



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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## SURVEY OF USAID'S DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE IN SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA

SURVEY REPORT NO. 4-000-15-001-S  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA



*Office of Inspector General*

September 1, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Acting Chief Human Capital Officer, Erin McKee

**FROM:** Regional Inspector General/Pretoria, Sarah Dreyer /s/

**SUBJECT:** Survey of USAID's Development Leadership Initiative in Southern and Eastern Africa (Survey Report No. 4-000-15-001-S)

This memorandum transmits our final report on the subject survey. In finalizing the survey, we considered your comments on the draft and have included them in Appendix II.

Because the survey does not have any recommendations, your office is not required to take any additional action to address the survey's findings.

Thank you and your staff for the cooperation and assistance extended to us during this effort.

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**Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations appear in this report:

ADS	Automated Directives System
DLI	Development Leadership Initiative
FSN	Foreign Service national
FSO	Foreign Service officer
FY	fiscal year
HCTM	human capital and talent management
HR	human resources
OIG	Office of Inspector General
RIG	Regional Inspector General

# SURVEY RESULTS

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that USAID's workforce declined 2.7 percent from 2004 to 2009, while program funding almost doubled to \$17.9 billion in the same period.<sup>1</sup> At the time, USAID faced critical staffing shortages—especially in high-priority countries like Afghanistan and Iraq—and a high percentage of Foreign Service officers (FSOs) nearing retirement. All of these factors affected USAID's ability to work directly with foreign governments and local partners, and increased its reliance on contractors and outside organizations to carry out its mandate for development.

USAID launched the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) on May 24, 2008, to address diminished staff levels. Managed by USAID's Office of Human Resources (USAID/HR), the initiative aimed to double the number of FSOs from 1,200 to 2,400 by fiscal year (FY) 2012 and targeted both junior and mid-career officers, referred to as "DLIs."

The initiative aimed to prepare junior-officer DLIs<sup>2</sup> for careers as FSOs through an intensive multiyear training program. DLIs spent between 4 and 12 months in the Agency's Washington, D.C., headquarters to complete mandatory orientation, rotations, and formal training. Many also spent 6 to 9 months studying a foreign language. DLIs continued their learning during their first overseas assignment, which typically lasted for 2 years. There, they completed additional training and rotations, and gained hands-on experience in their area of expertise or "backstops."<sup>3</sup>

The last class of 23 DLIs entered the Agency on September 23, 2012. At that time, USAID had hired 820 DLIs above attrition—approximately 68.3 percent of the number initially targeted. USAID/HR officials said congressional funding limitations prevented them from hiring the full number. As of January 31, 2014, obligations and disbursements for the initiative were approximately \$640 million and \$540 million, respectively.

Approximately 21 percent of DLIs were deployed to 16 missions in southern and eastern Africa<sup>4</sup> for their first overseas assignments. Obligations and disbursements for these groups as of January 31, 2014, were \$116.7 million and \$95.3 million, respectively. The Regional Inspector General (RIG)/Pretoria conducted this survey to determine whether the initiative prepared the DLIs in southern and eastern Africa for future assignments in their designated backstops. In addition, the results should help USAID develop Career Candidate Corps (C3), a follow-up program the Agency transitioned to in October 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> GAO, *USAID Needs to Improve Its Strategic Planning to Address Current and Future Workforce Needs*, June 2010, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/310/306295.pdf>, accessed on March 12, 2015.

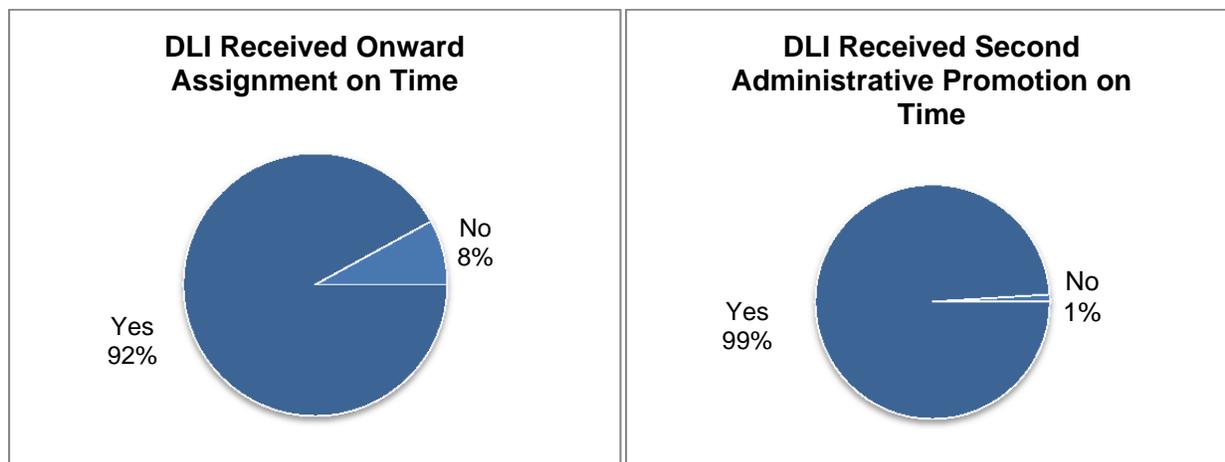
<sup>2</sup> Junior officer DLIs are the focus of this survey and are referred to simply as DLIs. Mid-career hires were expected to perform fully as FSOs, and did not have the same needs and requirements for training and supervision.

<sup>3</sup> These can be education, health, economics, engineering, agriculture, and environment, for example.

<sup>4</sup> USAID's southern and eastern Africa missions with DLIs were Angola, East Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Southern Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. However, South Sudan received only mid-career DLIs who were therefore not surveyed.

Survey results showed that DLI had some successes; 92 percent of the DLIs who responded said they received assignments in their designated backstops, and 99 percent reported receiving their second administrative promotion on time, as shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Assignments and Administrative Promotions**



In addition, survey results showed that:

- All of the mission directors felt that the initiative was a good use of mission resources and did a good job of preparing DLIs for assignments in their designated backstops.
- The initiative was an effective method for addressing the Agency's staffing crisis, with supervisors and mission directors in particular lauding the caliber of DLI recruits.
- More than 80 percent of supervisors and mentors agreed that their DLIs were prepared for future assignments in their designated backstops after completing their first overseas assignments; approximately 11 percent disagreed.
- Most DLIs said they would recommend the initiative to others; only 16 percent said they would not.

However, despite overall success, respondents discussed several concerns with the initiative. One of the most significant was different expectations between DLIs and their host missions. Supervisors said DLIs arrived at post with an unrealistic understanding of their responsibilities after being labeled the "future of the Agency" in Washington. Some DLIs, they reported, approached the initiative as a "fast track to management" and were unprepared to learn. DLIs, on the other hand, said missions interpreted their trainee status to mean they were not full employees, thus limiting the work assigned to them. Respondents said the initiative would be better if all roles, responsibilities, and expectations were better defined and understood at the outset.

USAID/HR officials acknowledged that they overlooked these and other aspects of the program in their effort to get DLIs to the field quickly. Although employees in HR modified guidance for the initiative regularly, officials were slow to formalize it; for example, the first *DLI Reference Manual* was issued on July 30, 2009, more than a year after the first DLIs assigned to southern or eastern Africa were hired.

