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HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) TOOLS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST OVERSEAS MISSIONS IN ESTABLISHING TEAM-BASED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the use of team-based organizational structures to best accomplish its development objectives. Team based organizations are being established at overseas missions to accomplish specific Agency strategic objectives (SOs). Missions have identified to the Policy and Program Coordination (PPC) staff the need for guidance on how to use the Agency's human resources (HR) programs to support team-based organizational structures. This handbook provides such HR guidance.

This handbook will be divided into five parts. Part I will provide a brief overview of organizational design as concept. In Part II pertinent parts of ADS 102 will be referenced and procedures for submitting team-based reorganization proposals outlined. Part III defines the competencies needed to function effectively in a team environment. Part IV identifies HR tools available to support team-based structures as they apply to the Foreign Service (FS) and Foreign Service National (FSN) personnel systems. Part V provides questions and answers of likely interest to mission staff. Due to the unique requirements of civil service HR, a separate handbook is being developed for supporting team-based organizations in USAID/W.

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN AS CONCEPT

Organizational design decisions impact all functional areas of HR including classification, recruitment, employee development and performance management. The two most common organizational design models are hierarchical or team-based.

The Hierarchical Model. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries U.S. industrial growth required the rapid assimilation of a largely agrarian and immigrant workforce. Contemporary theorists advocated breaking jobs down into their simplest parts. Organizations were aligned around specific functions that were often subdivided into individual processes. Spans of control were limited to better supervise a largely unskilled workforce, oftentimes having limited English language skills. Mid-level management was required in order to coordinate the

activities of the specialized units into a final product. The hierarchical model met the demands of its day. In today's global economy its costs are seen to outweigh its benefits. Specialization breeds bureaucratic games as "turf" becomes more important than product delivery. Multiple supervisory levels impede and distort communications and increase overhead costs by adversely impacting the ratio of "doers" to "reviewers." Nevertheless, task specialization remains the best way to bring large numbers of new members into an organization or to coordinate the activities of large numbers of people and huge amounts of material on short notice.

Team-Based Models. In team-based organizations each specialist applies his or her expertise to manage a team program, complete a project, or resolve a problem. In some cases work may be assigned so that one person provides virtually full-service to a customer by resolving issues through application of knowledge of multiple team specialties.

In team-based organizations, the role of the team leader is not necessarily as clearly defined as in a hierarchical structure. In self-managed teams, the planning and assignment of work are done by the team-members themselves. In supervised teams, the Team Leader *may* exercise the classic supervisory duties of planning and assigning work. The Team Leader may also exercise personnel management responsibility over team members (see the next section for a comprehensive outline of typical supervisory duties).

Since team members will come from specialty areas, it is important that newly established teams plan how to successfully integrate each member into team operations. This requires defining the role of the team leader and the roles and responsibilities of team members. When going from a specialist to a generalist role, members usually require additional training to render them fully capable. Additional technical guidance may also be required from outside the team in order to accomplish certain operations.

As outlined in ADS 102, teams are further distinguished by being either a parallel or an aligned team. Parallel teams are typically established for short periods of time. The team is frequently composed of members from both inside and outside the unit/office. Since they are of short duration, parallel teams usually do not appear on an organization

chart. The leader of a parallel team rarely has
supervisory responsibilities. An aligned team typically is
a permanent substitute to the classic hierarchical
organization. This is an ongoing arrangement, members are
permanently assigned to the team, and the Team Leader
usually has supervisory responsibilities. An aligned team
is reflected on an organization chart.

Team-based organizations have the potential for overcoming
the dysfunctional aspects of the hierarchical model. At
their best teams create a synergy whereby new ideas and
concepts are applied to resolve customer problems at the
point of initial contact. SO based teams can easily focus
on results through their shared understanding of the entire
project. The active involvement of customers in team
operations can enhance communications and an understanding
of the decision-making process. The active participation
of customers in the process will lead to their support and
advocacy for team decisions. However, unless properly
planned, the migration from a hierarchical to team-based
structure can result in chaos and severely diminished
customer service. Structural reorganizations fundamentally
impact process design necessitating a bottom-up review of
communications and paper flow. Team-based organizations
can lack the role clarity of hierarchical structures. When
coupled with communications problems and ill-defined
leadership tasking, finger pointing and risk avoidance
become the norm.

