News about USAID and the Foreign Service

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2011 AFSA USAID Annual Survey

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VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

THE VANGUARD

2011 AFSA USAID Annual Survey

We continue our practice of presenting the results of your input to the annual AFSA survey. This is the sixth year we have gone to our membership to get a sense of your concerns and thoughts about your working experience at USAID. The response rate to this year's anonymous exercise is again statistically significant with over 600 of USAID's Foreign Service Officers taking the time to complete the survey. In the spirit of openness, the reporting of the results is straight forward and free from any pressure to stay away from sensitive or controversial topics. Nevertheless, there is no intention either, on our part, to attack anyone. Our priority is to provide information that will educate and improve both USAID and AFSA's operations to ultimately serve you better.

Among the topics we sought to clarify are such things as: At what level do we find morale? Are conditions at work getting better or worse? What does our Foreign Service workforce look like and what are their concerns? How are agency offices performing? Which specific areas and services need attention and improvement? What obstacles hinder greater productivity and success in our jobs? What work-life balance issues exist? These are all important questions and we aim to discuss the results with key decision-makers.

Although there is more information than can be thoroughly studied here, what follows are the results, some analysis and comments from responders about the issues that stood out to us in this year's survey. We hope to give you an understanding of the most salient issues which rose to the top. In some cases, we made comparisons with the previous 2010 yearly survey to get a sense of direction we are going. Nevertheless, you are welcome to look at the full data and reach your own conclusions. This should stimulate discussion and move USAID and AFSA towards meaningful course corrections.

We are interested in hearing from you. Please send your comments to me at fzamora@usaid.gov.

Start of Survey Results

1. What is your Gender Identity?			
Male		312	51%
Female		293	48%
Transgender		0	0%
Other identity, please specify		2	0%
	Total	607	100%

Result: Responders were approximately half male and half female.

Analysis: The gender response rate seems evenly distributed between male and female employees which is in line with official Agency statistics.

2. What is your race/ethnicity? Please check all that Apply			
American Indian or Alaska Native		7	1%
Asian or Middle Eastern		52	9%
Black, African American		47	8%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish		32	5%
White, Caucasian		477	79%
Other, please specify		17	3%

Result: Agency data indicates that around 80% of all Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) identify as being White Caucasian which is what this survey data also shows. Data from this survey as well as official Agency statistics point to significant under-representation of Hispanic and Black FSOs and the situation is especially noticeable in the foreign service component when compared to the U.S. National Civilian Labor Force (NCLF).

For Hispanics the NCLF stands at 10.7% versus the 5.0% of USAID Hispanic FSOs identified in this survey. Agency data shows an even higher under-representation for Civil Service Hispanics at a level of 2.2% versus the 10.7% of the NCLF.

The NCLF data for Blacks stands at 10.5% compared to the 8.0% for Black USAID FSOs in this survey. However, Blacks in the USAID Civil Service are fully represented at 33.2% versus the 10.5% quoted by the NCLF.

Analysis: The most under-represented race/ethnic group in the USAID Foreign Service are Hispanics by a factor of about 2 times the NCLF (5.0% versus 10.7%). Hispanics are severely under-represented in both the Foreign and Civil Service at USAID.

For Blacks, the NCLF shortfall in the foreign service is 2.5% but agency data shows only a 0.9% difference. Blacks are under-represented in the Foreign Service.

One survey responder asked “Why does race matter?” Our response is that it should not; however, like a thermometer, this data alerts us to the possibility that problems may exist. All things being equal, the distribution by race and ethnicity in our agency should be consistent with the way America looks. The survey is an indicator that the employment situation is either not attracting minorities or that there are barriers to entry—or both. It is up to the leadership to seek solutions to these problems and make necessary corrections. It should strike us as ironic that many of our overseas activities strive to impart values of inclusion and democratic principles to the people of the world. We should be the first to live up to our mission. A USAID which is fully representative of our country’s richness in diversity will only make us a better organization. Whether we realize it or not our employees are the face of the U.S. to the world.

3. What is your age?

18-30	50	8%
31-45	305	50%
Over 45	254	42%
Total	609	100%

Result:, Around 58% of our FSOs are under 45 years old. While not all newly hired DLI officers were younger people, this data indicates a significant young cohort of such employees now exist.