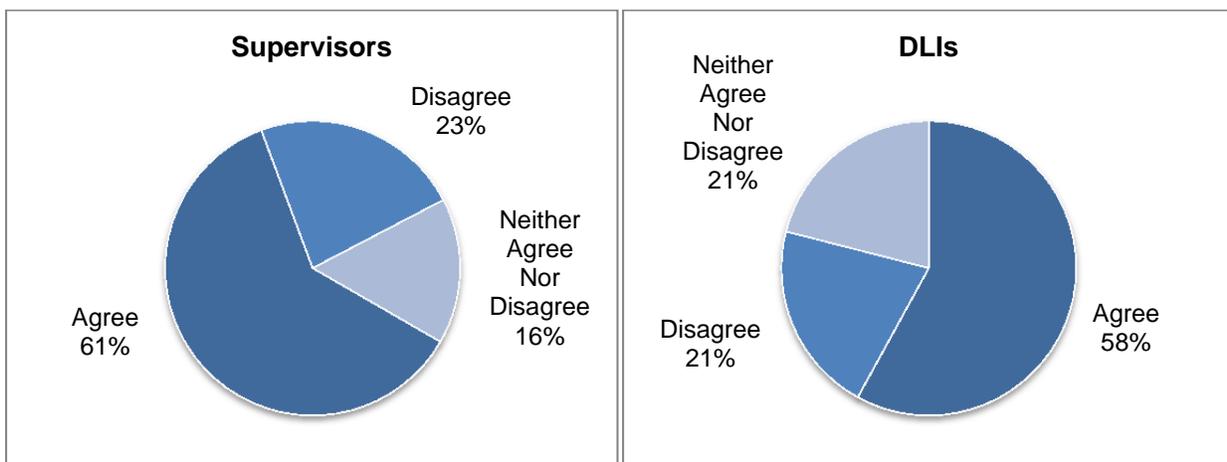
Additionally, survey results found the following problems.

- Training was not always relevant.
- Some new hires did not use the foreign languages they were taught.
- Supervisors did not always help DLIs prepare for future assignments.
- Some DLIs did not find coaches and mentors helpful.
- Some perceived that USAID overlooked Foreign Service nationals (FSNs).
- Hiring practices changed midway through the initiative.

## Training Was Not Always Relevant

Training, including formal training and rotations completed in Washington, D.C., and at posts, was the foundation of the initiative for junior officer DLIs. Most of those who responded to the survey agreed that the formal training and rotations they completed helped them understand the Agency and its procedures. Additionally, 61 percent of the supervisors and 58 percent of the DLIs agreed that the mix of formal training, rotations, and on-the-job training was balanced appropriately; 23 percent and 21 percent, respectively, disagreed (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Responses for “The mix of formal training, on-the-job training/work assigned at post, and rotations completed as part of the [initiative] was appropriately balanced.”**

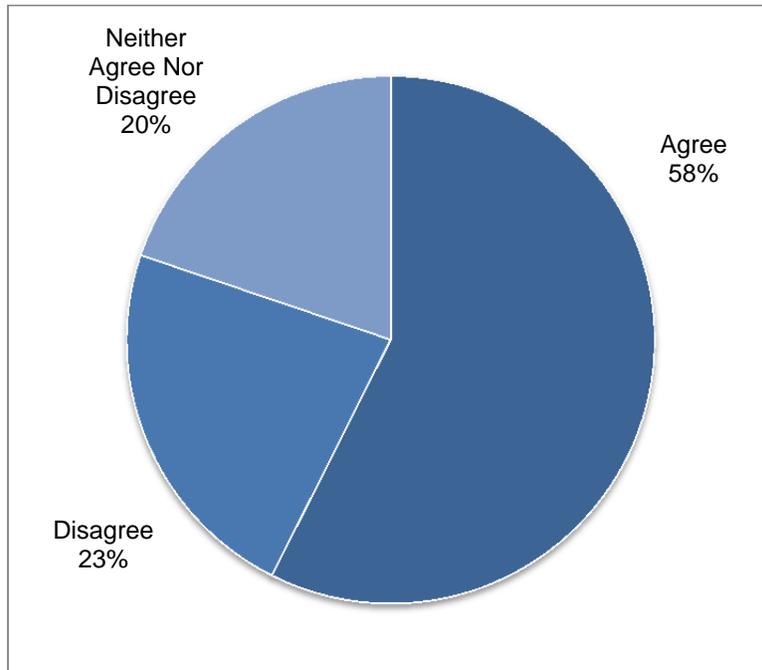


However, DLIs who completed formal training and rotations were away from their offices so frequently that their supervisors found it difficult to assign them substantive work. This limited the amount of on-the-job training DLIs received. Conversely, DLIs who had substantive work assignments had to forego other opportunities for formal training and rotations.

Some DLIs explained that the value of formal training was diminished because they could not apply everything they learned in a timely manner. For example, they completed required training for agreement and contracting officers' representatives yet they were not assigned to these jobs during the 2 years of their first overseas assignment. DLIs also completed a supervision seminar when they were not supervisors.

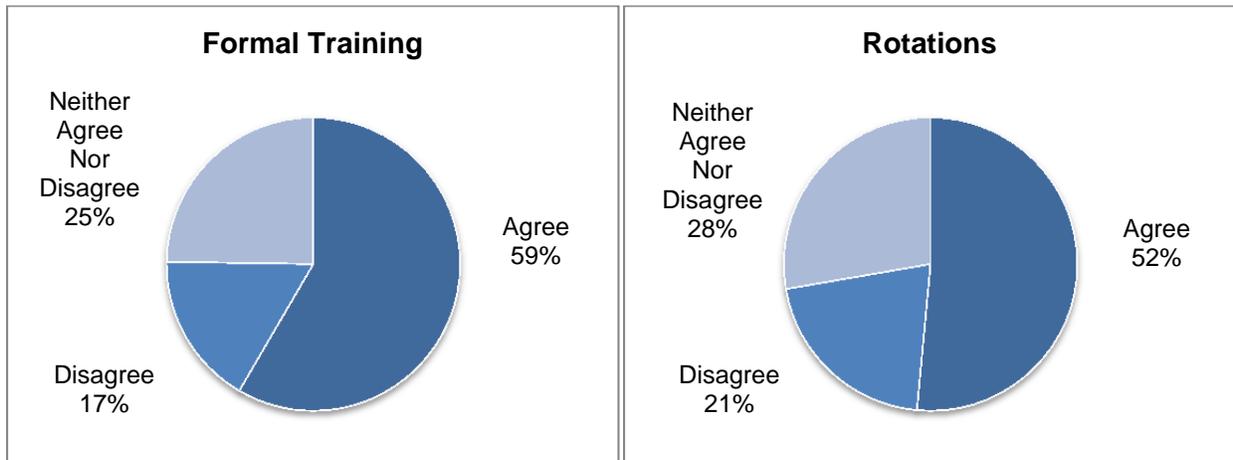
As shown in Figure 3, approximately 58 percent of DLI respondents agreed that overall the formal training they completed helped them perform in their backstop at their first overseas assignment; 23 percent disagreed.

**Figure 3. DLI Responses for “The formal training I completed as part of the [initiative] helped me perform in my backstop at my first directed overseas assignment.”**



Approximately 59 percent of DLI respondents agreed that the formal training they completed included content that was well programmed and thought-out; 17 percent disagreed (Figure 4 on the next page). Those who disagreed said the trainers often did not have USAID experience and consequently could not apply course materials to realistic situations. In some cases, course material was outdated and did not reflect USAID’s current policies and procedures. Some DLIs said the training and orientation they completed in Washington, D.C., before leaving for post lacked critical information on the realities of working in an overseas mission or in other cultures.

**Figure 4. DLI Responses for “The formal training/rotations I completed as part of the [initiative] included content that was well programmed and thought out.”**



Almost 52 percent of the respondents agreed that the content of the rotations they completed was well programmed and thought-out; 21 percent disagreed, as shown in Figure 4 above. Respondents said the best rotations had a specific purpose and learning objectives that helped them understand the responsibilities of their backstop.

However, not all rotations had these, especially those in Washington. When broken out by year, the survey data shows that dissatisfaction for nearly all aspects of rotations increased over the course of the initiative. For example, approximately 74 percent of the DLIs from early classes in 2008 and 2009 were satisfied with the rotations they completed, compared with nearly 58 percent of those who took classes in 2011 and 2012.

The survey data indicates that the content of DLI training improved over time, while the content for rotations did just the opposite; 81 percent of DLI respondents from the 2011 and 2012 classes agreed that formal training included content that was well programmed and thought-out, compared with approximately 51 percent from the 2008 and 2009 classes.

USAID/HR acknowledged that timing the formal training for new FSOs appropriately was challenging. Officials and respondents alike said completing formal training before going overseas minimized disruptions once at post. However, some overseas experience was necessary to put formal training into context and make it more useful. Our surveys did not definitively conclude when certain trainings should be offered. However, USAID/HR agreed that supervisors should make efforts to match formal training with work assignments or rotations so new FSOs can apply what they learn quickly. For example, a new FSO could participate in a data quality assessment following training in monitoring and evaluation.

