



## The Results Framework Puzzle *by Thomas Ochs*

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*Note: Karen Thornton, On Track editor from May 1995 to March 1996, has moved on to another position outside USAID. Torun Willits is the new editor and welcomes any input you may have. Due to this change of staff, there was no March/April 1996 edition.*

In the February 26, 1996, PC Week, Christine Comaford, "Mission Critical" columnist, asks, "How useful is it to find out what is wrong without finding out why?" "What," she continues, "isn't satisfying. It only provides you with an opportunity to solve today's superficial problem, whereas *why* helps you get to the root of the problem and prevent future occurrences."

For example, if my car stalls, I need to take it to a mechanic. If the mechanic simply tells me that it doesn't work, I might say something to the mechanic that I would eventually regret. Instead, I want the mechanic to tell me why the car stalled and to use that knowledge repair it. The mechanic has hypotheses about mechanical interactions that can be used to trouble-shoot and determine exactly what needs repair.

In our Results Framework, we have indicators, results, hypotheses, and targets. Hypotheses tie our Frameworks together. What happens when something goes wrong with an activity? The first clue is a missed target, which, with its indicator, tells us what we have failed to accomplish (just like my stalled car). In the case of a Strategic Objective (SO) supported by two intermediate results, a hypothesis links each intermediate result to the SO. Thus, we expect that if we meet the targets for each of the intermediate results, due to the linkages laid out in hypotheses, a positive change toward meeting the targets set for an SO will occur. If we meet the targets in our intermediate results, but do not move positively toward the SO, we have overlooked or misidentified some relationship.

The key to evaluation and monitoring is analysis. If we meet intermediate expectations, and not the next level up, the most direct way to correct and recognize this problem is to re-examine our hypotheses. We must then redefine the Results Framework based on new discoveries. Within the new operations system, our analysis should always return to interrelationships or the puzzle of the whole Results Framework. Since indicators and targets will not give us the needed information, we should approach the Results Framework with the idea that looking at causal linkages (hypotheses) will help determine why things are on or off track.

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# *Field-Washington Teamwork: Highlights from the Participation Forum*

On Feb. 15, almost 50 staff from different parts of USAID/W attended a Participation Forum on "Field-Washington Teamwork in Planning and Reporting Results." Convenor Diane La Voy shared a series of e-mails on field perspectives. Six panelists (DAA/ANE Terrence Brown; ANE/ESA Elizabeth Warfield; ANE/ESA Michelle Adams-Matson; AFR/DP Jon Breslar; G/PHN Joyce Holfeld; DAA/PPC Nils Daulaire) gave brief presentations. Active discussion followed. *Summary by Marcia Bernbaum, PPC/CDIE.*

## *Two primary themes emerged at this Participation Forum:*

- 1. Can USAID/W, as both responsible and responsive partners with our missions, speak with one voice to those missions?**
- 2. As we let go of old lines of control, review, authority, and intrusion with our missions, can we possibly resist the temptation to create new ones? How does USAID/W carry out its policy leadership and oversight functions without disempowering missions?**

E-mails sent to Diane La Voy said:

— "Why can't management stop everything and delegate authority to strategic objective and results framework teams to meet the demands of the responsibilities? We've been stuck between the new and old systems far too long. The runners are ready. Where is the starting gun?"

— "How do you break the USAID/W behavior that rewards being judgmental over being participatory? How do you get USAID/W to become a learning culture?"

— "How do you balance all ADS chapters

and mandatory directives to the field against the value of empowerment? What are the criteria for determining how and when USAID/W must be directive to the field?"

— "I fear that USAID/W-based bureaus and offices are trying to maintain excessive controls and in the process thwarting empowerment to operating units close to the development or humanitarian problem."

## **The discussion was candid and upbeat, focused on "How do we make it work?"**

Participants addressed the challenges they face in working closely with the field as teams to plan and report results. They also shared steps they are taking to make this joint planning and reporting happen.

**FOUR KEY CHALLENGES.** 1. Where does Washington's mandate stop and where does the field's mandate begin under the new management contract? 2. Where does Washington have a definitive say and where can it propose but not impose? 3. What falls into the category of "clearly wrong" vs. "experimentation" vs. "a valid and reasonable difference of opinion?" 4. "What is simply intervention or second-guessing vs. the necessary application of Washington's responsibility exercised at the right point?"