Analysis: Due to several recent years of accelerated hiring under the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) program which has brought in about 800 new employees, a substantial percentage of our employees are now relatively younger. This means that the agency must address the differences in work styles and career expectations of these new employees. Issues such as the need for increased mentoring, teleworking, and family-life balance have to be revisited.

4. Which of the following best describes your current physical status?

Have a physical disability	9	2%
Have a medical clearance that limits my ability to serve worldwide (anything other than a Class 1 Medical Clearance)	38	6%
Have no major physical disabilities	553	92%
Total	600	100%

Result: If this result is truly representative of the current situation, 6% or more of our FSOs may not be cleared medically to serve worldwide in Class 1 postings.

Analysis: Out of a population of around 1,800 FSOs as many 100 may not be worldwide available thus complicating assignments to Critical Priority Countries and other hardship locations.

5. Which of the following best describes your current marital/relationship status?			
Single / Divorced / Widowed		177	29%
Have a spouse or partner residing with you		311	51%
Have a spouse or partner not residing with you for reasons related to your assignment		67	11%
Part of a tandem couple		43	7%
Other arrangement		13	2%
Total		611	100%

Result: Almost a third (29%) of FSOs have no spouse or partner. Many of these unattached FSOs may be in the younger age group. Also, more than half (68%) are married and 7% are part of a tandem couple.

Analysis: Singles in the survey reported being treated unfairly when it comes to assignments and other hardships. Married FSOs as well have informed us of their concerns especially when it comes to finding meaningful employment for their spouses. Although not everyone's need can be accommodated, the agency management should make an effort to assure fair treatment for all when it comes to sharing the burdens of service.

Comments from members:
"Don't want to go repeatedly (to CPCs) simply because I am single and childless and perceived as more "able" to go than others."

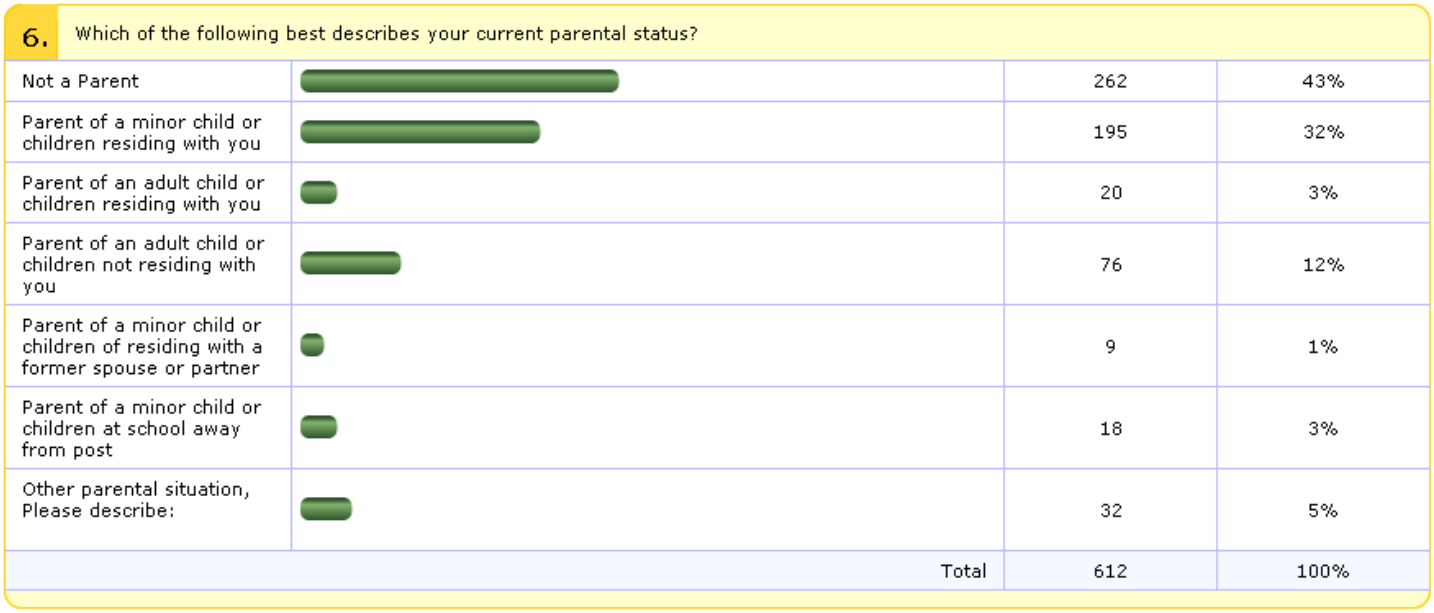
"The feeling that as a single person I am expected to serve in difficult places when others are unwilling to do the same."

