

**USAID Field Operations Leadership:  
Mission Manager Tradecraft**

**June 2017**

Revision of *Lessons from the Field (2012)*

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## **Note to the reader**

Policies, priorities, and conditions change. Lessons learned change. To update the 2012 informal, internal Agency note for Mission managers, "Lessons from the Field," we changed the format and diversified contributors. This 2017 revision is built around ten key Mission manager roles, and contributors include Civil Service senior managers and staff across Headquarters field support functions, Critical Priority Country Mission management alumni, more Agency retirees, and a few interagency colleagues. Not all is flux. Many lessons included in 2012 are included here--most, in fact.

Contributions are anonymous and were collected using a Google Forms survey that generated only an identifying time and date stamp. Contributions were edited lightly for repetition and clarity, if edited at all. Contributors were advised that

the best contributions are concrete, actionable: "this worked for me...," "a best practice has been to...," "here's one thing that never works...," "our Bureau prefers that....," "a good reference on this is XXX...," "important interagency stakeholders usually include...," "we save time on XXX by doing YYY...."

As a collection of opinions, this is not a statement of policy, position, or procedure. It is a contribution to your success, to our success. Please put this aid to productive use.

From the production desk, then, for 2017: This revision was completed with the cooperation of many people and is the result of their contributions. Many thanks to them and every success to you, – C.H.

## **1. Mission Director as U.S. development counselor at Post**

The Mission Director is typically the most knowledgeable and experienced officer on the country team with respect to development and foreign assistance. The role calls for providing leadership and counsel to others at Post on these issues. The Mission Director, through his or her staff and implementing partners, has a broad perspective on local dynamics and an important vantage point from which to view the coherence of foreign assistance with U.S. foreign policy in-country. The Mission Director is often best placed among members of the country team to articulate views that defy conventional wisdom, when this is necessary.

### **Mission Director and the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy Front Office**

- Establish and maintain a working relationship with the Ambassador built on trust and confidence.
- In addition to developing a strong relationship with the Ambassador, you should do the same with the Deputy Chief of Mission. He/she runs the Embassy on a daily basis and can help facilitate support services.
- Invite the Deputy Chief of Mission to accompany you on field visits. The Embassy is almost always short on travel funds, and your invitation to see projects will be useful and appreciated.
- I'd make sure that my USAID staff thoroughly understood the importance and priority of this role. Often staff think that the Mission Director spends too much time with the Ambassador. Staff need to understand that this is critical to their jobs and work. It can mean keeping USAID jobs if/when staffing cuts are needed, it can mean capturing shares of the assistance budget, it can mean attention to projects they manage, and on and on. They should be briefed on what goes on in these front office meetings, their advice and input sought. When possible and appropriate, be sure to take along project managers or arrange briefings for Embassy staff on USAID projects.
- There will be a time when the Ambassador needs to know that USAID does not just write checks but that we bring expertise and thought to development challenges. However, it will help to have some flexible procurements that can respond to emergencies and fluid situations. Yet the COM needs to know we, meaning we the U.S. Government, have constraining laws, regulations, and policies that are in place for a reason (i.e., conflict of interest, full and open competition and

planning). Things take time and an idea from the Ambassador cannot always take priority. If it cannot be done in Washington, D.C., because of competition rules, ethics or appearance issues then it cannot be done 3000 miles away in the field either.

- Often Embassy staff are on their second or third tour so the Ambassador will look to you as the senior FSO. Be an advocate for development and dissent only in private with him or her.
- Sit back and assess your COM and Deputy Chief of Mission so that you can learn how to work most effectively with them. Each one will have strengths and weaknesses. Respond rapidly to their requests while standing firm when necessary. Help them understand that development is multi-faceted and long term, but at the same time, be willing to proffer short-term actions that may help them out.
- You gain credibility with the Ambassador and front office by your actions, not by your words
- The one thing that becomes more important as you become a Mission Director is managing the relationship with the Embassy. This can take a lot of time and effort but you are the one person the different sections of the Embassy see on a regular basis. You set the tone for how they view and interact with USAID. Keeping your Ambassador informed and involved while not letting him/her or the Deputy Chief of Mission take over the decision making on your portfolio is a balance we all have to find and make. Making that balance explicitly part of your management plan is a necessity.
- Befriend the Ambassador. Success in the Country Team is more heavily based on personal relationships than many people like to admit. Be careful about written work products--State Department personnel are far more focused on writing skills than most USAID staff are and one wins or loses credibility based on the quality of the writing that is sent to the Front Office of the Embassy.
- While doing the bidding of the Ambassador would seem to be a requirement, you have a fiduciary responsibility to represent USAID, albeit in a responsible, thoughtful manner. The best Ambassadors will welcome judicious feedback from USAID's perspective.
- Set the right tone: The health of your relationship with the Ambassador has an impact on and sets the tone for USAID staff interactions with others in Country Team.
- Trusting relationship: If you're going to be effective, you have to have a relationship that allows you to call him/her up whenever you need to, to walk into his/her office, and to discuss issues

one on one. You want to be able to say to the Ambassador in the Embassy staff meetings, "can we talk privately about a few issues?" and have the Ambassador respond "of course."

- Be honest with your ideas, implications, and reasons behind them. You are in a position to influence the Ambassador's decisions/positions.
- Take the stands you need to take and when you disagree, do it in a way that is not confrontational and not in public, to the extent possible.
- Stay on message in terms of the Ambassador's themes/priorities. Use the interests of the Ambassador to frame your input and honest opinions.
- Keep the Ambassador informed and communicate effectively and on a regular basis.
- Meet with your Ambassador at least once a week to cultivate the relationship, keep the dialogue ongoing, build partnership, and to avoid micro-managing.
- Be concise.
- Don't use development or procurement or program cycle or other internal jargon.
- Provide your best professional advice, regardless of whether it is what he/she wants to hear or not.
- Be proactive – avoid surprises. Don't let the newspaper headlines be the first news s/he gets.
- Develop an intuitive sense of what to discuss in private vs. public.
- Showcase the Ambassador by encouraging her/him to visit project sites and make sure the media is present.

### **Mission Director and the Country Team**

- For credibility with the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and Pol/Econ section as well as key people at Main State and Congress, it is crucial to frame USAID's work and contributions in terms of geopolitics and larger US foreign policy interests. Don't get lost in the weeds and don't talk to them in development jargon.
- Effective participation on country team will help leverage many USG resources at post.
- The Mission Director is typically best placed to see the big picture on foreign assistance. It is the Mission Director's business to know what other agencies are doing to advance development and to act or advise accordingly.

- Spend time interacting with the Embassy staff: This will reap rich rewards all the way around. We are part of the USG team. My Ambassador is a BIG believer in leaving uniforms at the door – if you cannot get your arms around this, get some new arms.
- Develop solid relationships with your colleagues in the interagency. As they learn more about USAID and you, they will be more supportive of your efforts.
- USG interest comes first: Within the interagency act first in the USG’s overall interest and second in USAID’s interest.
- Speak with one voice. Don’t air internal Mission or USAID dirty laundry. Make sure that the Mission speaks with one voice during interagency meetings. Internal USAID differences need to be resolved internally.
- Cultivate the interagency relationships: Always copy key people from other agencies on e-mails that might be of interest. Always invite them to meetings or field trips. Make them feel that we are always being inclusive, and they generally will reciprocate, making country team run more smoothly, and enhancing the implementation of our programs.
- Step back, be strategic: Achieve balance while moving forward. A Mission Director manages four (and sometimes more) distinct groups some of which are in potential conflict. These include the interagency, the host government, AID/W and the USAID mission.
- Don’t hesitate to lead in the country team. Remember, you frequently know more than others around the table about a specific issue. And reach out to other agencies. You’ll be surprised how receptive other agencies will be to your initiative.
- Know what all Embassy sections (DoD, ICE, PAS, Pol/Econ, Consular, etc.) are doing and build allies and professional relationships with them. Play an active role in Post planning and budget exercises.
- Use the country team meetings well, helping interagency leaders to understand the development perspective, appreciate our successes/challenges, support our efforts and benefit from our expertise/information/work.
- Organize a lunch dinner or reception for first and second tour (FAST) officers at post, not just from USAID but from across all agencies and departments represented at post.
- At Country Team and at All Hands, it is critical for the Mission Director to comment on development trends in the country, conversations we have ministers, techies and civil society, and what we see out in the field. Other USG agencies want to hear about an on-going drought



or arrests of human rights activist and many never get the chance to get out of the capital city. It is not a time to talk about the dollar amount of a new award.

