urban legend that serving in Washington DC promotes career advancement. And, no data supports building partnerships promotes career advancement*."
>
> (Senior HR Manager)

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning is a process for recruiting, identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key leadership positions. The idea is to increase the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume roles as they become available. Other terms for succession planning are 'talent management' or 'replacement planning.'[118]

[118] Conger, J. A., & Fulmer, R. M. (2003). Developing your leadership pipeline. Harvard Business Review, 81(12), 76-84.

There are really two issues regarding succession planning at USAID: 1) staff; and, 2) continuation of programs and projects. Both are discussed below as they affect the Office of Human Resources.[119]

Staffing / Employee Turnover

According to the GAO investigations and other reports:

> *"USAID faces several challenges in its workforce planning and management. First, USAID lacks a sufficiently reliable and comprehensive system to record the number, location, and occupation of its staff. Second, according to mission officials, operating in an uncertain environment with continuous shifting program priorities and funding can make it difficult to ensure that missions have the staff available with the necessary skills when needed. Third, the processes USAID must use to plan for the placement of its overseas staff require coordination with State*."[120]

While USAID has addressed some of the issues raised above, the Office of Human Resources has a ways to go to streamline its systems. The HR literature is replete with research that shows that when poor performers are not managed properly top performers leave. Top performers can usually find new work and poor performers hunker down. Research also shows that high turnover may be harmful to a company's productivity if skilled workers are often leaving and the worker population contains a high percentage of novice workers.

We heard contrasting viewpoints on employee turnover and some comments are:

> "*We are driving out the top performers using excuses like Reduction in Force (RIF) threat and things like that*."
>
> (Senior division chief)

> "*We have more applicants than ever*."
>
> (Senior administrator)

> "T*here is a disproportionate amount of time between resignation and replacement. Frequently the result is zero jobs*."
>
> (Staff member)

> "*USAID is still playing catch-up.*"
>
> (Mission director)

According to one HR manager "*the cost of bringing a new FSO up to speed is about $250,000 per employee over five years*." This includes salaries, foreign language training (approximately $40,000 per employee), relocation expenses for employee and their family and time to become a contributor to the workplace. He said,

> "*It takes three to five years before a DLI officer is fully productive. No one actually calculated where we were at during the surge of DLI hiring. We had 10% employee*

[119] Of note is that these topics require coordination of several offices, specifically Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL).
[120] GAO-10-496

turnover early on, but DLI attrition is now around 5%. And, 50 to 70 officers retire each year."

Succession planning builds the foundation for effective organizational behavior and co-ordinates long-term management. We spoke with more than a few seasoned employees who say USAID has "*lost its way*." One career Officer said:

> *USAID often had the largest field presence and other donors used to look to USAID for leadership in engaging host government and in donor coordination. These days many Mission Directors don't have a strong understanding of development. Many come from technical backstops and don't often have experience in senior level engagement on development issues outside of their technical backstops. I find many tend to shun substantive engagement and stick to USG representational functions such as giving speeches, remarks and so forth."*

Program / Project Continuance

Actively pursuing succession planning ensures that employees are constantly developed to fill each needed role and that you have employees on hand ready and waiting to fill new roles. Succession planning can enable programs and project as they expand and lose key employees.

Succession planning can address accountability issues associated with abandoned projects. One Health Officer said:

> "*USAID has been distracted by external mandates to the work of the agency…earmarks, presidential Initiatives and Administrator Priorities.*"

Another senior program officer in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID said "*There is amnesia about development work…especially with mandates from areas that are funded externally such as Pepfar and OFDA.*"[121]

One senior Foreign Service program officer expressed frustration at building sustainable programs (or even projects).

> "*It is very difficult to build on projects in the field. People admire USAID, but they also see it as becoming increasingly dysfunctional. It wasn't always like this. The number of political appointees for this administration is at an all-time high; many inexperienced placements in key positions. It has a big effect in the field. We have a lot of work to do to fix our reputation.*"

Tours of Duty

Succession planning can take into account the length of time USAID officers spend in any one country. According to a senior HR administrator tours of duty are:

> "*constrained by security requirements and policy determined by the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM),*"

[121] President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance **(**OFDA**)**

She also pointed to

> "*Presidential Initiatives, earmarks and program budgets, physical security, the Critical Priority Country (CPC) overlay and family problems that curtail length of tours*."