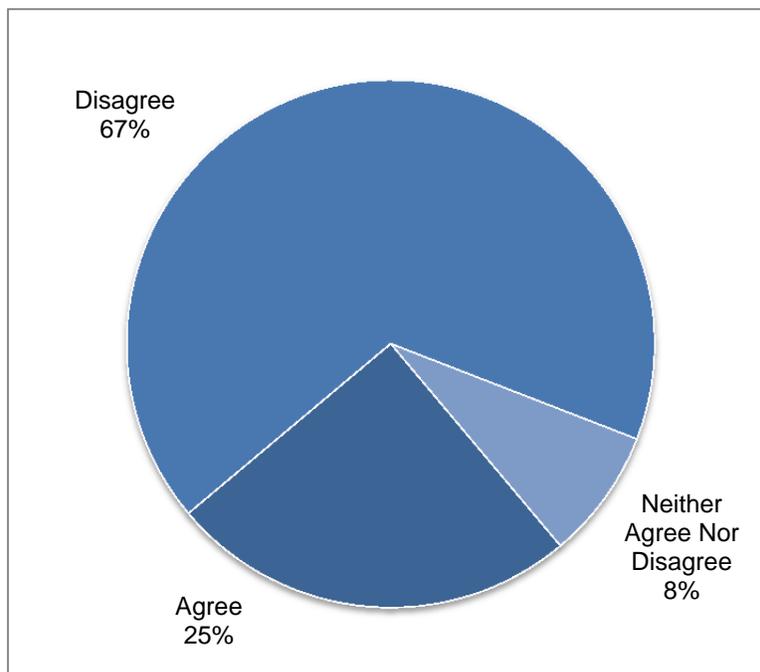
When asked about course content, USAID/HR officials said they relied heavily on contractors to provide formal training because Agency employees were not available consistently to provide it. The officials said requiring contract trainers to have USAID experience would be too expensive. But they suggested other solutions, such as using USAID-centric case studies, inviting senior employees as guest speakers, and having DLIs and Agency employees take training together so the DLIs could get the insiders' perspective. HR employees added that the curriculums of several core courses were updated in 2014, and others are scheduled to be updated by December 2015.

## Some New Hires Did Not Use Foreign Languages They Were Taught

Although USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) 459 specifies that DLIs and other new hires must complete language training, if needed, before beginning their overseas assignments, only 25 percent of DLI respondents who completed the training said they had the opportunity to use the languages they learned in their first directed overseas assignment. Sixty-seven percent disagreed, as shown in Figure 5 below.

This requirement stems from section 702 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, Public Law 96-465, as amended, which states that FSOs should have "a useful knowledge of the language or dialect common to the country in which the post is located," and that language training should be provided by the State Department's Foreign Service Institute or "otherwise."

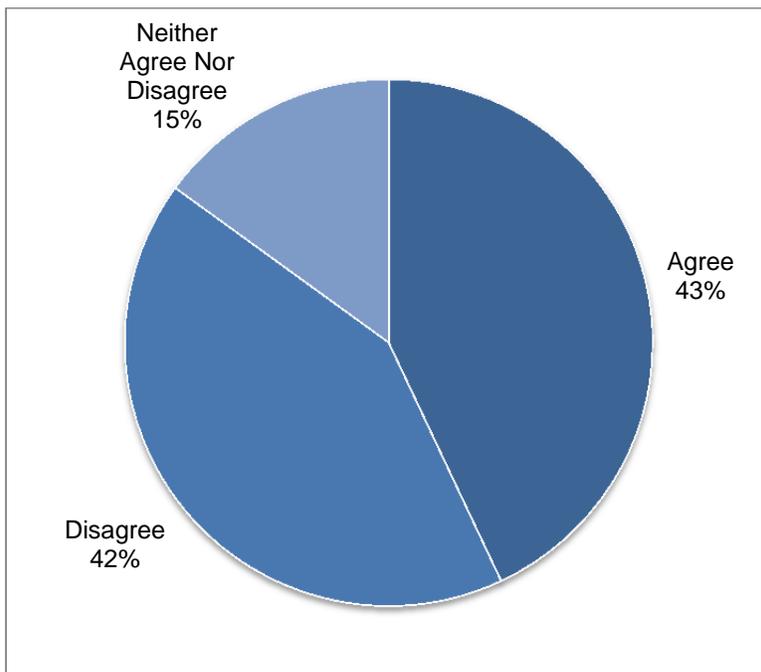
**Figure 5. DLI Responses for "I had the opportunity to use the language I trained in as part of my first overseas directed assignment."**



Some DLIs raised concerns with the requirement to attend the Foreign Service Institute because the courses there were tailored for State Department employees working in diplomacy, not USAID employees working in development. The curriculums did not teach the vocabulary they needed for development work, they explained.

While 43 percent of DLI respondents agreed that the time and money invested in language training was worthwhile, an almost equal amount (42 percent) disagreed (Figure 6 on the next page).

**Figure 6. DLI Responses for “The time and money invested in language training was worthwhile.”**



USAID/HR officials acknowledged these concerns. They said they upheld the requirement to be fluent in a language before going overseas to make sure people were capable of meeting the tenure requirement within the 5-year time frame.<sup>5</sup> They said common languages, like French or Spanish, had a greater, though not guaranteed, chance of being used at more than one assignment and were therefore more appropriate for tenure if the position did not have another language requirement.

In addition, USAID/HR officials said, selecting common languages for DLIs assigned to southern or eastern Africa posed a particular challenge because of the prevalent use of English and vast number of local, less common languages used in those regions. Officials said it was too expensive to teach FSOs the less common languages if they were not required for the position since they would not be useful elsewhere.

USAID/HR officials said they favored the Foreign Service Institute because it was the designated center for testing fluency. Sometimes contractors were hired for students who had difficulty with the institute’s learning environment or curriculum, they explained, but this option was not widely available. Since USAID employees constitute a small percentage of students at the institute, the officials said they did not have much influence over the curriculum. They tried to address this problem in the past by offering translated copies of key Agency documents in the USAID library, but few people used them.

USAID pays approximately \$1,520 per week of training at the Foreign Service Institute, and students generally attend for 24 to 30 weeks. DLI respondents who filled positions at English-speaking posts asked why they could not postpone the training until it could be matched with an

<sup>5</sup> FSOs get tenure after they have done their job successfully for 5 years.

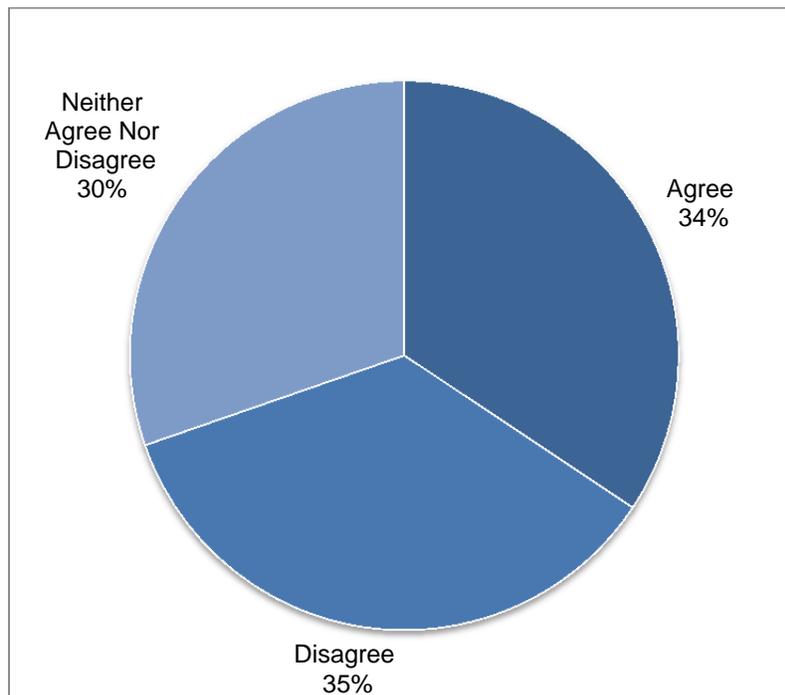
overseas assignment. Moreover, DLI respondents who could not use the languages they were taught immediately said they needed to get the training again to regain fluency.

