



Independent observer
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IS THERE SCOPE FOR RISK?

Anyone who has scrutinized reports from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) will have noticed that in the last couple of years the tone has become less strident and more nuanced. The new tone is welcome, but I have a quibble about some of the new language.

Somewhere along the way, the OIG decided, or was told, that it should start using “the language of risk,” since “risk” had become a new Global Fund buzzword. Thus, what used to be described as a “deficiency” is now described as a “risk.” This has led to some pretty convoluted language in OIG reports.

First example: “There is a risk that it will not be possible to establish whether grant objectives have been achieved (and a risk that they may not be achieved) due to incomplete availability of baseline data and survey data for mid-course corrections.”

What does this mean? I think that it means that the incomplete availability of baseline and survey data makes it difficult to ascertain whether grant objectives are being achieved and whether there is a need to alter the plan. Wouldn't it be more clear to say it this way?

Second example: “There is a risk that the quantity of condoms provided by the grant is inadequate to ensure achievement of grant objectives and that condoms distributed do not reach the intended recipients, particularly MARPS.”

I think this means that not enough condoms are being distributed to ensure grant objectives will be achieved, and that the condoms are not reaching intended recipients, particularly MARPS. Why not say so?

I am a big fan of clarity. If you fail to take your vitamins every day, would you say: “There is a risk that I am

failing to take my vitamins every day”?

Third example: Referring to the performance of a particular local fund agent (LFA), the OIG said: “These observations point to a risk that the Global Fund Secretariat may not be always getting accurate grant related information.” Can you tell what that means? I think it means that sometimes the LFA does not provide the Secretariat with accurate information on the grant. Maybe.

In addition to how the OIG refers to “risk,” what the OIG used to describe as “an area of weakness” it now describes as “an area where there is scope for improvement” (or “scope for strengthening”).

Thus, we get sentences like, “The audit also identified a number of areas where there is scope for strengthening the controls around procurement.” I think this means that there were some weaknesses in procurement management.

And we get sentences like the following one (included in a recommendation): “There is scope for increased collaboration between the program and [the PR] by sharing information on....” I think that the OIG is recommending greater collaboration in the sharing of information between the programme and the PR. Couldn’t the OIG just say so?

In conclusion, I want to say that there is a risk that the OIG is not always stating things clearly in its reports, and that there is scope for improvement in the language of the reports.

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