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**HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:  
PEOPLE AS CHANGE AGENTS**

**HERNS  
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
NUMBER ONE**

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## HERNS INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NUMBER ONE

*An ancient Chinese proverb — that it is better to teach people to fish rather than to give them a fish — has been a frequently used example for describing the development process. However, we have subsequently discovered that teaching people to fish is not enough. If development is to be lasting, they must also have a deep commitment to fishing. With that commitment, they will learn to fish themselves and will see that fishing is done in their own best interests. An individual with this kind of deep commitment to development, and with the skills to ensure that development endures, is a change agent — the essential ingredient for sustainable development.*

### **HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: DEVELOPMENT IS PEOPLE ALTERING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR TO CREATE CHANGE**

*People* determine the success and sustainability of USAID development projects. Introducing **lasting change and sustainable development** means, among other things, altering peoples' **attitudes and behavior**. Even institutional development and policy change — the cornerstones for attaining USAID's Strategic Objectives and development goals — depend on the attitudes and behavior of the people who manage institutions and formulate or implement policies.

**Human capacity development is the participatory process of enhancing people's abilities, attitudes and behavior in positive ways related to their role in making development occur. Significant elements in human capacity development include:**

- technical or academic skills**
- leadership qualities**
- a commitment to change and development**
- a sense of responsibility for assisting others**
- a belief in oneself as a change agent (e.g., a leader and risk taker)**

For development to take place, **people** must be thought of as **change agents** — individuals with the **skills, traits, commitment and beliefs** that ensure the success and sustainability of USAID development projects. Project designers and managers must define **human capacity requirements** in terms of **what change agents do** — not how they are trained.

*Human capacity development is the process of selecting, preparing and supporting individuals to carry out their responsibilities as change agents.*

## CHANGE AGENTS — WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY REQUIRE TO SUCCEED?

It is recommended that the development roles identified as important to the attainment of USAID development goals be thought of as change agent positions. These are jobs which require individuals who:

- *Understand the meaning of change and have sufficient belief in themselves to take the risks required for change to occur. They must provide leadership to others for initiating and implementing change even in the absence of substantial incentives or institutional support. In other cases, they are the ones who effectively support change initiated by their colleagues, their institution or their community.*
- *Understand the realities and the needs of the target groups whom they serve.*
- *Have the technical/academic skills required for development to take place.*

If change agents are to be successful, they require the following support:

- Their human capacity development (training) requirements must be stated in terms of the *development roles they are expected to fulfill and the problems they are expected to address* — not in terms of the number of training months or the specific courses they will take. Their human capacity development consists of *whatever is required* to enable them to perform their development role effectively. The success of their training will be evaluated in terms of their *impact on attaining the project's development goals*.
- The *selection* of change agents *is as important* a component of human capacity development *as the training itself*. Leadership traits, commitment, responsibility to others, and self-confidence can be enhanced through human capacity development only if these characteristics already exist as a potential to be developed in the individual.
- Selection criteria and other aspects of the human capacity development requirements must be defined through a *participatory process* which includes representation from *USAID, project management, the participating institutions, representatives of the beneficiary groups, and the entity responsible for designing the human capacity development program*.
- The *change agent's institution must support their efforts* — an individual can seldom be successful without the support of others in the workplace or the community.

## CAN USAID IMPLEMENT HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS?

A recent study of former USAID/El Salvador training participants, conducted under the guidance of Mr. Melvin Chatman of the Mission's Office of Education and Training, compared those who had participated in the Caribbean Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) with former training participants from other Mission projects. The two groups were comparable in that most participants in both groups took part in short-term technical training programs intended to support project activities or to build institutional capacity.