## Supervisors Did Not Always Help DLIs Prepare for Future Assignments

Supervisors<sup>6</sup> played a crucial role in preparing DLIs to become FSOs. They were responsible for providing DLIs with office support, helping them assess and plan training needs, assigning work and providing on-the-job training, and evaluating performance. Responsibilities for DLI supervision are listed in two primary sources: *DLI Reference Manual* and a memorandum of agreement between the DLI and his or her host mission.

Survey results showed that 35 percent disagreed that their Washington-based supervisors helped them prepare for their first overseas assignments, while nearly 34 percent of DLIs agreed (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. DLI Responses for “My supervisor of record in Washington helped me prepare for my first overseas directed assignment.”**



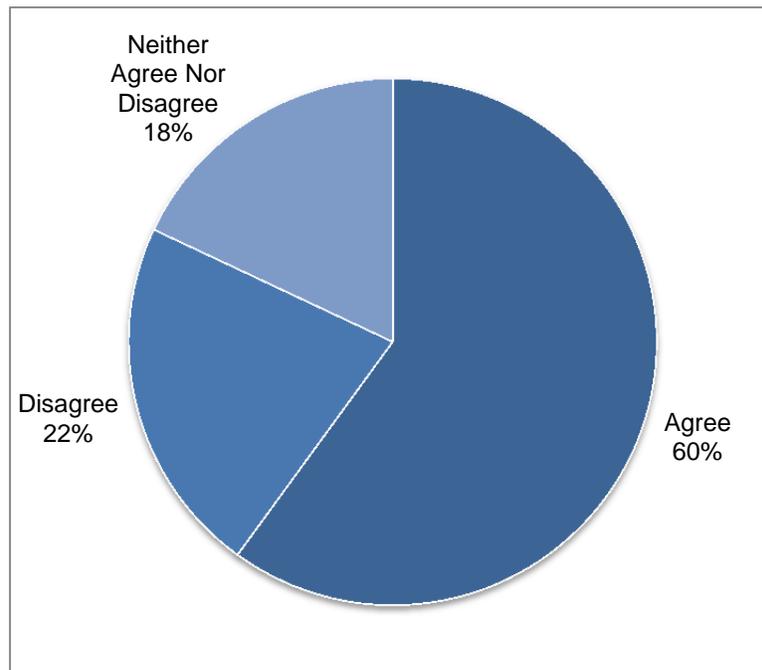
Those who disagreed explained that their supervisors in Washington were not engaged and took little interest in supervising DLIs. Some said they were assigned supervisors who were not FSOs or U.S. direct hires, which meant that they could not provide insight on overseas assignments or Agency policies and procedures.

Supervision at post was perceived better.

<sup>6</sup> DLIs had two types of supervisors: supervisors of record and rotation supervisors. This survey focused on supervisors of record, which USAID/HR officials said had primary responsibility for DLIs in Washington and at post. Supervisors of record are referred to as supervisors in the rest of this survey.

- Approximately 53 percent agreed that their supervisor was able to fulfill his or her duties as outlined in their memorandum of agreement; 21 percent disagreed.
- Fifty-nine percent of DLI respondents agreed that their supervisors at post helped them develop the necessary skills and knowledge for their backstop; 26 percent disagreed.
- Approximately 60 percent agreed that their supervisor helped them prepare for a future assignment in their designated backstop; 22 percent disagreed (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. DLI Responses for “My supervisor of record at my first overseas directed assignment helped prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.”**



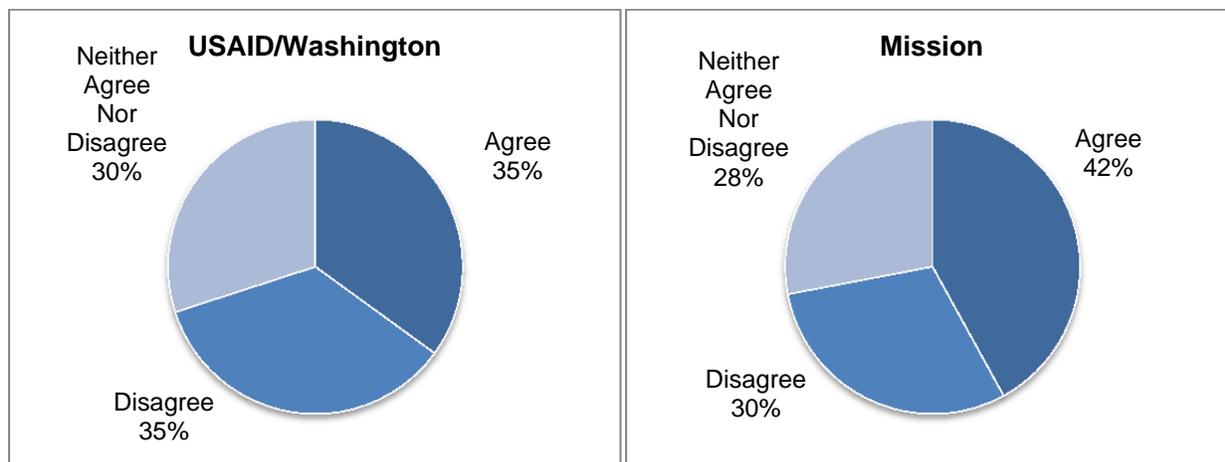
Overall, we found that DLIs who reported being satisfied with the supervision they received were far more likely to have a positive view of the initiative. Without good supervision, DLIs said, they were left to arrange their own rotations and seek out work on their own, a difficult task for someone new to the Agency.

The DLIs listed several barriers to good supervision. They said their supervisors did not have the time to manage them effectively. They also said their supervisors had a different understanding of the initiative than they did, which led to differing expectations. Some were outwardly unsupportive because they did not approve of the initiative, and this affected the type of work and training opportunities available to the DLIs. Furthermore, they said, supervisors did not provide guidance, direction, or constructive feedback on their work assignments. Other barriers were staff turnover and a shortage of FSOs in their backstops at the missions they were assigned to.

Thirty-five percent of the supervisors who responded to the survey agreed that they received adequate guidance from Washington about how to supervise their DLIs effectively, but an equal

percentage disagreed. Approximately 42 percent agreed that they received adequate guidance of the same kind from their mission; 30 percent disagreed (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Supervisor Responses for “I received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington/my mission about how to effectively supervise my DLI.”**



USAID/HR officials said they gave supervisors adequate guidance such as the *DLI Reference Manual*, ADS 459, and additional checklists. Yet, the supervisors said these needed revision.

One of the reasons for all of these problems, based on survey responses, was that supervisors often were not evaluated on the quality of supervision they provided to DLIs. Approximately 43 percent of the supervisors agreed that their performance as a DLI supervisor was factored into their annual evaluation; 35 percent disagreed. Some supervisors said they did not receive adequate recognition when they were able to provide good supervision and thus lacked incentive to do so.

USAID/HR officials acknowledged that they did not formally monitor the quality of supervision provided to DLIs and said DLIs were responsible for reporting any concerns they had to mission managers. Approximately 60 percent of DLIs agreed that their mission had a designated point of contact who was responsive to any concerns pertaining to the initiative. Yet 26 percent disagreed.

USAID/HR officials said one of the consequences of the Agency’s staffing shortage was that there were not enough experienced supervisors for the number of new junior officers. The officials said the Agency was addressing this by requiring supervisors to undergo management training; the department’s training team said the supervisory training would be updated in October 2015 to include information that pertains to new FSOs.

