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Management Assistance Report: Foreign Assistance Sustainability Is Not Clearly Defined in the Foreign Affairs Manual

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT

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Summary of Review

The Department has not developed comprehensive guidance for bureaus on how to build sustainability into its foreign assistance programs that annually receive about \$17.6 billion in funding. OIG's review of the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook found that only 3 bureaus or offices, of the more than 20 that receive foreign assistance,¹ have published references on sustainability. Volume 18 of the Foreign Affairs Manual, Chapter 005, establishes sustainability as a core foreign assistance principle but lacks specificity on how to incorporate sustainability into foreign assistance programs. Without consistent guidance, sustainability will continue to be incorporated unevenly into the design and evaluation of foreign assistance programs. OIG recommends the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources update the guidance to incorporate sustainability into foreign assistance programs.

BACKGROUND

Sustainability is one of the six foreign assistance effectiveness principles identified in the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review "to ensure that U.S. assistance adheres to the highest standards and achieves the best results."¹ Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-6 on U.S. global development policy cites sustainability as one of the President's three pillars of U.S. foreign assistance policy.² The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction identified the need to build sustainability into programs as a critical lesson learned from Iraq reconstruction.³ Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-23 on security sector assistance, released in 2013, sets as a primary long-term goal helping partner nations build sustainable capacity in their security sectors.⁴

FINDINGS

Sustainability is Not Clearly Defined in Department Regulations

Despite directives emphasizing sustainability as an important principle in U.S. assistance policy, the Department has not formulated comprehensive guidance on sustainability. Neither the 2010 or 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews nor Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-6 define sustainability. The most explicit references to sustainability and foreign assistance in the Foreign Affairs Manual are in Volume 18 Chapter 005 Supporting Development. That chapter is a reprint of a cable sent by former Secretary Clinton in July 2012 detailing her proposals for modernizing U.S. diplomacy to support development. It includes now-outdated policy guidance and references to individuals who are no longer working at the Department. Fewer than a third of the 70 individuals in the 12 bureaus and offices interviewed for this report were aware of the citations in Volume 18 of the Foreign Affairs Manual. However, 10 of those 12 bureaus and offices have or were developing internal standard operating procedures that

¹ *Leading Through Civilian Power – The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*. U.S. Department of State. p. 110.

² Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-6, p. 4, issued September 23, 2010.

³ *Learning from Iraq: a Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, March 2013, p. 130.

⁴ Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-23 on Security Sector Assistance, issued April 5, 2013.

referenced sustainability as one of the core attributes in project development. OIG acknowledges that each bureau's programs have different objectives and performance metrics, but clearer comprehensive guidance at the Department level is needed to ensure consistency in program management.

Recent Inspections and Audits Have Identified Inconsistencies in Sustainability Policies

In recent OIG audits and inspections, OIG has found that missions and bureaus do not consistently build sustainability into foreign assistance programs. In the 2014 Inspection of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, OIG found its programs did not consistently include sustainability in project design or as a performance measure for monitoring and evaluation. Data collected during that inspection found that fewer than 10 percent of the reviewed projects included metrics on sustainability.⁵ OIG's 2014 audit of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' counter-narcotics assistance to Afghanistan had similar findings.⁶

During its 2015 inspection of Embassy Amman, Jordan, OIG noted that the Jordanian Government was unlikely to be able to sustain Antiterrorism Assistance programs without continued U.S. funding.⁷ In its Evaluation of Antiterrorism Assistance Program for Countries under the Bureaus of Near Eastern Affairs and South and Central Asian Affairs,⁸ OIG found that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security lacked benchmarks and evaluation processes to ensure that training programs achieved their objectives and, without such benchmarks, had no basis for determining whether a country was capable of conducting programs without U.S. support. In that evaluation, program officers told OIG that for some programs partner-country sustainability was not a primary goal.

The references to the importance of sustainability of foreign assistance in documents from the White House and the Department highlight the need for consistent Department-level guidance.

Recommendation 1: The Office of the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources should update Volume 18 – 005 of the Foreign Affairs Manual to clearly articulate Department guidance on incorporating sustainability into foreign assistance programs. (Action:D-MR)

⁵ *Inspection of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement*, ISP-I-14-24, September 2014.

⁶ *Audit of Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Counternarcotics Assistance to Afghanistan*, AUD/MERO-15-02, November 2014.

⁷ *Report of Inspection of Embassy Amman, Jordan*, ISP-I-15-29A, June 2015.

⁸ *Evaluation of Antiterrorism Assistance Program for Countries under the Bureaus of Near Eastern Affairs and South and Central Asian Affairs*, AUD/MERO 12-29, April 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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APPENDIX: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

OIG reviewed the Foreign Affairs Manual, Presidential Policy Directives, the 2010 and 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews, and other relevant documents to determine the existence of an accepted definition of sustainability as well as a requirement to include sustainability into foreign assistance programming decisions. OIG then selected 12 bureaus in the Department that manage foreign assistance programs to determine if approach to incorporating the concept of sustainability into programming decisions is consistent.

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by OIG for the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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