

ANNEX I: TABLE OF PCLS FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This annex notes the data sources for the findings in the [Program Cycle Learning Study final report](#) and outlines which findings support which conclusions and recommendations. More specific suggestions from the interviewees regarding PPL’s Program Cycle support can be found in Annex 3.












Findings	Interviewees		Direct Observation	Document Review	Conclusions Supported
	Four Missions	USAID / Washington			
Overall Implementation and Effects of the Program Cycle					
Finding 1: Interviewees had limited exposure to the Journey to Self-Reliance but noted four enabling factors supporting the integration of the Journey to Self-Reliance throughout the Program Cycle.					1, 5
Finding 2: Mission leaders influence the timing, manner, pace, and scope of Program Cycle implementation through their messaging, decisions, and priorities, especially regarding clearances.					1, 2
Finding 3: Program Office staff were the most aware and appreciative of the Program Cycle, including the ability to tailor its implementation to the Mission context. Among other Mission staff, awareness of the Program Cycle overall was low.					1, 4, 5
Finding 4: The four Program Cycle principles appear most clearly in documents; actual practice varies across and within Missions.					1, 5
Finding 5: Mission staff typically use ADS 201 as a reference, consulting specific sections as needs arise rather than reading the entire document. They therefore rarely conceptualize the Program Cycle as a coherent, integrated whole.					1, 2

<p>Finding 6: Mission staff expressed uncertain views regarding the roles and place, if any, of implementing partners in strategy development and project implementation. Implementing partners themselves were most familiar with their own activities and the Mission’s overall strategy but not the projects with which their activities were associated.</p>					<p>4, 5</p>
<p>Finding 7: While the documents that result from Program Cycle processes serve important functions in each Mission, the processes related to the Program Cycle—especially strategy development and portfolio review—can play an even more important role in providing opportunities for Mission staff to be involved, informed, and “bought into” Mission-wide programming decisions.</p>					<p>5</p>
<p>Finding 8: Missions often bring in external support (in the form of USAID/Washington TDYs or contractors) to help complete Program Cycle processes and documents because of staffing shortages, frequent staff transitions, and many competing priorities, resulting in knowledge management, ownership, and continuity trade-offs.</p>					<p>3, 4</p>
<p>Finding 9: Mission staff perceptions vary by Program Cycle process; although many Technical Office interviewees consider certain elements as valuable sources for evidence-based decision making, they also considered others to be superfluous, time consuming, and unnecessarily bureaucratic,</p>					<p>2, 5</p>

sometimes resulting in procurement delays, heavy workloads, frustration, or staff turnover.

Individual Components of the Program Cycle, Alignment, and Adaptation

<p>Finding 10: Strategy development takes longer than the ADS 201 estimates and is affected by the need to conduct key analyses, engage Mission staff and external stakeholders, derive a consensus around development objectives, and obtain USAID/Washington approval.</p>					<p>2</p>
<p>Finding 11: Familiarity with the meaning of “project” is low, especially among non-Program Office staff; many view project design as an unnecessarily lengthy, bureaucratic process.</p>					<p>3</p>
<p>Finding 12: Project management as envisaged in the ADS 201 remains occasional; commonly cited reasons for this include a lack of time, available staff, incentives, and detailed management plans.</p>					<p>2, 3, 4</p>
<p>Finding 13: Most of the potential benefits of managing a group of related activities as a single project have yet to be realized.</p>					<p>4</p>
<p>Finding 14: Technical Office staff strongly prefer to focus on activity design and implementation, but many feel that competing priorities (including project design and implementation as well as other tasks) prevent them from fulfilling all of their activity-related responsibilities.</p>					<p>2, 3, 4</p>
<p>Finding 15: Mission staff typically mentioned challenges in maintaining alignment across</p>					<p>2</p>

strategies, projects, and activities—particularly related to MEL/CLA—because of multiple, concurrent processes that necessitate ongoing updates and amendments.					
Finding 16: Mission staff stated that in order to manage adaptively, they need meaningful indicators, high quality monitoring data, evaluations well timed to inform decisions, and management flexibility.					1
Finding 17: Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) practices occur throughout the Program Cycle, though only some Mission staff identify these practices as CLA per se.					1
Finding 18: Interviewees commonly reported that activities are typically the easiest to adapt in response to new information and contextual changes, followed by projects, strategies, and internal processes, all of which are more time consuming to adapt.					4
Support from PPL for Program Cycle Implementation					
Finding 19: Mission staff members' familiarity with PPL is typically low, even among some Program Office staff, and some staff are skeptical of PPL's understanding of Mission needs.					3
Finding 20: In cases where Mission staff experienced a PPL TDY, they were appreciative of PPL's direct support. Such support typically occurs episodically and relies on personal relationships.					3

Conclusions	Supporting Findings
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Conclusion 1: The most important factors influencing a Mission’s ability to implement the Program Cycle in a coherent, integrated manner are supportive Front Office and Program Office leadership, and high levels of Mission staff engagement.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17
Conclusion 2: Program Cycle processes take a significant amount of time and effort to implement, which can affect alignment and adaptation. The timing of these processes can also impact other required Mission tasks, leading to increased stress for staff.	2, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15
Conclusion 3: Staffing is often insufficient to support consistent and coherent implementation of the Program Cycle. As a result, Missions often turn to USAID/Washington or to contractors for assistance with Program Cycle processes and documents.	4, 8, 12, 14, 19, 20
Conclusion 4: Unlike strategies and activities, the concept, benefits, and management of projects are not well understood, nor are projects consistently valued or commonly operationalized.	3, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18
Conclusion 5: Program Cycle processes and convenings benefit Missions and their development programming by providing staff with relational and structured ways to make coherent and aligned decisions, build relationships, create shared understandings, and support employee engagement.	1, 3, 6, 7, 9

Recommendations	Supporting Conclusions
More specific suggestions from the interviewees regarding PPL’s Program Cycle support can be found in Annex 3.	
Recommendation 1: The Agency should review the generalizability and validity of the study’s findings and conclusions beyond the four Missions studied here.	1–5
Recommendation 2: The Agency should review ADS 201 requirements and assess the necessary time, level of effort, benefits, and trade-offs and resources needed to conduct Program Cycle processes.	2, 5
Recommendation 3: PPL and other Bureaus, with Agency leadership backing, should review connections, inconsistencies, and dependencies between the Program Cycle and other policies, initiatives, and processes to support efficient Program Cycle implementation.	1, 2, 3
Recommendation 4: The Agency should determine the most effective and efficient ways to ensure adequate staffing with enough capacity and understanding of the Program Cycle.	1, 2, 3
Recommendation 5: The Agency should develop a Program Cycle implementation strategy that prioritizes leadership, learning, and communication regarding the Program Cycle, especially projects, for all staff and implementing partners.	1, 4, 5