A panelist reminded those present that, under reengineering, missions don't have a blank slate. A middle ground is needed where "country teams" are made aware of the overall parameters within which they are working, but have the freedom to develop, implement, and evaluate strategic plans and results packages within these parameters.

USAID/W should speak with one voice. "It is very difficult for field missions to

reconcile all the different options that are coming from Washington." M, PPC, Global and the regional bureaus need to agree on the guidance they provide field missions and act within the limits of the approved country strategy. Input from Washington should be timely and appropriate. Representatives from M, Global, BHR, and PPC who attend mission strategy and R4 reviews must be empowered to speak for their bureaus.

There is a need for humility and honesty about what we know and what we don't know and our ability to control our environment.

We are asking missions to respond to procedures that are still evolving, to guidance that hasn't yet gone out. We need a process to deal with changing parameters. "We need to use some of our values of decency and helpfulness in resolving those situations we don't have control over." USAID/W, with mission input, needs to figure out "what kind of help is helpful and what isn't."

**Other challenges included:** Breaking down barriers within and between bureaus, between USAID/W and the field, and within missions. Understanding who a virtual team member is or his/her responsibility. Factoring into the planning process realistic expectations of what Congress will want to know. Appreciating that there will always be disconnects. Working effectively in teams. Managers' understanding of the team process: knowing when to step in to support or direct teams and when to support team decision-making. Appreciating that the changes called for by reengineering are hindered by the cutbacks in personnel and resources.

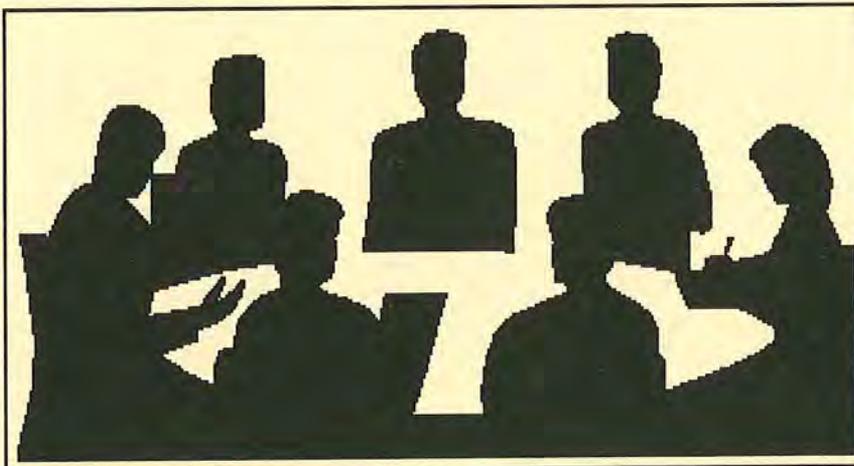
**SOLUTIONS. Speaking with One Voice.** Forum presenters and participants were eager to explore solutions and offered

the following answers to the question, "how can we speak with one voice?"

Speaking with one voice means joint planning and programming from the start, including: having key actors from the field and USAID/W in discussion early to identify realistic parameters; ensuring that those who can predict and gauge challenges are on the team; defining clear roles for virtual team members from USAID/W and determining the extent of their empowerment to speak for their bureaus. Speaking with one voice makes for better strategy because, if

this spring. **The Africa Bureau** is trying to set parameters for strategy development and resources earlier in the process, and in so doing, bring in key actors from USAID/W and field. However, where the relationship with the host country is more contentious (Kenya), even if the country is a high performer, achieving up-front Washington consensus is more difficult.

**Other observations about applying "one-voice" principles to the current R4**



accomplished, subsequent reviews are occasions for learning and engaging new perspectives, not for "second guessing" issues that have been fully considered; contentious issues may be addressed earlier and more constructively; all parties will be on the same wavelength and will have anticipated problems, so that there will be few surprises.

**Participants cited several examples in which speaking with one voice seems to have "worked."** USAID/Morocco, the ANE Bureau, and Global early on formed a team to reach a mutually agreeable strategy for phasing out bilateral support in the PHN sector by the year 2000. Because the strategy was jointly developed, it is expected to be favorably reviewed at the upcoming R4 review

**process were also expressed:**

"[ANE is visiting] offices and bureaus in Washington to clarify what our roles and responsibilities are... what questions we can ask and what...we should not ask the mission. We are trying to [say] we should not be micromanaging field missions. We ask office representatives to be empowered to speak for their offices [at] meetings, so it takes two weeks, not two months to [clear and] get out a feedback cable." "We have found that, despite getting consensus or not..., having that dialogue among ourselves...with the field, sometimes inviting field people in for parameter-settings meetings, has been

very useful. It lets us see where we are early-on in the process, what we agree and don't agree to. It lets us send guidance to the missions that helps them get a much stronger strategy and [avoid] choices they know may not be accepted even before they start".