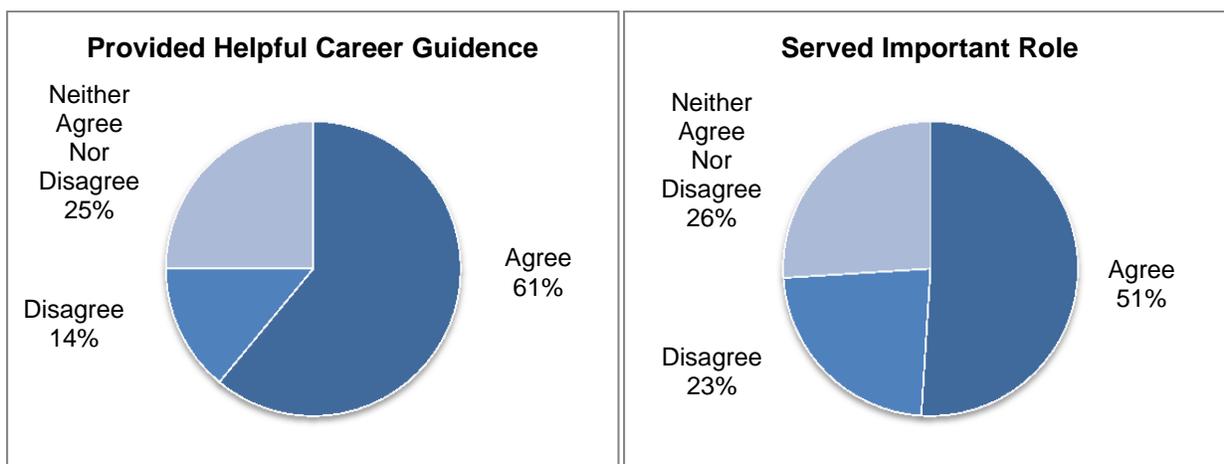
## **Some DLIs Did Not Find Coaches and Mentors Helpful**

The *DLI Reference Manual* states that USAID/HR assigned each DLI a coach in Washington, D.C., to “advise new [DLIs] as they prepare for their directed assignments and navigate through the USAID culture.” Washington-based coaches usually were retired FSOs. At post, missions were responsible for assigning each DLI a coach or mentor to provide career and job-related guidance and advocate for the DLI when needed. These coaches or mentors were experienced

staff from any backstop and could be U.S. direct hires and FSNs. The mission was supposed to identify the coach or mentor and his or her responsibilities in the DLI's memorandum of agreement. ADS 459 outlines the same requirements for new FSOs.

While 99 percent of DLIs said they were formally assigned a Washington-based coach, only 61 percent agreed that their coaches provided helpful guidance related to their jobs, careers, or personal matters; 14 percent disagreed. Approximately 51 percent agreed that their Washington-based coach served an important role in their DLI experience; 23 percent disagreed (Figure 10).

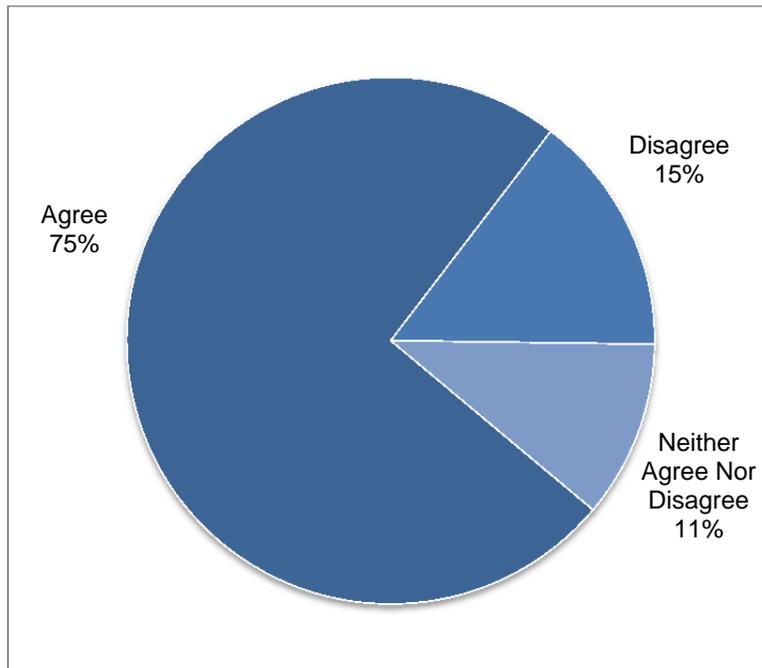
**Figure 10. DLI Responses for “My DLI Coach provided helpful career guidance/served an important role in my DLI experience.”**



USAID/HR officials said a DLI who remained in contact with his or her coach after going overseas would be a good indication of the program's success. However, 69 percent of the DLIs who responded to the survey said they rarely or never made contact with their coach after leaving Washington. DLIs explained that their coaches were too busy to meet with them, too far retired from the Agency to help with current processes, or from a different backstop and thus unable to provide the technical guidance the DLIs needed.

Nearly half of the DLIs who responded to the survey said they were not assigned a mentor at their mission. Moreover, many said they did not realize that mentoring was part of the program overseas. Approximately 65 percent of those who had mentors agreed that their mentor was able to fulfill their duties as listed in their memorandum of agreement, and 21 percent disagreed. While 75 percent said they were satisfied with the mentoring they received and 15 percent disagreed (Figure 11 on the next page), some said their mentors did not seem to know how to mentor them and were not good professional matches.

**Figure 11. DLI Responses for “Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received as part of the [initiative] at my first overseas assignment.”**

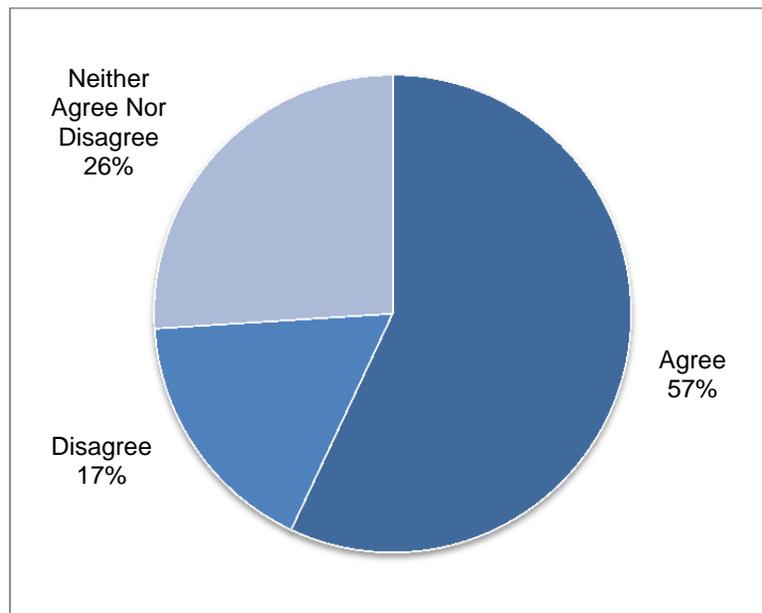


USAID/HR relied on each mission to incorporate DLIs into their existing mentoring program. However, several missions in southern and eastern Africa did not have programs at the time of the initiative. DLIs said mentoring relationships that developed naturally were more effective than those with assigned mentors, but this left some DLIs at risk of not developing any mentoring relationships. Mentors themselves reported that they lacked guidance from Washington and their mission on how to help their DLIs effectively.

A 2011 evaluation of the initiative mentioned similar concerns with coaching and mentoring. It recommended that USAID/HR “determine and formalize the purpose of coaching,” including developing guidance, time frames, and objectives for coaches and using coaches who are current employees in the DLIs’ individual backstops. The evaluation also recommended that USAID “continue encouraging missions to develop mentoring programs and provide guidance about how to ensure success.” This included developing best practices and guidelines for mentoring.

From the mentor’s standpoint, almost 57 percent of those who filled that role agreed that they had adequate time and resources to carry out their roles and responsibilities for mentoring (Figure 12 on the next page).

**Figure 12. Mentor Responses for “I had adequate time/resources to carry out these roles and responsibilities.”**



### **Some Perceived that USAID Overlooked FSNs**

USAID/HR overlooked FSNs in the initiative, survey respondents from all groups said, even though the surveys did not ask for feedback on the topic.

RIG/Pretoria discussed the initiative with FSN focus groups from five missions. They said they received virtually no information on it from USAID/Washington or their missions. While some FSNs said their office directors told them that employees called “DLIs” would be joining their team, nobody explained what the initiative was, what the role of the DLIs would be, or how they would fit into the mission’s existing framework. It also was not clear how work assignments would be shared among FSNs and DLIs.

