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REPORT ON MIS REVIEW CONDUCTED  
FOR TURKEY POPULATION PROGRAM

May 27 - June 7, 1996

**FAMILY PLANNING MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT**  
Management Sciences for Health

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## **I. PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY**

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This consultancy's objective was to improve the capacity of the USAID Population Program in Turkey to aggregate and organize reports from the various Cooperating Agency (CA) projects, for the purpose of program monitoring. The Program's primary interest was in facilitating and if possible computerizing the aggregation of CA quarterly management reports (QMRs) in relation to the country workplan. The Program was also interested in tracking consultant travel and reporting as well as commodities shipments more efficiently. Upon arrival, the Program also pointed to the need for improvement of the financial monitoring information available.

## **II. ACTIVITIES**

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The initial stage was to review the following documents and files:

- ◇ Strategy for USAID Population Assistance to Turkey, 1995 - 1999
- ◇ USAID Consolidated Workplan, Turkey 1996
- ◇ USAID's Population & Family Planning Assistance in Turkey, Annual Report, 1995
- ◇ Semi-Annual Country Program Review, January-July 1995 and January-July 1994
- ◇ Quarterly Management Report, October 1-December 31, 1995
- ◇ Standard Operating Procedures for Cooperating Agencies, June 1993
- ◇ USAID Consolidated Travel Plan, Turkey 1995
- ◇ Program files on commodities, travel requests, bi-monthly CA meetings, Population Projects Database (PPD) expenditures reports

During early meetings with the Population Advisor, Dr. Pinar Senlet, and Assistant Population Advisor, Mona Byrkit, it was agreed that CA input on the content and the format of the primary planning and tracking documents (annual workplan, QMRs, annual report) was important. Representatives from all the CAs were interviewed over several days, either in person or by phone. Mona participated in the majority of the interviews as did Ersin Topçuoglu (FPMD Local Coordinator). The persons interviewed were:

Cigdem Bumin, AVSC  
Elkin Konuk, AVSC  
Behire Oncuer, JHPIEGO  
Figen Tunçkanat, PCS  
Ersin Topçuoglu, PF/FPMD  
Derman Boztok, POLICY  
Sema Özdilekcan, POLICY  
Nilgun Kircalioglu, SEATS  
Hakan Cankatan, SOMARC

Following the assessment, work progressed through a series of discussions with the Population Program staff (including a meeting with Ricardo Roberto, Economic Section) and draft revisions of the forms and reports. To clarify the financial reporting issues, a discussion was held by phone with Tony Silbert of FPLM, the manager of the Population Projects Database. Once final decisions were made, there was a mini-training for the Population Program Staff to practice aggregating CA QMRs into the workplan using Word and to use Excel to monitor travel through a worksheet.

One supplementary activity was a courtesy visit to the MOH to demonstrate the Commodities and Logistics Management (CLM) software developed by MSH. This demonstration generated quite a lot of discussion. The MCH/FP General Directorate staff were interested both in knowing what other software options exist and in testing CLM. As the World Bank Health Project apparently intends to develop a comprehensive computerized system for the entire health sector, including a stock management component, any computerization effort should be carefully coordinated by the Ministry with the donors.

### **III. MAJOR FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

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#### **A. Findings Regarding Current System**

Overall, USAID and the CAs find the *workplan* format simple to prepare and follow, although occasionally there is confusion between activities and outputs as well as lack of specificity, making it difficult to report on the activity subsequently. Several CAs pointed out that they have another workplan for their home office and that this runs on a different yearly cycle, making overall work planning and tracking difficult. At least three CAs develop timelines internally to accompany the workplan as a visual reminder of what's coming up, potential bottlenecks and overloads, etc.

The format of the *QMR*, which is used to report quarterly progress against workplan activities, was also thought simple to follow (though some clarifications are needed) and helpful in reviewing progress; in fact, several CAs complimented the format as being very useful. Both USAID and the CAs find that there has been significant improvement in the content of recent QMRs. This improvement is due in part to the Population Program's effort to focus reporting on the workplan and to clarify several areas of difficulty, in part to new staff in many CAs becoming more familiar with the formats and issues as time goes on. Several CAs did mention their confusion regarding the quarter to be reported; the Population Program recently switched from a calendar year reporting system to a fiscal year system. Several CAs also cited difficulties in reporting on service statistics due to non-standard definitions, the inability to attribute credit for a site or a user to one CA, several CAs, or the government, and confusion on how to relate these

outputs to workplan activities.

Once the QMRs have been prepared, they are *used* by USAID and at least one CA frequently as a reference to answer questions or prepare additional reports. Other CAs said the information remained "in their head" so that while they might not use the document itself, they still benefit from preparing it. A couple of CAs also prepare a progress report or performance report for their home office, in addition to the QMRs. The reports for the CA home offices are generally textual rather than columnar and provide more explanation of achievements and obstacles. As a result, a couple of CAs commented that these reports were more useful to them than the QMRs. The main *feedback on the QMRs* that CAs reported receiving from USAID was on timeliness or errors in use of the format. As sources of *feedback on their performance*, CAs cited the bi-monthly CAs' meetings (which do not currently address the QMR information specifically) and the Annual Report.

