

Memorandum

From: Skip Waskin, PPC/PC

Subject: Assessment of the FY 2002 R4 Process

Attached please find PPC/PC's assessment of the FY 2002 R4 process for those R4s submitted on or about April 1, 2000.

The body of this Report includes an extensive list of findings, conclusions and the recommendations of PPC/PC. PPC/PC will use the results of this assessment to generate discussions for the development of the FY 2003 R4 guidance with the R4 Guidance Working Group that will convene in November. The recommendations contained in this report do not yet represent a consensus of the other bureaus represented on the R4 Guidance Working Group, and recommendations adopted into the R4 guidance may be different than those set forth in this assessment.

I hope you find this document interesting and useful. Please direct any comments or questions you may have about it to Parrie Henderson-O'Keefe in PPC/PC.

Reporting On Results:

Review of the R4 Process

November 1, 2000

PPC/PC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC), Office of Program Coordination (PC) has conducted its second annual assessment of the Results Review and Resource Request (R4) process. This assessment focused on the FY2002 R4s prepared and submitted on or about April 1, 2000. PPC/PC will use the results of this assessment to generate discussions for the development of the 2003 R4 guidance. PPC/PC does not intend for this report to focus on the substance or usefulness of the R4s; instead it focuses on the improvements undertaken last year to the process of preparing and submitting the R4s, and considers again whether further revisions to those process are needed.

The heaviest focus of PPC/PC's assessment of the R4 process is on specific issues regarding the use the new R4 Microsoft Word template and its ability to improve Operating Unit reporting efficiency and compliance with the Agency R4 guidance. A survey of template users and non-users was conducted and the information obtained from the survey was cross-referenced with information obtained from the R4 database on compliance with the Agency guidance.

The information gathered in last year's assessment indicated that the 1998 reforms to the R4 process reduced significantly the workload on AID/Washington staff, and reduced to a considerable extent the adversarial environment unintentionally generated by the ranking of performance included as part of the new results-based programming system introduced in 1995. The purpose of the additional reforms made this past season was to reduce the workload to Operating Units. Specifically, the R4 guidance was issued earlier, all guidance was consolidated into one document, the SO results review narrative was structured to more closely follow the Congressional Presentation (Budget Justification) to streamline later preparation of the CP, and a Microsoft Word template was developed to facilitate preparation of the R4 document.

Other changes were made as well—Bureaus committed to provide responses to issues raised in the R4 cover memo within four weeks of review, disaggregated information for health SOs financed with child survival and disease funds was required, the list of annexes changed, and more specific guidance was added on changing indicators reported—and though those changes will be briefly addressed, the remainder of this assessment will focus on the ability of Operating Units to continue the effort to bring the cost of the R4 process more in line with management benefits.

Page limits: In 1998, the number of pages of R4 text neared 12,000 pages. In 1999, the number of pages of R4 text was reduced to 5,441. This year, the number of pages received was up to 6,495. This increase of 1,000 pages is explained by an increase in annex reporting and not by an increase in the number of R4s or SOs submitted as both fewer R4s and SOs were submitted this year compared to last year (106 R4s and 474 SOs last year v. 105 R4s and 472 this year).

Indicators: Between 1998 and 2000, the number of indicators submitted by Operating Units went from 3,443 to 1,926 to 1,989. SO level indicators went from 531 in 1999 to 556 in 2000.

Some other important observations this year were that 26% of Operating Units provided additional narrative in an annex to elaborate on SO performance or for other purposes and 48 Operating Units, or 46% of the Agency sent in a success story annex. No Washington Operating Unit specifically addressed, however, the targets set in the APP for FY 2000. Lastly, whereas last year Operating Unit Self-Assessments tended to be slightly more negative than the year before, reflecting what we assumed was greater candor as a result of eliminating SO ranking, this year Self-Assessments tended to be more positive than last year.

Once again, this assessment did not attempt to judge the quality of the information included in the narrative portions of the R4. Operating Units could therefore have been judged to have accurately followed guidance while still submitting a poor quality report.

The body of this Report includes an extensive list of findings, conclusions and the recommendations of PPC. These recommendations do not yet represent a consensus of the other bureaus represented on the R4 guidance drafting team, and changes adopted into the R4 guidance may be different than what is reported here. Key conclusions and recommendations are summarized below. PPC/PC recommends the following:

The R4 Guidance should be issued as an e-mail attachment and an administrative notice.

There should be no significant change in the R4 Guidance this year from last.

Supplemental Annexes should be used when additional reporting on SO performance is needed beyond the prescribed page limits.

LPA should provide guidance on what to include and what to avoid as well as examples of well-written success stories to the Operating Units.

Relevant Operating Units should specifically address Annual Performance Plan, FY 2001 commitments in their R4. PPC will provide a list of affected OUs.

Language on changing indicators should be clarified.

Language on the disaggregation of indicators should be changed.

OUs should consult with PPC/PC and with their own Bureaus in the event that they receive guidance that was not included in the R4 guidance before acting on it. PPC/PC will then work with Bureau representatives to insure that the guidance is consistent.

OUs should review the new ADS 200 series before making any SO level or Strategic Plan revisions.

Procedures for the distribution of the R4 should be altered. PPC/PC suggests below two alternatives that may be explored as the R4 guidance is developed:

Alternative A: Teams are to work together to ensure that the R4 submitted is in as complete a form as possible for review. To facilitate distribution of the R4s, all R4s should be sent first to the DEC, from the DEC to the Program office in each bureau, and from the program office to a distribution list. No R4 is to be modified in any way until after formal review of the document at which time changes may be made and a new version re-submitted to the DEC.

