

Memorandum

Date: 12/16/98
From: Tom Fox, PPC
To: Senior Staff
Re: R4 guidance cable final clearance

Attached is the new R4 guidance cable which implements decisions made at the Mission Directors conference. In discussing previous drafts with the inter-Bureau DP working group, a few important issues emerged which warrant resolution at a higher level. All relate in one way or another to the degree to which we intend to apply the approaches discussed at the conference. Our decisions on these points will affect Mission staff and implementing partners as well. The cable is one of the first major products which implements decisions made at the conference, and there is some skepticism regarding our willingness to follow-through. For this reason it is important that we agree on the resolution of these issues.

Issue 1. Page length limits for SO performance narratives are too short: Previous discussions at the AA level indicated a strong commitment to keeping R4 documents short. We believe that a 2-3 page narrative for each SO supported by 3-4 indicator tables is adequate to support a determination of whether an SO is "on track", "exceeding expectations" or "falling short". However some staff have expressed concerns that the short length will reduce the opportunities to cull information for other uses such as regional trends analysis and special initiatives reporting. Some Missions have expressed concern that it may be difficult to provide comprehensive information on complex objectives in such limited space.

Resolution: While holding fast on page length, we are permitting selective and limited use of supplementary annexes to meet more general reporting needs. Missions could elect to add an annex at their option. Bureaus could request that supplementary reporting not directly tied to strategic objective performance be provided through user defined annexes provided that use of the reporting is made clear and specific questions to be addressed are provided. PPC would clear all such requests to help ensure some degree of consistency across regions and to help ensure that requests do not become excessively burdensome.

Issue 2: Guidance on strategy modifications which require Washington-level approval. This area is important to Missions as it touches directly on what authorities are delegated to the field. Standard guidance on this topic was provided in the ADS in a general way (it states that only significant changes at the SO level require approval in Washington). This guidance has been significantly modified in practice, and widely differing standards are in effect in different Bureaus. This creates an apparent lack of consistency and predictability for both Missions

and implementing partners.

Resolution: Amplified standard guidance is included in the cable (section II.D). Bureau variations on this guidance would be permitted provided it is in written cable form. PPC clearance on variations or amplifications would help ensure a reasonable degree of consistency. PPC and regional Bureaus will work together over the course of the year to examine what works best and seek greater consistency where possible. The issue here is to balance consistency with the need for operational flexibility to respond to different circumstances.

Issue 3: Elimination of selected performance indicators. Bureaus are concerned that the language giving Missions authority to eliminate indicators deemed not useful for results management may create difficulties for Washington staff seeking to respond to higher level reporting or analytical needs.

Resolution: While the cable continues to give Missions authority to weed out least useful indicators based on Mission level management needs, Missions are required to describe such changes in the cover memo to the R4. Upon review of all R4s, Bureaus could determine if concerns are warranted. Several possible solutions could then be vetted with PPC and other bureaus. Responses could range from requiring use of specific indicators in some cases (presumably if found essential to meet external requirements), to use of special reporting annexes to meet specialized analytical or reporting needs. Other alternatives could be explored as well to better meet specific Washington needs.

Issue 4: BHR performance reviews. In furtherance of Agency policy, BHR has encouraged cooperating sponsors to integrate Title II and III food assistance with Mission strategic objectives. While much progress has been made, we have continued to use two different systems in Washington to assess performance, budget resources and track performance. In some cases, cooperating sponsors must report on a significant number of performance indicators for BHR even though a significantly different (and at times much smaller) set of indicators is used by the Mission to track progress on the overall SO. This makes it appear that BHR and Missions belong to different agencies -- a complaint expressed several times at the recent conference. This issue affects partners as well as Missions.

Resolutions: PPC and BHR have agreed that there will be one performance review in the case of integrated programs and that this review will be based on the R4 submission. Furthermore, BHR is encouraging its cooperating sponsors to work with Mission SO Team staff to identify and weed out least useful indicators. BHR would review changes in performance reporting via the R4s and PAAs submitted by Cooperating Sponsors and determine if changes significantly affect Bureau or Agency reporting capability. Corrective measures could be developed if problems are found.

Issue 5: Non-Presence Country Reporting. The cable proposes that Missions with designated oversight responsibilities for NPC programs prepare R4-like summaries as Annexes to their main country R4. Feedback from some Missions indicate concern with the adequacy of staff resources to meet such reporting needs. The demand for NPC reporting, in part to feed into MPP processes will grow.

Resolution: The cable advises Missions to consult and seek assistance from their Bureau and allows Bureaus to make final decisions this year regarding what NPC reports are needed. Further steps in this area will be vetted as part of the non-presence policy discussion.