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING TEAM-BASED
REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS

Policies and procedures for establishing team-based
organizations are outlined in ADS 102 "Agency
Organization." The Office of Human Resources, Policy,
Planning, and Information Management Division (M/HR/PPIM)
provides primary staff support to missions in developing
and reviewing team-based reorganization proposals.
Paragraph 102.5.3 specifically addresses the use of Teams
and Teamwork within USAID. As in any reorganization,
establishment of team-based organizational structures
requires methodical planning and on-going communications.
Movement to a team-based structure need not jeopardize job
security or current grade levels

It is recommended that missions moving to team-based organizations initially develop a rough organizational chart with functional statements for team members that:

- Identify problems associated with the current structure. Outline how movement to a SO-focused team-based organization enhances internal mission communications, communications with USAID/W, and responsiveness to customer concerns.
- Establish criteria for team membership. Define the roles and responsibilities of USAID staff as compared to contractors, representatives of non-government organizations, and representatives from the host country.
- Identify the role of the team leader. Will the team leader exercise full "supervision" over the team by performing all or most of the following functions:
  - Assigning work to positions and reviewing work in a manner that permits each member to contribute effectively to team success;
  - developing criteria for determining the most qualified people for selection to fill vacancies;
  - assessing skill levels and scheduling people for training and development activities, whether formal classroom or on-the-job. [NOTE: In the initial phases of migrating to a team-based organization, it is especially important to identify who is responsible for defining team competency profiles and monitoring the development of these competencies.];
  - evaluating performance, providing feedback, and nominating for awards or addressing deficient performance; and
  - initiating appropriate conduct-based action consistent with Agency standards.
- Establish the reporting relationships for the team leader. Articulate whether the Mission Director/Deputy approve significant decisions and how the SO team reports to USAID/W. Identify decisions the team can make itself.
- Determine where team members go for technical assistance in their specialty area. State whether functional organizations will remain in place at the mission to provide senior advice and guidance. If not, identify where this expertise will be obtained.
- Define whether this is likely to be a long-term or short-term team assignment. If short-term, describe where team members will be assigned once the activity is complete.

■ Develop an implementation schedule with target dates for approving the concept, briefing mission staff, training team members, and moving to the team-based structure.

A draft of the organizational structure, functional statements, and implementation schedule should be sent to M/HR/PPIM for initial review and comment. It is emphasized that at this stage the process remains informal. Missions should identify what structure and reporting relationships best support SO accomplishment. The impact of establishing a team-based organization upon the mission workforce will then be addressed throughout the implementation process. Upon completion of the initial review M/HR/PPIM and the mission will reach consensus as to next steps. It will be determined at this point as to whether an assist visit to the mission is necessary.

THE COMPETENCIES NEEDED TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Over the last several years, the U.S. private sector has had considerable success using team-based structures to improve communications and customer responsiveness, while reducing overhead costs. For teams to effectively address short-term operational requirements, while concurrently envisioning long-term strategic priorities, each team member must possess:

1. Technical competence. Since each member of the team is expected to provide specialized expertise, being technically competent in her or his program area is prerequisite to team success. This is especially important when there is no technical supervision available from within the team. Teams must establish competency-based development programs that regularly update each member's technical skills consistent with evolving Agency requirements.

2. The ability to work as a team member. The elimination of hierarchical and clearly defined line/staff relationships is sometimes unsettling to employees: especially those who have come to place great value upon having a defined status within the organization. Some team members will find the natural cross training required in order to understand team operations and provide on-going support to multiple diverse customers traumatic. Sublimating individual recognition needs

for team success is not easy for some. Yet a thorough understanding and acceptance of team dynamics is essential to both individual and organizational success. This requires an aggressive transition plan for position restructuring, recruitment, training, and performance evaluation.

3. <u>The analytical skills necessary to evaluate team effectiveness and make recommendations for improving team operations</u>. SO-based teams within USAID are dynamic and ever evolving. This requires that members themselves be able to evaluate team performance using accepted quantitative and qualitative assessment tools. Training and performance criteria that reinforce the application of these tools are prerequisite for long-term team viability.

USING HR TOOLS TO SUPPORT TEAM BASED STRUCTURES

Movement from a hierarchical to a team-based structure impacts all of the major HR functional areas. Realignment of duties will require the rewriting of position descriptions. The criteria for selection may change significantly with a greater emphasis on interpersonal skills. Training and development programs will need to focus on providing the necessary competency-based tools to perform effectively in a team environment. Performance criteria will likely put more emphasis on team-supportive behaviors and accomplishments.

In this section we will address HR issues by functional area (position classification, recruitment, training and development, and performance management) in the FS and FSN personnel systems. Current primary points of contact are listed at the end of this handbook for easy update as responsible personnel change.