Alternative B: Beginning about April 1, OUs submit their R4s to their Bureau program offices who will distribute them to reviewers. Following the designated review period (formal or informal) for an R4, any needed revisions to the R4 will be made within one month of the review date specified by the Bureau and not later than June 15, 2001. One designated individual from each Bureau will then forward the revised and/or final R4 to the DEC.

The procedures in Washington for conducting the R4 Review should be clarified and strengthened.

Operating Units should be sent a minimum of an e-mail acknowledging receipt of "Cover Memo" issues and when the Operating Unit can expect

those issues to be addressed.

Only in extremely rare instances should R4s be classified.

PPC/PC recommends that in the near future the Agency should evaluate the issue of substance and usefulness of the reporting in the R4.

Use of the improved R4 Template should be strongly encouraged. USAID should be prepared to offer training in the use of the template to Operating Unit representatives in or traveling through Washington.

Details on these recommendations are contained below. An R4 Guidance Working Group will convene in November to discuss and seek to come to a consensus on this and other recommendations set forth in this PPC/PC assessment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	Page 3
Background.....	Page 7
Objectives of the Revised R4 Guidance.....	Page 7
Findings.....	Page 8
A. Overall	
1. Compliance with the R4 Guidance	
2. Progress Meeting the Objectives of Changes to the R4 Guidance	
3. Reporting/Monitoring	
4. Reduced Preparation and Presentation	
5. Strategic Plan and SO Revision Promoted	
6. R4 Dissemination	
B. Template Usage Issues	
1. Problems with Template Use	
2. Problems with Manipulating Subdocuments	
3. Problems with Indicator Tables	
4. Multi-User/Versioning Issues	
5. Formatting Complaints	
6. Problems with Execute Files	
Recommendations.....	Page 18
Annexes	
Annex A – Comments on the Template from E-mail.....	Page 22
Annex B – Survey Results.....	Page 25

Reporting on Results: Review of the Revised R4 Process

1. BACKGROUND

A key element of the Agency's new results-based programming system introduced in 1995, was the R4 - Results Review and Resource Request. The R4 was designed to be the only document that Washington would be given yearly to evaluate program performance. While the concept had considerable merit, during the first years of implementation (1996-1998) a series of concerns arose: The task took too much effort for the management benefits obtained, both on the part of those who were preparing the R4, including partner organizations, and those responsible for its review. The links between annual results data and the budgeting process seemed to be illusory, and the tactic of ranking SO programs by sector seemed to be generating significant ill-will, and an unwillingness to be frank about progress and program risks.

In 1997 and 1998, the Agency conducted a detailed [stocktaking](#)¹ of the overall Agency reforms, to identify the progress made, validate the underlying concepts, and pinpoint weaknesses and gaps seriously affecting the Agency's ability to fully implement the reforms.

The R4 process, seen to be one of the weaker aspects of the original reform design, became the focus of a Managing for Results Workgroup Review. This Workgroup, co-chaired by Dirk Dijkerman and Carol Peasley, carried out a detailed review of the existing system, and prepared a report recommending major change in the structure, approach and underlying purpose of the R4. This [report](#)² was then submitted to the 1998 Worldwide Mission Directors Conference, and resulted in the Guidance cable prepared globally by PPC and regional and central bureaus for the FY 2001 R4 (prepared and submitted to Washington in 1999).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVISED FY 2002 R4 GUIDANCE

The Agency continued to address problems and weaknesses in the R4 process. The

¹ "Stocktaking of Reforms in Agency Operations" June 1998, Stocktaking Study Team
<http://cdie.usaid.gov/features/stocktaking/synthrep01.htm>

² "Revisions to USAID's Performance Planning, Monitoring and Reporting System", 10/20/98. D. Dijkerman and C. Peasley

changes made to the 2002 R4 guidance (for R4s prepared and submitted in 2000) were as follows.

R4 guidance was issued earlier and provided all at once. All guidance was consolidated into one cable, including bureau-specific guidance.

Voluntary annexes requested by Washington in the previous year's R4 guidance were deleted, but a new voluntary annex was added on people-level success stories to help explain our programs to a broader external audience. Certain mandatory annexes were still to be completed.

Operating units were strongly urged to meet the limitations on page length and performance data tables, and to use an annex to provide additional details that could not be contained within the page limits if deemed necessary.

Bureaus were to provide responses to issues raised in R4 cover memos and in the R4 itself within four weeks of individual document review.

The SO results review narrative of the R4 was to follow the Congressional Presentation format.

In response to a special Hill request, Operating Units were asked to provide disaggregated information for health SOs financed with the Child Survival and Diseases fund.

All current operating unit objectives were assigned a unique eight digit identifying number, which was to be included as header information for each objective and on each performance data table related to the objective.

There was a new table for agency reporting on the separate agency appropriation for the Capital Investment Fund.

An optional Microsoft Word template was developed.

To comply with the GPRA concept of benchmarking, every effort was to be made to report data using the same indicators as last year.

These changes were intended to achieve the following benefits:

- Higher quality reporting (stemming from more focused and consistent data collection and reporting by missions and implementing partners)
- Reduced Operating Unit staff time preparing R4 documents
- Improved data for input into the Agency's R4 database
- Improved responsiveness of Washington to the Operating Unit

- Consistent, transparent reporting to the Hill

3. **FINDINGS**

A. OVERALL

For most Operating Units the level of effort was reduced from last year: more R4s were produced on time and with reduced page lengths. The number of indicators submitted in the R4 remains a problem. Efficiency can be improved further still by targeting particular Operating Units for guidance assistance.

