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The Participation Forum *

June 16, 1994

Topic: Breathing New Life into Old Projects through Participation

The stories told by the two presenters at the fifth session of the Participation Forum began similarly: health projects whose evaluations showed a lack of "ownership" by the host government and local communities. Barbara Sandoval, former Mission Director in Belize and future Mission Director in Ghana, spoke about Belize's successful effort to realign a community-level program that had achieved its numerical targets but had not built an institutional foundation. Stella Goings, a physician specializing in public health and infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins University who has been seconded to the USAID staff in Nigeria through the Quality Assurance Project, described how participation was used to redesign two large health projects. Ramón Daubón, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, kicked off the session. The presentations were followed by a lively question and answer session. --Diane La Voy, Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

Sustainability and Participation *Ramón Daubón*

What attracted me to come to USAID was the agency's emphasis on sustainable development and the notion that development cannot be sustainable unless host country citizens are committed to it and engaged and vested in it. USAID's *Strategies for Sustainable Development* says "Development is 'sustainable' when it permanently enhances the capacity of a society to improve its quality of life." That's what we do. We don't do projects; we make communities better able to deal with their own problems.

Building the notion of participation into projects is probably the greatest contribution USAID can make to the countries we work in. Citizens may participate directly in the design and implementation of projects. But their engagement does not end there. Even in large infrastructure projects, citizens must be engaged in fundamental decision-making and priority setting. They may not be engaged in the design and siting of a bridge, but they should be involved in decisions about whether or not it makes sense to have a bridge

The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to Diane La Voy, using either the USAID directory or INTERNET, as DLAVOY@USAID.GOV. Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants from outside of USAID and to others interested in participatory development.

at all. Every project has an opportunity cost: the money, human resources, and good will could have been invested in something else.

I believe that participation is indispensable to development, but I wonder to what extent the expectation of measurable results conflicts with the leeway that is indispensable to program participation. Measurable results, by their nature, need to be consequent and orderly; whereas democracy is unpredictable and messy.

Based on the few field visits I've been able to make, I believe that USAID mission personnel appreciate the essential role of participation. They are eager to learn more about how to program participation in specific activities and they wonder if Washington will give them the room to do it.

Getting Down to Basics in Belize *Barbara Sandoval*

Belize is an extremely small country with a population of only 200,000, although culturally it's very diverse. USAID started there in 1983 with some very broad-based interventions and will be closing out in September 1996. Overall we can count it as a major success for the agency.

The "Increased Productivity Through Better Health" project, or IPTBH, began in March 1985. Its original purpose was to assist in malaria and dengue control and to expand water and sanitation in rural areas. A 1989 evaluation of the project found that, while USAID and the government of Belize had achieved our numerical targets (number of latrines built, houses sprayed, health education messages delivered) the project did not appear to have built an institutional foundation, sense of ownership, or lasting impact.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Natural Resources had both done all the things they were supposed to do under the project but had not done much in terms of community development. Instead of just finishing the project and ending our work in the health sector, we decided to see what we could do in the very last year of this project to make its impact as long-lasting as possible.

Revamping the Project. We took steps to switch our approach. We contracted with the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) and the Vector Biology and Control (VBC) projects for assistance in planning interventions with the people who were our colleagues, our clients.

The first step was for those who were responsible for the implementation of the project to define the problem. These were mid-level people: the directors of health education, primary health care, vector control, water supply and sanitation. The two-day problem definition meeting for these people was very tense. They didn't know quite what was expected of them, and we in the mission didn't know quite what was going to come out of it. In the end they defined two major problems. One was their dysfunctional bureaucratic structure. The other was poor communication—downwards, upwards, sideways. District teams did not go to the communities; the central level did not support the district teams; health education consisted merely of canned talks; and there were no linkages among the volunteers and committees working at the community level on separate issues.

After defining the problems, they went out and gathered data to clarify the problems further and to identify the next steps. They sought to understand the different sorts of communications and different values in the communities and also surveyed to find out what skill areas were missing: What did people who were working in the program need to know how to do? Through a more formalized data-gathering process for the communities, they found out what community members' behavior was in reality.