**Working Effectively as Teams.** Key qualities identified for an effective team were small size; task-orientation; and clarity as to individual members' roles, responsibilities, and contributions to the team and as to whether the team is permanent or temporary. Effective teams need people who are qualified and who are in a position to anticipate problems. Recognition that some tasks that are more appropriate for task forces, working groups, or individuals is a must. Finally, several participants observed that it is time-consuming up front to form a team and get it operational. However, the resulting added value is worth the effort.

**RESOURCES** intended to assist in implementing reengineering and promoting teamwork are: a series of reengineering IQCs that M is about to issue; technical assistance and training supplied by M/HRD through CDIE's Prism contract; training from the Training Division; assistance from M/ROR on customer service; Participation Workshop materials; E-mail discussions on RFNET; and a Reengineering Best Practices series initiated by PPC/CDIE and M/ROR .

**NOTE:** Regional bureaus cited reflect participant affiliation; other bureaus are also innovating in comparable ways.

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# Country Experimental Labs: Best Practices

*The following article is the first in a two-part series that summarizes reengineering lessons learned by CELs. It draws on the report, "Country Experimental Laboratories: One Year Later" in the Reengineering Best Practices Series No. 1, developed by Turra Bethune at the Center for Development Information and Evaluation.*

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Between October 1994 and October 1995, the Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Jamaica, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, the Philippines, Poland, and Senegal CELs completed one year of experimentation with the reengineered systems and the agency's four core values: Customer Focus, Teamwork, Results, and Empowerment and Accountability.

## **Core Values Findings: Managing for Results**

Several CELs reported the **importance of developing a shared vision** based on shared values, "not just intellectual agreement." Results: participation and buy-in; clear understanding of mission program direction; a "weather vane" for decision-making. *"I cannot tell you how powerful this vision is in our mission and how it directs and motivates staff,"* the USAID Mali mission director remarked.

**Leadership is especially important** in the initial stages of charting a new course and must be exercised at many levels. Findings: high-level support for reengineering is essential; mission leadership must ensure that reengineering comes before regular work; leaders must commit time and intellectual energy to ensure high quality work; Leaders must place mission interests above personal "interest in maintaining staff, funding levels, and supervisory responsibilities." The team leader's role was negotiable and could be defined as part of a contract between the leader and team members. (USAID Dominican Republic). (For further information on initiating team building, see CDIE Reengineering Best Practices Series No. 2, Building Teamwork in USAID's Dominican Republic Mission, 1996.)

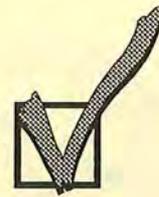
**Significant structural changes** have flattened missions, improved communications, and emphasized professional judgment. For example, a Niger task force recommended a flattened, two-level reorganization. USAID/Mali eliminated four offices and four divisions by reorganizing, then conducted open bidding on all team positions in which team leaders selected their own team members. The fluid job descriptions developed permit adapting to a less structured, more independent work environment, representing a move away from over-detailed and highly directive work processes. USAID/Niger staff either serve on or attend meetings of other teams, the result being that staff now know what is going on in the rest of the program. However, for the sake of "security" and "flexibility" or because imposed to some extent by vestiges of the old system, some missions run two parallel systems. While

more labor-intensive in the short run, it is thought that deployment of new management systems and software will eliminate the old system and its paperwork.

Missions reported **several keys to successful process management**, and a diversity of ways to manage change processes, reflecting, as the Philippines mission put it, "growing operational independence ... delegation of authority ... the need for each team or office to operate in a manner best suited to its own strengths and structure." Missions reported that: Reengineering is a continuous process; enthusiasm for reengineering peaks when "theorizing" ends and actual reengineering begins; fun and creativity buoy staff interest and spirits; systematic communication on reengineering sustains momentum and increases understanding.

**Missions reported success with:** establishing a strong internal structure, a cohesive team, and a participatory environment as a first step; "dealing with the whole ... rather than limited, separate pieces at different times;" appointing a full-time or part-time reengineering coordinator to "oversee and nudge the process along" as well as take care of logistics, coordination, team building, paperwork, and reporting that reengineering would otherwise have required on top of existing job responsibilities; conducting workshops on topics such as team building and conflict resolution to promote "healthy disagreement, trust, and teamwork" and to displace the command and control style.