PPC/PC believes that many of the still outstanding compliance and efficiency issues could be dealt with if the R4 guidance was more user friendly.

More and more Operating Units are expressing concerns that if their Unit is not slated for a formal review then their program is not reviewed at all, and further that there often is no long run schedule for review so that some Operating Units are not receiving a full-scale review at least once every three years as required by the 1998 revision to the R4 policy³.

The findings below are organized by how OUs complied with the limitations set out in the R4 guidance, progress in meeting the objectives of changes to the R4 guidance, developments in reporting/monitoring, progress in reducing preparation and presentation, developments in strategic plan and SO revision, and R4 dissemination. Finally, we present a section on findings regarding the new R4 template.

1. Compliance with the R4 Guidance.

A. **Overall.** The Operating Units (OUs) which most closely complied with the 2002 guidance include Tanzania, West Bank/Gaza, Lithuania, Romania, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Dominican Republic, and Paraguay. Only one of these Operating Units did not use the R4 Template (Paraguay). No Operating Units this year were six or more weeks late and over limitations on both pages and indicators, but this year we flagged missions that failed to comply with other Agency mandatory requirements: Strategic Framework, MPP and National Interest Coding, the Self Assessment, and the

³ "Revisions to USAID's Performance Planning, Monitoring and Reporting System", 10/20/98. D. Djikerman and C. Peasely

mandatory annexes. The following Operating Units neglected to supply three or more of the above requirements and were notably over the limit on either SO narrative or number of indicators: Benin (also late), DROC (also late), Namibia, South Africa, Mongolia, G/ENV, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Only one of these eight used the R4 Template (Nicaragua). Ten other missions also failed to supply three or more of the above requirements and most did not use the template. Honduras and Nicaragua have appeared on this list two years in a row.

B. **Timeliness**. 68% of Agency operating units submitted R4s early or on time, v. 35% last year. An amazing 65% of LAC's R4s were received early.

C. **Narrative Page length**. 79% of operating units met the page limit on SO narrative v. 59% last year. For the Agency as a whole, the R4 page count this year was 6,495 v. a total of 5,441 pages last year. While 21% exceeded the R4 guidance on page limits for SO narrative, 13% of those who did were within a fraction of a page. Last year 41% exceeded the page limit. OUs with an average of five or more pages of SO narrative (compared to a limit in the guidance of three pages) include ANE/SEA, BHR/OFDA, BHR/FFPI, BHR/FFPII, Croatia, Belarus, and G/DG.

D. **Indicators**. 72% of operating units essentially met the limit on indicators, v. 53% last year. For the Agency as a whole the total number of indicators reported this year was 1,989 v. 1,926 last year. 28% of Operating Units averaged 5 or more indicators (the limit is four indicators per SO), v. 45 % last year. Despite guidance to the contrary, Missions continue to report in one indicator table as one indicator indicators that are disaggregated by gender, region, crop, etc. In order to comply with limitations of the R4 database, these “multi-indicator” indicator tables had to be broken up into multiple indicator tables, resulting in some OUs having excessive indicators reported. OUs with average indicator numbered per SO greatly in excess of the limit include Benin (8.66), Namibia (8.8), USAEP (8), FYR Macedonia (9.66), G/ENV (16.75), Global Bureau Peace Corps (18), Honduras (10.3), and Panama (12). Last year five operating units submitted double-digit numbers of indicators per SO and two of those Operating Units – Global Bureau Peace Corps and Honduras – have done so for a second year in a row.

E. **Mandatory Annexes**. Annex reporting was significantly better than last year

though still incomplete. 88%⁴ of OUs submitted the mandatory environment annex and 81% of Agency OUs submitted the Results Frameworks mandatory annex, v. 50 and 70 percent last year. The majority of E&E Operating Units submitted their detailed budget annex along with their R4: 14 out of 17 applicable R4s.

F. **Voluntary Annexes.** Last year concerns were raised in the field and Washington that sufficiently detailed program knowledge would not be obtained. Some Operating Unit missions requested additional space to more fully report program experience and progress, and some Washington technical staff expressed concern as to how they would obtain sufficient information for their analytical needs. Thus in FY2002 R4 guidance, Operating Units were encouraged to use a supplemental annex whenever they felt the need to express in more detail the results of their efforts. In response, 26% of Operating Units provided additional narrative in supplemental annexes to elaborate on SO performance or for other purposes [Note: five of those submitting supplemental annexes still exceeded the SO narrative limit.] The breakdown of OUs submitting supplemental annexes by bureau was as follows: AFR – 26%; ANE – 16%; BHR – 16%; E&E – 31%; G – 28%, and LAC – 15%. Reporting for the voluntary annex on success stories was good. 48 Operating Units, or 46% of the Agency, responded. The quality of these submissions varied greatly, however.

G. **Submission deadline.** 34% of Agency OUs submitted their R4 to the DEC after the deadline of April first, v. 65 % last year. Of those, 13% were 6 or more weeks late, v. 14% last year. Several in this group were counted as significantly late because they failed to follow the R4 guidance instructing them that R4s were to be sent to the Development Experience Clearinghouse. OUs that were significantly late include: Mozambique (excepted due to floods), Sierra Leone (submits budget request only), ANE/SEA, Sri Lanka, BHR (ASHA, FPPI, FFPII, OFDA, and PVC), Belarus, G/DG, G/ENV, Colombia, and Cuba. Only three of the 14 operating units that were six or more weeks late used the R4 Template.