<u>Position Classification</u>. This is the functional area in which the FS and FSN systems most differ. A comparison of basic FS and FSN classification concepts will be followed by suggestions for writing position descriptions that effectively outline team relationships.

■ The FS personnel system is a rank-in-person system. As such, an assignment to a team in whatever capacity does not directly impact the person's pay. The assignment of duties to the position will impact the classification of

the position and may very well impact a Foreign Service Officer's (FSO's) competitiveness for future promotional opportunities as will be noted in the section on performance management. FSOs may be assigned as team members and are likely to fill team leader positions. Therefore, in writing FSO position descriptions under a team concept it is especially important to define supervisory responsibilities.

The workload planning, work allocation and personnel management responsibilities of team leaders must be clearly defined for teams to perform successfully. The FS classification system does not recognize an inherent difference between supervisory duties whether performed in a hierarchical or team-based organization. Clearly defined authority and responsibility for team operations will make it easier to define and measure the FSO's leadership skills and abilities.

Ultimately, the role of the team leader must reflect the operational conditions and priorities of the mission. Nonetheless, a participative supervisory model will likely prove appropriate. Under this model the team leader is delegated authority to manage the day-to-day operations of the team. The team leader remains responsible for team performance, including its ability to meet timelines and accomplish its strategic objectives. The team leader exercises direct supervision over team members, including full responsibility for personnel management functions. Team members are considered technically competent (or a mentoring program to establish requisite competencies is underway), requiring no technical supervision from the team leader. Supervision is goal oriented, coordinating team expertise in a collegial, problem-solving climate.

■ The FSN system is a rank-in-position system where duties and reporting relationships in general and responsibility for leading or supervising others in particular can directly impact the incumbent's grade and pay. Classification standards currently in use provide two ways of addressing supervisory responsibilities. Some standards describe a particular type of position that is typically supervisory, i.e. Maintenance Supervisor, Personnel Specialist FSN-11, Shipment Supervisor, etc. In other cases, the supervisory guidelines are applied to a position after the non-supervisory work has been

classified. Supervisory duties may not impact the final
grade level, especially in the case of higher graded FSN
positions where their duties as an expert in a subject
area and not supervision are grade controlling.

There will be occasions when FSNs serve as Team Leaders.
To properly evaluate the impact of Team Leader duties
upon the classification of an FSN position, the position
description, at a minimum, needs to clearly address the
FSNs authority to plan and assign work. In addition, it
must define the number and types of positions reporting
to the Team Leader, including whether they are FSN, FS,
PSC, etc. Finally, the FSNs authority to take personnel
actions must be clearly outlined to include: writing PDs,
initiating actions to fill positions, selecting
candidates for positions, authorizing and scheduling
training, and dealing with conduct and performance issues
(including the annual performance appraisal). It is
understood that FSNs are restricted from signing the
personnel paperwork for FSOs. Nevertheless, if the FSN
has the authority to provide counseling, recommend
disciplinary actions, and input to the performance
appraisal, usually over junior FSOs, supervision can be
credited for classification purposes. In such cases it
is understood that the FSN Team Leader's recommendations
are seriously considered by the FSOs who have the actual
signatory authority to sign AEFs, initiate discipline,
etc. The key is to properly credit for classification
purposes the FSN Team Leader's authority to substantively
influence personnel decisions involving FSOs.

Establishment of a team-based organization impacts the
classification of non-supervisory as well as Team Leader
positions. Teams frequently require their members to
perform a greater variety of duties in diverse functional
areas than is the case in a specialized functional
organization. When diverse duties are assigned, work
performed is oftentimes properly classified in multiple
classification series. In such team environments, the
"mixed position rule" permits work covered by three
separate occupational groups each performed for at least
25% of the time, and all at the same grade level to be
classified at the next higher grade. The *intent* of this
rule was to give classification credit for variety and
complexity when each separate type of work required a
separate body of knowledge. In mixed positions the
classifier must identify the grade level of work

performed in each classification series. Under current guidelines, if three series can be identified where work is performed at least 25% of the time at the highest grade level, than an additional grade can be added to the classification of the position. Certain combinations of duties will meet the intent, if not the letter, of the mixed position rule. For example, if at leasts three occupational groups are represented by work performed for 75% of the position's total time and all are at the same highest grade level, adding a bonus grade for variety fulfills the intent of the mixed position rule. If you have questions regarding mixed series classifications, call the HR/POD specialist servicing your mission.