- I often told the story about USAID's highly decentralized management model. Where did it come from? My answer, I think: Lend Lease for England at war: We did not tell them what they needed; we sat together to hear of their needs. Likewise, later, under The Marshall Plan and Truman's Point Four, again, we asked and discuss, we didn't dictate or order. USAID grew out of these respectful relationships.
- Our Embassy counterparts will have varying understandings about the concept of sustainable development, and varying levels of patience for solutions and results that may take years to realize. A careful assessment of those levels of understandings can pay dividends as you structure your approach.
- Master a couple authoritative accounts of assistance and development. For example, *Does Economic Growth Reduce Poverty? (Cambridge, MA, Harvard Institute for International Development, Discussion Paper No 5, April 1997)*. This study documents how 60 developing countries moved hundreds of millions of people across the poverty line. Macro policy counts for a lot, open investment and trade. But also, early and firmly investments in education, health and family planning. In short, sectoral priorities also explain real, inclusive, growth. With this analysis, USAID has very firm footing for most of its programs, that all in the Foreign Service in the developing world should know and embrace.
- Be intentional about being effective and playing well on the country team. The Mission Director is typically best placed to see the big picture on foreign assistance. It is the Mission Director's business to know what other agencies are doing to advance development and to act or advise accordingly.
- If you can, get yourself included in the weekly intelligence briefings for the Ambassador. You need a special (SCI) clearance, but you won't regret it -- this is especially true if you're in a fragile state and your programs are viewed with suspicion by the host government. Intelligence folks tend to think they have better sources of information than everyone else at post. While this isn't necessarily true, they have contacts we don't have and frequently have interesting pieces to add to the puzzle.

*These three points are offered by a State Department Senior Foreign Service Officer who has served—as a junior officer, Section Chief, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Chargé—in multiple countries, including critical priority countries, in which we work:*

- Recognize that the Mission Director holds a unique position in an Embassy. As an Agency Head, a Mission Director is a counterpart of the Ambassador. As a manager, the MD is a counterpart to the DCM. However, the MD is also a peer to the other Agency and Section Heads on the Country Team. The best Mission Directors are able to relate to the Ambassador, the DCM, and the Political and Economic Counselors as peers, rather than attempting to maintain the idea that his position is higher than that of the Counselors.
- Most Ambassadors will expect the Economic Counselor and (to a lesser extent) the Political Counselor to know what is happening in their areas in USAID. They will be given the opportunity to feed their views into the formulation of policy both at post and in Washington that will affect USAID, sometimes without the participation of the MD. A good MD makes sure that the whole Economic Country Team (in a small embassy that may be just the Econ or P/E Counselor and USAID) are on the same page. Working together with the Econ (or Pol) Counselor can extend the reach and influence of the MD.
- Of course, everything is case specific. The relative weight of USAID in the Embassy varies widely from one post to another, and relationships at posts vary with this difference.

#### **Mission Director as development counselor in critical priority countries**

- The Mission Director is often the primary source of knowledge about the Chief of Mission's priorities. The Mission Director must feed as much information as possible to USAID staff to reduce surprises and ambiguity about COM initiatives. This is especially true for any COM initiative which impact's USAID's budget significantly.
- CPCs are particularly susceptible to the Washington interagency good idea fairy running amok. It is critical to quickly establish yourself as the expert on humanitarian, reconstruction, and development for State and the U.S. Military. Nature abhors a vacuum and if we don't actively engage the interagency and put the good ideas on the table, the Embassy and especially the U.S. Military will rush in to fill the void. And we will be left with implementing poorly thought out

projects. It is not enough to say "no that's a bad idea" we have to explain why it won't work and offer up alternatives that will be more effective. Fill the vacuum before the interagency does!

- The U.S. Military craves our expertise. They have learned they are not terribly good at development. But they have a job to do and money to do it so if we don't help them think through the best approach, they'll do whatever crazy idea comes to them. The Military can be a resource for us, using their funding to compliment ours - take advantage of it. When USAID has to do a project at the behest of state or the Military that we have misgivings, document those misgivings and that the project was not our decision. It will save us a lot of grief when the auditors come around and ask us what the heck we were thinking.
- This is a must. If we're going to be in the "One Team" mode, then we need to be at the table with the Embassy and U.S. Military. Being at the table means having the confidence and willingness to leave the USAID hat at the door, and think development. The notion that we are only about development is old think and will not carry water in the new world.

## **2. Mission Director as a senior US diplomat at Post**

The Mission Director's position is highly visible and, when serving as a Senior Foreign Service Officer, the Mission Director will usually be one of the most senior officers on the country team. The Mission Director is often the most senior U.S. Government official to visit the more remote regions in a country. Consequently, the Mission Director represents the United States. The Mission Director models behavior. The Mission Director leads dialogues with foreign governments on a range of highly technical issues and is often empowered to negotiate on behalf of the U.S.

- Know the BIG picture: Be able to articulate how USAID's work fits into foreign policy priorities. Remember, you are seen as a spokesperson for the USG so link country and region-specific initiatives with broader USG policies and priorities. (If you're talking about food security, know how many people are hungry in the world and the size, location and other characteristics of the population you are targeting; make the link of hunger and poverty to terrorism/security.)
- Always have some success stories at the ready for both USAID globally and your Mission's programs.

- Accept the offer of being Charge or acting Deputy Chief of Mission if you have a deputy. Advocate for your Deputy Director to be the acting Deputy Chief of Mission. This may get some eye rolls and sighs from the inter-agency but it helps solidify USAID's role as a leader at Post.
- Go to events whether national days, workshops or lectures in the evening or during the day. Encourage staff to attend them too. Get your face known and sit in the front.
- Engage the private sector as well as academics, they have such different but valuable views and connections.
- Claim your place at the table. Do your homework before meetings, and contribute substantively.
- Publicity is very important: Part of the Mission Director's job (and really, no one else can do it as easily in the USAID mission) is selling America – get good at it. This means you have to get out of the office and know your programs, who runs them and how to sell them. The newspaper, the television, and most importantly the radio are your friends. I know many directors who somehow think VIP visits of any kind (Congress, White House, Secretaries or celebrities) are a big waste of time. They are not. These visits give you the chance to tell America what we do – invaluable really.
- Coordinate carefully with Embassy Public Affairs offices. Don't get out messages that are different from or contradictory to overall Embassy policies.
- There is sometimes a tendency in USAID to think that we can only influence change if we put together a project and spend money: I've been surprised how much we can influence the debate in our countries about policy reform (both political and economic) through speeches, formal and informal contacts. Referring to current development thinking and using examples from other countries is always a help.
- Be open, friendly, and informative with the press: Stick to your script. If you are in a country with a lively and free press, read the papers closely.
- The more experienced you are and the more sensible you sound, the more the Embassy will be willing to let you speak on its behalf. Flawless language skills can also feed into this. It's no better compliment when the PAO allows you to represent the USG at an event because the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission are not available. It's something to be earned and that you should aim for.

- Make sure the Ambassador and Consul General in any given district know that they are welcome to any USAID outreach event; schedule the event, with or without them--but let them know you are happy for them to have a speaking part if they attend and if they want it.
- As the top USAID official in country - it's your job to make the hard choices. You will never make everyone happy because people tend to resist change even if it's for the better. Stick to your values and do what is right - even if it is not what is popular.
- Look for opportunities to write op-eds on issues directly related to USAID and development and publish them in the local media.
- Be ready to talk about USAID "anytime, anywhere and to anybody," including locals as well as visiting American citizens. In two countries in which USAID had active cultural preservation programs aimed at promoting tourism as an economic sector, that extended to occasionally briefing visiting tour groups and alumni groups, something that was always well received.
- Assume that when you interact with senior officials whether government, United Nations officials, multilateral or bilateral colleagues, NGOs or just citizens that you are the face of the United States. Be circumspect while always helping people understand that development is a key part of our foreign policy.
- It is the Mission Director's responsibility to know what other donors are doing with respect to US foreign policy and foreign assistance objectives: donor government coordination is essential to maximizing the effective use of investment and development resources. The USG has a strong voice in international financial institutions (e.g. World Bank through Treasury and USED) and development organizations (e.g. Global Fund through Global Health and State/PEPFAR): don't be reluctant to press an issue through USG channels if you see a problem with the programs of these organizations. This is part of safeguarding USG assistance resources.
- Sometimes, just asking a question or meeting with NGOs can be used to send important messages to host-country authorities.
- In many places, USAID is perceived differently than the State Department, the Department of Defense, and others. For program implementation, it can be advantageous to maintain that perceived difference. How USAID expresses publicly the USG position should be carefully considered.
- Know your portfolio, and know how it fits into the great USG framework.
- Be polite, unless you have concrete suggestions, don't open your mouth.