H. **Submission process.** FY 2002 R4 guidance clearly stated that each OU was to submit its R4 to only two locations: The Washington Bureau Program Office (or as designated in the Bureau Specific Guidance portion of the cable), and to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). Several Operating Units failed to send the R4 to the DEC at the same time they submitted to their program office, resulting in them being recorded as submitting late, and in some cases the

⁴ NPC countries for which R4s were submitted were excluded from the environment annex count.

DEC had to retrieve these R4s from third party sources. Other R4s were modified by Washington offices even though copies had been sent to the DEC as final. This resulted in multiple copies being sent to the database or in circulation. Still other Operating Units submitted their R4s as Sensitive But Unclassified, which creates significant constraints to the distribution of the documents.

I. **Self-assessments.** 13% of OUs continue to neglect to state whether each SO met, exceeded or fell short of expectations. Those failing to do so included Mozambique, Poland, Slovakia, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Honduras, Panama, and Peru.

J. **Use of Comment Section of Performance Data Tables.** In Africa Bureau R4s, the comment section of the Performance Data Table has been extremely well used to convey a broad range of information on the chosen indicators. In only a few cases did Operating Units include performance information that should have been included in the performance narrative or in a supplemental annex.

In ANE, field missions were more inclined to use the comment section to appropriately discuss data quality standards and discrepancies, whereas ANE Washington Operating Units were slightly more inclined to use the comment section to explain performance.

In LAC, almost all Operating Units used the comment section for further discussion of performance reporting but almost all linked it to discussion of the indicator collection and verification. Nonetheless, diligence in this area could reduce the size of the comments sections for most Operating Units in LAC.

While E&E Operating Units have significantly improved their use of the comment section over previous R4s, the Bureau is still weakest in this respect. Narrative in the comment section still tends towards performance reporting rather than focusing on issues surrounding the indicator itself. The comment sections are often thin and repetitive and state the obvious (“The indicator exceeded the target”).

Operating Units in both BHR and G Bureau used the comment section of the performance data tables well to describe indicator quality, collection, and monitoring.

Overall, Operating Unit use of the comment section has improved markedly over previous years. Continued appropriate use of the Comment section of the performance data table improves USAID's accountability and transparency by ensuring that the Agency is reporting against direct, objective, practical, and adequate performance indicators.

2. Compliance with Objectives of Changes to the R4 Guidance

A. The FY2002 R4 guidance was issued by cable earlier than in previous years. Though all bureau guidance was to have been included in this one cable, an e-mail summary of a meeting went to some Operating Units indicating that OUs could submit their R4s as Sensitive But Unclassified though this was not part of the R4 guidance. This resulted in some serious confusion and delays.

B. Bureaus were to provide responses to issues raised in R4 cover memos and on the R4 itself within four weeks of individual document review. Although Washington review teams vastly improved response time over last year (when some Operating Units did not receive responses for nine months), and though most responses were within the four-week objective, many were not sent for five or six weeks subsequent to review. In some cases, Operating Units that were not undergoing a formal R4 review were informed that they would not receive a response until the completion of the Bureau Program and Budget Submission review.

C. For the most part, the SO results review narratives of the R4 did follow the Congressional Presentation format. Only once the CP is prepared later this year will we know if this has saved time and reduced the burden to the Operating Units.

D. In response to a special Hill request, Operating Units were asked to provide disaggregated information for health SOs financed with the child survival and Diseases fund. The supplemental reference on "Policy on Description and Use of the Child Survival and Diseases Fund" was delayed in getting out and this may have influenced OU compliance with this guidance change. At present, it appears that the guidance was not well adhered to.

E. See 1.E and F above for discussion of mandatory annexes and the voluntary annex on people-level success stories

F. See 1.C and D. above on limitations on page length and indicator numbers.

G. All current operating unit objectives were assigned a unique eight digit identifying number.

H. Only 46% of Operating Units submitted Capital Investment Fund tables with their R4.

I. See below for discussion on the merits of the optional Microsoft Word template.

J. 63% of OUs reported the same indicators as last year. Africa reported 58% of the same indicators, ANE reported 67% of the same indicators, BHR reported 50% of the same indicators, E&E reported 74% of the same indicators, and LAC reported 50% of the same indicators. To remain accountable under GPRA, it is important that OUs try, to the extent possible, to report the same indicators as the year before, and limit changes to where they are necessary to demonstrate genuine results. The language on the proper procedures for changing indicators was considered confusing by many last year. It is encouraging to see that the majority of OUs reported the same indicators, but PPC/PC wants to ensure that OUs are not keeping the same indicators because they don't know how to change them or may be reporting too many indicators because of confusing guidance on how to change them.

3. Reporting/monitoring.

A. More SO level indicators were reported this year than last (556 v. 531).

B. Last year, Operating Unit Self-Assessments tended to be slightly more negative than the year before, reflecting what we assumed was greater candor as a result of eliminating SO ranking. This year, however, Self-Assessments tended to be more positive than last year. Of Self-Assessments that were "On Track" or "Exceeding Expectations", AFR reported 93% this year v. 86% last year, ANE reported 97% of SOs v. 90% last year, E&E reported 83% v. 75% last year, and BHR reported 83% v. 50% last year. Only G reported 100% of its SOs were On Track or Exceeding expectations in both years, and only LAC reported that the number of SOs On Track or Exceeding expectations declined (93% v. 94% last year).

D. Promises Made. Each year in the Annual Performance Plan (APP), USAID as an Agency commits itself to meeting certain objectives. The 2001 Annual Performance Report (APR) will be partly based on commitments made in the APP for FY 2001.

