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Country Transition Planning

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201

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This Mandatory Reference outlines two transition-planning processes. The first informs USAID's compliance with related requirements in the Agency's year-over-year appropriations and applies to both Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) and Regional Development Cooperation Strategies (RDCSs). For example, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 ([Section 7081\(a\) of Division K of Public Law 114-113](#)) required any "country assistance strategy developed after enactment of this bill to include a transition plan." The Appropriations Act for FY 2017 carried over these requirements, but legislation in FY 2018 and 2019 substantially modified them. Because the requirements can change on an annual basis, any Mission that initiates the development of a CDCS or an RDCS should consult with the Office of the General Counsel or the cognizant Resident Legal Officer on the current status of Congressional reporting requirements or other directives with respect to transition planning.

The second process outlined by this Mandatory Reference refers to "Strategic Transition" countries and applies only to designated Bilateral Missions. "Strategic Transition" is a sub-set of transition planning and, as described in [ADS 201.3.2.8](#), is a means to address the future of programming and resource-planning in countries that already show relatively advanced levels of self-reliance. The Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) must consult with Regional Bureaus to identify and designate countries that have relatively advanced levels of self-reliance and where a strategic transition should occur.

Missions should seize opportunities to change the nature of USAID's relationship with a partner country. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shifting from a technical and financial partner to a convener and facilitator that mobilizes other U.S. Government departments and agencies, the private sector, other donors, and civil society to support the Journey to Self-Reliance;
- Supporting partnerships and approaches that expand access to finance, mobilize private capital, or deepen trade relationships and access to international markets;
- Elevating partnerships and exchanges in science, technology, and innovation, or increasing technical and educational exchanges;
- Demanding more of the national government (and, in some cases, sub-national governments) in terms of cost-sharing, mobilizing resources, and commitments to needed policy and governance reforms;
- Strengthening host-country governments to take the lead in addressing, managing, and funding their own development challenges;
- Adopting more locally owned and led development models that put local actors in the lead to address their own challenges;

- Targeting sectors that are essential for sustaining development gains or addressing remaining challenges identified in the Country Roadmaps that are key to the Journey to Self-Reliance;
- Shifting USAID assistance out of specific sectors and/or geographies; and
- Revisiting USAID’s footprint or the role and function of our staff.

These opportunities can arise out of promising developments as a country gains greater self-reliance, and an analysis of the Country Roadmap should help highlight these opportunities.

For many countries in which USAID invests, a transition might occur over a longer time-horizon as self-reliance increases and the relationships evolve. In other countries, such as those that already show relatively advanced levels of self-reliance (based on the Country Roadmaps and supplemental analyses), an expectation of a shorter transition timeline should apply.

Transition planning consists of determining the conditions necessary for transition in light of the following: 1) the current country context and Country Roadmap; 2) the needs of the government, civil society, and the private sector in the partner country and other development actors; and 3) the proposed future trajectory for USAID **programmatic resources** in-country. The following sections outline transition planning during each phase of the development of a CDCS.

Phase One: Initial Consultations and Parameter-Setting

Early in the parameters-setting phase, to analyze historical programmatic and budget data and determine what opportunities exist for transition and what is possible to achieve during the implementation of a CDCS, Missions should engage the relevant Regional Bureau; the Office of Budget and Resource-Management (BRM); the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL); and other stakeholders. The Mission should address this discussion in the Phase One digital videoconference (DVC). The Regional Bureau will document the final outcome in the Phase One Summary of Conclusions (SOC), which it will share with stakeholders in USAID’s Bureaus and Independent Offices in Washington.

Missions in partner countries that already show relatively advanced levels of self-reliance must focus on re-thinking the nature of their partnerships through the lens of a “strategic transition” and consider what is achievable in the near-term (within the typical five-year timeframe of a CDCS). To this end, Missions in countries identified as such must engage in an iterative dialogue with USAID/Washington to inform their vision for a strategic transition. Such Missions also must address their initial transition planning explicitly in the Phase One DVC. Regional Bureaus will document key decisions from Phase One in the SOC.

Phase Two: Development of the Results Framework

For countries in which a transition is a longer-term endeavor (*i.e.*, beyond the typical five-year time frame of a CDCS), Missions do not have to address transition planning during Phase 2 explicitly; however, Missions should identify development sectors in which they will be transitioning in or out, shifting responsibilities to other donors or domestic resources, or moving programmatic support to policy or technical assistance over the period of the CDCS. Ultimately, partnerships should evolve as self-reliance increases, and all Missions should use their Country Roadmap and related analyses to explore when and how a strategic transition should begin to apply.

For current partner countries identified as showing already relatively advanced levels of self-reliance and in which a more fundamental transition will occur in the near term (*i.e.*, a “strategic transition”), Missions must reflect their plan for transition in the Results Framework (RF) graphic, by building upon the vision articulated in Phase One. For these identified countries, Missions must also address their plan for transition in the associated RF Summary Paper and Matrices, budget scenarios (which includes a Visionary Budget), and the Phase Two DVC. The Visionary Budget must reflect the Mission's plan for transition, given its envisioned new partnerships in the partner country. The Regional Bureau will capture decisions made through the Phase Two SOC.

Although the term “strategic transition” does not apply to Regional Missions, staff who are developing an RDCS may use Phase Two as an opportunity to identify areas for transition as described herein.

Phase Three: Preparation and Approval of a CDCS

For countries in which transition is a longer-term endeavor, Missions must discuss their transition plan as a sub-section of the section on “country context” in the full CDCS narrative. This sub-section must describe the Mission’s assessment of the ability for the relationships in the country to evolve successfully and begin to transition given its self-reliance profile, and what is achievable during the implementation of the strategy. This might include USAID’s historical and planned **resources** in-country, sector-specific end-states of USAID's work in-country, milestones toward achievement of these end-states, and options for transition. It should also describe specific efforts to build sustainability and lay the groundwork for the eventual transition of USAID assistance.

For current partner countries identified as already showing relatively advanced levels of self-reliance and in which a more fundamental transition will occur in the near term (*i.e.*, a “strategic transition”), Missions must address their transition explicitly throughout the final strategy, including their intended overall end-state at the end of five years and their approach for achieving this end-state over the life of the CDCS. These strategies must address the following:

- The plan among the government, civil society, and the private sector for addressing last-mile challenges to self-reliance;

- What is achievable over the course of the implementation of the CDCS and the associated milestones;
- How to build on, and sustain, current development gains, and avoid or respond to backsliding, where applicable;
- Those sectors in which an exit will occur over the course of the implementation of the Strategy; and
- The new modalities the Mission will use over the course of the Strategy.

In all instances, each Mission must collaborate closely with the Country Team at the U.S. Embassy throughout the CDCS process so their transition plan can inform the relevant Integrated Country Strategies (ICSs), including updates thereto. (See [ADS 201.3.2.6](#) for additional guidance on the alignment between CDCSs and ICSs.)

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