- The 2012 version was excellent. I wish it had been available to me in the 1985 a 1993 era. The only thing in it I would change is replacing the concept and term "sell America" with something like "representing U.S. interests and society/culture effectively."

### **Mission Director as a senior U.S. diplomat in critical priority countries**

- In a CPC, the Mission Director is often the "good face" of the USG because USAID takes on the less controversial and non-U.S. Military development work. However, when the Embassy is making the big decisions for USG policy, the Mission Director plays a minimal role. Mission Directors should anticipate this and use whatever influence they have to help make USAID's life easier as opposed to attempting to influence larger policy decisions.
- If the US U.S. Military is present, cultivate a relationship with them even if USAID is not directly involved with the U.S. Military. That can change on a dime and then you want the U.S. Military to know to come to you before engaging in any activity. The best time to educate the U.S. Military about USAID and development and how and why we do it is before they need to engage with us.
- If there is a level of confidence and trust placed on you by the Ambassador, then he/she will ask you to represent the USG at the highest levels.

### **3. Mission Director as USAID field operating unit manager**

The Mission Director bears the dual responsibilities of ensuring the welfare of Mission staff and the soundness, integrity, and transparency of foreign assistance. The Mission Director is both a leader and an operations manager. The Mission Director oversees, coordinates and empowers the work of program managers, financial managers, lawyers, and acquisition and assistance experts. The Mission Director needs to understand the local operating environment while leading the Mission in anticipating and adapting to change. The Mission Director must support and develop the Agency's most important assets in the field: it's people.

## **Staff supervision, conduct, and performance management**

- You represent all staff including most importantly the FSNs. Don't forget they are the biggest part of your workforce. Pay attention to their needs. Meet with them regularly. Setting the tone for good relations among all types of staff rests with you.
- As a manager, you will need to spend at least one-third of your time on staff recruitment, coaching, mentoring and hiring. This will come back to haunt you if you don't. It's not sexy or fun but has to be done and will make a big difference.
- You set the example. If you come in late then don't be surprised when others do too. That's the job. If you want others to be open and collaborative you have to show it in your actions. People observe what you do much more than what you say. Remember that the most.
- Be alert to signs of serious stress in staff and offer support without being too nosy. Remind your hardworking staff that it's important to recharge.
- Don't micromanage. Give colleagues enough space to learn, assume responsibility and make mistakes. Don't demand that everything be "just like you would do it yourself."
- Be mindful of how your office directors manage "down" and "across," not just "up."
- It is better to leave a slot vacant than to fill it with the wrong person.
- Be very, very careful on the use of your official vehicle--probably, more Mission Directors have gotten into trouble over this than any other single issue.
- If the situation allows, it is preferable to delegate most of the internal management, operations to the Deputy except taking lead on developing Mission "climate," interpersonal conflicts, personal coaching/mentoring, external relations, Host country relationship development, Country Team integration, donor coordination, HQ and Congressional interface.
- Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your staff so that you can make sure that they succeed. That means attention to detail. Read everything and sometimes that means drafts of a document, including the annexes, five to ten times to make sure that it is correct. Be attuned to the emotions of your staff; find some people to help you keep track of the pulse of the Mission so that you can tackle morale issues or interpersonal conflict before it becomes acute. Set up committees in the Mission to focus on stress and resiliency and include your FSNs; call on the regional psychiatrist, find local counsellors and use Staff Care.

- Accept those in-briefs, courtesy calls and attend the office meetings to hear from each of the staff not just at the senior staff meetings.
- Communicate clearly and repeatedly. Stay on message with staff. Repeat, Repeat.
- Encourage office directors to get out to the field.
- Be careful with your ideas. Clearly prioritize so staff don't spend weeks chasing your idea at the sacrifice of other work. Staff get confused and worried when Mission Directors come up with an idea that seems to be outside the planning process. Is your idea part of the CDCS or a PAD? Is it based on empirical data, triangulation of information gathering or just a conversation from last night's cocktail event? It is important that the Mission Director hear from a variety of sources outside the Mission but not to take the Mission in a different direction or focus on a new activity will take time, labor and take away from other duties so it better not be a half thought out idea. Staff want to make the Mission Director happy but it can demoralize and exhaust them if there is a new idea every week that they need to respond to.
- Spend time recruiting. Don't simply relay on references provided by FSOs bidding on your Mission. Get unsolicited references. Directly contact fellow Mission Directors where the bidding or interested FSO was previously assigned. Ask around about a bidder. If you cannot find the right person, a warm body is worse than no body. Be wary of HR pushing a candidate on you for a position. This goes the same with FSN recruitment but engage your FSN HR manager. Careful of nepotism and cronyism in local hiring.
- Your staff will all have a different take or understanding of what you say in meetings. be wary and clear in your messaging. Ask for staff to repeat back what you said so there is no misinterpretation.
- Generational differences are valid as are cultural and regional differences too whether American or FSN. A 30 year old Californian and a 55 year old New Englander talk a different language. That goes the same for local staff.
- The need for constant praise for the under 35 years old is amazing. Accept it. Once in a while given them constructive criticism but begin with praise.
- Accept that staff, even office directors, will chat about what you said behind your back. It may be eyerolling, funny or even disrespectful but laugh it off. Laugh it off.
- Stick with a hard decision. Don't backtrack or staff will think they can get you to easily change your mind.



- Get ahead of the assignment cycle and actively and personally recruit your own team, but remain respectful of people you haven't worked with before – some of the best USAID Mission talent comes from unexpected places.
- Select USDHs who have excellent communication and interpersonal skills over technical skills: Such an officer will help you create a good work environment. Technical expertise is wasted on someone who is difficult to work with and everyone avoids. In fact, a USDH with poor interpersonal skills will create more work for you.
- Anticipate predictable problems: For example, housing assignments and spousal hire will be contentious topics at most posts including at the interagency level. Don't be surprised, be prepared.
- Building your Senior Management Team:
  - Hold weekly meetings Office Directors: You need to know what's going on and communicate your vision to your staff.
  - Let Office Directors know what decision making power they have: Coach office directors. Delegating downward does not mean abandoning all control/responsibility.
  - Augment talent when necessary: Assess staff skills and provide backup. Try to separate private frank assessment and coaching from public comment and AEF ratings. Bring in SMEs to help frame and carry out major tasks. Make sure that your staff learns vicariously from experts. Talent can be found in unusual places. Always ask about backgrounds, interests and experience when meeting people living in country.
  - Develop your staff: Make sapience available to your staff through external coaching and/or other continuing relationships that impart skills and advice in a safe environment.
  - Stay focused on your priorities: Assess your priorities and try to stay at that level. Accept the fact that you may have to reach a less-than -optimum solution at times. Resist the temptation to personally manage sector offices but meet with them regularly.
  - Demonstrate flexibility: Be willing to change. Always seek to re-establish roles and priorities that best accommodate new leadership. Failure to appropriately adjust one's operational style is a major contributor to professional disappointment. This is true at all levels.