"I believe that AFSA spends an unequal amount of time advocating family and spousal related issues, and does not spend time on those issues that affect unmarried officers."

"EFM opportunities, specifically parity between State and AID spouses. It has happened five times in two years that non-transparent choices have been made in the EFM positions that my husband applied for and they all went to State spouses."

"It seems like there is an increasingly high number of people with professional spouses/partners -- some tandem with other US government agencies or foreign service officers with other governments. I would really love if AFSA could assist with increasing the options for working remotely to enable couples to stay together. I don't want to have to choose between USAID and my partner."

"More emphasis on employment opportunities for spouses. Managing USAID workforce - DLIs FSLs PSC PASAs RASAs etc. most of these should be FS positions or at least on the bid list."
AID Missions shoot themselves in the foot in terms of Eligible Family Member (EFM) employment. They rarely hire spouses and when they do, they use local hire US PSCs who are greatly inferior to the EFMs. State saves many a USAID spouse from unemployment."



6. Which of the following best describes your current parental status?

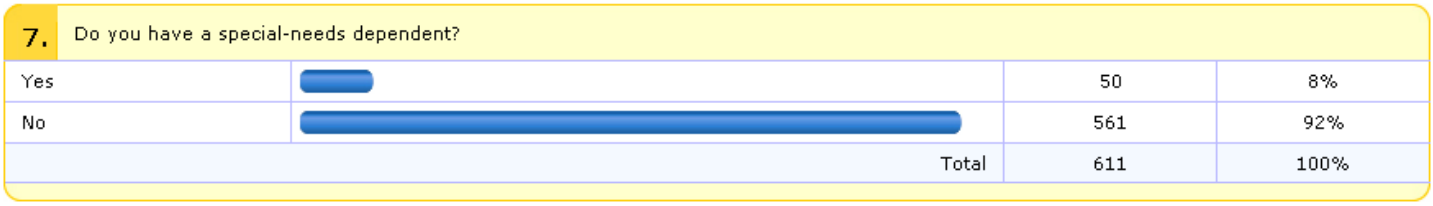
Not a Parent	262	43%
Parent of a minor child or children residing with you	195	32%
Parent of an adult child or children residing with you	20	3%
Parent of an adult child or children not residing with you	76	12%
Parent of a minor child or children of residing with a former spouse or partner	9	1%
Parent of a minor child or children at school away from post	18	3%
Other parental situation, Please describe:	32	5%
Total	612	100%

Results: It is significant to note that almost half (43%) of our FSOs are not yet parents. Another third (32%) already have small children with them at post.

Analysis: Many of these FSOs may start having children soon and may face maternity leave issues for themselves or their wives for the first time. Unlike many other countries, the U.S. federal government does not offer paid maternity leave. Since many female FSOs are new to the agency, they frequently do not have sufficient sick or annual leave accumulated to cover the maternity experience without significant loss in income. Pregnant women are forced to stop working at the mission earlier than if they were in the States. Evacuation from post of maternity cases is mandatory 6 weeks before the birth and the woman may not return to post until she and the baby are medically cleared. To provide some relief and have a win-win situation, AFSA and Human Resources promotes telework for these employees whenever justified. This means that these women can work remotely, even from other locations around the U.S. to continue contributing to agency without losing their income especially before the birth.

Comments from Members:
"Maternity leave for FS female employees. This is extremely important in most posts. We are FORCED to leave our jobs for a minimum of 3 months. After two children, I was in the hole over 250 hours each for AL and SL...and god forbid I wanted to have more than 6 weeks with my baby after he was born. It's just an unfair situation for female FSOs to be in since we are forced to leave the post, and in some cases not able to work remotely (especially if your boss is not supportive). I would like to see maternity leave for any period BEFORE the birth of the child and starting from the time when you are forced to leave post. In most cases, this will be about a 6 week period."