C. It is not yet clear whether performance data trends over several years can be identified through the selective presentation of indicators. In depth evaluation of

this subject is needed but is beyond the scope of this assessment.

4. Reduced preparation and presentation.

A. Opinion as to impact of the template on reducing workload overseas was mixed; see below for detailed discussion.

B. Further fine-tuning to the links between the CP and R4 may be necessary following review with LPA on progression of requirements for Congressional Notification.

5. Strategic Plan and SO revision promoted.

Again this year several Operating Units used the R4 to present changes in their Strategic Objectives, though some proceeded to make changes with little or no discussion with Washington.

6. R4 dissemination.

A. A few questions were raised this year on the proper sharing of R4s, attendance at R4 reviews, and issues of R4 classification and posting on the web. OUs are encouraged to check section 201.3.7 of the new ADS for complete guidance on these issues.

B. Despite what PPC thought were clear dissemination instructions in the R4 Guidance Cable, much confusion was created this year by AID/W staff not knowing where to send or obtain the final R4s; Development Experience Clearinghouse staff spent much time re-sending R4s to numerous bureau staff and received several AFR Bureau R4s from the G Bureau, rather than AFR. The idea of a “bureau coordinator” for the receipt of all consolidated R4s from the DEC did not work very well due to communication breakdowns or unclear lines of authority.

C. CDIE continues to improve its R4 homepage, home of the R4 database. CDIE would like to undertake more discussions with AID/W bureaus in order to determine what improvements and/or additional reporting capabilities would make the R4 homepage more useful to bureaus during R4 reviews, goal reviews, strategic plan reviews, etc.

B. TEMPLATE USAGE ISSUES

About half of the Operating Units used the template this year – a good percentage for a new, voluntary system. While many Operating Units experienced significant problems with the template, most template users completed the full template and only one was returned in an unusable state.

The templates were very successful in improving compliance with the R4 guidance – an Operating Unit using a template was three times more likely to be in compliance than a non-template using Operating Unit.

We feel continued use of the R4 Template is warranted and efforts should be made to address the technical problems.

Below is a list of positives associated with the use of templates this year:

1. Greater consistency of reporting. R4s that used the template were all structured consistently, and tended to report on the same data as last year.
2. Greater adherence to guidance: template users tended to follow guidance better than non-template users. For example, every unit that used the template coded against the framework.
3. More timely submission: use of prepopulated templates did seem to save Operating Units time, and as a result the DEC received many R4s early.
4. More reliable data: the design of the template, when taken with the guidance, really helped push the job of linking Operating Unit activities into larger USAID and State frameworks back out to the field. As a result, Framework linkages in the R4s reflect the judgment of USAID staff, not an after-the-fact analysis in Washington.

The tables below give a quick breakdown for template usage. The second table shows which units failed to code to the framework as required by guidance. Note that none of these OUs made full use of the tmeplate.

Template Usage by Bureau

	Used Template			Did not Use Template	Total
	Correctly	Partially	Incorrectly		
AFR	6	5	1	21	32

ANE	6	2		7	16
ENI	14	3		6	23
Global	0	5		2	7
LAC	9	8		2	19
BHR	0	1		5	6
Total	35	22	1	45	103

OPUs missing links to Agency objectives by Bureau – 21 Total

AFR – total of 10	ANE – total of 5	E&E – total of 2	LAC – total of 3	Global – total of 1	BHR – total of 0
AFR/SD	Egypt	Poland	Honduras	G/ENV	
Benin	Mongolia	Slovakia	Nicaragua ⁵		
Congo, DR	Morocco		Panama ⁶		
Guinea	Sri Lanka				
Kenya	Yemen				
Mali					
Namibia					
REDSO/WCA					
Senegal					
S. Africa					

1. Problems with template use

Three areas were cited as major areas of technical difficulty with the templates:

- No ability to spell check inside form portion of template
- No ability to use word processing features to enhance look of text in forms such as bolding, use of bullets, italic, font changes, shading, tables, etc.
- Even though users were told **not** to unlock the forms, the application allows them to do so, which led to forms being changed and used improperly, such as only portions of the data being within the form, and portions being outside the form; incorrectly adding rows of data, etc.

⁵ Partially submitted—used format, but did not use template

⁶ Partially submitted—used format, but did not use template

In hindsight, it seems clear that, despite meetings with Bureau DPs and repeated open briefings about the templates, there was not enough communication between CDIE and the DPs on how to use the templates, and how document distribution in the aftermath of the templates would be handled. Meetings tended to focus on smaller technical issues rather than the larger workflow implications of template use. The single biggest improvement that could be made would be better communication between the Operating Units, the Bureaus, and CDIE.

2. *Problems with indicator tables*

Users were concerned with the quality of the printed output of the tables. Often, especially when they had extensive comments, the table would break awkwardly across pages. Some Operating Units wanted to include nonstandard elements (e.g., graphs) in the comment section. Much time was spent correcting broken tables.

3. *Multi-user/versioning issues*

Another class of problems arose when multiple authors contributed to the same subdocument. In more than one case, this caused confusion about which was the most recent version. Typically, users would remove the subdocument from the template directory structure, copy it to their local drive, and edit it there. At this point, the master document would generate an error since the subdocument was not present.

Individual units' need to review the R4 also differed, and caused some problems. In one case, the head of the Operating Unit refused to review the R4 via the master document, requiring instead that a single Microsoft Word file be furnished. Of course, any edits made to this file had to be reinserted into the template, creating extra work.