CEL reports **emphasized human resources**. Human resource needs vis-a-vis reengineering involved conducting training in new concepts, such as teamwork, to facilitate the success of reengineering and tying employee incentives to reengineering to ensure its success. In addition, various missions focused on human resources process reengineering related to: ensuring quality of employee objectives and work plans at the beginning—and thorough evaluation narratives at the end—of the rating cycle; establishing uniform annual performance review cycles for Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs); giving and receiving feedback, and reviewing and improving employee performance objectives and work plans; integrating performance evaluation, training, and awards in a transparent process; encouraging supervisors and employees at all levels to serve as mentors and attend career development sessions; developing consolidated annual Mission Training Plans; increasing participation of FSNs to include important roles on strategic objective and results package teams; assigning PSCs and FSNs as contracting officer technical representatives (COTRs) for contracts and grant officer technical representatives (GOTRs) for grants, as well as authority to



This article summarizes the section on "Managing for Results," the second, findings about the other core values, including Customer Focus, Teamwork, and Empowerment and Accountability.

representatives (GOTRs) for grants, as well as authority to approve international travel, annual work plans, and other deliverables designated in contracts; generating ideas for employee awards and recognition for creative, productive work.

A need was also identified for an FSN career path to encourage longer-term employee development; a need to develop clear definitions of FSN roles and responsibilities on Strategic Objectives (SO) and Results Planning (RP) teams, including delegation of authority; and a need to develop compensation packages commensurate with expanded levels of authority asked of FSNs, especially those in senior positions.

**Information systems support reengineered work processes** and improved management practices. For example, in the Philippines, improved communication was considered crucial for assuring the success of the team structure. "Information must flow freely and frequently .... putting in place additional structures and technologies that permit effective information flow is critical to the success of our program." Using Lotus Notes and the assistance of IRM/W, the mission created five databases. In addition, to increase communication about reengineering within the mission, USAID/Philippines is issuing numbered reengineering notices via E-mail to all staff."

**Planning, design and implementation** made for lessons learned about reengineering basics, how to facilitate planning and design, working with other stakeholders, and transition issues. One CEL reported, "By the end of the experiment, skills previously considered critical to good design were

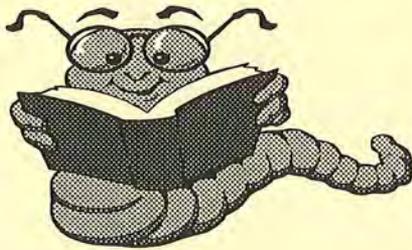
supplanted by abilities such as teamwork, rapid appraisal, customer environment, and a knowledge of strategic planning processes." **Lessons learned included:** Emphasizing SOs and a sustainable development vision that showed how SOs were linked and downplaying "program goals and subgoals" facilitated rethinking. Sustaining the rapid work pace was possible only through effective teamwork, including use of sub-teams formed to address particular problems.

*Change is a given. Though seemingly disruptive, if individuals, operating units, and organizations are to evolve, make progress, or move forward, change is inevitable and necessary. To avoid it is to remain static or even to deteriorate. In establishing core values and reengineering operational systems, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) addresses a recognized need to examine its old ways of doing business to get better results and to play a role in the reinvention of government. USAID's CELs in ten Missions overseas met this challenge, experimenting with newly-designed, reengineered systems before Agency-wide implementation began, October, 1995. Resulting CEL reports enable the rest of the Agency to benefit from their experience.*

Using coordination groups to work on specialized design topics proved helpful. Allowing working groups to progress at different speeds is recommended. Creating working guidelines for results frameworks prevented a tendency to overload them with details belonging elsewhere in the plan. Taking responsibility at the mission management level for fostering a supportive environment enabled members to operate as an empowered team and complete the task in time. Holding SO review meetings encouraged participation and empowerment in designing and reviewing the strategic plan by involving a broad range of mission personnel in evaluating and critiquing SO proposals—ensuring that all interested parties had an opportunity to voice their opinions and see to it that their issues were addressed. Holding retreats facilitated the strategic planning process, improved commitment and morale, and served as an

opportunity to include partners.

