ETHIOPIA (CASE STUDY 1)

Methodology: The case study team carried out 32 individual and group interviews of key stakeholders in Ethiopia, including field site visits in Amhara Region. Interview included USAID/Ethiopia leadership and technical staff, US Embassy staff, implementing partners, project beneficiaries and technical staff of other donor organizations. Fieldwork occurred from March 2-13, 2015. Interview data were complemented by background documentation from USAID/Ethiopia and other stakeholder sources.

Country Context: Ethiopia is a closed political space, featuring a centralized government structure and one-party dominance in the political sphere. Ethiopia's human rights record is problematic, creating barriers to programmatic collaboration with government. There are openings, however, for working with government, especially in peripheral ("emerging") regions of the country.

Mission Context: USAID/Ethiopia's CDCS Results Framework features a DRG-focused Support Objective that explicitly articulates programmatic collaboration of the ODG with the other technical offices. Additionally, each DO contains programmatic foci to promote increased accountability and civic engagement. The overall Mission portfolio is predominantly in health and EG&T, driven in large part by initiatives such as PEPFAR and Feed the Future. Current DRG programming is in conflict management, social accountability and support for vulnerable populations, leveraging operational funds from the other sectors (USAID/Ethiopia has not had DRG program funding since 2011). The DRG program features a nation-wide approach with emphasis on lowland emerging areas.

Integration Themes and Entry Points: DRG integration emphasized use of existing government and traditional ("customary") institutions, including, farmer's cooperatives and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). Through its capacity development and work with local organizations, USAID is able to engage with the GoE at the local level. The DG team does engage on the central policy level occasionally where feasible (e.g., in health and food security). The DG team engages with the other Mission technical teams, both at design stage and with projects on the ground. The DG team is also active in coordination with other donors.

On the management side, USAID/Ethiopia is distinguished by including on its DG team a Senior Cross-Cutting DG Advisor who acts as a "program entrepreneur" (the case study team's term) in collaborating with colleagues working in other sectors. The team observed that the Advisor's work has played a very constructive role in shaping and fortifying DRG integration across technical sectors. Overall, levels of awareness and receptivity to integration vary considerably across the Mission. Involvement by the Advisor in PAD development and pipeline reviews keep the cross-sectoral dialogue active.

In general, stakeholders within and beyond the Mission recognize the added value, at least potentially, of DRG integration. Many interviewees noted that an independent stream of DRG funding would strengthen the voice of those promoting further DRG integration. The Mission features good working relationships across sectors, and technical specialists from non-DRG sectors readily identify governance and accountability dimensions in their own programs, even if the term "DRG" may not be particularly familiar to them.

Challenges:
- Funding restrictions via mandated stovepipes slow down and inhibit integration work
- Congressional earmarks and G2G regulations make significant cross-sectoral collaboration difficult
- More readily available governance-related performance indicators would help
- In addition, research evidence on the added value of integrated approaches is largely lacking

Lessons from other donors. Donor partners offered several pieces of advice, based on their experience in Ethiopia. These include: (a) simplify the DRG jargon and technical descriptions into more accessible tools for application beyond the DRG sector; (b) consider using your Mission DRG Team as a thought resource for the Front Office for DRG-related input to risk assessments, strategy papers, etc.; and (c) recognize that direct DRG budget support gives a donor more leverage vis-à-vis a government such as that in Ethiopia.

Conclusions. Ethiopia exhibits ambitious, often impressive Mission efforts at DRG integration in a challenging country environment. Observers need to keep in mind that in a closed political space the value-added of integration tends to be localized and modest; huge gains are hard to come by. A major challenge remains in finding ways to more adequately include "thinking politically" in project design, across sectors.

The case study team offers the following conclusions based on its exploration of the DRG integration experience at USAID/Ethiopia:

1. Integration at the Mission displays ambitious, often impressive efforts in a challenging country environment. As finalization of the current CDCS proceeded, the Mission "fell into" its DRG integration approach, given the requirement to include a maximum of three development objectives combined with the heavily earmarked program. The DRG support objective became the platform through which the Mission could program DRG work, although subsequent to approval of the CDCS it became evident that stand-alone money in the sector would not be coming from Washington.

2. DRG integration is present across all sectors, although awareness of DRG integration opportunities and receptivity to programmatic collaboration varies significantly across and within sector technical teams.

3. Engagement of DRG expertise in project design is critical, and such involvement (and accompanying influence on designs) has become broader and deeper in recent months. Nevertheless, under the current strategic and funding framework (with DRG initiatives "borrowing" program space and funding from collaborating sector teams) there remains room for more systematic DRG inputs to designs.

4. The role of the Senior DRG Integration Specialist as an integration collaborator and champion has been very constructive in forwarding integrative work across the Mission's portfolio. As we have noted, however, there are issues surrounding the longer-term sustainability of the approach as it has been structured.

5. In terms of the relevance of USAID/Ethiopia's integration experience for other missions, the story is mixed. DRG tools and concepts are integrated at many points in the Mission's programs because USAID/Ethiopia has explicitly identified an improved governance environment as an objective, and the DG team has successfully "jawboned" the value of integration with USAID colleagues and external partners. The process of integration is therefore of considerable potential value to other missions. The particular structure through which integration works, with a support objective and no DRG OYB, is distinctive, however, and less transferable to other settings.

6. Finally, the case study team notes that "the jury is still out" regarding the role of DRG integration in achieving program results in the context of the relatively closed Ethiopian political space. It is simply too soon to derive metric-based data and draw broader conclusions about attributable program outcomes.