Units that were able to assign a single, savvy support person to manage use of the templates fared the best when using the templates in a multi-user environment. File management is crucial to avoiding broken master documents and ensuring that the template always contains the most up to date text and data.

4. *Formatting complaints*

There were a variety of complaints about the way that the template was formatted. We received many questions about the SO narrative subdocument, and whether the menu-driven header section would count against the page limit. In addition to the complaints about the indicator tables discussed above, there was some discomfort over a perceived lack of flexibility in how template-based R4s would look. It was felt, in short, that last year's R4s were "prettier".

There is always a tension between how Operating Units want to format their documents and what any template will allow. Many times people did not realize that the only parts of the template that had a restricted appearance were the forms-based sections, e.g., the SO narrative and the indicator tables. Some complained that their document was not paginated, not realizing that they could add their own pagination scheme. The solution that was suggested to users who specifically asked about special formatting -- that any extra information be included in an annex -- was not always satisfactory.

5. *Problems with Execute files*

Another class of problems had to do with the mechanics of downloading the custom template, expanding it, and zipping it back up when the R4 was complete. Many of these problems had to do with file corruption introduced during transmission overseas. The only real remedy is to retransmit the file until the Operating Unit receives an uncorrupted copy.

Zippping files back up for transmission to Washington was also problematic for many. The usual problem was not including the subdirectories in the archive file, so the master document contained broken links for all the SO narratives and indicator tables. A fair amount of time was spent personally visiting users in RRB to assist in zipping the template files. In many cases, program offices receiving zipped files either did not have the capability to unzip them or did not know how.

6. *Problems with working with/manipulating subdocs*

Users had difficulty at times working with subdocuments, especially with deleting them and rearranging them. A more significant shortcoming was the lack of spell check in the SO narrative sections.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

PPC/PCs recommendations are structured in two parts; those that apply to the R4 process and guidance in general and those specific to improvements to the R4 Template. An R4 Guidance Working Group will convene in November to discuss and seek to come to a consensus on this and other recommendations set forth in this PPC/PC assessment.

A. General Recommendations

To maintain the forward momentum we have achieved in improving the R4 process, we recommends the following:

The R4 Guidance be issued as an e-mail attachment and an administrative notice as well as by cable. PPC/PC believes that many of the compliance and efficiency issues could be dealt with if the R4 guidance was more user friendly and more widely distributed, both of which would be addressed if the guidance could be e-mailed.

There should be no significant change in the R4 Guidance this year from last. All the changes suggested below are incremental improvements to changes already made and build on past achievements.

Supplemental Annexes reporting on SO performance should continue to be encouraged when additional reporting is necessary. 26% of the Agency utilized a supplemental annex to further describe SO performance or for another purpose. As this directly affects the ability of the Agency to continue to provide short, useful performance assessment in the body of the R4, it should continue to be encouraged.

LPA should provide guidance on what to include and what to avoid as well as examples of well-written success stories to the Operating Units. The Agency was pleased with the response from the Operating Units on success stories. The utility of these stories would be increased with help from LPA on standard formats for providing such stories.

Relevant Operating Units should specifically address Annual Performance Plan, FY 2001 commitments in their R4. PPC will provide a list of affected OUs. In the Annual Performance Plan (APP) for FY 2001, specific OUs were committed to meeting certain targets. The 2001 Annual Performance Report

(APR) will be partly based on promises made in the APP for FY 2001. Therefore, in their 2003 R4s, Washington Operating Units should specifically address the relevant commitments made in Section D of the APP for FY 2001 about their strategic objective areas. To aid OUs in knowing who they are and what they are committed to reporting on, PPC will provide a list of affected OUs.

Language on changing indicators should be clarified. To remain accountable under GPRA, it is important that OUs try, to the extent possible, to report the same indicators as the year before, and limit changes to where they are necessary to demonstrate genuine results. The language on the proper procedures for changing indicators was considered confusing by many last year.

Language on the disaggregation of indicators should be changed. To address the issue of reporting disaggregated data while not exceeded the limit on the number of indicators, PPC/PC recommends that OUs submit performance data tables disaggregated by gender, region, crop, etc., as a separate annex. This option will permit the Agency to keep the body of the R4 down to a manageable size for our external audiences while permitting us to report the disaggregated data critical measuring our performance.

OUs should consult with PPC/PC and with their own Bureaus in the event that they receive guidance that was not included in the R4 guidance before acting on it. PPC/PC will then work with Bureau representatives to insure that the guidance is consistent. The Agency's official R4 guidance is the result of a collaborative inter-Agency process spanning many weeks of effort and including concerns and issues from all Bureaus. Any guidance in addition to the R4 Guidance Cable should be assumed NOT to have gone through this inter-Agency process. OUs that receive additional guidance should consult with PPC/PC who will then coordinate with the Bureau representatives to ensure that the guidance is consistent.

OUs should review the new ADS 200 series before making any SO level or Strategic Plan revisions. Great effort has gone into restructuring and improving the guidance contained in the ADS. All Operating Units that wish to make changes to SOs or Strategic Plans through the R4 process should consult the new guidance to get clarity and ensure conformity.

Procedures for the distribution of the R4 should be altered. PPC/PC suggests below two alternatives that may be explored as the R4 guidance is developed:

Alternative A: Teams are to work together to ensure that the R4 submitted is in as complete a form as possible for review. To facilitate distribution of the R4s, all R4s should be sent first to the DEC, from the DEC to the Program office in each bureau, and from the program

office to a distribution list. No R4 is to be modified in any way until after formal review of the document at which time changes may be made and a new version re-submitted to the DEC.