All the CAs mentioned that they look to the *Annual Report* (formerly semi-annual) for a program summary, although several CAs mentioned that they had not had time to read the most recent one yet. At present, the Annual Report is the only document received by CAs summarizing the activities of the entire population portfolio; most CAs mentioned how useful it is to have information on other aspects of the program beyond their own activities. However, several CAs mentioned the inequity of the CA-specific information included in the Annual Report: because the report highlights the major achievements across the Program, rather than discussing CA-specific performance, some CAs found it minimized their individual contributions. Currently, the Annual Report does not report specifically on the longer-term Program goals and benchmarks that are outlined in the five-year strategy, but rather on the annual activities found in the workplan.

When asked about *other types of information* reported to USAID, CAs mentioned occasional requests by USAID for updates on the travel plan. Two CAs volunteered that they found the list of upcoming events that was developed and shared at a recent bi-monthly CAs' meeting very useful.

During the assessment, two CAs made *requests for information from USAID*. While these requests went beyond the scope of this MIS activity, they may be considered for future discussion. One CA expressed interest in receiving a copy of USAID's regional workplan for the year. The other CA, based in Istanbul, thought it would be useful to receive a regular update on government and SSK activities.

In sum, the strong points cited by all parties are the simplicity of the reporting formats and their utility in forcing CAs to compare their activities to the workplan. The weak points have been the analysis and use of the information as an evaluation tool, and the specific provision by USAID of feedback on quarterly performance as reported in the QMRs. Additional types of information that are not part of the USAID monitoring system but that CAs find useful are timelines and explanations of issues.

## **B. Needs**

The primary needs perceived by the Population Program are:

- ◇ Better tracking of performance according to workplan objectives
- ◇ Better breakdown of annual plans by quarters
- ◇ Less time-consuming compilation of quarterly management reports (QMRs) for annual reporting
- ◇ More consistent reporting by CAs as far as amount of detail provided, status of planned activities, next steps for activities not completed during period, reporting on unplanned activities, periods covered by each report
- ◇ Improved ability to relate travel to workplan
- ◇ Improved tracking of consultant travel and receipt of trip reports
- ◇ Timely method of noticing overdue shipments
- ◇ Monitoring of CA expenditures in comparison to budgets on a routine basis
- ◇ Aggregation of CA expenditures by project and over time

The primary needs reported by the CAs are:

- ◇ Sharing by all CAs of information in QMRs
- ◇ Joint evaluation by all CAs of QMRs and Annual Report
- ◇ Feedback by USAID to each CA on performance
- ◇ Communication of workplan updates
- ◇ Improved collaboration on work planning
- ◇ Clarification on planning, budgeting, and reporting of joint activities
- ◇ Clarification on whether to report past activities and outputs, including those turned over to local counterpart organization
- ◇ Clarification on level of detail of planned activities

## **C. Recommendations**

### **⇒ 1. Facilitate planning and reporting while maintaining simplicity of current system**

Since all parties commend the current planning and reporting forms for their simplicity, the system should be modified as little as possible. Modifications should be made only to clarify the confusion regarding aspects such as activities vs. outputs, level of specificity, cumulative vs. quarterly, and to provide additional information as needed. Similarly, computerization should be aimed at facilitating aggregation and organization in the easiest way possible.

Specifically, the recommendations with regard to performance, travel, commodities, and financial tracking are to:

*Clarify Performance Tracking and Facilitate Aggregation*

- a) Improve forms by renaming column headings for clarity.
- b) Make only the minimum required additions to the forms, including numbering all objectives and activities for easy reference.
- c) Provide sample reports containing examples of how activities should be planned and reported.
- d) Develop protocols and clear instructions for filling out workplan and QMRs.
- e) Request each CA to accompany its annual workplan with a timeline (Gantt chart).
- f) Request CAs to submit their annual workplan and QMRs on disk, saved in MSWord 6 format, to facilitate aggregation. (A format will be provided.)

*Systematize and Computerize Travel Tracking*

- g) Merge the annual workplan and annual travel plan forms so as to facilitate identification of workplan activities with which travel is associated and to minimize number of documents required for planning.
- h) Require CAs to identify the workplan activity with which travel is associated when requesting concurrence.
- i) Expand slightly the current (paper) system listing monthly travel so as to meet needs for tracking concurrence, date changes, and reporting.
- j) Computerize the travel tracking system using a simple Excel spreadsheet so as to facilitate year-end calculation of total travel and travel by CA, modification of dates, viewing or printing of monthly travel plans, and preparation of year-end graph(s) in annual report.

*Facilitate Commodities Tracking*

- k) Track expected arrival dates on a physical calendar or using the Microsoft Scheduler to facilitate immediate follow-up.
- l) Use Excel to track actual receiving dates in comparison to expected, dates of confirmations, and to sum quantities received by product throughout the year.