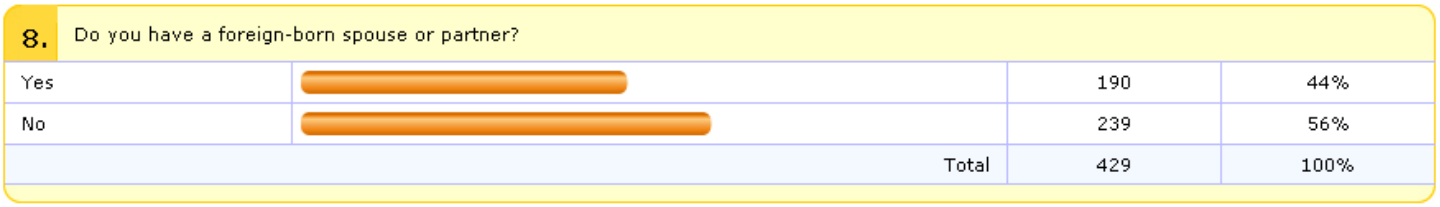
""I think AFSA focuses too much on the needs of specific groups of people (parents with children or special needs children for example) and should focus more on broader issues of concern to all."



7. Do you have a special-needs dependent?			
Yes		50	8%
No		561	92%
	Total	611	100%

Results: Almost one in ten FSOs have a special needs dependent.

Analysis: Again, this is an issue which needs more study and analysis by the agency. The new Staff Care Unit which was recently establish is a good service which can look into this. AFSA will engage them in discussions of this result. Special needs cover a wide are from learning disabilities to physical disabilities. It affects employees, dependents, spouses, partners, and parents. Identifying the problems were beyond the scope of this survey but a new Staff Care Unit has just been established which should look more closely into this.



8. Do you have a foreign-born spouse or partner?			
Yes		190	44%
No		239	56%
	Total	429	100%

Results: A surprising result from the question above was the high percentage (44%) of married FSOs who report that their spouse or partner is foreign born.

Analysis: While it makes sense that foreign service officer types tend to meet and marry people from other parts of the world, the number is significant. Foreign born spouses or partners can enrich the overseas experience in many cases but they may also have unique needs that may be challenging when it comes to such things as homeleave travel, educating children, Critical Priority Country (CPC) service, language training or just fitting into the American community life at post. The Staff Care Unit people at Human Resources should be aware of these situations in order to provide improved employee care which may not be typical or traditional for these multi-cultural families.

Comments from Members:
"Employment and employment opportunities for foreign born spouses are needed."

"We need support to Officers with foreign born spouses."

"There are subsets, where I feel AFSA is more responsive to some groups than others, in particular family issues vs singles and couple and Member Of Household issues (especially for foreign born). I would like to see a more equitable balance on these issues."

9.	Are you currently an AFSA Member?		
Yes		571	94%
No		37	6%
	Total	608	100%

Results: This question was used to verify that the survey had high participation of the AFSA members we serve.

Analysis: AFSA is pleased with the high participation of its membership in this survey.

10.	What is your assignment status?		
Assigned overseas		497	81%
Assigned domestically		116	19%
	Total	613	100%

Results: The distribution above is consistent with agency data.

Analysis: The representation from the field is excellent.

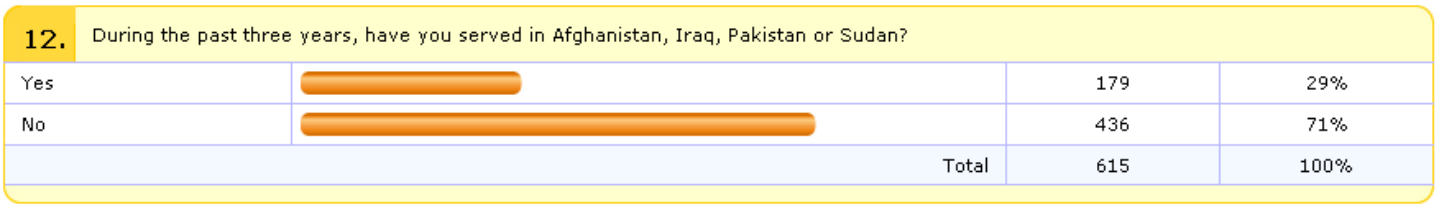
11.	Which of the following best describes your current career status:		
FS-6		41	7%
FS-5		60	10%
FS-4		129	21%
FS-3		110	18%
FS-2		128	21%
FS-1		84	14%
SFS		43	7%
FSL		9	1%
Other, please specify		12	2%
	Total	616	100%

Results: The distribution by grade in the agency is normalizing. That is, grades FS-6 to FS-4 are the base of the pyrimid and the other grades taper off to the higher levels as expected.