Once the data had been gathered and the communities talked to, another meeting was held for program planning. The idea was to inform the senior level people in the two ministries what it was that the mid-level people had learned and to develop some clear objectives and strategies for achieving them.

The mid-level people had gotten very energized by all of the information they had gathered and excited about what they could do at the district level in other communities. But they had a great deal of trepidation about how to explain this to their bosses, that is, the permanent secretaries and the higher-ups in their organizations. But after the program planning meeting the mid-level people were ecstatic about the results and said, "We finally have learned how to talk to our bosses." Everyone bought into the process.

New Behaviors, New Relationships. The last step in revamping the project was to do training-of-trainers to spread information and make everyone involved into an enabler rather than a provider. As you know, health workers often see themselves as providing a service. They provide a well or primary health care. Through training we hoped to show them how to help people in the communities take charge of some of their problems themselves.

Training was short-term--nothing more than a week. The technical advisors came in and left district staff with homework assignments and then returned to give another short training course and homework assignment. Our colleagues and clients were pleased to see the same advisors come back, and it inspired them to participate more fully in the next level of training.

The behavioral analysis mentioned earlier led to the development of more effective health education messages. For example, the project had put in a lot of wells, but it turned out that many of the villagers did not care to drink the well water. They preferred rainwater, which they collected in catchment tanks. There was no problem with that except that once a year they painted the insides of these tanks with lead-based paint. These findings led to the design of interventions that no one had thought about before.

Information on the conditions and needs of the villagers was collected and expressed through the village health committees, which had formerly been inactive for the most part. Asking the residents about their needs empowered and strengthened these committees.

We also worked hard on the teamwork approach. Instead of the water people going off to community X all by themselves and doing water, they would go together with the malaria and health education people as a team. This would lead to greater efficiency and a lot less confusion among community people. The various health providers, by the simple act of travelling together, saw immediate positive results from their visits and also learned the value of each other's work.

Another effort was directed toward developing an information system. No one had been keeping track at the community level of what the health problems were and feeding that information back into decision-making.

Policymakers had to interact with the mid-level people every three months. In this way they became involved with what was going on within their own ministries as well as the communities. This cyclical process was advantageous for the communities as well. Policymakers would come by, ask them what they thought, do something, and then return and complete the process.

Institutionalizing the Approach. Eventually, the project was extended to complete the process of institutionalizing the new approach. It culminated in the development of a policy paper written by the mid-level people and presented to the chief bosses, the permanent secretaries. They all realized that they should not fall back into old patterns and canned solutions. They learned that it was possible to formulate policy by starting with the community and working through the middle level.

Because Belize is such a small country, the few people in permanent-secretary-level positions have a lot of responsibility. Getting them to put in extra time for the participatory approach was difficult. It called for USAID to be flexible, to give and take, to know when to back off or when to devote more resources on something that hadn't been in our original plan.

We also felt a need to keep Washington out. Part way through the process, some of our colleagues in Washington tried to force certain indicators on us to measure the project. These were unrelated to the capacity-building process we were going through. We said, "That's not what we're about right now. We have only five or six months left in this project, and we are not going to change course now. Goodbye. Thank you. Don't call us. We'll call you."

In the end, we had products: papers, meetings, a record of what we did. Is that a measure of sustainability? I don't know. But I do know that a year after project completion the methodology is still being used. The health teams are still working. We do know that they're involving the communities, that the interactive visits are still going on. And another donor is picking up where we left off to expand the program. (I don't know if I'd count that on the plus side or not, but it's so.)

Lessons Learned.

