IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF REPORTS AND REPORTING IN THE NARS

Background

The resolutions of the first planning have always been a subject of concern since, among many other things, they sought to streamline or harmonize reporting across the PARIs. Reporting on ongoing research activities has been a thorny issue for quite sometime. By definition according to Horton, D. *et al.*, "Reporting is an administrative device for gathering timely information on the progress of research projects or activities." At the first planning and review meeting the formats for reporting at the Theme, Project and Experiment or Activity level(s) were agreed upon. Also agreed upon was that the PARIs were to submit two versions of the Project level report and retain the Experiment level report at the Institute. For the Two Project level reports were to be a detailed Quarterly Project Report, and an Institute brief/summary submitted every after a financial quarter and normally within the first fifteen days of the month following the quarter (for reporting to Ministry of Finance). Since the June 2007 meeting, the observed trend is that reporting seems to be limiting itself to reporting to Ministry of Finance to a point, and worse still to reporting for reporting sake. There are lots of glaring gaps in terms of content, and sometimes the quality and consistency while reporting on a given items/experiment/activity. And sometimes it simply wrong and sometimes the individuals do not write. There are also instances of outright non-compliancy. Other issues include the formats themselves, the frequency, difficulties and what solutions. Visits to the PARIs and ZFSs to discuss issues related to reports and reporting, MIS and planning have been organized.

Objective of the Exercise:
The exercise is intended to create an understanding of how the quality reporting can be improved and to understand issues related to MIS and planning.

Issues to discuss in the PARI and ZFSs:

I) REPORTING

A) Background information (to be provided by NARO Secretariat team as in the background section above)

1) What is a report/reporting?

2) Reports as M&E tools.

3) The significance of reports to the PARIs, ZFSs, NARO Secretariat, Development Partners (including GoU).

4) What is a reporting format?

5a) Present samples of the reporting formats used in NARO.

5b) Give the use of each of the reporting formats (information needs that they meet).

B) Ease of understanding the reporting formats

1) Are the reporting formats understood? Yes/No

2) If no, which of the formats are *not* clearly understood?
(a) Experiment ( ) (b) Project ( ) (c) Annual ( ) (d) Results tracking ( )
(e) Institute summary ( )

3) Which aspect(s) of each of the formats is(are) *not* clearly understood?

a) Experiment

b) Project

c) Annual

d) Results tracking

e) Institute summary

C) Suitability of formats in capturing required information/meeting information needs

1) Do you think the reporting formats are suitable in meeting the information needs?
a) Experiment (Y/N) (b) Project (Y/N) (c) Annual (Y/N) (d) Results tracking (Y/N) (e) Institute summary (Y/N)

2) If yes, what do you think are the *strengths* of the reporting formats?
a) Experiment

b) Project

c) Annual

d) Results tracking

e) Institute summary

3) If no, what do think are the *weaknesses* of the reporting formats?
a) Experiment

b) Project

c) Annual

d) Results tracking

e) Institute summary

4) What *modification(s)* would you propose to each format to ensure that it adequately captures the required information?
a) Experiment

b) Project

c) Annual

d) Results tracking

e) Institute summary

5) Is there any other format(s) you would propose for capturing information and why?

D) Challenges faced in report writing and development

Timeliness of submitting reports

1) Do Scientists submit their reports on time or not? Yes/No

2) If no, what is (are) the reason(s) for delayed or non-submission of reports?

a) Reports are time-consuming to write ( )
b) Reporting formats are not understandable ( )
c) Scientists are too busy (heavy workload) ( )
d) Scientists are fatigued with report writing ( )
e) Scientists do not consider the reports to be important ( )
f) Feedback on reports not received frequently ( )
g) Other reasons

E) Responsibility in reporting

1) Who is responsible for reporting and compiling reports before they are sent to NARO Secretariat?

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2) Additional comments (on how reporting be improved to ensure *ownership, quality* and *timely* submission)

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II) MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

1) Do you have any guidelines for data management for your research activities?

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2) How is the raw data you collect from you activities, experiments, surveys, census stored or kept for quick access and future reference?

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3) How are your reports kept for quick access and reference?

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4) Additional comments on data and information management

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III) PLANNING

1) What plans do you have/follow while implementing your activities/programs?
a) Monthly work plans ( ) (b) Quarterly work plans ( ) (c) Annual work plans ( )

2) What processes were undertaken to develop your plans?

a) Monthly work plans

b) Quarterly work plans

c) Annual work plans

3) What challenges do you face in implementing/following these work plans?

4) Do you have an approved/complete strategic plan? Yes/No

5) If yes, provide a copy.

6) If no, why not?

7) If the process of developing a strategic plan has started, at what level is it?

8) What support do you require to formulate or complete your strategic plan?

9) Additional comments

IV GENERAL COMMENTS