- Build staff confidence: Let them see that you are looking after their individual and collective interests to the maximum extent possible.
- Get everyone on the same page - Repeat your major messages/themes: So that all mission staff are on the same page. Everyone needs to understand major priorities.
- But.....tolerate separate opinions and encourage diversity of thought among your team. When a decision is made, the team is expected to follow it – but until it’s been made, test your assumptions and get wide input.
- Set up individual meetings with everyone: Set as a priority to schedule time to meet one on one with everyone on your staff when you first arrive.
- Learn the name of everyone who works at the Mission. Find out about their families, their hobbies, their strengths.
- Invite people to your home: FSNs are the heart and backbone of the USAID Mission while USDHs rotate in and out. Maybe it’s an “old school” approach, and not something everyone should do, but we have invited all Mission staff, FSNs, PSCs, USDHs, to our home in small groups of 4 or so, to weekly family meals over the year, and people have responded very warmly. It also develops your “team” and you’ll be able to reap huge rewards in the long term.
- Connect with staff in personal ways: Organize and participate in events where it doesn’t matter that you are the boss like sports activities, school activities, etc. Celebrate weddings and births; and show support during difficult times like serious illnesses and death.
- Ensure there is effective performance management in place:
  - Build the Mission Team: Jointly defining work objectives and performance measures helps people recognize mutual interdependence. Staff should recognize that an important part of the Director’s job is to enable everyone to accomplish their respective part of tasks that are team/intra-agency work efforts. These areas of responsibilities should be developed with the Mission at the beginning of the rating cycle and be reflected in individual work objectives. This not only strengthens the teams in the Mission, but it also makes doing good AEFs a lot easier. This should apply to anyone working on a joint effort, regardless of employment category. Each entity should define what others can expect of/depend on them to do and should also articulate what they expect from/depend on all other Mission units.

- Connect with staff in a professional way: Mentor your staff to be successful. Look for opportunities to give positive feedback.
  - Don't tolerate poor performance: Give constructive feedback immediately. If performance doesn't improve, work with employee to develop an improvement program. Keep AID/HR informed of consistently poor performer and develop a plan -- Learn how to "work around" the consistently poor performers.
  - Set expectation that staff interact positively with colleagues from other agencies at post – invite other agency folks on USAID field trips.
- Treat FSNs with respect and dignity: Generally FSNs distrust management. They think you have more information and authority than you actually do. You can build trust by being transparent – share as much information with as you possibly can. Meet with FSNs on a regular basis, perhaps monthly or quarterly.
  - Be transparent, share information: Hold All Hands Meetings at least once a quarter to brief the entire mission staff on what the front office has been up to, what is going on in Washington, what the strategic goals/priorities are for the upcoming months or year, etc. This serves to keep the mission personnel at all levels engaged and informed, not just senior staff. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!
  - Involve staff in decision-making: Present management issues to the general staff, seek staff input in problem solving and act swiftly on recommendations. When you build trust between you and the staff by getting them involved, you will have fewer management headaches.
  - Do keep a real and true open door policy: As Powell says, once the soldiers don't think they can talk to you, you have lost the ability to lead. Don't let office chiefs sandbag this by demanding that their subordinates clear items with them before discussing with you.
  - Create safe places to be frank: Provide a calm center and a forum where people can express their ideas and perspectives with you in private.
  - Ask questions and listen: Ask people questions and listen to understand from the perspective of the speaker, especially if you think you already know the answers. Maximize the Socratic dialogue as a tool.
  - DON'T play favorites: Not with the FSNs and not with the Americans – this is very easy to do and is a bummer – those outside the circle resent it and will work against you.

- Whenever possible be an active participant on major budget related issues. Not a dictatorial role but a cooperating role. Be specific about how your previous experience and (other team members also) apply logically the solutions.
- Have each division chief, in concert with staff, develop an annual work plan. The plan should be presented to all senior staff to ensure their understanding of both the larger goals of the program and its main components, since many USAID offices will be needed to provide support for the work plan.
- Use Post and Mission plans and annual USAID and congressional reporting requirements to help you build a personal work plan around which you can schedule your time most effectively.
- Take care of your troops. Delegate (trust) and verify. You will get useful management information or insights from many different sources (e.g., sometimes in uncomfortable conversations with the Deputy Chief of Mission). Do what you can to make it safe for your staff to bring information directly to you, but embrace information, no matter what the source.
- To some extent, you are more a judge than an executive. Look beyond the letter of the regulation to the impact on staff morale, program achievement, etc. Are there ways to mitigate repercussions? The best way forward is not always the most obvious.
- Be totally impartial. Listen both sides separately. Cogitate about reactions to your judgement and opine accordingly. Never be hasty, take your time.
- Create an environment of FSN excellence; they will be there long after you are gone.
- Establish a staff development and training program with a firm annual budget. Hire an FSN trainer to help run the program which should include clear guidelines for FSN participation. The expenditures will be exceptionally cost-effective both in terms of improving operational efficiency, and, over time, in replacing some USDH personnel. Even a modest effort in this area will also reap large benefits in FSN morale and commitment. This effort will not go unnoticed by the national government.
- Develop a handbook for implementing partners that provides a guide to Mission operations. For example, it should contain information about the functions of the controller's office including how and where to submit payment vouchers, receive advances, and get local currency. It should describe Embassy facilities available to contractors, such as health and visa services.
- Ensure proper oversight of programming--always.
- ... Oversight is not the same as management.

- Use semi-annual portfolio reviews. This is a process that Mission Director can own (without its own specific external reporting requirements). Try to maximize their effectiveness as tools for frank exchange.
- When a Mission has good, experienced staff, the best Mission Directors/managers delegate responsibility and monitor their staffs' operations--s/he does not manage them!

### **Staff stress and resilience management**

- Take care of your people during times of tragedy, trauma, or crisis: If you do, they'll take care of you. In the Foreign Service, we are a family and our jobs/family are really 24/7.

### **Mission front office management**

- If you are becoming the Mission Director at the same post where you were Deputy Director, take care to stop acting as the Deputy Director. Let your new Deputy Director handle the portfolio. You will have enough to do as the new Mission Director than micromanage your deputy.
- Work hard at developing relations with your Deputy Director. Many ways of dividing up the workload – find one that you are comfortable with, and once you decide don't backtrack and assume responsibility for things that you agreed were the Deputy's. Some models: "Mr. /Ms Inside and Mr. /Ms Outside"; The Alter Ego; Principal sector responsibility (e.g., if Deputy is a world class economist, consider giving him/her primary responsibility for Economic Growth portfolio. Ditto with health specialists, lawyers, etc.

### **Program office and program operations management (Strategy; Project design; award process; mobilization and refinement; implementation management; monitoring; evaluation)**

- Get out and see your projects frequently, and see them as a thought-provoking and energizing experience, not just publicity for USAID. Don't get chained to your desk. Get out every 6-8 weeks and encourage your staff to do the same, even down to the support staff on occasion. Every time I'm in the field, I learn something our partner and I hadn't expected, and in the process I also find that I often meet an incredibly bright and/or energetic soul or two who is a potential mover and shaker in his/her community. Often these people are the ones that could

change the world if they just had a few shekels in their pockets. Look for these people and latch on to them, support them. The best ideas often come from below, and in the field, you have the possibility of discovering them. And pull other people and staff along with you.

- Get a good Program Officer, but then pay attention to the details of the process yourself. They may seem arcane, boring, dumb, but you ignore them at your peril. Knowledge is power, and Washington is process. You need both.
- Don't try to personally run the program or procurement office. Let staff do their job. DO, however, demand regular updates to be sure that schedules are adhered to, that procurements don't get too far behind, etc.
- You are supposed to know a bit about how everything at USAID works. Which means bringing best practices from other Missions and inviting all your other staff to bring in their best practices. Everything can be improved no matter how well its been done for the past few years.
- Use the experts in your Mission to make sure you follow the rules and do things right or call on regional missions for help. Remember that rules are always changing and procurement, for instance, may have changed a lot since you actually designed a project and/or served on a procurement technical evaluation committee.
- Know the budget, know the numbers.

### **Support office management**

- Treat Contracting, Controller, and EXOs like development officers, not second-class “support” officers: First, they respond better. Second, they have a great deal of technical expertise to impart, particularly if you are trying to build indigenous capacity. Most of our indigenous partners have the technical expertise but lack the financial and administrative capacity to remain viable. Contracting Officers and Controllers, in particular, can be valuable resources in helping local partners become viable entities.

### **Technical office management**

- For anyone transitioning from a technical specialist or office chief role to Mission Management, one of the first things that must be learned is to LET GO! Accept the fact that you can't know everything about every program, you can't be involved in every decision and you won't know

how to personally do the functions of every office in the Mission...and that is okay. You don't need to. That's why you have staff with a range of expertise. Respect and trust them. What you do need to do is keep an eye on everything that is going on, know enough about all the programs to be able to articulate them to outside audiences and advocate for them with Washington and master the art of identifying the early signs that some program/person/office is in trouble and when those signs appear, intervene.