- False participation temporarily enlists input from community members but fails to build capacity or ensure sustainability. Many organizations involved in water supply, for example, go into a community and dig a well and then expect the community to "participate" later on by maintaining the well. If the community had no say about the well in the first place, it's a little hard to count on its subsequent participation.
- Genuine community participation is a long-term process aimed at developing leadership, technical skills, and social cohesion as well as achieving specific project benefits. The fact that our Belizean counterparts had the experience of working differently together in their communities may lead to other initiatives or changes. Certainly, at a minimum, more participation will strengthen Belizean democracy.
- Ownership of a project should ultimately be transferred to local institutions. This sounds obvious, but is not always easy to do. We have to learn to step back.
- Policy development can and should be included as a component of any community participation project. Policy dialogue and reform are often viewed as high-level, while community development is field or ground level. In Belize we found that the two levels had to be married. What was developed and learned at the community level had an impact on the policy level.

The next lessons are specific to community-level health projects.

- A dual approach is called for, one which not only teaches health workers the skills necessary to operate successfully at the village level but also focuses on the development of the district team itself.
- Establishing village health committees is a good way to decentralize the health care system. They can certainly empower the people to take responsibility for their own health and their own behavior.
- Increased attention should be focused on the quality of work at the district level, because that leads to the development of viable community institutions. In many countries, even those that talk about decentralization, the district level personnel often get short shrift.
- Mid-level program managers also have a central role in assuring the quality of service provided at the community level. This project started to yield results at the community level when mid-level people became fully involved. Prior to this effort, mid-level managers saw their role as distant "gate keepers" or "policemen," but they learned through this process what kind of impact they could and should have.

I'll conclude with the most obvious, but perhaps the most significant lesson of all. Genuine community participation is not easy, fast, or inexpensive.

Securing Nigerian Ownership As a Part of the Project Paper Development Process

Stella Goings

During the last few years the USAID programs in Nigeria have been working in a challenging environment. Nigeria's economy has been in free fall for some months. There have been four ministers of health in the last two years. Political unrest is a constant factor, and our USAID programs were recently, and we hope temporarily, disrupted as a consequence of decertification for drug-trafficking. Nevertheless, we believe that we have demonstrated substantial progress in effectively engaging the broad fabric of Nigerian society in planning and implementing our programs.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and it has one of the worst health and demographic profiles of any country in the world. The entire list of difficulties and obstacles to the delivery of health and population programs can be applied to Nigeria. Nigeria's population has grown very rapidly. The country has approximately five million births a year. Even with a substantial out-migration and high mortality rates, the population is growing by about three million persons per year.

USAID Lagos supports three core health programs: one in health with the focus on maternal and child health care and communicable disease control, another in AIDS prevention being implemented by AIDSCAP, and a third in population: the new Family Health Services Project currently under review. The three projects are designed to work together in support of an integrated program of service delivery. The redesign process that I will describe began during the developmental stage for the NCCCD project, but the real breakthrough in participation occurred later in the development of the project paper for the Family Health Services Project. This process has been evolutionary, with the mission staff responding to lessons learned and adjusting the art of collaboration as we engaged in the process.

Making Changes Based on an Honest Evaluation. USAID Lagos began by critically examining its experience with health and family planning to extract lessons learned. I was privileged to direct the sustainability assessment of the NCCCD project. The assessment team received only one operative instruction from the mission director: "Provide an honest evaluation." The team came back with 17 recommendations, some of which were critical of USAID's failure to engage the government of Nigeria in project development and implementation. Much to our amazement and delight, the USAID mission staff responded almost immediately by shifting the frame of reference and the process for proceeding with the new Family Health Services Project.

Taking It on the Chin in Town Meetings. To initiate the process, USAID convened a series of workshops, which resembled town meetings. Mission staff, consultants, and host country counterparts spent time away from Lagos in an environment conducive to an open-ended exploration of the issues. We tried to make these meetings inclusive. Government counterparts attended, along with representatives from key PVOs and NGOs and the private sector. We worked to identify constituency and interest groups, such as traditional leaders, women's groups, journalists, and others. Any group that expressed an interest in the development of these projects was given the opportunity to participate.