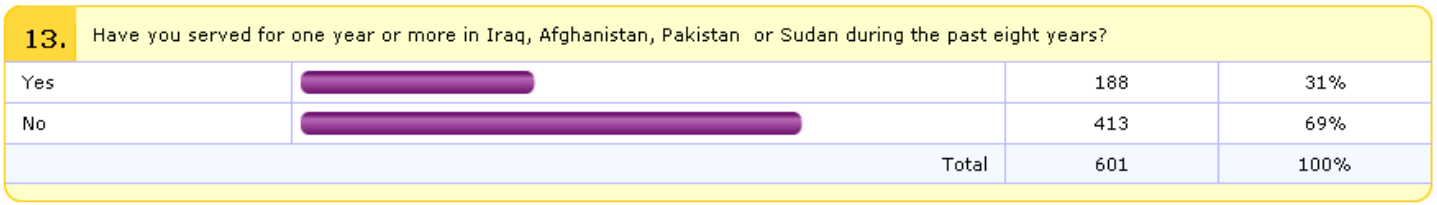
Analysis: The Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) hiring has helped to bring in much needed FSO staff to operate our development programs which have grown and become more complex. Now that the hiring has slowed it is likely that for the foreseable future the agency will only hire to attrition (50-60 a year). It should be noted though that USAID FSOs numbers have now only reached the levels they were 20 years ago when our programs were fewer and smaller in funding and scope. FSOs report of being overworked. In addition, the CPC missions have been diverting a large number of staff from our typical development missions. Therefore, the case can still exists for additional FSOs to be added to the agency levels.

Comment from a member:
"The service and sacrifices of USAID foreign services officers remain unrecognized in the US media. We do not carry guns or wear uniforms but we serve in dangerous places in the interest of the people of the United States. The Administrator should use his political clout to consistently raise this in the

public view. Service is inconsistent across the Agency, depending upon who you work with and how overworked they are. We are weary of constantly doing more with less while new priorities are piled on top of old ones!"



12. During the past three years, have you served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan or Sudan?			
Yes		179	29%
No		436	71%
	Total	615	100%



13. Have you served for one year or more in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Sudan during the past eight years?			
Yes		188	31%
No		413	69%
	Total	601	100%

Results for Questions 12 & 13: Questions 12 and 13 above asked about service in the Critical Priority Countries (CPCs) in the past 3 years and 8 years respectively. The data shows that in both cases about a third of the FSOs have already served there.

Analysis: After so many years of CPC presence it would seem that more than half of FSOs would have already served in one of those countries. However, one needs to take into account that there have also been retirements of FSOs (about 60 a year) many of whom served in CPCs and not counted here. Second, apart from mid-career new hires, there is also a policy to avoid sending new officers into CPCs. This reduces the availability of FSOs to serve in those countries. To meet the needs, many slots in CPCs are filled with Foreign Service Limited (FSLs) employees who are not career candidates. But, as new DLIs move into higher ranks, they will eventually be asked to serve in those CPC posts.

14.	If you have served for one year or more in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Sudan during the past eight years, what was your one primary motivation on bidding for that (those) post(s)? You can only check one.		
Financial benefits or incentives		17	8%
Desire to serve, Sense of Adventure / Challenge / Patriotism		67	31%
Belief that it would advance my career generally		21	10%
Eligibility for Priority Bidding		19	9%
Living up to Worldwide Availability		26	12%
Other, please specify		66	31%
	Total	216	100%

15.	What factors would discourage you from wanting to serve in a Critical Priority Country? Please check all that apply		
Disagreement with policy / Don't support Administration's Goals		175	30%
Personal / family medical or health issues		197	34%
Obstacles to performing assigned duties		117	20%
Security concerns		223	38%
Separation from family		361	62%
Other, please specify		110	19%

Results for Questions 14 & 15: Two factors stand out from questions 14 and 15. When FSOs are asked about service in CPCs most officers claim that their main motivation for having served was sense of duty, challenge, adventure and/or patriotism (31%). Their greatest concern was their separation from their family (62%).