USAID/HR officials acknowledged that they did not follow ADS 459, which states that the success of the initiative depended on “the cooperation of all USAID organizational units and personnel in carrying out their assigned responsibilities.”<sup>7</sup> They said this happened because their priority was to get DLIs to the field quickly. As a result, they said, they now recognize that not involving FSNs in the initiative hurt morale.

FSNs said the lack of understanding negatively affected DLIs’ reception at post. It also led to the common misconception that USAID hired DLIs to replace FSNs. In fact, many missions created additional FSN positions to support the additional hires. DLIs commented that their relationships with FSNs were sometimes awkward or hostile because of unclear roles and responsibilities. DLIs and FSNs also reported problems from perceived and real inequalities for training and professional development.

<sup>7</sup> We noticed that neither the updated version of ADS 459 nor the DLI manual have information about FSNs.

Some respondents mentioned positive, mutually beneficial relationships between FSNs and DLIs. FSNs also explained that their relationships with DLIs generally improved over time as mission staff became more familiar with the initiative and each other's roles and responsibilities. USAID/HR officials said a November 2013 FSN conference held in Washington raised the need to empower and include FSNs in future initiatives, and an internal communications working group has been tasked to gather FSN input.

## **USAID Changed Hiring Practices Midway Through Initiative**

Section 307 of the Foreign Service Act, as amended, stipulates that, in most situations, Foreign Service career candidates may not be initially assigned at a salary class higher than FS-04 (FS-01 is the high end of the scale). ADS 459 established the salary classes, or grade levels, at which DLIs would be hired.

When the initiative began, USAID/HR recruited junior officers at the FS-06 level for all backstops and mid-career officers at the FS-03 to -02 levels for certain backstops. Midway through, however, the division began to appoint junior officers at the FS-05 level. This meant that people with fewer qualifications came in at a higher grade and for backstops that were not offered previously.

Survey respondents raised concerns with this. Many DLIs from early classes who accepted positions at the FS-06 grade level had master's degrees, doctorates, or many years of professional experience; they said the opportunity to join the Agency offset the significant pay cuts and professional setbacks they encountered. The change in hiring practices has left the existing DLIs demoralized.

USAID/HR officials said they made the change to make sure that they continued to attract highly qualified candidates and to fill gaps in staffing. The change also aligned hiring practices more closely with the State Department's, which allowed entry-level hiring at the FS-05 grade level. USAID/HR officials acknowledged inequity for early DLIs and said they had not thought this through at the time. However, these officials also said DLIs were not forced to accept lower-graded positions and associated pay cuts; it was their personal choice to do so.

Survey respondents said this fact might affect retention. In addition, by starting the majority of DLIs at the FS-06 level, USAID has a large pool of similarly graded officers bidding for a limited number of assignments. Half of the DLI respondents who reported not receiving assignments in their designated backstops explained this was because opportunities within their areas of expertise were limited. While USAID/HR officials estimated attrition at about 10 percent, survey respondents said they expected to see a surge of DLIs resign from the Agency after their second tours unless USAID provides adequate opportunities for professional development.

A description of the survey's scope and methodology is in Appendix I, and management comments are in Appendix II.

# EVALUATION OF MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

USAID's Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) responded to our draft survey report, and these comments are in Appendix II.

In addition to addressing the results in the survey, HCTM gave additional context and actions taken to address the problems identified. The draft survey did not contain formal recommendations; therefore, management decisions and final actions are not required.

**Training was not always relevant.** USAID management revised ADS 459, which HCTM says will make formal training and core courses more relevant and useful for new officers. The Agency will continue to revise core courses as needed.

**Some new hires did not use foreign languages they were taught.** HCTM said that USAID increased language-designated positions worldwide and plans to set aside funds for more training in local languages. In addition, USAID plans to focus on foreign language proficiencies in the C3 hiring process.

**Supervisors did not always help DLIs prepare for future assignments.** HCTM said that USAID plans to deploy C3s overseas as regular employees within newly established First Tour Officer positions. The focus for supervisors would be to ensure that new FSOs gain experience working in their area of expertise and would not require additional supervisor training.

**Some DLIs did not find coaches and mentors helpful.** HCTM reports that the formal mentoring program was discontinued, and it instead advocates for unstructured mentoring for new C3s. Officials said the Agency can provide coaching to new FSOs if they ask for it.

**Some perceived that USAID overlooked FSNs.** HCTM disagreed with this finding because it was based on people in a few focus groups, not the entire group of DLIs. We agree, and in response have revised the headline in the report. However, HCTM conceded that a communication strategy to clarify misconceptions between DLIs and FSNs could have been helpful during DLI implementation, while noting that DLIs received counseling during orientation about the important roles the FSNs play in USAID's work force.

**USAID changed hiring practices midway through initiative.** HCTM noted that the decision to hire DLIs at the FS-06 level was the standard practice. USAID's decision to hire new FSOs at the FS-05 grade level was to address DLIs' concerns regarding differences from the practices of other Foreign Affairs agencies.

# SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

## Scope

RIG/Pretoria conducted this survey in accordance with Chapter 3 of *Government Auditing Standards* relating to professional independence and judgment, competence, and quality control. We also followed Chapter 6, Sections 6.79 to 6.82, which relate to documentation standards.

The survey's objective was to determine whether USAID's DLI prepared its junior officers in southern and eastern Africa for assignments in their designated backstops. RIG/Pretoria developed and circulated surveys to four groups of respondents from 15 missions in southern and eastern Africa that received junior-officer DLIs as the basis of this survey.

Those in the primary group were junior officer DLIs assigned to the missions for their first overseas assignments since the initiative launched in 2008. USAID/HR gave us the names. We started with a universe of 160, excluded 21 people who joined the Agency after January 1, 2014, and sent surveys to the remaining 139. At the time our surveys were circulated, none of the DLIs included had resigned from USAID. As of January 31, 2014, USAID/HR said obligations and disbursements for all DLIs assigned to the 15 missions for their first overseas assignments were \$116.7 million and \$95.3 million, respectively. We conducted entrance and exit conferences on February 12 and August 1, 2014, respectively.

RIG/Pretoria also surveyed the supervisors and mentors of the junior-officer DLIs included in the survey scope and the mission directors of the overseas missions that hosted them. The missions provided the names of the relevant supervisors and mentors, and RIG/Pretoria got the directors' names from USAID's historical staffing reports. Three directors had retired from USAID at the time of the survey. Survey response rates are presented in the table below.

**Survey Response Rate**

Surveyed Group	Number of Individuals In Surveyed Group	Number of Individuals Who Received Surveys <sup>†</sup>	Number of Individuals Who Responded	Response Rate (%)
DLIs	139	137	99	72
Supervisors	131	124	77	62
Mentors	59	54	24	44
Mission Directors	21	20	12 <sup>‡</sup>	60

<sup>†</sup> Some people did not receive the surveys because their e-mail inboxes were full or the e-mail addresses were invalid. This number was small, and we did not consider it a scope limitation.

<sup>‡</sup> This includes nine people who responded to the survey, two who we interviewed over the phone, and one who provided input by e-mail.

RIG/Pretoria tailored surveys for each respondent group, focusing on four central elements of the initiative: Washington-based activities, training, supervision, and mentoring. OIG's Office of Management's Special Projects Division helped with survey development, testing, administration, and analysis. Surveys opened on May 12, 2014. Surveys for DLIs, supervisors,

and mentors closed on June 6, 2014. We extended the deadline for mission directors to June 24, 2014, to increase participation. Two mission directors responded during conference calls, and one by e-mail.

RIG/Pretoria held supplementary discussions with controllers of four missions included in the survey scope to discuss the use and management of DLI funds. RIG/Pretoria also held focus groups with FSNs from five missions included in the survey scope to discuss the initiative, its impact, and their associated roles and responsibilities.