These meetings were nothing short of courageous. Both Nigerian and USAID attendees were encouraged to speak out openly about issues that they felt were important. A basic ground rule was that no topic was off limits, and USAID did not attempt to structure the dialogue. As a consequence, both USAID and the government of Nigeria had to be willing to listen to some very pointed complaints and concerns and to discuss issues of causation and proposed remedies. While some barbs were slung at USAID, the people who really demonstrated tremendous personal courage in participating were Nigerian government officials. The Nigerian people, and especially the private sector and NGO groups, were angry about what they saw as a lack of progress, and they did not mince words. Some government officials had to take it on the chin.

The Project Paper Development Process. Prior to the redesign process, USAID Nigeria had completed a country program strategy plan (CPSP) based on a high-level dialogue between Nigerian and U.S. officials. This provided a framework for the development of subsequent project papers. Therefore, the task at hand was to find the best way to accomplish USAID Nigeria's program objective tree and to develop projects which would support the development of those objectives.

To follow up on the planning workshops, USAID supported an on-going forum for extended dialogue and the consideration of issues and suggestions that had arisen during the original meetings. Nigerian and U.S. staff were encouraged to work together to develop program critiques and initiative papers proposing creative solutions and new approaches. USAID effectively limited its role to one of supportive participation, making sure that the mission perspectives were heard without dominating the process.

Administratively, the process was orchestrated by a team of three U.S.-based external consultants who facilitated the town meetings with about 63 participants, an 18-member technical advisory group, and a smaller subcommittee of core writers. The technical advisory group was nominated by the participants during the town meeting process. In other words, it was the Nigerians who decided among themselves who the members of the technical advisory group should be. In turn, the technical advisory group decided internally on the membership of an eight-person core writing group. With the aid of facilitators, these eight people did the majority of the work in close collaboration with the larger group. Several opportunities were planned for the core writing group to share ideas with the members of the technical advisory group.

The core writing group was extremely productive thanks in part to administrative support provided by USAID. We assigned office space and gave the core group the freedom to hire secretarial staff. We provided a dictaphone to allow people who would normally have difficulty using a wordprocessor to dictate what they wanted to say. The result was production of a compilation of background documents authored entirely by Nigerian participants early in the project paper development process. As we like to say in Nigeria, if you want Nigerians to be with you when you get off the plane in Borno, you have to have them with you when you get on the plane in Lagos.

Long-Term Ownership. The USAID team focused on fostering dialogue and a sense of ownership in the project paper development process. It was made clear to our Nigerian colleagues that they would be expected to serve in a long-term capacity as an advisory group for the life of the project and would periodically be asked to examine and realign project activities in response to shifting political and economic realities and performance assessment. Everyone understood that the advisors and the Nigerian collaborators shared with USAID responsibility for insuring the success of the USAID project.

When the draft documents were finished, we received excellent support and assistance from REDSO, the Office of Population, and the Global Bureau. Our backstop officer in Washington ran interference for us early on, defended our vision of the participatory process, and then helped us to get the best inputs from Washington. The reviews and comments that came in were shared with our Nigerian colleagues who were fully a part of the project development team.

Elements of Success. We have identified a few factors that contributed to the success of this process.

- The process was inclusive. We made a concerted effort to identify those who had a need or interest and then worked to secure their involvement.
- We had a flexible time line. Without that we would not have been able to develop such a good participatory process. Because our core funds come from the Development Fund for Africa, we had the latitude to negotiate several project extensions, and this was key to having sufficient time to work on the participatory aspects of project paper development. However, because we've learned so much about participation in Nigeria, we do not anticipate that future project papers would require such a flexible time line.
- Our efforts were self-directed with respect to the topics considered and the approaches to project development. We were assured that, even though a project initiation document (PID) had been developed, if we thought there was a better way, we were free to suggest it and to write it into the project paper.
- The three-person technical team who facilitated the Nigerian group had collectively more than 25 years of experience in Nigeria, much of it external to USAID. These advisors came to the task with well-developed, warm, and supportive relationships with people in many different sectors of society, and their presence added to the credibility of the effort early on.