Analysis: It is significant that neither financial incentives (8%) nor other career factors (advancement, bidding priority) placed very high on the scale of importance for serving in CPCs. The number one concern for officers is the sacrifice of being separated from the family. The agency can do much to ensure that families are well cared for financially and emotionally while our officers are serving at CPCs. That includes counseling, information, separate maintenance allowance, keeping family at current post, and fair assignment procedures. The recently established USAID Staff Care Unit in Washington can play a big role in meeting those needs.

Comments from members:
“We were told we had to eventually (serve in CPCs). I did it early in my career because I wanted to get it out of the way so I could start a family afterwards.”

“Was "volun-told" to serve.”

“For me it's hard to do with small school age kids, and I have spent 4 seperate years at 4 different Posts away from my family for 1 year in each of those postings trying to balance work and home life already. Adding on another year assignment away from the kids and my wife is hard to program. The kids are early primary school age and having both parents around is key for us.”

16. Which of the following issues (if any) do you consider "game changers" for your career and would cause you to reconsider the FS as a career and/or retire earlier than planned? Please check all that apply.

Loss of Overseas Comparability Pay	256	44%
Continued freeze on federal salaries	172	30%
Loss of pension portion of retirement package	364	63%
Uncompetitive Salary	243	42%
Increasing Stress or Demands	234	40%
Health Reasons	161	28%
Other, please specify	209	36%

17. Please rate the following lobbying and public relations issues in terms of what you consider their priority should be for AFSA:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
	1	2	3
Preserving Overseas Comparability Pay	433 73%	121 20%	42 7%
Preserving FS retirement benefits	509 85%	81 14%	9 2%
Lobbying for funding for FS agencies	260 44%	256 43%	73 12%
Increasing public awareness of / support for the FS	225 38%	290 49%	77 13%
Lobbying for maternity/paternity Leave	143 24%	192 32%	257 43%
Lobbying for benefits for unmarried opposite sex partnerships	63 11%	181 31%	346 59%
Lobbying for increased same-sex partner benefits	89 15%	217 37%	281 48%
Increasing mandatory Retirement age to 67	121 20%	177 30%	294 50%

Results for Questions 16 & 17: USAID FSOs value their retirement package (63% question 16) above many other factors and want AFSA to actively protect them (85% question 17) through lobbying. Close behind is concern about maintaining Overseas Comparability Pay (44% question 16) and protecting it through lobbying (73% question 17). The lowest lobbying priority is benefits for unmarried opposite sex partnerships (59%).

Analysis: This survey helps AFSA prioritize its lobbying efforts to meet member needs and we will try to focus our efforts based on your input. FSOs are keenly aware of the recent national federal budget discussions in Congress which have put at potential risk federal salaries and retirement benefits. AFSA has redoubled its efforts to lobby along with other national unions to counter such threats. Our legislative outreach staff has increased in number and budget to totally focus on protecting our benefits.

Comments from members:
"Tough times ahead for FSOs, and with likely budget cuts (and possibly cuts in benefits) it can have a negative effect on our workforce. AFSA's efforts on our behalf are more important than ever. If you need to raise membership fees to support more robust efforts on our behalf, just let us know. Thanks again, and keep up the good work!"

“I appreciate AFSA's efforts to maintain the current level of the overseas pay comparability.”

“AFSA should lobby harder for age 67 retirement”

“I would like a more robust lobbying campaign regarding: our benefits and salary packages.”