Alternative B: Beginning about April 1, OUs should submit their R4s to their Bureau program offices who will distribute them to reviewers. Following the designated review period (formal or informal) for an R4, any needed revisions to the R4 will be made within one month of the review date specified by the Bureau and not later than June 15, 2001. One designated individual from each Bureau will then forward the revised and/or final R4 to the DEC.

We expect that this recommendation will generate considerable discussion. Unfortunately, the transmission of R4s this past year was confused, burdensome and incomplete. An R4 Guidance Working Group will convene in November to discuss and seek to come to a consensus on this and other recommendations set forth in this PPC/PC assessment.

That the procedures in Washington for conducting the R4 Review should be clarified and strengthened. More and more Operating Units are expressing concerns that if their Unit is not slated for a formal review then their program is not reviewed at all. Further, some Operating Units are not receiving the minimum of one formal review once every three years per existing Agency guidance⁷. All R4s should be reviewed every year with each OU receiving an intensive review at least once every three years during the R4 period. In any given year, however, it is possible that an Operating Unit may raise in its cover memo, or through another mechanism, an issue that requires an intensive R4 review. This Operating Unit should be added to the list of intensive reviews for that year without displacing Operating Units already scheduled for review.

That Operating Units be sent a minimum of an e-mail acknowledging receipt of their Cover Memo Issues and when the Operating Unit can expect them to be addressed. All Operating Units should receive some formal communication acknowledging that issues in their Cover Memo have been received and what is being done to address them, even if those Operating Units are not undergoing a formal review this year.

⁷ "Revisions to USAID's Performance Planning, Monitoring and Reporting System", 10/20/98. D. Djikerman and C. Peasely

Only in extremely rare instances should R4s be classified. Operating Units are encouraged to use alternative means (classified cable, secured fax, etc) to transmit classified information regarding program performance (See ADS 201.3.7 on procedures for managing the public release of planning documents). If an R4 is determined to warrant classification, then all procedures governing the classification of documents **must** be followed.

PPC/PC recommends that in the near future the Agency should evaluate the issue of substance and usefulness of the reporting in the R4.

B. Template Recommendations

The experience with the templates this year has shown that using a structured data acquisition instrument can make everyone's job easier. By improving the R4 Template and working with Operating Units to fill them out appropriately, we can make the data we collect from the R4s, and the resulting database, more useful to the Operating Units, Washington and reviewers, and we can improve the R4 production, review and distribution. To that end, PPC recommends that Agency continue to strongly encourage use of the R4 Template. PPC will be responsible for improving the template to address problems and issues from last year. Specific recommendations are as follows:

1. To increase acceptance of the template, the PPC should 'pre-populate' and customize the R4 template for individual OPUs based on the past year's R4 document. A 'blank' template would be available for OPUs that did not submit a R4 last year or for those with approved major changes to their strategic framework.
2. PPC should improve the template in the following ways:
 - A. Development of a tool that does not require the use of the MS Word master/subdocument document capabilities, but retains the use of the Word template for the narrative portions of the R4.
 - B. Better guidelines/step-by-step instructions that could be programmed into the improved application.
 - C. Development of procedures to improve multi user access.
 - D. Allow the automatic creation of a single Word document from the template when the R4 is finalized to permit spell check and for local dissemination, printing. A single Word document would accompany template files in order to expedite submission to AID/W and the distribution and printing of the R4 for review in AID/W.

- E. Use of a single table for performance data instead of current use of three tables seamlessly pulled together and simplify the R4 indicator tables making the insertion and/or deletion of rows of additional data much easier while allowing for spell checking on each block of text within an indicator table.
 - F. Allow automatic handling of the file naming convention.
 - G. Allow the user to easily add or delete a Strategic Objective and its accompanying indicators. Automatic file-naming convention by application so that it is easier for users to identify SOs they are working on.
 - H. The application will automatically zip files necessary to be sent to AID/W.
3. PPC should greatly simplify the steps needed to submit the R4 template to AID/W. A “button” on the application tool bar should allow the user to choose the appropriate e-mail package, i.e. Banyan Beyond Mail e-mail, Banyan “blue” mail or Microsoft Outlook; automatically attach the files necessary to submit the full R4 document, indicator data tables and budget spreadsheets while allowing the user to add necessary e-mail addresses. Automatic zipping of additional files to submit to AID/W would be handled by the application if necessary.

PPC expects that budget and OE reporting tables to remain similar as last year.

Annex A: Comments on the Template from E-mail

Indeed, I didn't follow your instructions precisely--I did not cut the individual sections to the new doc before doing the spell check workaround but did it to the entire document (outside the master though). In one case, I just tried to do a test without cutting individual paragraphs, and even though I didn't save the new spell-checked document, the original template (an individual SO section) became blocked. The funny thing was that I was unable to undo these blockages so that the document would be back to normal. I won't mess with it any more. I'll do everything in a regular Word document and then cut and paste into the master once it is all done, and I scanned the test sections so that I can no treat them as regular Word docs and cut and paste into the master along with the rest once we have a final draft.