The Family Health Services Project Paper that resulted is still being reviewed, but we think it's very good. The original drafts and background documents were authored by Nigerians, and they were responsible for a substantial redirection of the project design and for proposed approaches and mechanisms of implementation that are uniquely Nigerian. However, the most important result is that we have fostered a sustainable partnership. The Nigerians who worked with us are intellectually invested in the project and see themselves as a part of a USAID team that will work to get this project approved and successfully implemented.

During the difficult weeks just past, as we contemplated the possibility that USAID Nigeria might not be able to continue and began to take stock of the sustainable activities we've carried out in Nigeria, there was agreement that this process of dialogue and participatory project development was one of the most sustainable and that its impact extends far beyond the USAID umbrella. The government of Nigeria has, as a consequence of our effort, developed the skills, the capacity, and the desire to have an ongoing

dialogue with the people of Nigeria, and the people of Nigeria have, through their representatives, developed a posture of ownership of their health and population programs. If USAID disappears tomorrow, we believe that this process will see Nigeria through difficulties in months to come and will make a very positive contribution to its potential for sustainable development.

Questions and Answers

Cost Effectiveness

Q: Andy Sisson. I was struck by Barbara's last lesson, that participation has costs, isn't easy, takes time. Could you provide some thoughts on which kinds of participation are cost effective in achieving results like sustainability or ownership?

A: Barbara Sandoval. The costliest part of full participation is the community level, even in a very small country like Belize. But it is too important to short change. It's worth whatever the cost is. There may be some tools to minimize the cost of participation, but we now all know for sure that it's effective.

A: Stella Goings. There were some substantial costs to the approach that we used in Nigeria: convening workshops, paying for people's travel, per diem. That all mounts up. But when we consider the history of project development in a country like Nigeria and compare the costs involved in assuring the never-ending flow of U.S.-based consultants to come in and write background documents and help write your project paper, we think we got a real bargain by working with our Nigerian counterparts. We don't expect this process to end with the project papers. This same group will be playing a pivotal role in implementation and evaluation. Ultimately, when we tally up the whole thing midway to two-thirds of the way through these new projects, we're going to find that we were extremely cost effective.

A New Paradigm for Host Country Participation

Q. Andy Sisson: It seems we're still thinking in terms of USAID projects and trying to get government or people's ownership of these projects. Is there any scope for moving to a new paradigm where the government, working with its civil society, could define much broader strategies and priorities and gain donors' support for its efforts in, say, the health sector or the water sector?

A: Barbara Sandoval: In Belize our goal was not to make the *project* sustainable but to make health provision, and interventions, and institutions, sustainable. When the technical advisors kept talking about the project, I told them, "We're not talking about the project; we're talking about the community's involvement in its own health."

A: Stella Goings: In Nigeria the town-meeting scenario was an open forum. Part of the purpose was to foster Nigerian leadership, to allow the Nigerians to decide among themselves and then to tell us what direction they wanted to go in their health and population program. The only constraint was to stay within the health and population sectors. The trouble is that USAID and its programs can respond to Nigerian leadership in a substantial way only during the project development process. For example, in the week before I left Nigeria, I was sitting with some government officials in Nigeria who were talking about the need to privatize hospital services in Nigeria. This is a very important initiative, but USAID will not have a mechanism to assist them in responding to that for several years. So our problem in Nigeria is that, although we are clearly operating within the new paradigm you describe, we are worried that USAID will not have the ability to respond.

Indicators for Evaluation

Q: Diane Russell. During the design process, did you elicit indicators from local people? Did you find out what they saw as successful outcomes to a project? That might be one way of integrating participation and measurement of results. Washington then could be presented with the indicators that the local people see as important.

A: Stella Goings. In Nigeria, we had many extended debates about evaluation indicators. The Nigerian input was responsible for many changes in these. If you compare the project initiation document with the family health services project paper, you'll see that the indicators changed substantially, in part in response to Nigerian input. But we took it even further. We've also modified the indicators in our Assessment of Program Impact (API) as a consequence of Nigerian input and suggestions.