Nonetheless, several officers and alumni said length of tour is instrumental to successful development work:

> "*Terms of one, two, and three years haven't always been the case. The norm used to be four to four-and-a-half years. It's only now with CPCs and having to feed the beast of hardship posts that tours were shortened and new people were thrown at them. A large percent of new employees start in conflict posts. You can't even learn your backstop or what you need to do your job (in that amount of time). Maybe you have a chance to interact on the phone, but certainly they aren't interacting with civil society. I fear we have many people today with unrealistic expectations*."[122]

Another FSO posted the following on his blog:

> *"FSOs generally spend two year each in their first two overseas assignments – unless it's a danger post, in which case they spend just one. After that, a typical assignment lasts for three years. In many cases it takes at least a year to really acclimate to a new country, so it's often almost time to leave by the time an FSO really begins to feel at home in a place. And you usually have your onward assignment a year or so before you leave a post, so mentally you're already in the next place before you leave a post.*
>
> *The system is set up this way for what is believed to be a good reason – the U.S. government doesn't want FSOs to "go native" – essentially adopting the host country's interests over those of the U.S. But the flipside of all the moving around is that embassies have a merry-go-round of Americans hopping on and off all year round. The local employees are in many ways the foundation of each mission, because they tend to stay in their jobs for decades, if not their entire working lives*."[123]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below, for USAID consideration, are recommendations for USAID that result from this study and analysis.

Recommendations #1 through #4 apply to the first section of this report, including Major Developments. Recommendations #5 through #17 apply to the second section of this report, including Job-Relatedness and alignment of HR activities.

[122] Quote from a retired officer.
[123] Comments by Dave Seminara (April 25, 2012) available at http://www.gadling.com

RECOMMENDATION #1: TEST CWPM: CONDUCT FIELD STUDIES/ QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK / COUNT OF PEOPLE WHO USE THE TOOL / PROVIDE TRAINING ON USE OF TOOL

Workforce planning is an interrelated process affected by:
1) Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Controls and Workforce Flow
2) Workforce Assignment
3) Human Capital Changes

It is important to note that these are not linear steps. They are interconnected and cannot be assessed in isolation (whether across a Mission, Region, Bureau or Agency). Proper use of any tool for workplace planning requires training and testing. Field studies will identify both benefits and troubles with the model, including the number of people who use the tool and areas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATION #2: REVIEW CORE TRAINING

Significant training issues need to be addressed as they pertain to the key thrusts of USAID Forward. It is highly recommended that all core training offered to USAID employees be reviewed. Such efforts should:

1) Address duplication of effort and information
2) Align key messages
3) Coordinate any assemblage or sequence for training
4) Highlight coursework to retire or revise
5) Lay the groundwork for training to develop going forward

Specifically, training related to Local Capacity Development (LCD) can be included in "New Employee Orientation", "Working Across Cultures", "Area Studies" and "Candidate Development". However, LCD ought also to be addressed in Program and Project Management and is applicable to Acquisition and Contracts as well.

RECOMMENDATION #3: VALIDATE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT WORK

The CMS web site is technically sophisticated and looks good; however, the data gathered to create the competencies are weak and of questionable validity. Given the importance of competency development to the entire HR system, it is worth the time and effort to validate these competencies for accuracy. Related to this is the very limited importance given to competences related to working with local systems, cross-cultural skills, etc.

RECOMMENDATION #4: MOVE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT TO STRATEGIC PLANNING DIVISION

Competency assessment is rooted in Job Analysis (JA), Job Design (JD), Job Specifications (JS) and Classification. The work is more akin to workforce strategy and planning than to training and education. The identification of and uses for competency work is far more extensive than training alone.

In order for USAID to succeed in the USAID Forward mission, then all aspects of the HR recruitment, selection, training and performance management systems must align with the strategy and goals set by USAID Forward. This begins with **job-relatedness**.

RECOMMENDATION #5: MATCH PERFORMANCE REVIEWS TO JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Data for this research show that performance reviews do not align with USAID objectives and goals. For example, IPR 2 and IPR 3 of USAID Forward stipulate local partnership development but these goals are not included in performance evaluations. As recommended above, supervisors need better training to align jobs with job-relatedness. Performance (pre)views should be future-oriented, focus on improvement and management by objectives (MBO). Action plans help to identify problems and find solutions. They provide useful feedback and, most importantly, relate directly to the responsibilities of the job.