### **Mission Director as field operations manager in critical priority countries**

- In posts with one year tours, it is often too easy for staff to fall into a generic project design rather than one tailored specifically to that country. Encourage staff to do their research on what was done before and what are the specific conditions in country.
- Streamlining is always good but in a CPC it is critical. The pace and expectations are accelerated in CPCs.
- In most USAID missions, there is some level of disconnect between the technical areas that the mission would identify as priorities and the parameters around how funding can be used. This becomes even more magnified in places where, for example, the country is on the brink of conflict - but funding streams are limited to PEPFAR and Feed the Future. In these cases, it becomes even more critical than usual to think not only about the technical areas in which you are working - but also about how assistance is delivered. For example, you may be able to adopt 'Do No Harm' approaches in your HIV programming, or integrate broad-based trauma or reconciliation work within food security programs.
- Encourage technical staff serving as CORs/AORs to act as partners and facilitators with our activity implementers -- rather than as compliance officers. Our contractors/recipients were chosen for their expertise; USAID shouldn't be micro-managing them, but rather working with them to make sure we are addressing the right problems and helping them be as effective as possible (which means USAID also needs to be timely about obligations, waivers and modifications, when needed). This is particularly important in uncertain/unstable environments, where the ground is shifting beneath our feet - sometimes on a daily basis - and our implementing partners need to respond to changing circumstances.

- In a CPC environment, you are going to have to work faster and smarter. Pay careful attention to your Delegations of Authority and other Mission Orders. Make sure that you don't create unnecessary bottlenecks within the mission by demanding unnecessary clearances and approvals for common actions. Streamline processes. Create thresholds and delegate authority to lower level/fewer staff for clearances/approvals for actions under a certain dollar amount.
- Make sure that staff understand that they don't need to have all of the answers up front or always get everything right. During site visits, team meetings, and portfolio reviews, don't only focus on successes; ask about failures and what we can learn from them to do better in the future. Be deliberate about learning. Dedicate the staff time and money needed to allow the Mission to learn both the good and the bad, and encourage your team to adapt (an activity, PAD or the CDCS) to get things back on track when needed, rather than sticking with a strategy/program that isn't working.
- Again, you need good staff to delegate this to. You don't have enough time in a 24/7/365 cycle to focus on portfolio management.
- Highly recommend that the Mission Director delegate these management responsibilities when feasible. It is too easy for a Mission Director to get bogged down in management and administration. The Mission Director needs to focus on representing USAID to the COM, interagency, Washington and members of the public.
- In a CPC, strongly consider having the Inspector General co-locate with the Mission to do concurrent audits. Also in highly insecure countries, consider setting up a Partner Liaison Security Office (PLSO) to look out for the safety of our implementing partners. Actively encourage your staff to take advantage of the resources with Staff Care. While the Embassy will have security drills, reinforce this effort with practice time for USAID staff for putting on PPE (if this applicable). Its cumbersome and staff are not likely to practice on their own. But the practice will be key in the event of an attack where no one will have time to figure out how to put the PPE on.
- Never forget that while your expat staff live in relatively protected, secure environments -- whether in compounds or behind high walls with bars on the windows -- at least some of your FSN staff probably do not. They may have all kinds of stress factors in their lives that the American staff can't imagine. Try to understand and acknowledge the challenges they are facing



and offer whatever support is allowable and makes sense to help them (ranging from shuttle bus services to trauma counseling). They will appreciate the effort.

- Obviously, FSNs are citizens of the country in which you are working and class/caste/ethnic group/political party tensions in the society can permeate the staff and affect their perspectives of USAID's programs and how they approach their work. While it is critical to trust and empower your FSNs to do their jobs, you may also need to triangulate the information/recommendations they provide, to ensure it is objective.
- Managing the transition of USAID staff, especially in one-tour countries, is critical. When it is not possible to have staff overlap briefly to facilitate handover of responsibilities, try bringing incoming staff in for TDYs. If a TDY is not possible, try organizing a video conference. And while handover notes are useful, they take time to write and are often drafted in a rush as an officer is halfway out the door; try filming interviews with out-going officers instead. In order to succeed in this aspect, you have to trust the staff working for you. You need good deputies.
- Be selfish at times – your staff has to survive a year or more of limited recreation, limited fun, limited family time, and a ridiculous workload, but so do you. So guard your free time and do what you want with it – sleep, TV, sports, and hobbies!
- Keep office parties to working hours – everyone likes parties, but given the incredibly limited amount of “my time” in CPCs, folks appreciate it greatly when mandatory parties are scheduled during work time. Plus FSNs can participate!
- Be sure to make sure that both you and all your staff take off on that wonderful one day a week that is the “weekend” in CPCs. Everyone needs that day off, regardless of the press of the abominable workload.
- Remember that all staff recruited should be nice – don't take anyone who is not nice! Being nice is one of the most important qualities for staff to possess in a CPC.
- Be sure to help staff exiting a CPC country to obtain approval to take as many home leave days as necessary – and even beyond the 45-day limit, if required.
- Be sincerely nice, thoughtful, and kind. These three qualities in a CPC leader are much more important than the “traditional leadership” of the book variety because these three qualities positively impact the staff on an individual basis.
- Pay attention to individual needs to the extent possible. Generally, given time constraints, this advice would mean that you would pay the most attention to your deputy mission directors and

office directors. These leaders would then pay attention to their own subordinates in a focused, helpful, and supportive manner, following your lead.

- Be totally human – approachable, friendly, real. You don’t have to be “one of the gang” but you do want to be as normal as apple pie in a CPC environment. Staff will be more at ease, less stressed, and happier knowing that you are what you seem!
- The Ambassador (or Ambassadors!) is the key person – make sure that you are quickly and fully responsive to all requests from the front office on a same-day basis, if possible, because the next day there will be more requests; also ensure that all members of your staff understand that Ambassadorial requests are top priority.
- If you are Mission Director or Deputy Mission Director at a non-CPC post, expect former CPC’ers to be undergoing a “transition” to your more normal post; these formal CPCers may be not as able to deal with issues, have shorter tempers, etc. until they “recover” from the CPC experience.
- If you are Mission Director or Deputy Mission Director at a non-CPC post, remember that for every year in a CPC, it takes six months for the employee to fully “recover” and return to his or her normal personality and work style.

#### **4. Mission Director as USAID relationship manager**

The Mission Director, in concert with the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, sets the tone for inter-agency relations and the operational effectiveness of collaboration at Post. The Mission Director fosters the internal and external relationships that will enable Mission staff and implementing partners to excel in their respective roles. The Mission Director ensures timely and open communication with USAID headquarters. The Mission Director plays an active role in supporting VIP visits, whether from the Executive Branch or Congress. The Mission Director helps to open new doors and to leverage partnership opportunities. The Mission Director helps to mitigate and resolve conflicts.

##### **Implementing partner relationship management**

Host an implementing partners’ meeting at least once a quarter. Give the implementers a chance to hear from the front office, network with each other across sectors and disciplines. This fosters better

integration, camaraderie, and provides the Mission Director with an opportunity to communicate priorities from the mission leadership perspective.

### **Host country relation relationship management**

- Have a clear understanding with Ambassador as to level of your contacts with host country. Some COMs want to limit meetings with very high level officials to only a few people, others want to see exposure at all levels. Find out and respect decisions. If you believe COM is overly restrictive, explain to him/her why.
- Never waste a minister's time. In advance of a meeting, send an aide memoir which outlines a proposed agenda. If the meeting involves a problem, propose a solution or solutions. Send the message within 48 hours of the meeting. This will help to keep it from falling into a bureaucratic entanglement and will assure its being on the minister's desk prior to the meeting.
- Invite host country officials to visit projects with you. Often, they will not have visited some of the regions of their own countries. Use the visit for a relevant discussion of project problems. Have your project manager visit the project in advance with his/her counterpart to review issues and identify problems which need to be resolved. Have the issues and proposed solutions as part of the agenda for the project review. Seek to resolve the project issues at the field review.
- Cultivate relationships with Ministers and key government contacts and know them by name.
- Meet them in settings other than the office or official events.
- Develop a working relationship so you can easily contact and communicate when the need arises.
- You are in trouble If your staff doesn't know the name and office location of the deputy minister (by whatever title).
- Having key government contacts is the mission director's job--you should not put this on other people.

### **Donor coordination and relationship management**

- Participate actively on donor groups; encourage your staff to do the same at all levels. Pay attention to trends in the Agency and new policies and enlist staff to help interpret and apply to your Mission.