Dealing with Conflict

Q: Robert Mitchell. In Nigeria the focus has been on finding commonalities and concerns. That is quite different from the next step, actually developing a project, which involves bargaining. NGOs and the government all bargain for a piece of the action, and that's where participation becomes potentially full of conflict. How did you deal with known areas of potential conflict?

A: Stella Goings. We had a lot of arguments. Sometimes we resolved the issues and sometimes we didn't. The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy in the family health services project paper, for example, includes a completely separate strategy for the northern part of the country. We could not resolve issues having to do with the role of some of the NGOs. Areas of conflict were explored: Should this be government or NGO responsibility? What role should religious considerations play? But what we arrived at was a compromise, with the understanding that the Nigerians themselves will make adjustments if the plans do not work out.

Measuring the Participatory Process

Q: Ramón Daubón. When beneficiaries are engaged, a project is more likely to be successful. But how can we measure the degree of engagement so that we are accountable to the U.S. taxpayer? Even a project that fails to achieve its immediate objective may still manage to generate enough participation so that the people involved can carry on and design a follow-up project on their own. If that capacity is embedded in those people, haven't we succeeded to some extent?

A: Stella Goings. In Nigeria we are using a number of objective indicators to measure the success of the participatory approach: The degree to which Nigerian leadership is accomplishing tasks within the project development work plans and implementation of program components without external input are two examples. These and others I could name are indicators of the degree to which the Nigerian community has invested in the project. One of the most interesting indicators is the degree to which Nigeria invests financially in the projects that we have mutually designed and developed.

Q: Arthur Silver. It might be of interest to mention USAID's most successful sector-wide or subsector-wide experience in participatory project design and redesign in the area of irrigation and water management. Starting in the 1970s, USAID discovered that the irrigation infrastructure it had built was not being kept up. Sociologists and agronomists and engineers were forced to sit down together and come up with new approaches for projects in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan and others. They found ways to organize water-user associations that made decisions on key questions of water-sharing. There's a body of successful experience on these user associations.

Q: Julie Sutphen Wechsler (Inter-American Foundation). How do we know that the American taxpayers want quantitative indicators about the results of development? We come from a fairly math-averse country. However, Americans have the personal experience of participating in local civic activities and understand what it means. Instead of straitjacketing ourselves with quantitative indicators, perhaps we

need to re-evaluate what kind of indicators of development we are going to be reporting to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the taxpayers themselves.

A: **Barbara Sandoval.** Elected officials tell us that Americans want numbers. They go to the store, put their hard-earned money down, and get something -- with a 12-month warranty.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

This month's E-mail highlighted several themes emerging from the Forums. The following are excerpts from the many thoughtful communications.

Advocates for Development

Kristen Loken: "Previous forums have mentioned that USAID needs to reward the 'courage to keep Washington at bay.' It seems to me that we have to become once again ADVOCATES FOR DEVELOPMENT. We must communicate the idea that if the USG wants to have effective development programs that are valued by our counterparts and beneficiaries and that are sustainable and that ultimately benefit the U.S. as well, then the design and management of these programs must be participatory and field directed and take into account the lessons learned from the past. We need country-specific strategies developed together with local counterparts and beneficiaries. And we need to make it understood that trying to transplant American systems in other societies won't work. What will work is to address local problems and develop indigenous systems. This can't be done by a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington. We have to address this message to our colleagues in State and on the Hill."

Pre-Project Homework

Molly Davis: "I know it's not always possible to KNOW beforehand whether a project will be 'successful' or 'sustainable,' but perhaps a pre-project evaluation of potential impact and prospects for sustainability could tell us if the project meets the expected criteria. If it doesn't, then would be the time to re-design it, not half-way through, not at the end. We have Environmental Impact Assessments - why not Sustainability Impact Assessments?"

John Daly: "Why do we have to wait until an evaluation tells us that a project is failing to decide to use a participatory approach? In a recent meeting of the Agency Research Council, John Wilkinson showed that USAID usually started research in a substantive area five to ten years after starting assistance in that area. He suggested that we normally didn't start research until evaluations started showing that projects went wrong from lack of knowledge or understanding of the situations in which they are working.