## Methodology

To gain an understanding of the initiative and its internal controls, RIG/Pretoria held discussions with USAID/HR officials, including the acting DLI coordinator, the DLI coach, and the designated DLI budget analyst. We also reviewed documents pertaining to the initiative, including:

- ADS 459, “DLI Program,” updated July 21, 2011
- Supplemental help documents to ADS 459, including the reference manuals updated on July 30, 2009, and March 9, 2011, and DLI implementation guidance updated on November 4, 2011
- “Evaluation of the Development Leadership Initiative,” developed for USAID by Federal Management Partners in October 2010, and USAID/HR’s subsequent action plan
- USAID’s “Report to Congress: Development Leadership Initiative,” March 2012

Based on these discussions and document reviews, we identified Washington-based activities, training, supervision, and mentoring as central elements of the initiative. We developed surveys according to our understanding of these areas, and tailored them to each respondent group to get an overall perception of the initiative. USAID/HR provided feedback on the draft surveys, and we incorporated this feedback into the final version used.

To answer our objective, we relied on survey responses pertaining to the time DLIs spent in Washington, training, supervision, mentoring, and overseas rotations. We set a threshold of 90 percent for a positive answer to the survey objective. Data from other questions provided insights on the initiative’s central elements. Using auditor judgment, we analyzed this information to better understand the outcomes of the initiative and identify successes and areas for improvement.

The majority of survey questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” and the results of these questions are summarized in Appendix III. We elected to include a “neither agree nor disagree” response to capture neutral positions and to prevent forcing a positive or negative answer. In addition, the surveys solicited supplementary input from respondents; these responses were confidential but were valuable to our survey findings and conclusions.

As part of this survey, we also asked survey respondents about concerns pertaining to fraud, waste, and abuse. We forwarded one response to RIG/Pretoria investigators.

# MANAGEMENT COMMENTS



August 7, 2015

## MEMORANDUM FOR REGIONAL INSPECTOR GENERAL, SOUTH AFRICA

**FROM:** Human Capital and Talent Management, Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), Elizabeth Kolmstetter

**SUBJECT:** Survey of USAID's Development Leadership Initiative in Southern and Eastern Africa (Survey Report No. 4-000-15-OXX-S)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) Survey Report, dated June 2, 2015. HCTM very much appreciates the data analysis provided. HCTM had an independent review on the DLI program in 2011 which provided similar feedback. The information provided in the report substantiates some of the same issues from the 2011 report and several of them have already been addressed by HCTM. One of the outcomes of the 2011 review was the transition from the DLI to the Career Candidate Corps (C3) program.

In addition to the HCTM comments and actions in the report to address the problems mentioned, we would like to note these additional actions:

- Training was not always relevant - The most recent revision of ADS 459 has refocused formal training for new officers in USAID Washington and on-the-job training in the Mission. As noted in the report, the relevance of formal training courses improved dramatically the last two-years of the DLI (2011-2012). Our Center for Professional Development is continuing to revise and improve the relevance of our core courses, as needed.
- Some new hires did not use the foreign languages they were taught – HCTM appreciates the comments regarding foreign languages as it supports the efforts that are already underway. It is critical to note two (2) of them. (1) HCTM is focused on increasing the number of Language Designated Positions around the world, and (2) HCTM is putting resources in place to train Foreign Service Officers in more local languages, as well as train to the FSI 3/3 in more languages. C3s are also given credit for language skill proficiency during the recruitment process in an effort to increase the number of FSOs entering the Agency with tenure level proficiency in a Foreign language thus focusing more resources on language training for Language Designated Positions.

- Supervisors did not always help DLIs prepare for future assignments – The initiatives that are or have taken place will improve issues shown in this segment. (1) C3s are not deployed overseas as trainees. Therefore, the revisions in the supervision seminar series should address how to supervise these officers as regular Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). (2) HCTM is finalizing the establishment of First Tour Officer positions at various Missions. The intent is to get the new C3s to the field to get relevant experience that will help them progress as a Foreign Service Officer. There will no longer be a problem with supervisors not being prepared for the C3s as their assignment will be to an identified position assigned to the Missions with a focus on substantive on-the-job training in their BS.
- Some DLIs did not find coaches and mentors helpful – These findings are consistent with the DLI evaluation that was performed in 2011 on which HCTM took action. Under the C3 program, a formal mentoring requirement has not been continued. Per the Survey findings, it appears that organic mentoring is the best type of mentoring for the C3s. Coaches are available for the new FSOs, if they choose to use them. Unfortunately, it often seems that those in most need of this type of support do not utilize the assistance that is available.
- USAID Overlooked FSNs – HCTM takes issue with this section of the report especially since the conclusions are not based on statistically valid formal survey responses. The conclusions in the report are based on a few focused groups after the fact. This section should be characterized appropriately as the perception of a few DLIs and FSNs.

In fact, HCTM hired an additional 300 FSNs as part of the DLI. The justification for these new hires was made clear to Missions. HCTM depended on the Missions to convey the roles and responsibilities to the FSNs.

While there was not specific guidance on the role of FSNs in the formal DLI training program, the new FSOs were made aware of the critical role of the FSNs. All DLIs were repeatedly counseled during Orientation concerning the important roles USAID's FSNs play in our work overseas. DLIs were consistently advised to be open to learning from their FSN colleagues.

HCTM would agree with the recommendation from the DLI evaluation that a communication plan should have been put in place early in the life of the initiative. However, HCTM would not characterize it as overlooking our FSNs.

- USAID Changed Hiring Practices Midway Through Initiative – Originally, the decision was made to hire at the FS 06 class as it was consistent with the Agency practice under the International Development Intern program. The original hiring strategy was revisited and brought more in line with other Foreign Affairs Agencies in response to concerns raised by DLIs.

If you need further information, please contact Ms. Brenda Horne, [REDACTED].

## Aggregated Survey Data

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
<b>Overall Perceptions</b>				
<b>DLI Responses</b>				
Overall, the [initiative] was a positive experience for me.	71	17	12	+
I would recommend the DLI program to others.	70	15	16 <sup>†</sup>	+
<b>Supervisor Responses</b>				
Overall, the [initiative] was a positive experience for me.	69	24	7	
I feel my DLI was prepared for an onward assignment in his or her backstop after completing the first overseas directed assignment at my mission.	82	11	8	
<b>Mentor Responses</b>				
Overall, the [initiative] was a positive experience for me.	61	35	4	
I feel my DLI was prepared for an onward assignment in his or her backstop after completing the first overseas directed assignment at my mission.	83	4	13	
<b>Mission Director Responses</b>				
Participating in the [initiative] was a good use of mission resources.	100	0	0	
Overall, the [initiative] does a good job of preparing junior officer DLIs for onward assignments in their designated backstops.	100	0	0	
Overall, I was satisfied with the [initiative].	100	0	0	
<b>Washington-Based Activities and Overseas Post Assignments</b>				
<b>DLI Responses</b>				
DLI orientation effectively helped prepare me for my first overseas-directed assignment.	49	25	26	+
The interim period in Washington between DLI orientation and departure to post effectively helped me prepare for my first overseas directed assignment.	41	21	37	+
My supervisor of record in Washington helped me prepare for my first overseas directed assignment.	34	30	35	-
My DLI coach:				
Helped me prepare for my first overseas assignment.	60	22	18	+
Provided helpful job-related guidance.	62	22	16	=
Provided helpful career guidance.	61	25	14	-
Provided helpful personal guidance.	58	26	15	-

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
Helped me attain useful insights into the culture and operations of the Agency.	62	23	15	+
Served an important role in my DLI experience.	51	26	23	+
Overall, I was satisfied with the coaching I received as part of the DLI experience.	61	22	17	+
The mission that hosted me for my first overseas directed assignment had the appropriate mix of staff to provide supervision and mentoring I needed to help prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.	68	10	22	+
The mission ensured I received the training opportunities (formal training, on-the-job training/work assignments, and rotations) I needed to help prepare for an onward assignment in my backstop.	70	12	18	+
The mission had a designated point of contact that I could approach with and was responsive to any concerns pertaining to my DLI experience.	60	14	26	-
My first overseas directed assignment helped me prepare for an onward assignment with USAID.	71	12	17	+
Overall, I was satisfied with my first overseas directed assignment.	75	10	16	+
<b>Supervisor Responses</b>				
I feel the time my DLI spent in Washington prior to departure properly prepared her or him for the first overseas directed assignment.	32	39	29	
My mission had a designated point of contact that I could approach with and was responsive to any concerns pertaining to my DLI or [the initiative].	47	29	25	
<b>Mentor Responses</b>				
I feel the time my DLI spent in Washington prior to departure properly prepared her or him for the first overseas directed assignment.	38	38	25	
My mission had a designated point of contact that I could approach with and was responsive to any concerns pertaining to my DLI or [the initiative].	74	13	13	
<b>Mission Director Responses</b>				
Before assigning DLIs to us, I feel that USAID/Washington considered our mission's staffing needs.	78	0	22	