RECOMMENDATION #6: MAKE BETTER USE OF EXIT SURVEY

An exit survey is available upon request to all who leave the agency. However, many are unaware that an Exit Survey even exists. "*The biggest (non-health/retirement) reason for leaving is tied in some way to the direct supervisor*," said the Bureau Chief for Workforce Planning;

> "*In the direct interviews I need to work at it sometimes and build some trust but when they start to discuss it you can get a great deal. The survey seems to pick this up better. In terms of workforce planning – the big concern is losing high performers*."

A Personal Service Contractor told us that she was "*let go*" when her contract ran out although it could have been renewed. She was unaware of any USAID Exit Survey and would have "*welcomed the opportunity to express her view about her work experiences at USAID*." She said that she had never received a performance review even when she asked for one.

> "*They said the next person would do it. No matter what, I know I did a good job and worked harder than most. Heck, there are people who don't even show up for work and they just hang on. To this day, I have no idea what I did that made the newest supervisor decided my work wasn't valuable."*

RECOMMENDATION #7: REVIEW AND REVISE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS, RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION GUIDELINES

The aim of recruitment is to attract qualified job candidates. Data from this research suggest the need to attract and interview a wider range of candidates. The case exists for hiring the right mix of employees in all categories across the agency with the appropriate background, knowledge and skills to match the tenets of USAID Forward. But we have noted a lack of emphasis on the 'soft skills' that are so fundamental to development work in the USAID recruitment, interviewing and selection process. The agency needs to pay more attention to the kind of person it hires, as much as to the skills that person has; that is to say it needs to find ways to hire on the basis of the personality and character of its people.

Thus the recruitment and selection processes should be expanded to include a broader set of competencies for a best "fit" with work in development (i.e. social and cultural sensitivity, empathy, thoughtfulness, relationship building). In addition to the need for selection criteria based on character – beyond scores and word count – is the need for interviewers who are knowledgeable about the requirements of the job, and who themselves possess the 'soft skills' that make for an interview that delves into and discerns the 'person' who is behind the resume.

RECOMMENDATION #8: STANDARDIZE AND STREAMLINE ORIENTATION

At USAID, all new staff – no matter through what door they entered – need to be oriented to USAID as a development agency: the purpose and mission, the history of USAID, the challenges and successes, policies, procedures, rules and regulations.

Developing and facilitating a new employee orientation takes time. Too often, busy workplaces forego a proper orientation in the hopes that new recruits will 'figure it out' as they get to work. In fact, taking the time to properly orient new hires increases employees' chances of success and employee retention; ultimately, standardized, carefully-designed orientation saves time and money and helps employees to perform better.

RECOMMENDATION #9: HARMONIZE THE TRAINING OFFERINGS/CREATE CERTIFICATIONS

Training needs change over time. USAID doesn't need more training; however, USAID can "package" curriculum to address development studies, cross-cutting themes and certification programs in place of layering on more training. This begins with a Needs Analysis to decide which training is appropriate, including ways to deliver the training.

RECOMMENDATION #10: INVOLVE USAID EMPLOYEES AS INSTRUCTORS IN TRAINING

Administrative costs charged by contractors are approximately 100% or more than actual costs. Rather than having USAID staff manage contracts for training courses it would save money to involve them as instructors. Participants in a recent training that included USAID personnel as trainers noted the unique value-added in meeting and working with staff saying they "*had a better understanding of history, mechanisms, and nuance much more than contractors*." Furthermore, headquarters staff benefited from getting to know those working in Missions: learning, discussing, and consulting about current and planned projects and activities. Perhaps the biggest benefit is building trust and making use of Headquarters' services.

RECOMMENDATION #11: COMBINE TRAINING WITH OTHER USG AGENCIES

USAID can make better use of training courses offered by other federal agencies such as Commerce, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Defense University (NDU) and Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Other USG Agencies have asked to be included in and share training sites, programming and instructors with USAID. Combining efforts saves time, money and streamlines messaging.

For example, the number of employees eligible for Foreign Service Institute (FSI) courses can be expanded. Currently, the Foreign Service Institute offers two courses for USAID employees. The Executive Leadership Seminar is for GS 15 level employees and requires approximately 11 days of training. The Understanding Interagency Relations is at the GS 12 level and involves cultural differences between agencies. "*Acceptance for both course are extremely competitive and approximately six people are accepted each year*," according to the FSI person in charge of the course. Acceptance is by nomination only.