The El Salvador CLASP Program has incorporated a range of innovations over its eight-year existence. These improvements have originated from evaluations, Mission initiatives, and trainee and contractor feedback. CLASP has adopted design features which encourage greater participation by trainees, the institutions which employ them (or where they serve as volunteers), and the entities which provide their training. Generally, the CLASP returnees indicated their training was relevant and useful, and that it had been effective in supporting them as leaders and "multipliers." The following findings attest to CLASP's relative success:

- *CLASP trainees have actively promoted a range of institutional changes.* Most notable have been groups of primary school teachers and administrators who have introduced modern pedagogical techniques in rural schools throughout the country. CLASP has also supported the institutional development efforts of women leaders, environmental educators, emergency rescue workers, physical rehabilitation workers, and university planners.
- *The project seeks to train a "critical mass" of mutually supportive individuals to facilitate the attainment of specific Strategic Objectives or development goals.* These "core groups" ensure that returnees have others to support their efforts to more effectively use their training to initiate change. The groups also facilitate the ability of individual returned trainees to influence their supervisors and employers to accept innovations. Returned trainees maintain contacts and work together to provide motivation and training to co-workers and others in the community.
- *CLASP focuses on outputs and training objectives by requiring all trainees to produce action plans which guide their post-training activities.* Action plans ensure that trainees relate the goals and content of their training to their own work or community participation. It leads them to formulate *how they will concretely apply the training* after their return.
- *The objectives, program content, recruitment strategies, and group composition are developed jointly by the Mission, the training contractor and the counterpart or nominating institutions.* In the most successful cases, representatives of the counterpart institutions, trainees' supervisors, and other interested groups have been involved in the

program design. They become an informed constituency supporting the trainees when they return to their organizations or communities after completion of their training.

- *The programmers have attempted to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of training by bringing representatives of the U.S. training institution to the work site or community prior to designing the training program.* Trainers have direct contact with trainee candidates and become familiar with the realities they face. Trainers are therefore better able to respond to the trainees' actual work situations.
- *Project trainees are regularly offered the opportunity to participate in programmed follow-on, including support for sharing the results of training with colleagues and fellow community members.* In some cases, group outputs have been included as a training requirement. For example, as part of their training, teachers of English as a Second Language were tasked with developing a new curriculum, later adopted nationally by the Ministry of Education.

These participants begin their training with a *greater understanding of the goals, content and expectations of training* than do participants in other Mission projects. They are *more likely to share their training with others and to use their training on the job*. They are also more apt to have an *increase in their job-related responsibilities* than others and *participate more frequently in volunteer activities*.

The El Salvador study demonstrated that *CLASP training, even with its additional features, is nearly fifty percent less costly, on average, than non-CLASP training* done by the Mission. It is important to note that non-CLASP training is largely composed of very short training programs — many programs last only a few days. These short programs are very expensive when they are prorated for a training month.

**ARE ALL USAID SPONSORED TRAINING PROGRAMS  
CURRENTLY DEVELOPING THE "CHANGE AGENTS" REQUIRED FOR  
DEVELOPMENT TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE?**

The same recently completed analysis of former USAID/El Salvador training participants indicates that Mission sponsored non-CLASP participant training programs fall short of their potential in creating the **change agents** necessary to implement the Mission's Strategic Objectives and development goals. Non-CLASP participants reported that:

- They were often *unable to apply their training on the job* due to lack of support from their employers, supervisors and co-workers or they were transferred to other jobs not requiring their newly acquired skills.

- The *training was not applicable to their present work or appropriate for the technological realities of El Salvador.*
- The *training programs were very short* and did not allow participants sufficient time to adequately comprehend the subject matter.
- The *training was often presented as either a prize or reward, or as an offer of foreign travel* rather than a coherent effort to reach project development goals.
- The *selection of the trainees was often deficient* — most of them did not pass through a formal selection process.
- The *training was not coordinated with the other development resources in the project* so training often came too late for participants to contribute to meeting the project's development goals.
- *Critical elements of training design were absent*, including needs assessments, pre-training orientations, commitments by employers to support trainees upon the completion of training and assistance to reintegrate participants into their jobs.
- *Participants were not involved in any formal follow-on activities sponsored by their employers or by USAID.*