- Donor Meetings: Have a member of your staff at the table of every important donor meeting. Participate fully in policy discussions surrounding budget support even though USAID does not pool its funds.
- Get Involved: if you are not involved, the USG money probably isn't getting the biggest bang for the buck. Beyond the meetings, you have to get involved in the nitty-gritty issues, you have to help edit joint statements and you have to entertain.

### **US Government and Washington interagency relationship management**

- When in Washington, embrace opportunities to go up to Capitol Hill. Don't be afraid of Members of Congress and their staff. They are people too and most of them are very rational, with a practical turn of mind. When talking to them, keep messages direct and straightforward; avoid jargon; frame your program's work in terms of larger geopolitical and US foreign policy interests; and be cognizant of the special concerns of the Member of Congress's state or district.
- Managing this broader relationship is fundamental to Mission in obtaining resources and providing USAID with what "field" is accomplishing--constraints, successes, new ideas, and so on.

### **USAID headquarters relationship management**

- This is a good duty to share with your deputy and office directors. Still you need to be the face so host quarterly town halls with partners, lunches, invite DAAs and AAs from the pillar bureaus out to the Mission. They bring a lot of intel on what HQ is thinking as well as a range of mechanisms that can supplement your highly earmarked/Presidential initiative-leveraged budget.
- Other than engagement with senior leadership at the AA, possibly DAA level of the Bureau (and of course, the Embassy Front Office), I would leave most of this to the operating unit chiefs.
- It can be quite difficult to keep the pillar bureaus and others at bay sometimes. Mission Directors should insist these offices go through the desk officers so they can serve one of their primary functions: gatekeeper.
- Sometimes, managing multiple State and USAID functional Bureau stakeholders can be a challenge, especially if they are taking extreme or opposing positions on issues. It is a good

practice to bring these issues into the box formed by the State and USAID desks, the Embassy and the USAID Mission. If you can reach consensus on how to handle an issue within this group, it is easier to address the challenges. Even if you agree to disagree, you are working with known colleagues to manage an issue.

- The leap in deference the Agency affords you is larger than you might think. With that territory comes the need to balance the needs of your own direct reports against the interests of the Agency as a whole.
- Maintain contact with HQ. Keep Bureau leadership and Desk informed of both programmatic and political issues that might impact country programming or staff.
- The best Mission Director is one who ensures that HQ hears and respects the realities, opinions, and perspectives of the field. Too often Washington dictates/decisions neglect the field's input (if Washington seeks it at all) in decision-making, policy formulation, and operational procedures. You need to be honest and clear in feedback to Washington about things that don't make sense. That is why you are the Mission Director or Deputy. But there is a way to do that respectfully. It's our duty to be intellectually honest and provide field feedback. Once Washington hears it and still decides to do something you don't agree with, then you have to follow orders. But not providing your constructive criticism is to not take your role seriously.
- Stay in touch with senior leaders in the Agency but don't waste their time!
- When in Washington, drop by to see the head of HR for a half hour. Believe it or not, she or he really wants to be of service and when you need to communicate then or later on a tough personnel problem, you will have a personal connection and the director may have more confidence in you and understanding of your problem.

### **Relationship management in critical priority countries**

- CPCs are much more likely to experience Washington (from across the US Government) using “the 3,000 mile screwdriver” to insert itself into field operations. And that screwdriver is not going away. Questions and taskings that a traditional development Mission would never get will be the norm in a CPC. We don't get to not answer them. Your HQ backstop can help keep the Washington screwdrivers at bay. But they need your help to do that. Make sure that HQ backstops are extremely knowledgeable about the Mission's programs so they can respond to

inquiries without waking you up at midnight. Every time USAID staff in HQ have to say I've got to go back to the Mission for that information, the agency looks incompetent. Share any program problems with HQ so HQ can be ready for that inevitable question at 5 pm on a Friday. Never let your HQ backstop find out about a problem via the front page of the *Washington Post*. Same thing with negative audits--give a heads up to your HQ team. When the call comes in from the White House or the media, the turnaround time is hours, often not enough time for HQ backstops to go back to the Mission to find out what is going on. In CPCs, more often than not, international media is not your friend. It is imperative to flag any engagement with international media to LPA first.

## **5. Mission Director as assistance and development subject matter expert**

The Mission Director draws upon—depends upon—the strengths and knowledge of Mission staff and partners to ensure sound program and business operations. The Mission Director may be a master of many trades yet must seek out and integrate the insights of technical experts, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

- You may be senior, but you are not always the senior subject-matter expert on every subject.
- The Embassy and other donors view you as the development expert. In many ways, you are. But you don't need to know all the answers. You just need to know where to find answers. Your staff have many of them; they should be empowered to show that they are the experts and that you are proud of their abilities.
- Yes, you may be a subject matter expert, but your expertise is probably too narrow for most Missions. Have to take a broader view; know a little about many subjects. Technical office teams should be the subject matter experts doing the day to day work.
- Being a subject matter expert at this point is icing on the cake--not that it is unimportant, but use your staff experts unless you personally truly have world-class capabilities.
- Keep reading, follow development trends, exercise your mind! If/when you can, give outside lectures, contribute to books, articles, etc. even if only small things like a preface or commentary.

- Be careful. Your knowledge may be outdated. You may need to defer to the newer, younger more up-to-date experts.
- Do not reinvent the wheel. Many Missions have already had years of experience with programs such as integrated health, decentralization, disaster preparedness, etc. As your Mission staff develops new projects and programs, make sure that your staff understands what worked and what did not work in prior project and programs. Often FSNs will have this information but in some cultures, may be too deferential to their U.S. colleagues to speak up without being asked.
- The Mission Director who micro-manages or performs an operational role within a technical team is not delegating responsibility appropriately. I have seen instances where a technical team lacked skilled, experienced, competent staff and in those instances senior management input and actions were needed, but only in these instances should there be such involvement. Otherwise, senior management is not using its time and abilities effectively and undermines the team's work and morale.
- Be precise and straight forward. Be responsible and accountable for your actions.

### **In critical priority countries**

"Subject matter" expertise in CPC's is about leadership in conflict and post-conflict areas; about the inter-agency process; about how to lead people.

## **6. Mission Director as senior on-site emergency and crisis response manager**

As member of country team, the Mission Director plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and welfare of Post personnel and American Citizens in times of emergency or crisis. As the senior manager at post for USAID, the lead agency in coordinating responses to natural and industrial disasters, the Mission Director acts to maximize the impacts of USAID interventions through clear communications, calling forward resources, and implementing a timely response. When the Department of State has the lead, as in response to civil crises, the Mission Director acts to ensure full USAID support in a whole-of-government response. The Mission Director watches across the Mission to gauge the stress of any crisis

and crisis response on Mission personnel; the Mission Director promotes the Mission team's resilience and that of their families.

## **General**

- In times of personal or Post wide crisis, be ready to step forward and lead. Crises test the mettle of leaders. Whatever happens, remain calm. Project compassion and concern. Allow staff to express their feelings and listen carefully to what they say. Do what you can to respond to requests and concerns but do not make promises you won't be able to keep. Be honest with staff about the limits of your authority but also clear with them about what you are trying to do on their behalf. Even if you fail, staff will usually appreciate the fact that you tried. Reach out to the Staff care folks in Washington if it is a major or protracted crisis.
- Especially in times of extreme stress and crisis, it is important to express concern for not only the staff but also their family members. Be open to hearing the concerns, problems or fears that staff have regarding spouses and children. In the Foreign Service, curtailments and other problems at the office are more often driven by personal issues relating to the employee's family (spouse can't find a job at Post, spouse can't speak the language and feels isolated; child has a learning disability that the local American school can't address, etc.) than any actual "work" related problem.
- We have had several different types of crises in our mission. Take a deep breath when you get the call, take notes and never be afraid to consult with others on your team at Post or elsewhere to help you respond appropriately. We weathered all kinds of stuff because a core group of us huddled to come up with solutions; and never assume that you as Mission Director are the only one who knows what to do.
- Crucial but kind of trial by fire.
- The world is a complicated place and bad things happen everywhere. Making sure you are ready to lead in any situation is part of the job. Making sure you make your staff think about all the different possibilities and preparing for the worst is the best you can do. When the "event" happens, you need to stay calm, show compassion and help others get through the "event."
- Major, major responsibility.