18. Please rate the following labor / management issues in terms of what you consider their priority should be for AFSA:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
	1	2	3
Improving training opportunities generally	147 25%	315 53%	130 22%
Increasing Eligible Family Member (EFM) employment opportunities	219 37%	236 40%	135 23%
Opposing mid-level hiring from outside into FS	216 37%	127 22%	247 42%
Limiting assignment of CS employees into FS positions overseas	137 23%	211 36%	243 41%
Increasing transparency in assignments process	396 66%	149 25%	53 9%
Ensuring "level playing field" for employees with disabilities	109 19%	289 49%	191 32%
Increasing diversity in FS workforce	112 19%	239 41%	239 41%
Ensuring safety and security of FS overseas	242 41%	236 40%	111 19%
Improving supervisory skills of FS supervisors	308 52%	218 37%	66 11%
Improving quality of overseas schools	120 20%	254 43%	214 36%
Assuring equal benefits with State	495 83%	81 14%	17 3%

Result: While AFSA will address all the lobbying issues listed above, two items stand out which our membership has prioritized very highly: Assuring equal benefits with State (83%) and Increasing Transparency in the Assignments process. Increasing diversity was not considered a priority (41%). Finally a controversial item “opposing mid-level hiring” was considered a low priority by 42% of the responders a medium to high priority by 58%.

Analysis: There are several inequalities in benefits and salary compared to the State Department. The most serious is the low entry level salaries which AFSA has written extensively about and have had meetings to discuss at all levels of the agency. While the agency has gradually adjusted their policies on entry level pay such as now allowing more experienced applicants to start at the FS-5 grade, the problem is the insistence on setting entry leve pay based on previous salary history--which the State Department does not. This unfair practice has put many new employees at extreme hardship due even though they have valuable work experience in lower paying but excellent organizations such as the Peace Corps or Non-governmental Organizations. This is discussed more fully in Questions 27 & 28 of this survey.

Other inequalities exist in the areas of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Spousal Language training, Washington per diem practices, lodging arrangements while training in Washington, FSI day care services, and overseas Difficult to Staff Differentials. All of these have been addressed and will continue to be addressed with the Agency by AFSA. It is ironic that as USAID is for all practical purposes now administratively absorbed by State, that there still exists such unequal treatment and lack of effort to standardize benefits or salaries.

The issue of transparency of the assignment process is one that has been and always be a source of discomfort for FSOs. AFSA is closely involved in monitoring fairness of the assignment system and has participated in the assignment meetings to assure that the agreed-upon regulations are respected. We will continue to question any procedures which may disadvantage any officer and will insist that the burdens of hardship service be shared in a fair manner.

Many of the respondents were mid-level hires who felt attacked by AFSA. For our part, we believe that mid-level hires have a critical role to play in the agency. However, there has been a lack of communication, perhaps due to our fault, to clarify that AFSA is not opposed to ***justified*** mid-level hiring. AFSA is opposed to excessive mid-level hiring which could occur if USAID Management does not consult with us to agree on the numbers and types needed. So far, we have worked well in determining the numbers to fill in the gaps and look forward to further discussions. Once mid-level hired officers join the agency, we are commited to helping them as well as other FSOs. AFSA can cite many instances where these officers have received our full support.

(note: see Question 2 for a discussion on diversity).

Comments by members:
“I'm overall satisfied with my experience. The only concern is mainly parity with our colleagues at State which is glaringly apparent if taking classes at FSI.”

“The disparities between incoming USDH's at State and USAID is difficult to accept when we work side by side overseas (and USAID requires its officers to have a minimum of a master’s degree to even be eligible for the FS. The pay discrepancy is a significant issue and one that has led many people to join State over USAID, especially those I know with PhD's. Additionally, the fact that USAID DLI's do not receive per diem while in Washington (while our State counterparts do) is simply unacceptable. Coming in as an FS-06 is not a livable wage in DC and the relocation allowance does not make up for not receiving per diem.”

“Unfair policy in that some FS-1 employess have never served or intend to serve at a CPC Post.”

“There are serious issues with the transparency with bidding and assignments. That is the other consistent source of complaint from all FSOs.”

“AFSA was tremendously helpful with an assignment appeal. Thanks.”

“I'm very concerned that USAID hired a bunch of over-qualified JOs, forced them to take pay cuts and come in as FS-6s, and now it wants to hire mid-levels above them and restrict promotions.”

“I am concerned about the opportunities for promotion as the DLI classes become tenured and begin competing for limited promotion slots. There needs to be a balance in bringing in mid-level hires.”

“AFSA, in its on-going efforts to fight mid-level hires, is actively working against the interests of the agency to attract a diverse complement of staff other than "lifers":who bring management skills and experience that are required at the mid and senior levels.