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
Before assigning DLIs to us, I feel that USAID/Washington considered our mission's ability to provide training opportunities (formal training, on-the-job training/work assignments, and rotations), supervision, and mentoring to help prepare DLIs for onward assignments in their backstops.	78	11	11	
The number of DLIs our mission received aligned with the feedback we provided USAID/Washington.	67	22	11	
The guidance we received from USAID/Washington on how to spend DLI funds was adequate.	100	0	0	
The guidance we received from USAID/Washington for DLI implementation was adequate.	89	11	0	
USAID/Washington worked effectively with the mission to ensure the needs of our DLIs were met.	67	33	0	
I feel the time the DLIs spent in Washington prior to departure properly prepared them for their first overseas directed assignments.	56	44	0	
Overall, I was satisfied with the way DLIs were assigned to our mission for their first overseas directed assignments.	67	22	11	
<b>Training (including formal training, on-the-job training/work assignments, and rotations)</b>				
<b>DLI Responses</b>				
The mix of formal training, on-the-job training/work assigned at post and rotations I completed as part of the [initiative] was appropriately balanced.	58	21	21	-
The formal training I completed as part of the [initiative]:				
Helped prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.	55	29	17	+
Helped me perform in my backstop at my first directed overseas assignment.	58	20	23	+
Helped equip me with an understanding of the Agency and its procedures.	88	10	2	-
Included content that was well programmed and thought out.	59	25	17	+
Was a good value compared to other development opportunities.	42	38	21	-
Overall, I was satisfied with the formal training I received as part of the [initiative].	61	27	13	+

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
I had the opportunity to use the language I trained in as part of my first overseas directed assignment.	25	8	67	=
The time and money invested in language training was worthwhile.	43	15	42	-
Overall, I was satisfied with the language training I received as part of the [initiative].	50	17	33	+
The work assigned at post and on-the-job training I completed:				
Helped me prepare for an onward assignment in my backstop.	81	5	14	+
Helped me develop necessary skills and knowledge for my backstop.	80	8	12	+
Helped equip me with an understanding of the Agency and its procedures.	87	10	3	+
Was challenging.	75	15	11	+
Was substantive.	79	11	11	+
Contributed to the USAID mission.	87	11	2	+
Was appropriate for my existing skill set and experience.	65	14	21	+
Built upon skills and knowledge learned in formal training.	62	22	16	+
Overall, I was satisfied with the on-the-job training/work assigned at post.	73	8	20	+
The rotations I completed as part of the [initiative]:				
Helped prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.	71	13	17	-
Helped me develop necessary skills and knowledge for my backstop.	69	15	16	-
Helped equip me with an understanding of the Agency and its procedures.	76	13	11	=
Included content that was well programmed and thought out.	52	28	21	-
Overall, I was satisfied with the rotations I completed as part of the [initiative].	68	17	15	-
<b>Supervisor Responses</b>				
The mix of formal training, on-the-job training/work assigned at post, and rotations that my DLI completed at post was appropriately balanced.	61	16	23	
The formal training my DLI completed seemed to be a good value compared to other development opportunities.	55	30	15	
<b>Mission Director Responses</b>				

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
Our mission received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington on how to meet our DLIs' training needs including formal training, on-the-job training, work assignments at post, and rotations.	78	22	0	
Our mission was able to ensure our DLI's training needs were met.	89	0	11	
Overall, I was satisfied with the training opportunities that were available to the DLIs at our mission.	89	0	11	
<b>Supervision</b>				
<b>DLI Responses</b>				
My supervisor of record at my first overseas directed assignment:				
Helped prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.	60	18	22	=
Helped me develop necessary skills and knowledge for my backstop.	59	15	26	=
Helped me meet my training needs.	65	19	16	-
Assigned substantive work that was appropriate for my skill set and experience.	59	15	26	+
Was able to fulfill his or her duties as outlined in my Memorandum of Agreement.	53	26	21	+
Provided mid-cycle and annual feedback that helped me improve my job performance.	51	19	30	-
Provided informal feedback that helped me improve my job performance.	53	17	29	-
Overall, I was satisfied with the supervision I received from my supervisor of record at post.	60	12	28	+
<b>Supervisor Responses</b>				
I received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington about how to effectively supervise my DLI.	35	30	35	
I received adequate guidance from my mission about how to effectively supervise my DLI.	42	28	30	
My roles and responsibilities for DLI supervision were clear.	53	25	22	
I had adequate time to carry out these roles and responsibilities.	54	24	22	
I had adequate access to resources to carry out these roles and responsibilities.	56	29	16	
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of my role as a supervisor of record.	75	13	12	
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of his or her role as a DLI.	73	14	13	

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of the [initiative].	68	21	12	
I had the choice whether to become a DLI supervisor of record.	21	23	56	
My performance as a DLI supervisor of record was factored into my annual evaluation.	43	22	35	
I was comfortable assigning substantive work to my DLI.	82	13	5	
I had a good relationship with my DLI.	95	5	0	
My DLI and I kept in touch after he or she completed his or her first overseas directed assignment.	75	20	5	
I would choose to be a supervisor or record for a first-tour DLI if I had the opportunity to do it again.	87	7	7	
<b>Mission Director Responses</b>				
Our mission received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington on meeting our DLIs' supervision needs.	67	11	22	
Our mission was able to ensure our DLIs' supervision needs were met.	100	0	0	
As a mission, our DLI supervisors were able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities outlined in the Memoranda of Agreement.	100	0	0	
Overall, I was satisfied with the supervision the DLIs at our mission received.	89	11	0	
<b>Mentoring</b>				
<b>DLI Responses</b>				
My mentor at my first overseas directed assignment:				
Helped prepare me for an onward assignment in my backstop.	53	31	16	+
Was able to fulfill his or her duties as outlined in my Memorandum of Agreement.	65	15	21	+
Provided helpful job-related guidance.	71	13	17	+
Provided helpful career guidance.	67	21	13	+
Provided helpful personal guidance.	73	13	15	+
Helped me attain useful insights into the culture and operations of the Agency.	71	15	15	-
Was an advocate for me at post.	60	25	15	-
Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received as part of the [initiative] at my first overseas assignment.	75	11	15	+
<b>Mentor Responses</b>				

	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Trends Over Time (+, =, -)
I received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington about how to effectively mentor my DLI.	25	21	54	
I received adequate guidance from my mission about how to effectively mentor my DLI.	63	25	13	
My roles and responsibilities for DLI mentoring were clear.	58	29	13	
I had adequate time to carry out these roles and responsibilities.	57	26	17	
I had adequate access to resources to carry out these roles and responsibilities.	57	26	17	
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of my role as a mentor.	71	25	4	
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of his or her role as a DLI.	74	17	9	
I feel my DLI and I had the same understanding of the [initiative].	71	21	8	
I had a good relationship with my DLI.	96	4	0	
My DLI and I kept in touch after he or she completed his or her first overseas directed assignment.	63	29	8	
I would choose to be a mentor for a first-tour DLI if I had the opportunity to do it again.	79	17	4	
<b>Mission Director Responses</b>				
Our mission received adequate guidance from USAID/Washington on meeting our DLIs' mentoring needs.	67	33	0	
Our mission was able to ensure our DLIs' mentoring needs were met.	56	44	0	
As a mission, our DLI mentors were able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities outlined in the Memoranda of Agreement.	78	22	0	
Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring the DLIs at our mission received.	56	44	0	

† Some data sets add up to 99 or 101 percent due to rounding.

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