- In a complex crisis, do not under-estimate the demands of external communications/public outreach.
- Your presence matters. Acknowledging the efforts of others matters.
- Talk to your staff as soon as you can--even if you don't have all of the answers. It's okay to say that you don't know.
- Listen to your FSNs. They know the local issues and may be able to alert you to potential issues.
- Be assertive. Clarify USAID's role as soon as possible.
- Ensure timely communication with stakeholders (especially USAID/Washington)
- Staff will misinterpret your statements so be clear. Staff will also look for clues on who you favor or dislike at the Mission
- Step up as necessary
- Make sure you are aware of backgrounds of all your employees and their strong points. When an event is reported take immediate action, sometimes delay can make the event worse. Respect and listen to the opinions of those who have proven experience on such events.

### **Staff medical emergency or curtailment**

I hate saying this but no good deed goes unpunished. Support staff needs, such as curtailments for compassionate reasons, but then know that the newly vacant position may go unfilled for months.

### **Disaster response**

Know USAID/OFDA's role and responsibilities as well as that of Post's Mission Disaster Relief Officer.

### **In critical priority country**

- Given the importance of staff health security, as well as the ways that bad publicity on waste or fraud can impact hard working staff, monitoring and maintaining staff health is an important Mission Director role. The Mission Director should set the example for other senior managers by paying close attention to these issues when they arise.
- Let Washington know ASAP of any security event, including those with implementing partners.
- When you are aware that your operating environment is (or could be) deteriorating, or changing, make sure you have reliable, timely methods in place for monitoring the situational

context--not just portfolio performance. Your Regional Security Officer and other USG agency colleagues with access to political/security information can be important information sources.

- This is the proverbial "what keeps me up at night." I would add managing the death of a civilian to this category. Always good to have handy a printout of key individuals in Washington to call at 3:00 am when all hell breaks loose.

## **7. Mission Director as USAID and US Embassy community leader**

The Mission Director, in concert with the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, promotes community cohesion and good morale at Post. The Mission Director is a highly visible leader in modeling, communicating, and promoting American values.

- For some, it's an unexpected part of the job, but it shouldn't be. It might be one of the most important aspects.
- You are a senior leader in the broader USG community--act like a leader.
- Together with the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, the Mission Director sets the tone at Post. Foster collaboration. You are often the best advocate (among officers at Post) for FSNs.
- You set the example. If you come in late then don't be surprised when others do too. That's the job. If you want others to be open and collaborative you have to show it in your actions. People observe what you do much more than what you say. Remember that the most.
- Host a reception in your home for "USAID alumni" or "former USAID employees"; I've done this in two countries, and it was always very well received, providing an opportunity to pay tribute and honor those who worked for USAID in the past, sometimes for decades.
- Don't expect to get compensated or reimbursed for every representational event that you host in your home--sometimes just write it off as "the cost of doing business"
- Invite people to your house. Entertain not just USAID staff but volunteer to help by hosting Post-wide events. Volunteer, if you can, or be clear when your work load precludes it.
- Have parties at your home for staff and partners. Encourage the Americans at least to attend Community Liaison Office events and Marine House events too. Seems many USAID FSOs keep to themselves or don't socialize with other official Americans.

- Develop familiarity with staff (US and local), try to remember the names of immediate family members, whenever possible there in their difficult times. (If you are married, your spouse can take care of most of these functions more effectively.) Organize and be an active member of any community functions: e.g., family picnics, 4th of July celebrations, Thanksgiving.
- Be aware of local traditions and customs.

### **In critical priority countries**

- The Mission Director should set the tone for USAID. If staff care is important, the Mission Director must show that s/he follows the principles underlying staff care.
- In a CPC environment, where there isn't much to do, it is easy to fall into the trap of just working more, which increases the likelihood of burnout. Burnout takes on a whole different meaning in a CPC, leading to conflict in the staff, drinking problems, poor health and wellness, inappropriate relationships, decrease in productivity, etc., all of which are exacerbated in the fishbowl that is a CPC environment. Set the tone for good physical and emotional health by leaving the office at a reasonable time each day and stay out of the office on days off. Let your staff see you exercising, engaging in social activities and chilling out so they can feel comfortable doing the same. Make sure your staff takes leave. Recognize that at about the nine-to-ten month mark in a tour, many staff will get crispy in CPCs.
- Nice to do, but no time.

## **8. Mission Director as spouse, parent, daughter or son**

Mission Directors must make time and space for their spouses or partners and their children. Mission Directors must take into account the challenges of serving away from home and in a foreign environment and of the varying nature of these challenges among people of different circumstances. Often, this will include the less visible but considerable concerns of caring for families who could not come to post, children away at school, or for more elderly family members back in the United States. Each must find a proper balance.

- Key. Need to take time for this.

- It's tough managing the work life balance. Our families didn't ask for our jobs. Understanding that there are many things you are required to do as a Mission Director whether you like them or not is part of the territory. But being clear about the time you can and will carve out with your family is just as important.
- Don't shortchange yourself on Home Leave and don't shorten your Home Leave by being hurried into the next assignment just because of the latest "emergency" or just because you are "needed yesterday."
- Remain yourself. Just because you have a car and a chauffeur at work do not get a big head at home. Recognize that many of us at this stage of life are balancing children and aging parents and that can make it extra stressful. Reach out for help and confide in people about the strain. If you have a professional spouse, their well-being is as important as yours so make sure that you make decisions on assignments based on them and/or the entire family. It matters for all spouse but in a different way if they are managing their own career and have made sacrifices for you.
- Family comes first. Introduce your spouse or partner to colleagues.
- Talk about work if asked by your family but they may be bored by it. Still it is fun to show your children all the great work we do.
- If children are with you, make an effort to eat dinner together at least 2-3 times a week. Participate in their school activities, know their friends and parents and teachers. Try to play sports with them at least once a week. Be supportive of your spouse's activities, be a partner *not* a boss at home. Make sure you dine out with your spouse once a week, visit a theater or see a movie. Be sure to call your parents once a week and visit them at least once a year. Invite them to stay with you at least once each tour.
- My wife hosted 400 official function during our four year tour. Do you think State could say "Thank you?" --Not a chance!
- The key to happiness is happiness at home. Cultivate your office directors and deputy mission director to fill in when needed at the office.
- Allow your staff to be a part of your life--tell them about your kids, spouse, friends or house. This makes people feel that they may have something in common with you.
- Keep your priorities straight.

### **In critical priority countries**

- In setting an example to USAID staff, the Mission Director should make it clear that s/he should not have to change a scheduled R&R unless there is a highly compelling reason. If the Mission Director takes leave when expected, others will feel more comfortable about pushing back on supervisors who try to alter leave plans unreasonably.
- Absolute must especially in unaccompanied tours. Every day (yes, every day) touching-base is a must.

## **9. Mission Director as Agency employee**

Mission Directors, like all Agency employees, are ultimately responsible for their own professional development and managing their careers. Mission Directors must keep abreast of changing policies and requirements that may concern them as employees.

- You're at the top of the game. Time to start balancing your own ambitions against the greater good. What's best for the American people?
- Network. Remember our senior leaders are always changing and often moving on so keep in touch with the RRB, especially the DAAs (both political and FS ones)
- Make use of the FEI trainings. Not only are they the best quality leadership programs I have ever attended but they also are incredible opportunities to get to know and bond with other senior managers in the Agency.
- Yes, manage your career, but this should not be your top priority or too obvious.
- Be a mentor to your staff and share what you have learned during your tenure at USAID.
- Challenge yourself to do more than what is required of you.
- Cultivate your linkages with Washington.
- Make a conscious decision on when to open your window for Senior Foreign Service.
- Even as a Mission Director you have to manage your career. Part of that is the good relations you need to have with your Ambassador and the other part is being clear about what your goals are. Never give up an opportunity to represent the Mission to Congress or at other fora.

- Don't think of your current assignment as a "stepping stone" to a hypothetical next posting, rather make the most in the here and now of what could be your "final" assignment
- Be willing to get feedback (positive and negative) from peers, subordinates and outsiders. I have never really managed my career--it just sort of happened, but I did know that I cared about development passionately and eventually that's what moved me into a Mission Director position.
- Try to attend regional conferences/meetings (even be a part of agenda development of such meetings). Have physical communications with AID/W at least twice a year. People in AID/W should be fully aware of and be with you in important decision-making process.

### **In critical priority countries**

Hopefully by the time you are an Mission Director in a CPC your career is well on its way, though I would not say "autopilot."