*Continued on page 6*



## Reengineering: *The Latest in the Literature*

The concept of reengineering is not new to the business world. Many corporations and organizations have grappled with the very issues and concerns that USAID is currently undertaking. This regular feature provides a synopsis of some of the current literature on reengineering. For further details or for additional bibliographies, send E-mail requests to Learning Resources Center@HRDM.TSD@AIDW.

### Additional Readings:

"Culture Change at the Department of Education," by Madeline Kunin, deputy secretary of the Department of Education, *The Public Manager*, Winter 1995-1996.

"Creating Seamless Health Care: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Baltimore, Maryland," by Phil Bodrock, *Government Executive*, September 1995.

"Performance-Based Budgeting: Can It Really Be Done?" by Craig L. Holt, Oregon Department of Transportation, *The Public Manager*, Winter 1995-1996.

"A Problem With Benchmarking: Using Shaping as a Solution," by C.W. Von Bergen and Barlow Soper, Louisiana Tech University, *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Autumn 1995.

Ever wondered how to explain reengineering? These articles describe reengineering in a nutshell.

In a *Government Executive*, September 1995, article entitled "Rebuilding Government," Tom Shoop answers the question: Why reengineer the public sector? He describes the motives for federal reengineering, Vice President Gore's reinventing government initiative, and the perennial need to rethink the way organizations conduct business.

Often we hear that "Reengineering is the radical redesign of business processes to bring dramatic improvements in performance." In "The Reengineering Revolution," *Government Executive*, September 1995, Michael Hammer and Steven Stanton explain, word by word, what this statement really means, especially the terms "dramatic," "radical," and "process." They also explain what reengineering is not, e.g., downsizing, restructuring, a fad. Also described are: the activity of reengineering, the why of reengineering, who participates in reengineering and how, and common pitfalls to avoid.

"Beyond the Bottom Line" *Government Executive*, September 1995, describes how federal agencies adapt reengineering to their mission-driven (vs. profit-driven) organizations and illustrates how mission-driven organizations define success, and how they identify their "customers."

*CEL Best Practices, continued from page 5*

**Working with other stakeholders, CELs found that:** the new design approach enables a large number of people to participate directly in the design process; presenting strategic plans to directors of major private voluntary organization partners generated enthusiasm and interest in becoming SO team members and in-the-field implementers; frequent meetings should continue between stakeholders and between USAID and the recipient organizations to promote coordination and keep all involved in the design process; recipients should be defined as partners, using a design and implementation mechanism. Finally, it is challenging for the mission to develop a strategy incorporating the core values when a stakeholder, "especially a principal player such as the embassy," operates from very different values and management concepts.

**Transition Observations and Recommendations:**

Reengineering and strategic planning methods will change over time. SO teams and cross-cutting offices in particular found it a challenge to fit existing projects into the SO framework and believe that when some of these activities are removed from their workload, they will be better able to link all their work responsibilities to measurable results. Extending somewhat the rapid design turnaround time would slow the pace, prevent burn-out, allow sufficient time for the team to consult outside experts, and enhance quality. Because it is critical to involve other stakeholders, CELs recommend that USAID/W provide stronger involvement and support for reengineering in a dialogue with State and others. Finally, whereas field processes had undergone some reengineering, USAID/W's program review process had not as yet been reengineered.

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# *Customer Service Plans: Who Has to Do Them?*

By Sher Plunkett and Liz Baltimore, M/ROR

There is some concern in the field, as well as USAID/W, over the Automated Directives System (ADS) requirement to complete customer service (CS) plans. Who has to do them? What format do they have to be in? Do they have to be reviewed by anyone? While there are some basic requirements for customer service planning laid out in the ADS, many of the answers to these questions are left to units. But why?

CS planning is intended to be part of the practical strategy of operating units managing program funds. However, after putting the original guidelines into practice with the country experimental labs (CELs), other missions, bureaus and offices, we have learned a number of lessons. We now emphasize customer service planning by both SO teams and other units that find customer planning to be an effective management tool. The SO teams are best positioned to clearly assess customer needs and to do what is required to obtain customer feedback, input, and participation in USAID operations. On the general foundation of SO planning, results teams may wish to examine service delivery and customer feedback for their activities as well. Parts of missions, like EXOs, controllers, and program offices, may also wish to examine their internal "customer relations," in addition to the contributions staff from those offices make as part of SO teams.

If a mission, with several SOs and SO teams, still wishes to produce an overall mission CS plan (CSP) for its own guidance, that's its decision. It could summarize the SO customer service plans, indicate crosslinkages, and connect them to agency goals and the agency's CSP, or develop an overarching plan that sets the stage for customer service plans at the SO level.