*Benefit from Existing Information for Financial Tracking*

- m) Use a spreadsheet to track basic expenditures information in comparison to budget, by project.
- n) If necessary, submit formats for sample expenditure reports to FPLM, as FPLM is willing to provide the necessary reports from the PPD.
- o) For any expenditure data required more than twice yearly (from the Field Support report) or annually (from the routine PPD reports), request CAs to copy the Population Program on the information they submit for the PPD.

## ⇒ 2. Share reports more widely and frequently

Although the Turkey population program is discussed regularly through formal meetings and regular discussions with CAs, the information gathered routinely on progress against the workplan is not formally aggregated and fed back to the CAs until year-end. CAs can benefit from receiving formal feedback on their own performance each quarter; similarly, they are better able to coordinate with other CAs if they have up-to-date information regarding planned and actual activities.

In this context, the specific recommendations with regard to the workplan, QMR, and annual report are to:

### *Share documents regularly*

- a) Continue to encourage collaboration on workplanning, providing adequate review time after submission of draft workplan to USAID and all CAs.
- b) Request CAs to copy their QMRs to one another at the same time that they submit them to USAID.
- c) Distribute a draft of the Annual Report and request CA input before finalizing the report.

### *Create formal opportunities for feedback and discussion*

- d) Set a deadline (e.g., 30 days) by which USAID will provide specific verbal or written feedback on individual CA performance to each CA following submission of a QMR.
- e) Following each distribution of QMRs, identify a theme or issue found in the QMRs to be discussed at the next bi-monthly CAs' meeting.
- f) Set aside time at each bi-monthly CAs' meeting following submission of a QMR to recognize and discuss aspects of the overall performance (successes, lessons learned) that have been identified in advance.
- g) Hold a joint session of the CAs and USAID following dissemination of the final Annual Report to discuss common trends and issues.

## ⇒ 3. Increase interpretation and analysis of information

The activities in the annual workplan are grouped according to annual objectives, which in turn fall under longer-term objectives identified in the five-year strategy. Thus, the activities are planned based on the assumption that if they are all completed, the short-term objective will be achieved, while the short-term objectives are planned assuming that if they are reached, progress toward the long-term Program objectives will be made. The implication is that *performance should be discussed in terms of long- and short-term objectives, and not simply activities*. However, since the QMRs simply report on achievement of activities (which is all that's realistic in a single quarter), it is critical to ensure that discussions at CA meetings, in all feedback provided, and in the Annual Report link performance back to the short- and long-term Program objectives.

In this context, the specific recommendations are to:

*Ensure analysis and discussion of information reported*

- a) During discussions of the QMRs and Annual Reports at the bi-monthly CAs' meetings, focus on identifying successes and blockages and the lessons that can be learned by all parties from these experiences, rather than on % activities achieved or similar activity-focused discussions.
- b) In the Annual Report, provide written analysis and interpretation of annual Program performance, identifying Program-wide trends, issues, and lessons learned. This analysis could usefully draw on project evaluations, trip reports, bi-monthly meeting minutes, and other sources of information in addition to the QMRs.
- c) Include an overview in the Annual Report of how the annual performance contributes toward the five-year strategies and benchmarks and how next year's planning should follow on the current performance.
- d) Include in the Annual Report a separate section recognizing each CA's major contributions over the year and analyzing each CA's performance against its *annual objectives*, as the QMRs only report performance against *major activities* within the annual objectives.

*Use comparisons as the basis for interpretation and analysis*

- e) To allow evaluation of performance, ensure that the rationale for targets set in the annual workplan is documented. For example:
  - Rather than listing "train 10 staff" as an activity, list "train all staff from the appropriate unit" or "train 2 staff members from each of the counterpart NGOs" as the activity, and list "10 staff trained" as the anticipated output.
- a) To ensure that activities are measurable, make outputs specific (e.g., a number rather than "a series").
- b) Ensure that the output indicator reported in QMRs for completed activities corresponds to that anticipated in the workplan even if the level of performance is different from what was expected, or if there are additional outputs also reported.
- c) Even for aspects of the Program not formally listed in the annual workplan, provide an explanation of expected outcomes and performance.
  - For example, the MOH was supposed to procure 20% of condoms and pills in FY1995, but did not need to as there was sufficient stock. This should be mentioned in discussing USAID procurement, and the implications for the MOH's 1996 (and beyond) contribution discussed.

#### **IV. DELIVERABLES**

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- ◇ Revised formats for:
  - ◇ workplan
  - ◇ QMR
  - ◇ travel plan
  - ◇ travel tracking
  - ◇ list of events
- ◇ Spreadsheet templates for:
  - ◇ travel tracking
  - ◇ commodities tracking
- ◇ Instruction sheets for revised workplan and QMR forms with sample filled-out formats
- ◇ Updated Standard Operating Procedures
- ◇ Written instructions and mini-training to Population Program staff on using:
  - ◇ Word to create consolidated workplan and annual report based on QMRs
  - ◇ Excel to track travel, commodities, budget vs expenditures

\*See document: Revised Standard Operating Procedures and Formats for Management Reports for the Turkey Population Program