Day 1 Breakout 1
Topic: How do you Measure Success?

Speakers

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Moderator

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Opening Remarks

Questions to consider: What should we do to measure? What should we be measuring? How should we be using those measurements?

Additional opening comments: What we are able to measure at this point in time is richer than at any point in human history; the precision with which we are able to measure would have been unimaginable even 2-3 years ago.

♦ Important to first answer the questions of how we define success and what we are trying to measure
♦ Crucial to set comprehensive strategy that leads to clear, precise set of goals and end state
♦ Goals should also be realistic; must prioritize!
♦ Must ensure that all international actors and donors are on the same page, and not acting contrary to the strategies and goals that you have set out
♦ Discrete data collection is key to understanding whether you are reaching your goals; but data can be volatile. There are two ways to deal with this problem:
   o Get a lot of indicators
   o "Digging into the why" – understand why each indicator is telling you what it is telling you; other external factors may be at play

♦ How do you know whether strategy is working? Success is paramount to conflict transformation
♦ How to measure success?

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- o Stop overlooking the spoilers and leading sources of obstruction, which often take the form of criminalized power structures
    - Must establish baseline for presence and activity of these parties
- o Emphasize metrics for accountability
- o Utilize local CSOs because they possess the regional expertise necessary to understanding success
- ◆ What is success? Providing more attractive institutions and peaceful alternatives to conflicting parties
- ◆ Crucial to lower the cost of intervention to the point that US can sustain the effort over the long haul
    - o This point can be reached in 3-5 years only if conflict is properly diagnosed – this requires heavy involvement of local CSOs and interagency efforts
    - o Must be a point person (director at the NSC?) overseeing this interagency effort, so we know who is responsible
    - o Average lag time between when US intervenes and realization of presence of criminalized power structure is FIVE YEARS – "prescription for failure"

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♦ In order to have measurements stick in a given location, culture must be present first
♦ Measurement of success – "have we saved any lives today?"
♦ Put people first in any measurement tools – people-centric goals, look at indicators that show whether people's lives are actually improving
♦ One of the key first steps: establishing a baseline; many places that we work don't actually have a baseline
   o Ex: working with 30-year-old census in Afghanistan

♦ Data collection is becoming easier and more precise, must utilize new methods of measurement
♦ What factors will make the SAR successful? What factors will keep SAR from being successful?
   o Elevation of importance of this document, definition, and report

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- Government agencies must take this seriously in order fulfill its most fundamental function; cannot return to the same old reaction
  o Cadre of skilled leaders is imperative
    - Good leaders can turn ten interns into an effective unit; while bad leaders can turn team of experts into ineffective unit
  o Are we organized for a crisis?
    - One team, one strategy, one leader
    - Who is doing the 24/7 work for you on a given project?
♦ Must bring this report to life, lest we have another panel sooner than we'd like

Audience Q&A

Question: What is the difference between a criminalized power structure (CPS) and an incompetent power structure (IPS)?

♦ The two can often overlap
♦ CPS maintains power on illicit revenue
♦ CPS puts service to certain people as primary objective, at least outwardly

♦ One of the interveners' important roles is ensuring people don't get killed or hurt as they compete with established CPS

Question: How do we feed this new report into the program cycle?

♦ Ability to have flexibility in regards to program funding, utilizing funds where they prove to be best utilized over time
♦ Funding is not the only key factor – must make sure that we're deploying experts

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Question: How do you control for other explanatory factors to the success or failure of the peace process?

- One of the key indicators is context – does it have to do with what we are seeing?

- It is always difficult to tell whether what we're seeing is due to our efforts
- Can get a better sense of those factors—and how they are related to successes or failures—over the course of several years

- These settings are not great control environments, might be helpful to get rid of that thinking
- Many unpredictable events will occur, crucial to recognize them and take them into account when they happen

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Question: With new focus on stabilization, how do we avoid going back to that same leader/person (one who's been in power for a while, but may be harmful to overall goals)?

- It is unavoidable – we are going to be dealing with a lot of bad guys
- Accountability (in various forms) is critical for that reason

Question: As far as getting results and utilizing them, how do you encourage buy-in to the broader communities that we have to work with?

- Evaluation models need to be much more like consulting reports; need to make them relevant to the appropriate parties
- This is extremely high-risk work and the chances of success are small
    - Accepting that most of the time we're not going to succeed is an important measurement of success
- Crucial to gain space to be credible on the ground

- Must find balance between accountability and shutting off program entirely
- Incremental success is key – realistic, achievable goals
- Broader looks at what information is telling us and the overall decision making process

Closing Remarks & Major Takeaways

♦ When looking at the data from Afghanistan, many of the indicators and signs are promising; but it is arguably much more unstable than it was in 2002
  o One of many examples that certain measurements are not always good indicators of success

→ Comprehensive strategy must tie in to clear, precise, and realistic set of goals
→ Incremental successes are key to achieving larger goals – must prioritize importance of some goals/situations over others
→ Important to utilize local CSOs for their regional expertise in order to better understand the situation on the ground and deploy appropriate strategies
→ "Have we saved any lives today?" – most important to make sure people's lives are actually improving, must set people-centric goals and put people first