"It shouldn't take a rocket scientist (a teckie) to understand that knowledge and information are central to good project and program design and management. Basically we have two ways to improve knowledge and understanding -- getting people who have the knowledge and understanding to participate with us, and formal research. Don't we know enough yet to use these two approaches before we start any project or program?"

Measuring Results

Ramón Daubón: "Citizens must be engaged in whatever the selected model of development is for that model to be successful. This engaged participation almost defines development. Hence we--USAID--should judge our projects by the extent to which they promote this engagement. They should be deemed successful if they promote it, even if for some other reason the potatoes don't grow or the immediate goal is not achieved."

Jeanne North: "The Administrator has said 'remember that results are really up to the countries we work with. They must develop themselves. We can only assist.' With his leadership in this important concept, the re-engineering should help bring clarity to this matter. A 'results orientation' is essential. However, I would like to propose the following typology:

"SUSTAINABLE RESULTS OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: changes in the indices of development achieved by host country organizations with the use of USAID (and other) development assistance and investments. (These results -- concerning population, economy, literacy, natural resources, democracy, etc. -- are now tracked and reported by the World Bank's DEVELOPMENT REPORT and UNDP's HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, for example). Sustained achievement of these changes requires a number of complementary developments in the host country, which depend upon initiative, influence, organization and management by host country organizations. A results-oriented USAID will have to take these factors into account as it develops its programs.

"OUTCOMES: Examples of 'outcomes' might be: a) well-trained teachers employed, b) adoption of specific new natural resource regulations, c) new political parties formed. In each of these examples, the outcome goes beyond what is in USAID's power to do. Host country leadership or at least 'ownership' is important if the 'outcome' is to affect the 'results.'

"PRODUCT: Any USAID unit should be held responsible for the 'products' of the assistance it provides to support the 'outcomes.' This assistance must be of high quality and sound in respect to development strategy and appropriate in timing and kind. USAID should also be responsible for assuring that the assistance 'products' are designed and delivered in such a way as to support the capacity of host-country organizations to design, plan, and carry out the activity in question and to produce the 'outcomes' envisioned.

At first glance USAID responsibility for 'products' may seem much less demanding than a responsibility for achieving 'results.' In fact, these products will be very difficult to produce, given the lack of control USAID Missions have over all of the elements needed. However, this requirement is more within the realm of possibility for USAID than the 'airy' and remote responsibility for 'results.'

"But 'results-orientation' is the overarching guide in this chain of activities: product, outcomes, and results. It is the shared goal of USAID and the host country partner."

Participatory Communications

John Grayzel: "It would be interesting if the participation network could upgrade our basic understandings of participatory communications and responses. The matter can become quite complex because the same terms can convey different meanings if used verbally (in conjunction with body language) or in writing. Then there is the problem of different cultural settings; different disciplinary backgrounds, the experiential background of individual parties, etc. People who are going to participate together may need basic communications preparation prior to the actual participation process."

Pirie Gall: "The basic issue is whether people have the patience and the skills to listen, to explore different levels of understanding (rather than jumping to conclusions and decisions prematurely). John Grayzel from Manila got to the core question - whether people have the communications skills for participation (and whether the Agency develops and rewards them). When we identified project management competencies, communications skills were rated first among twelve, higher than the 'hard' skills that get most of the rewards in the Agency."

Teamwork and Shared Vision

John Grayzel: "Dr. Margaret Mead said that the only time people from different perspectives could work as a team is if their contributions were based on what they brought to the task individually, not on their own narrow expertise or separate functional responsibilities.