### DOING TRAINING RIGHT: GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

For **human capacity development** to fulfill its potential as a development tool, a three stage process should be followed:

- Needs Assessment
- Preparing Change Agents to Carry Out their Development Roles
- Monitoring and Evaluation

### *PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES*

All aspects of the above process should be *participatory*. Individuals and institutions to be affected — the *stakeholders* — should actively participate in all phases of the process from conceptualization of the problem through needs assessment, project design, implementation, monitoring and follow-on. Stakeholders include everyone who will be involved in or affected by the project. The *institutions which employ the trainees, the trainees themselves, USAID and its contractors, and the training institutions* must agree upon a mutual *compact* which

ensures that the training is appropriate for the development goal and that trainees will be able to effectively use this training.

- **Needs Assessment**

A comprehensive *human capacity needs assessment* is the cornerstone of a results-oriented human capacity development program. The human capacity needs assessment is best done at *the time a development project is designed*. It identifies the *stakeholders*, defines *development objectives*, clarifies *project outputs*, identifies the *core group* or *critical mass* of jobs that support one another to attain development goals, *defines the roles of the change agents* in the core group, and *sets priorities for human capacity development*.

- **Preparing Change Agents to Carry Out their Development Roles**

The needs assessment will define the *change agent roles* that are necessary for attaining the project's development goals. The second stage consists of a number of *related modules* in which change agents are *recruited, selected, prepared, reintegrated and supported* in such a way so as to *successfully fulfill their development related roles*. Modular human capacity development includes:

- *A selection process* in which individuals are chosen for the right reasons.
- *A pre-training orientation* which *builds commitment* and which *informs* individuals and their institutions about *what to expect from training and what their post-training commitments are for achieving project development goals*.
- *Technical or academic training* comprising what has traditionally been referred to as in-country, third-country and U.S. training.
- *Change agent training* which enhances trainees' leadership skills, commitment to change and development, sense of responsibility to the beneficiary groups being served, and self-confidence in their abilities to bring about change.
- *Follow-on support* for the *change agents* and *their institutions*, enabling them to carry out the commitment made to use training for development purposes. This may include continuing education to reinforce newly acquired skills or may introduce complementary topics related to development.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

All human capacity development programs will include a Mission-based monitoring and evaluation effort to *assure that human capacity development goals are being met*. This will

include a database using an enhanced Participant Training Management System (PTMS) accompanied by questionnaires and interviews with change agents, their employers and other stakeholders in the development process. Continual monitoring and evaluation will permit improvements to be made in the human capacity development process.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE AGENCY

It is unlikely that Agency project managers alone can devote the attention required to implement the human capacity development process described here. It is envisioned that Missions will obtain the services of *specialized contractors* available through the Global or Regional Bureaus or *through contracts at the Mission level* to carry out the human capacity development functions. Mission Training Offices, with the support of the Center for Human Capacity Development, will provide technical guidance to other Mission Technical Offices in the application of human capacity development. Contractors will be responsible for:

- *Designing human capacity development programs* in consultation with USAID and other stakeholders.
- Administrative and technical support in the *selection and evaluation of candidates*.
- *Organization and implementation of pre-training orientation* programs and other logistical matters related to attendance at training sessions.
- *Coordination with and monitoring of sub-contracted human capacity development institutions*.
- *Development and implementation of all training modules*, including *follow-on*.
- *Monitoring and evaluation* of human capacity development and trainee accomplishments, *with stakeholder participation*.
- *Adjustments*, as necessary, of original human capacity development plans, *with stakeholder participation*.
- *Reporting* of human capacity development accomplishments to USAID.
- *Advice and assistance*, as needed, to enhance the implementation of human capacity development activities *for the attainment of Strategic Objectives and development goals*.