Suggestions for writing position descriptions (PDs) that effectively outline team relationships. In writing PDs that give proper credit to FSOs and FSNs for their duties and responsibilities, it is especially important to methodically address each of the following:

■ Duties. Describe both their technical duties *and* define their responsibilities for participating in team activities to analyze team operations, redesign processes, and improve customer responsiveness. Be sure to clearly define those duties involving laws, regulations, processes, procedures, or relationships that are unique to that overseas area -- in particular those where the incumbent serves as the local competent authority, providing advice and guidance to other team members.

■ Supervision received. Be clear in defining where the team member is to go for assistance if she or he comes across an issue that cannot be resolved without some technical advice from someone in her or his specialty area. Is technical support available from others within the mission? From a regional office? From USAID/W? Or, is the incumbent considered to be the mission authority? Also address how closely work is reviewed for technical accuracy. Are the incumbent's recommendations accepted by the team leader as technically authoritative, and reviewed only in terms of compliance with mission policies and priorities?

■ Working relationships. Be precise in defining the incumbent's authority to represent USAID with host country officials and other customers of the team. When they deal with customers, is it mainly for the purpose of exchanging information? Do they have the authority to

negotiate implementation schedules and related issues
where the customer may not be in agreement with the
Agency position? Are they involved in sensitive
negotiations, representing the Agency when the outcome
could fundamentally impact the USG/host country
relationship? What authority do they have to commit the
Agency to courses of action with their customers?
Identify their role within the team structure. Do they
provide advice and guidance to more junior members of the
team? If so, in what context?

Non-supervisory duties and responsibilities need not be
diminished when moving from a hierarchical to a team-based
structure. In some cases the lack of immediate technical
supervision and expanding team responsibilities could have
a positive impact upon individual position classifications.
Two points are reemphasized. First, do not attempt to
design teams in anticipation of negative classification
consequences. Organizational design should drive the
classification process and not vice versa. Second, the
early involvement of PPC and M/HR/PPIM experts in the
redesign process will avoid last minute surprises and
ensure execution of the team concept with minimal
disruption to mission operations.

Oftentimes the classification of mission positions by
HR/POD is delayed due to incomplete paperwork in the
original submission. To maximize the possibility that
HR/POD staff can expedite your classification requests,
missions are requested to include the following in their
submission packages:

- The position description.
- A & E prepared by post
- Organization chart reflecting all positions: USDH, USPSC,
  FSN, PIT, etc.
- Organization chart of both the unit where position is
  located and one for the entire mission showing where the
  unit is located.
- Statement as to why the request is being made – is post
  having problems? Is this an exception that must be
  approved by Washington? Is this a situation where post
  doesn't have classification authority for whatever
  reason, etc.?

In addition a request for a multi-grade promotion must
additionally include:

- The employee's current assignment (title, series, level of current position).
- Date employee was assigned to that position.
- A copy of employee's most recent performance evaluation (to ensure duties of PD are consistent with actual work assignments)
- Discussion of employee's qualifications compared to the qualifications identified in the standards for the grade level you wish to wish to promote.

Recruitment. In establishing team-based organizations, it is important to consider what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are required if team members are to function effectively. The Agency has established comprehensive assessment tools as part of the rating, ranking, and selection process for FSOs entering its New Entry Professional (NEP) program. These criteria can be easily applied to the FSN recruitment process. Missions wishing additional information on crediting plan requirements can contact M/HR/POD.

Evaluation criteria for non-supervisory positions should be at four levels: superior, acceptable, minimal, and unacceptable. A minimum of three elements should typically be addressed:

- Technical knowledge.
  - Superior. Defined as knowledge directly related to mission programs that will permit the applicant to perform a full range of typical functions under limited technical supervision after receiving orientation to mission programs and operations.
  - Acceptable. Good knowledge of the discipline through academic training or experience. However, a specific training program will be required in order to augment this technical knowledge so it can be applied to mission programs and operations under limited technical supervision.
  - Minimal. Some knowledge of the discipline to be filled. However, a substantial amount of training and supplemental experience will be required before this applicant will be able to perform under limited technical supervision.

♦ <u>Unacceptable</u>. Does not meet the minimal level.
  Typically this would eliminate the applicant from
  further consideration.