"What does this mean for USAID and participation? We have to figure out how to arrive at a common understanding of the problem both among ourselves and between us and our collaborators. Unfortunately, the functional units and job division in USAID result in our having different objectives. The emphasis on measurable results is controlled by groups that feel their objective is providing such results. They want to do what is easiest and surest to get these. Financial management is in the hands of people who sincerely believe their objective is to insure that at least several pieces of paper cover every cost. In terms of program, the process is in control of people who believe their objective is to insure every act conforms to a Handbook. Just look at a PIO/T form, the major implementing document of the Agency. It requires every person and office to see the problem FROM A DIFFERENT perspective--not a shared perspective!!!

"One idea we are considering in our new coastal management project is to say to communities that we would like to work with a number of them on sustainable management of coastal resources but that we will chose the communities to a large extent on what they bring to the table in terms of already existing community consensus and willingness to work together. We believe before we and a community can work together we both have to get our own acts in order. At the moment our greatest concern with such an approach is not that we won't find communities that can get their acts together but that within USAID we will still be operating under the paradigm of division of perspectives and responsibilities exemplified by the PIO/T clearance sheet."

Diane La Voy: "Selecting communities according to their track record of collective action and will makes perfectly good sense if one gives real weight to participation as a likely determinant of success. Institutions that specialize in selecting and funding bottom-up development efforts (the Inter-American Foundation, where I used to work, being the USG agency that has pioneered in this field) give even more weight to the organizational and 'social energy' underpinnings of a group than to the specifics of the project, when they evaluate a proposal. The design of the project can be improved through dialogue, exchange of experience with other groups, training, and technical assistance. But the real raw material of development, without which a project will not succeed, is shared vision and solidarity.

"As John Grayzel observes, our challenge is to ensure that the way we do business at USAID does not keep us from arriving at and acting upon a common understanding of the problem."

Gerald Cashion: "I certainly agree with John Grayzel's point on working with folks who have their act together. It makes sense to work with those that know what they want to do, are already expending some effort to realize their objectives, and will be sure to do so with a boost from the exterior.

"Key problem with this philosophy: the need for pretty thorough knowledge of the culture, society, and economy so that you have a sense, for example, who are Bedane or Rimbe and who are Rimaibe of Haartane or Banya. So that you don't help the exploiters exploit the exploitees. So that you have an idea of what resources are available to the target groups. So that you have an idea of their sense of purpose. And so that you can be reasonably sure that benefits will diffuse. In most of the assistance we program today I believe this knowledge is missing. The result: we program and account for money but positive change in peoples' lives is hard to discern.

"When we work with rural or urban groups, governments, or PVOPs/NGOs, it seems to me the principle of a cash contribution should be standard. But with governments today we routinely waive the required contribution. Isn't this because we want governments to do what we want rather than what they want? If it were what they want, they would make the contribution.

"Bottom line comment: We need the knowledge that comes from participation, writ large, by USDH personnel with ministry colleagues, with local NGO officials and members, with target groups. And I do not think that second-hand knowledge from proxies--consultants--is sufficient for us to effectively program assistance. Participation in its various refinements is one of the methods available to us to inform our programming--to expand our knowledge. And even those of us with no formal social science training know something about participation. The task now should be to make sure our programming is properly informed. This should be a mission responsibility kept honest by Washington oversight. I don't think this is currently working well."

Evaluations, Participation, and Sustainability

John Eriksson: "The degree of stakeholder involvement in project evaluations varies considerably. In my experience, the greater the degree of involvement of the host country implementing agency in the design and execution of a mid-project evaluation, the greater the likelihood that the project will be sustained. This is because implementing agency involvement results in a stronger 'ownership' of the evaluation's findings and recommendations.

"Intuitively, it would seem that beneficiary involvement in an evaluation would result in broader ownership of the evaluation and would further enhance the prospects for sustainability. Such involvement should include active participation in evaluation design, implementation, and interpretation, not just 'passive' participation as an interviewee. This is known as 'participatory evaluation,' or '4th generation evaluation' in the evaluation literature. I have not had direct experience with this form of evaluation, and I think USAID's experience with it is fairly limited. But it has been tried, and I suspect there are ongoing examples in the field. It would be valuable to try to capture this experience. This is one topic the proposed 'Best Participation Practices Electronic Conference' might consider."