RECOMMENDATION #12: OFFER REGIONAL TRAINING

Cross-cutting issues (such as partnerships or gender) and topics specific to geographic areas can be offered as Regional training. Regional offerings can provide an opportunity to learn from others working in the same sphere of influence (either by issue or geographic area), move programming faster and provide venues for teamwork and problem-solving. Costs can be shared. Regional training effectively saves money, time and energy, increases information and promotes communication.

RECOMMENDATION #13: MANAGE THE NUMBER OF BROWN BAGS; GIVE CREDIT TO STAFF FOR ATTENDING

The idiom "*too much of a good thing*" may apply to the Brown Bag experience at USAID. Too much of a something pleasant (i.e. Brown Bags) becomes unpleasant simply because there is too much of it. Some level of control on the numbers, topics, and schedules for Brown Bags may increase their importance and standing. Tasks such as organizing, synchronizing and marketing Brown Bags and other forms of information dissemination should be recognized in the Job Description.

RECOMMENDATION #14: ENHANCE SUPERVISOR TRAINING

Data show that many supervisors are put into supervisory positions without adequate training not just about the procedures, policies, rules and regulations required of their job, but more importantly, what it takes to be a good manager and leader of people. Many supervisors (several are FSLs and political appointees) do not understand or receive training about the HR system, including manager assistance programs and planning tools. For example, supervisors can become more aware of tools available, including the CWPM, classification assistance and ethics training. We were told that supervisors go around the system to avoid regulations (i.e. veteran preference) and hire acquaintances.

RECOMMENDATION #15: DEVELOP MENTOR PROGRAMS

Research shows mentoring provides the opportunity to retain the brightest new talent and prepares them to lead. Not only does a mentoring program boost bench strength, but people who learn more on the job are far less likely to quit. The benefits don't stop with protégés: People who mentor often are more productive, better socialized, and less stressed. They also tend to develop a loyal network of supporters, gather valuable perspective from younger employees, and gain insight into other parts of the business.[124]

RECOMMENDATION #16: CONSIDER WAYS TO ADDRESS SUCCESSION / TEMPLATE / INVOLVE FOREIGN SERVICE NATIONAL STAFF / EXTEND TOUR OF DUTY

As with all other aspects of human resources processes, aligning succession planning with the tenets of USAID Forward enables future development projects to succeed in the field. It would be relatively easy to develop a succession planning template to identify and recruit superior employees, develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and prepare them for advancement or promotion into ever more challenging roles.

[124] Terri A. Scandura (2009). Mentoring – A Review of the Science and the State of the Art, Management Faculty Articles and Papers. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/terri_scandura/18

To this end, FSN staff roles and capacity can be developed further. Relationships are built over time and FSO rotation schedules rarely fit with program, project or partnership life-cycles; in fact, the rotation schedules work against sustained relationships.[125] It makes sense to develop Foreign Service National (FSN) personnel to work alongside FSOs, either in tandem or as lead, in project design for three distinct reasons:

1) FSOs rotate faster than a partnership's lifecycle
2) FSNs are familiar and vested in local capacity development
3) FSNs stay in-country and can co-ordinate across sectors

Longer tour times can enable international development and sustain projects. USAID can begin efforts to address constraints in the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA). At the very least, USAID ought to make a concerted effort to return to FSO tour durations used before the emphasis on Critical Priority Countries.

RECOMMENDATION #17: CUSTOMER SERVICE FEEDBACK SYSTEM FOR THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

An effective customer service feedback (similar to USAID's IT Office) will provide immediate feedback from Officers and other Human Resource users about customer service. Such a system can help staff stay organized and up-to-date. The system will assist managers and supervisors to manage performance, track emails and assess hot topics.

This should be done *only after* a full-blown assessment to verify whether the Office of Human Resources has sufficient staff to carry out USAID's Human Resource requirements. In other words, conduct an exhaustive, independent evaluation of USAID's two personnel systems for civil and foreign service (first the entire system, then each separately). Recommendations should be based on robust analysis that considers Agency needs, staff feedback, and where and what senior management, State Department, international development stakeholders (including host governments, private sector, U.S. contractors and Congress) think USAID should be achieving or doing.