## **10. Being your own person**

Mission Directors, to sustain performance in their demanding positions, must make time and space for themselves. Exercise, recreation, and personal expression all contribute to the health and well-being of the individual.

- Try not to set a precedent for living at the office--this trickles down to all of your staff.
- Be sure to do every week some of the things that you most enjoy--whether that is reading a book, spending time with the cat, visiting museums or playing tennis and soccer. Don't let anyone make you feel guilty for taking the time to do this. If you are inclined to be overly conscientious and always putting the job first, the strategy I've learned is "pay yourself first." That is set aside, on your schedule, time for some of these things *before*, not after, your assistant books the rest of your schedule. If you relegate all your personal needs and pleasures to the category of "when I have some extra time," you'll probably never do them.
- *Enjoy* the country where you are posted. One of the great fringe benefits of the Foreign Service career is the adventure and joy of seeing other countries, experiencing other cultures,

interacting with new people and customs--don't become a prisoner of the Embassy/USAID building or the small expat community. Get out and about. Go to museums, art galleries, festivals, visit the villages--not just for work, but also for fun. You'll enjoy the post more and also understand the society where you work a lot better.

- Keep a sense of humor. All the Mission's problems that can't be solved by others will come to you. At times, it can be heavy and depressing. That's why it is so important to exercise regularly, eat healthily and put everything back into perspective. Will the world really end if this doesn't get done right now? is a good question to keep in the back of your mind.
- Don't take yourself too seriously--very few people even know that a "USAID Mission Director" is outside of USAID
- Find a few outside friends so you can unwind. Hopefully some of them are from the country you are living in. make sure you find at least some time to exercise. It really clears the head and makes you more productive.
- Find time away from work. Have friends not associated with the Embassy. Do not hang out with just some of the staff. Don't play favorites. Be friendly with everyone at the Mission but that does not mean be friends.
- Exercise. Meditate. Go to church, temple, the mosque, etc. Find time for reflection.
- The Mission Directors I've known who are the most successful in leading a Mission are those who balance work, fun, and family. Those solely dedicated to work, I've observed, make the workplace a hell for their staff (night calls, week-end meetings and demands, no recognition of what a balanced life is all about).
- Make a calendar and spend at least 8-10 hours a week on physical exercise, yoga etc. Develop regular walking/jogging routine. Pursue your hobbies (music, painting, reading, writing, fishing, bird-watching, golfing) don't bring work at home. Learn to smile more often than frown and be grumpy. Be always positive. Learn to trust. Visit regular church
- Twenty years into retirement, I realize what a hugely fulfilling career USAID handed me. Large thanks to many!
- Seek balance in your life.

### **In critical priority countries**

- You can't be the best Mission Director you can be without taking care of yourself first. Especially in CPCs, it is easy to try to become superman or wonder woman. It won't work. There is nothing worse in a CPC Mission than a Mission Director who is crispy. The mood will permeate throughout the Mission.
- What life?

### **Did we forget anything?**

In this section, contributors were free to identify and address additional topics.

### **From a current Mission manager**

- Yes, a discussion of backbone. There are people who have risen to a high level--yes even to Deputy Director and Mission Director--by constantly sticking their finger in the wind to see which way the wind is blowing, mouthing the latest platitudes and throwing staff under the bus when trouble arises. But few people really respect them and most of them, sooner or later, are brought low by their lack of integrity and their spinelessness. What the Agency really needs and what staff ache for is true leadership by which I mean courage, integrity, genuine concern for others, a willingness to fight for what matters and to do the right thing for staff, for the Mission and for the Agency as a whole--all coupled with intellect and good judgment. We will all of us leave these Mission Director and Deputy Director jobs behind at some point but our characters and consciences will come with us wherever we go. In my own career, I have taken risky positions, stood up for junior people who were under attack by persons far more senior than me, insisted on accountability in programs that had political patrons, and stood my ground even when counseled by friends that I was risking my career by taking unpopular positions or displeasing some very highly placed person. Where key principles--for example, justice and fairness or the proper use of very large sums of taxpayer money were at stake--I have held my ground despite the risks. This has caused me some very uncomfortable moments and even on occasion real fear that my career was ruined, but I have never been sorry. Not only is my conscience 100 percent clean but I have also learned over time that my willingness to take



principled stands, to defend staff and to fight for the Agency has won me both respect and friends. In the long run this has benefited my career far, far more than any short-term expediency would have. In short, it is entirely possible (and not merely a utopian hope) to do well for yourself by doing right for and by others. Cling to this.

- The importance of trusting your staff and building them up. Feedback can be negative or it can be positive. Positive feedback will always earn you more loyalty and respect. Find a way to provide constructive feedback in a positive way.
- The grass is not always greener on the other side. Stay a while in a country--four to five years is best to be really effective and reap the rewards of development. You will feel so much more of a personal accomplishment.

#### **From a USAID Foreign Service Alumni (retiree)**

- Oh yes! The whole important functions of mentoring staff, of promoting those who deserve it, of showing appreciation for jobs well done (from deputies, tech personnel and teams, to admin people, drivers, and custodians) and having an 'open-door' approach are all important roles of the Mission Director and senior staff. Please don't ignore these dimensions of well-rounded Mission leadership.
- The most important thing is to allow office managers the flexibility and creativity to innovate. Create some flexible programming mechanisms to let technical offices manage toward objectives at the purpose level without being constrained by pre-determined input/output and financial plans.
- Support for FSNs must start with the State-controlled salary system ! It took me three years to bring their salaries up to the State-par in Dar. Enough said!
- While it does not fit exactly into the suggested format, I believe this attached points, "Guidelines for Operations Management," which I prepared for use by both direct hire and foreign national staff in my missions is applicable.
  - Time is your most precious possession. Don't let people waste it for you. Guard it carefully, while at the same time being sensitive to the importance of making time for social courtesies and personal communication, especially when in countries and cultures other than your own.

- Identify your objectives clearly. Make them as specific and concise as possible. Group them in relation to larger goals.
- Identify the resources you will need to achieve your goals—financial, human, physical—and the time frame required. Set out a work plan in order to understand their relationships in time.
- What kind of agreements and contracts will be needed to achieve these goals? Over what time? List them. List the persons needed for each agreement.
- Do the people you work with—peers, subordinates and supervisors—understand and agree with your objectives? If they don't, know their objections. Think about how to deal with them.
- What are the principal constraints in achieving your objectives? List them. Consult with your colleagues to ensure that you have identified the most important ones.
- When you manage by objective, you need to be especially sensitive to human factors. Do not lose sight of the importance of human relationships in achieving goals. The results will be a more congenial work and personal environment.
- The sequence of actions is very important. Try to have actions reinforce each other.
- Always examine actions to analyze their secondary consequences. Are there any conflicts between your personal objectives and professional goals, i.e., do you really believe in what you are doing?
- Take responsibility for the people who work for you. Help them to grow. Reward them. Give them feedback when they do not perform to agreed standards, and make sure they know of these standards well in advance.
- Make certain supervisors and peers know what you are doing. It will make it easier for them to help you when you need it. Don't surprise them.
- Always be honest. Solving difficult problems is easier when people trust you.
- Take time to think about your professional relationships. Do people enjoy working with you and for you?
- Try to solve problems verbally whenever possible. Use memos and letters to confirm agreements, not as a means of negotiations. One of the few exceptions is when you need to notify or indicate actions you will take if someone is in violation of a contract or other formal accord.

- Do not solve the easiest problems first. Start work on the most important problem, especially if it can be done within a reasonable time frame. If a problem will take a long time to solve, do not delay. Begin to work on it now. Be certain to assess carefully the help you will need.
- Never get behind on your work. You do not know when you will need to deal with an emergency which will take a substantial amount of unscheduled time. If you are not current with your work, you will be further behind when you return to it.
- Respect yourself and what you are doing. If you do, others will be more willing to cooperate with you.
- Never communicate with someone either verbally or in writing when you are angry. If you write a nasty email or letter, put it aside. Go back to it an hour or so later and you will see that there are more effective ways to deal with the problem.
- Seek evaluation of your work. Get a professional judgment on how you are doing. Do not be defensive. Be flexible and open to suggestions for improvements.
- Make sure people, both superiors and subordinates, understand that you want to know when you have made a mistake.
- Go over these principles at least once every six months. Evaluate yourself honestly in relation to them.