While missions such as those in Guatemala and Niger, as well as bureau operating units such as Global and Bureau for Humanitarian Response focus on customer planning for specific programs directly relating to ultimate customers, intermediate customer planning and focus have become apparent as needs for nonprogram-funded units. Mission to bureau, bureau to bureau, office to office and even colleague to colleague, customer relations become extremely important in achieving results. Missions and USAID/W operating units continue to rely on procurement, training, administrative services, travel, personnel and other activities to serve the needs of their customers. Customer planning is encouraged in these units, although not required by the current ADS. Intermediate customer planning helps the people on work teams develop a sense of the needs of the people who are affected by the services they provide. It also results in getting the right services to the right people to achieve the desired results. It is the

unit's decision whether to develop customer plans. However, work teams or overall unit plans should still connect to the agency CSP and strategies.

Customer service planning is a subset of strategic planning and is NOT a reporting mechanism. However, policy concerns, and opportunities for crosscutting ways of strengthening programs may make it advisable that CS planning reports and activities be shared across teams, missions, bureaus, and separate offices. This may be in the form of a brochure similar to the one produced for the agency as a whole. As a published document, it may be shared with USAID's partners and as a public relations exercise within the host country.

But, unless it's a useful tool for management purposes by the unit concerned, a customer service plan would be just another piece of paperwork--and that's what our reengineering is working to reduce!

*Sher Plunkett and Liz Baltimore are the Agency Customer Service Officers with the M Bureau's Results-Oriented Reengineering Team (M/ROR). Sher works primarily with missions on customer service planning and is a regular contributor to RFNET. Liz works primarily with USAID/W such as ES, ANE and other bureaus/offices. She worked as a Total Quality Management Facilitator for M/AS in its reengineering efforts. Sher and Liz can be contacted via E-mail or Internet at <shplunkett@usaid.gov> and <ebaltimore@usaid.gov>.*

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# The Mailbag

*“What you always wanted to know about reengineering but were afraid to ask.”*

*This section of the newsletter answers your specific questions. Questions or comments can be sent by E-mail, regular postal service, or scribbled on a napkin. Letters and questions can be submitted anonymously. The questions below are part of a prepared Q&A on results frameworks (RFs) by Michele Adams-Matson, agency subject matter expert (SME) for strategic planning, and other bureau SMEs.*

## **What are the primary issues addressed in Results Reviews and Resource Requests (R4s)?**

Performance and budget are the primary focus of R4s. R4s determine whether the mission has made a plausible case that it is making progress toward its Strategic Objective (SO). Plausibility is determined by whether: 1. Numbers or other measures indicate the importance of program sustainability, policy, and increasing private sector participation in achieving the objective, 2. indicators measure results, 3. significant unforeseen events have affected the achievement of objective(s).

## **What are some other common issues that come up in R4s?**

Issues affected by dramatic cross-cutting changes in the country, which raise questions about the validity of the overall strategy; issues concerning where the mission should focus vis-a-vis budget cuts; management issues related to performance.

## **What issues have tended to come up in R4s that really cannot be adequately addressed in that forum?**

Issues affected by broad, pending agency decisions, crisis prevention, and unresolved budget issues, for example; mission strategy issues outside the current approved strategic framework; general management issues; activity-level issues, such as the composition of a team.

## **What other forums are available for addressing these issues?**

Agency Sector Reviews, mission brown-bag sessions, joint planning (in which missions request feedback and USAID/W offers a coordinated response), strategic planning sessions, virtual mission team membership.



## **What makes a strong R2 document?**

A strong before-and-after picture that links results with plans and funding resources; collection and inclusion of baseline data; measurability of results; focus on results vis-a-vis the results framework, vs. impact, outputs, or ongoing long-term consequences of mission activities; a statement about how the results benefited the United States and USAID; simple prose and use of graphics to represent impressive points; avoiding undercommunication of good results; taking the R4 process seriously regardless of whether mission funding seems guaranteed; integrating salient diversity issues, such as gender, into analysis instead of treating them as afterthought/footnote items.

*If you have further questions about the appropriateness of an issue for the R4 review process, please contact Michelle Adams-Matson in ANE/SEA.*



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*On Track is a monthly publication from the MBureau addressing issues related to USAID's reengineering effort. All agency employees and associates are encouraged to contribute stories and ideas. Material can be submitted by postal service, E-mail or through Internet.*

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