- <u>Skill in representing the Agency and gaining the
  cooperation of others</u>.
    ♦ <u>Superior</u>. Shows significant experience in one or more
      professional positions successfully dealing with
      customers where the applicant was required to convince
      the customer to follow a recommended course of action.
      To qualify at this level, the applicant must also
      demonstrate experience successfully working as a
      member of a team focused upon accomplishing shared
      goals. Participation in sports requiring coordination
      of team efforts can be used to demonstrate this
      experience, provided that applicant can provide
      satisfactory examples of how they incorporated team
      concepts into their own individual behavior.
      Knowledge of analytical tools for evaluating process
      design and/or team performance [e.g., flow charting
      experience, planning tools such as Program Evaluation
      Review Technique (PERT) or Critical Path Method (CPM),
      or statistical applications] may be substituted for
      team experience.
    ♦ <u>Acceptable</u>. Experience in any position that
      demonstrates successful customer relationships,
      teamwork, or possession of analytical tools as
      described at the superior level.
    ♦ <u>Minimal</u>. A positive work history.
    ♦ <u>Unacceptable</u>. Negative information that indicates an
      inability to work well with others.
- <u>Communications skill</u>. NOTE: In order to be evaluated
  under this or other elements, the applicant must meet the
  mission's minimum language requirements for English and
  the host-country language.
    ♦ <u>Superior</u>. Demonstrates considerable experience in
      bilingual environments making written and oral
      presentations addressing professional issues requiring
      problem articulation and analysis.
    ♦ <u>Acceptable</u>. Successful experience in any setting
      making written or oral presentations in English and
      the host-country language.
    ♦ <u>Minimal</u>. Meets minimum mission language requirements.

♦ <u>Unacceptable</u>. Cannot demonstrate minimum language requirements.

<u>Training and Development</u>. Training requirements for migration to a team-based organization should be established by the mission as specific competencies to be demonstrated by team members. Comparing the requirements of the position with its incumbent's current knowledge, skills, and abilities typically identifies training needs. Textbooks call this a "gap" analysis. It is recommended that individual development plans (IDPs) be established for each team member. At a minimum, they should address the following:

■ Additional technical knowledge required to assist the team in accomplishing its objectives.
■ Skills required to successfully work with customers and function effectively as a team member. Team leaders will have additional requirements in this area.
■ Analytical tools needed to evaluate team performance and make recommendations for improving its operations.

The HR Learning Support Division (M/HR/LS) has developed comprehensive competency profiles for FSOs, by backstop and tied to the existing FSO promotion precepts. Missions are encouraged to work with the M/HR/LS staff in identifying how these competency profiles can be adapted to mission needs and form the basis for relevant IDPs.

<u>Performance Management</u>. Establishment of team supportive performance criteria will vary by personnel program.

■ <u>Performance criteria for FSOs</u>. FSO performance objectives for leading or participating in team-based organizations should be developed with promotion precepts clearly in mind. The performance objectives should reflect the organizational design and duties assigned in the position description. It is especially important for team leaders to have PDs and performance objectives that successfully address goal accomplishment, leadership, interpersonal, and communications skills. It is recommended that missions developing team-based performance objectives submit the proposed standards to M/HR/LERPM for comment prior to establishment.

■ <u>Performance criteria for FSNs</u>. It is recommended that FSN performance criteria be established to measure both

behaviors and accomplishment of specific finite goals.
The following criteria are recommended (and specifically
address the same elements used to select and train team
members):

♦ Effectiveness in contributing to the accomplishment of
  team goals.
♦ Technical knowledge of assigned area.
♦ Ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
♦ Success in completing training and development
  activities.
♦ Communications skills.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: "Isn't it more difficult to work in teams as USAID
shrinks in staff?"
A: "In fact, the smaller the posts, the more teamwork
becomes the only way to get work done, and a more
hierarchical structure becomes harder to implement..."

Q. "It seems to take a lot of time to get teams organized;
isn't this a waste of time?"
A. "Yes, that's right; it doesn't happen overnight.
Changing structures on paper is the easy part. But it's
worth the cost in terms of overall empowerment...."

Q. "How do I get really good people interested in my small
program, which has few people to supervise?"
A. "By ensuring that they understand how the organization
of the position and its duties relate to the Foreign
Service Officer promotion precepts. In particular,
emphasize their opportunity to manage entire projects
through multiple disciplines requiring the active
cooperation of multiple direct-hire, indirect-hire, NGO and
host-country staff and officials.

Q. "What's the difference between a supervisor and a
leader?"
A. "Supervisors plan, allocate, and monitor the work of
subordinates. Typically this is done on an on-going
program or project basis and may involve accomplishment of
the Agency's strategic goals. In addition supervisors
exercise personnel management responsibilities over
subordinates, including the writing of position
descriptions, selecting candidates to fill positions,
authorizing and scheduling training, initiating performance

and conduct related actions, and nominating for awards.
Leaders also plan and allocate work, but usually on a
short-term daily or weekly basis. Leaders typically do not
exercise personnel management responsibilities over
subordinates beyond approving emergency leave and planning
360 input to the performance management program.

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