

the new management thinking — a niche for specialized services, the country desk approach — are still the exceptions in the department's attempts to deal with the challenges it faces.

## **2.2 More proactive leadership could improve human rights management.**

Concerns with leadership surfaced in much of our data. A significant number of officers perceive an inconsistent, and at times, ineffective leadership at the level of ADMs, Deputies and Ministers — notwithstanding the large numbers of senior managers. Many officers argue that managing human rights issues is affected by leader inconsistency, lack of a coherent vision, and an apparent unwillingness to prioritize. More generally, the officers are cynical that the department leaders will follow through on the results of reports and studies, and they are concerned that senior managers do not advocate the value of the political/economic function with government leaders.

The issue is how DFAIT defines and rewards leadership. In DFAIT the individual can seldom afford to be even a little 'wrong' in his or her judgement or action — so as a result he or she is not likely to take any risks. But given the complexities of the work environment, DFAIT should be rewarding teamwork, decision-making, risk-taking, and those who learn from their mistakes. The participants at the concluding workshop asked that we communicate a clear message on this matter, as the subject is sensitive and not easy for those involved to address directly with their leaders given the realities of the department's culture. The isolation of most senior managers on the 8th floor does not ameliorate what might in fact be inaccurate perceptions.

## **2.3 Establishing strategic priorities and limits could enhance management performance related to human rights.**

Much of DFAIT's human rights work is more responsive than proactive. In the process the department ends up managing events more than relationships, and being operational more than strategic. This is DFAIT's inclination in managing human rights issues — responding to the many immediate fires — even though the thrust of its bilateral work is aimed at managing relationships. Like Canada's work in multilateral fora, managing bilateral relationships is strategic when the relationship is important to our interests, and not strategic when the relationship means little to our well-being. In a resource rich context, the department can take a responsive stance and operate in all the world's corners without setting limits on what it can do. In today's context, however, the department needs to establish strategic priorities in order to remain effective in managing human rights issues. Its responses would be governed by *a priori* decisions on how much it is willing to invest in particular relationships or for particular issues. As priorities and situations change, scarce resources would need to be re-allocated.

## **2.4 Establishing tangible value for the management of human rights issues could contribute to better understanding of the department's 'value added' by stakeholders, interest groups, clients, and funders.**

The concept of government serving the people is a sound one in principle, but it has implicit challenges in practice. DFAIT has a tradition of service on demand which in the current environment is putting enormous pressure on its people and systems. Individual officers are dealing with demands from external groups with special interests, as well as internal groups such as ministers, their advisors and assistants, managers, posts, OGDs, and members of parliament. Moreover, they are expected to respond without clear guidelines for establishing priority among client requests, and for determining the appropriate quality and timeliness of service.