RESOURCES

A NOTE ABOUT RESOURCES

Time and resources are a major problem across most areas of the organization. Lack of resources from paper and pens to qualified individuals impedes all functions and negative affects morale and respect for the job. Personnel at all levels of the organization complain about lack of resources. To quote one person in Washington DC:

[125] FSOs play a key role in project design and are key personnel who build and represent USAID at the highest level when formulating partnerships. To this end, FSO rotation schedules can be incorporated into the partnership activity. Likewise, partnership activities should be reflected in the performance review. Hand-off of partnership relations should be considered at the start of the relationship.

> "*We cannot do our jobs, let alone a good job while we are looking for printer toner, a notebook, paper and pens. It's a running joke. People horde supplies or buy their own. Frankly, it's embarrassing*."

The 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint survey asked the following question in response to which 43.5% Disagree or Strongly Disagree:

I have the necessary time and resources to provide significant direct engagement in the field with a host country or regional entity:

Strongly Agree	5.4%
Agree	26.8%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24.2%
Disagree	27.9%
Strongly Disagree	15.6%

"*There is a direct correlation between federal budgets and the availability of resources*," said one person. Staff has come to expect resources are not available in the third and fourth quarters. Seasoned staff either horde supplies or purchase their own. People interviewed for this report cited examples of bartering with other units and departments for copier supplies. "*When the boom comes there is a rush to purchase items*," said an institutional support contractor as he showed us a $230.00 stapler. "*This is my version of the $500 toilet seat*."

CONCLUSION

The main finding from this research is that Human Resource systems are not in tune with the 'changes in the way we do business' emphasized in USAID Forward. It appears many HR matters are an afterthought to the policy and mandates that drive the Agency and this has been going on for decades. Understanding the Agency from the HR perspective helps identify ways in which USAID can better align staff recruitment, selection, orientation and development with USAID Forward.

USAID continues to face several challenges and constraints that affect its workforce planning and management. Much rests on the new triad – the CHCO and two deputies – to restructure the Office of Human Resources to align with USAID Forward. But, it is possible to become a proactive, rather than a reactive, organization. It is worth repeating what the former Mission director:

> "*Someone in HR needs to be listening if the agency really intends to return to a learning organization. The HR office might have people with HR experience but there aren't many HR professionals in HR and there isn't a lot of willingness to listen, especially if it means altering course. USAID Forward requires risk and challenge to change. The organizations we're working with are weak. We did this (type of development) before and the new staff we hired doesn't have the skills to manage these types of relationships*."

Add to this employee turnover, a major hiring surge, earmarks, secure and vulnerable budgets, two personnel systems, multiple hiring schemes, an assorted workforce, and an ever-changing

environment. The result is layers upon layers of processes and procedures, many created to respond or "fix" issues related to GAO investigations and recommendations, Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and USAID Forward. In many ways, USAID as an organization got ahead of its own internal HR infrastructure.

To improve systems and prepare for the future the Office of Human Resources needs to put more emphasis on:

1) validating the competency work
2) sorting through the myriad of hiring mechanisms
3) scrubbing the training decks
4) restructuring the Office of Human Resources to align with USAID Forward principles

The significance of aligning competencies (and thereby recruitment, selection, training and performance evaluations) with the intent of USAID Forward cannot be stressed too much. It is essential both to remove confusion and improve morale. In general, people come to work at USAID because they want to make a difference; they want to do development work. As mentioned above, people love the work at USAID, but they are frustrated working at USAID.

Aligning Human Resource activities is important and decisive work and we were told the Office has plans that address several of the recommendations made in this report and in the local solutions report, writ large. Much rests on the new triad design of the HR office. We are hopeful things will improve so that USAID can continue its noble efforts within the development sphere. There are many good staff in HR; however, many are lacking in their ability to serve those whom they represent: there are too many complaints of lack of response, unanswered emails and canceled meetings.

The Office of Human Resources can bring its functions into step with the rhetoric of transformational development. The costs to reputation and financial repercussions are adverse consequences and the Office of Human Resources can provide the necessary infrastructure. However, the experiences expressed by nearly every person interviewed for this report details an office that is circuitous and opaque. It is matter of accountability, not only to those who work at USAID, but to the American taxpayers and countries where USAID has a presence.