Hopefully next year this master document routine will include a spell check function that is more user friendly than cutting and pasting dozens of individual paragraphs time and again as we go through the various iterations of the document. Unless this sort of thing is worked out, I'm not sure that the master document approach is saving anyone any time/effort (at least not those of us in the field.) Thanks,

Don't get me wrong. I think the master document/template approach is a good idea, and I appreciate your effort to make it as useful/easy as possible. I don't even mind sacrificing some time because of first-year bugs. But this spell check thing is one that would be a make-or-break factor on my vote next year. Thanks,

I begun working with the R4 template and so far things are OK with one exception: I tried to delete the unnecessary SO narratives and indicator tables but I got stocked to step no. 10 when I had to click the Remove Subdocument icon. Somehow I can not find this icon. I checked and the Master Document Toolbar is active. Can you look into this issue? Does it have to do with the fact that the sub-document is locked?

By the way, my boss just told me that I should find a way to put the Sos sections in numerical order because we've numbered them differently since the last R4. For example, More Genuinely Inclusive Democratic Governance that was originally SO1 is now SO5. Therefore, this SO's section cannot be in the front. Sustainable Increased Income for the Poor, which is now SO1, must be in the front. I am afraid to get confused

and destroy any link to the HaitifullR4 if I start moving all the SOs sections to the right folder. Isn't there a better way to do it?

Looks like the R4 came through this time just fine. Thanks a lot for thinning it down, that makes it more user friendly for people here in BHR.

Thanks also for your quick response, it really helps us keep our schedules when we get that kind of timely technical help.

While waiting for your answer, I went to the PRINT OPTIONS and I put a check mark in the UPDATE LINKS box. I was glad to see that the Haiti02full R4.doc was automatically updated. But the YEAR-PLANNED-ACTUAL block now overlaps the rest of the performance table by 1/16" causing a misalignment of the two blocks, on the right hand side of the table. You cannot see the overlapping on the screen but you can see the misalignment. The overlapping shows only on paper, when you print the tables. I cannot edit the tables to fix them since they are form-based; I only have access to the shaded fields to type the text.

I followed the steps in your e-mail to open the files. Unfortunately, the overlapping and misalignment problems with the tables remain. Please let me know if something can be done at my level. I am looking forward to reading you soon.

Thanks again.

Please help. The Mission has decided not to use the preparation template. In an attempt to comply with the specifications, we have downloaded the R4 PERFORMANCE DATA TABLE MACRO from the CDIE website. This MACRO is proving too much to handle. It seems to us that the YEAR/PLANNED/ACTUAL piece of the table has been designed as a separate piece and our experience is that it tends to stick at the bottom of the table, with each slight movement and cannot be cut and pasted to its original place. Can we create our own table that is similar to this MACRO? If so, what are the specifications in terms of font and size? This is frustrating our efforts to adhere to the rules.

In the R4 Template, under the directory XXXX MASTER DOCUMENT, the folder Special Annexes does not contain separate sections for each Strategic Objective (SO). For example, SO3/Health was the first to be ready to include its success stories and other annexes. I asked the SO team members to type it in Country02AnnexSUC. Now, what about the other SOs. What should they do? This is not clear at all to me.

I am looking forward to reading you soon.

I am sure you are inundated with questions regarding the template at the moment but I am afraid I have to add another. The last glitch we have is that we have lost a link in the table of contents to a supplementary annex. When it is populated the one spot where the page number should be says 'ERROR: BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED'.

If you can you tell me how to add back that bookmark i would be most grateful. I have attached the file but I doubt it will be useful for you.

We have been compiling practice versions of our R4 using the templates provided by CDIE to make sure the process works properly. We have encountered three problems or at least items that seem unusual. Please advise

1. The So text sections appear in the populated 'tanzania02fullR4' file exactly the same as they do in the subdocuments. The resulting formatting utilizes a great deal of space. For instance, the rows of secondary links remain. A sample file is attached. Is this the way the final submission should appear? I have the impression the text should be pulled into a nicer format in the final document. Is this incorrect? Or are we somehow not creating the master document correctly?

2. Similar to the above the indicator tables appear the same in the populated master document as in the sub-documents. These tables have a very rough appearance and only vaguely resembled the tables submitted last year. Is this the way they should appear in the final document or should contents be pulled into a more refined table in the final document? Again please advise.

3. In the full master document the headers are letters rather than numbers. Should we go into the master and change them or should they change automatically?

Unfortunately we can not unpack YYYYYYY.exe file you sent us with prepopulated R4 templates. Our computer guys said it is "crashed". Please help. Thanks.

Just tried to get into populated GWID template and downloaded information could not be read. Try changing exe to doc but no luck. HELP

Greetings. I will get back to you on your action. But I have another question. Is someone responsible for the working on the R4 templates? Can you forward this to them. I would like to ask them this question.

In the new R4 template how are health programs supposed to identify integrated programs? Under 'primary link to agency strategic framework' you are only allowed to pick one. USAID/GYYYY has an integrated health program that targets population, HIV/AIDS, Child health and Maternal Health. Should we just leave it blank? Or type in all 4 with a typewriter?

The health SO was criticized in the last r4 by Washington because we do not show our program as being an integrated program. This template does not help us solve that problem.

ANNEX B: Survey Results

A small survey was done of both template and non-template users to determine what influenced their decisions to use or not use the template and what was their experience. 50 percent of the respondents who did not use the template said they had requested a template but that it seemed too complicated so they did not use it. There seemed to be great reluctance to using Microsoft Word Template software stemming from previous familiarity with the problems of Microsoft Templates. 75 percent of respondents said they thought the idea of a template was a good one and would consider using the template if more training and assistance were provided and if MS Word templates were more user friendly.

Of those that used the template, 25 percent of respondents thought it was a bad idea, that it cost them time, and that they would prefer not to use it in the future. Most respondents said that it did help them prepare their R4s and recommended improvements that could be made.