“Mid Levels come with experience and skill the agency is lacking and instead of AFSA doing something to help us, every effort has been done to block our progress. Our numbers are low and we are not a threat to the junior FSOs, it is a myth that someone came up with at AFSA and in return we are paying the price. More has to be done for the Mid Levels in terms of promotion eligibility and career advancement.”

19. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following issues at your post:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Very satisfied - is excellent or outstanding	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Total	N/A
	1	2	3		N/A
Safety of post housing	241 47%	238 46%	36 7%	515	67
Security of your day to day life	224 43%	268 51%	31 6%	523	59
Overall management of post	77 15%	307 58%	142 27%	526	56
Mission Leadership	123 23%	283 54%	120 23%	526	58
Opportunities for Eligible Family Member (EFM) employment	35 10%	152 46%	145 44%	332	246
Inclusion of same-sex partners in Post community	53 23%	147 64%	31 13%	231	343
Inclusion of foreign-born spouses and/or EFMs in Post community	66 20%	206 63%	51 16%	323	253
Quality of at-post schools	60 26%	126 55%	43 19%	229	348
Quality of counseling / resources available at overseas high school - including college preparatory counseling	19 15%	67 52%	43 33%	129	447
Treatment by Post of individuals with disabilities or special needs	21 12%	112 64%	41 24%	174	400
Educational opportunities for special-needs students	22 15%	61 43%	60 42%	143	434
Safety and security of school at Post	58 26%	141 64%	21 10%	220	353
Consolidation of Administrative Services	15 3%	129 28%	323 69%	467	112
Quality of Medical Care	108 21%	303 60%	94 19%	505	74

Result: For FSOs overseas, the most bothersome issue is still the Consolidation of Administrative Services (69%) under ICASS (International Cooperative Administration Support Services) . A previous AFSA survey on the subject yielded the same results. Employment opportunities for Eligible Family Members (44% not satisfied) and Special Needs Student Education are also great concerns (42% not satisfied).

Analysis: In April 2010 USAID AFSA published an extensive worldwide survey of employees affected by the ICASS (International Cooperative Administration Support Services) implementation. The results of the survey were so disturbing that certain U.S. Senators requested a review by a team from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). It should be noted that the priority for the State Department under the recent QDDR (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review) plan is to fully implement the ICASS at all U.S. Embassies. However, the final GAO report has not yet been published and we hope that it will, at least, result in correcting at least some of the most acute

problems that USAID employees (USDH, Contractors, FSNs) reported. For a fuller discussion please access the survey at the AFSA.org/usaid website in the April 2010 Vanguard.

Comments from members:
“Consolidation with State definitely is not improving the overall conditions of work in an overseas Mission.”

“We have been working to implement many reforms in Procurement, FM, IRM, and even admin consolidation and we have needed an AA for Management. The lack of an AA/M was especially felt overseas where admin consolidation and rushed IT consolidation have hurt efficiency and driven costs to the USG through the roof.”

“State employees cannot stop talking about consolidation and how it will allow State to manage development "its way" as if that would be better. I am getting out asap so I will not be around for the gutting of USAID.”

“Our relationship with State is making us sub-servient, and taking away the character and independence of our agency. I understand that we should cooperate under the Chief Of Mission direction, but with admin consolidation, and the State department's insistence on doing more development activities themselves, we lose our influence and voice at the table as development experts- we are heading toward being the development office much as the DoS created the Public Affairs office.”

20.	Do you believe that AFSA supports you and is responsive to the issues important to you?		
Yes		422	78%
No		114	22%

22.	Did you vote in the last AFSA election?		
Yes		250	44%
No		314	56%

23. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Agree	Disagree	Total	N/A
	1	2		N/A
AFSA keeps me informed about issues important to me.	458 82%	98 18%	556	26
AFSA keeps me informed about issues it is working on.	485 86%	69 14%	554	26
I know how to communicate with AFSA representatives.	429 76%	124 24%	553	25
AFSA listens to member communication.	293 74%	104 26%	397	176
AFSA has increased its responsiveness to issues important to me.	215 56%	168 44%	383	188
AFSA gives equal weight to the concerns of all member constituencies.	170 44%	219 56%	389	175
AFSA's priorities reflect my priorities.	285 59%	192 40%	477	89

Results for Questions 20, 22 & 23: AFSA received high marks (78%) on support and responsiveness. Voter participation is still an issue (44% claim they voted). Finally, members report that they are mostly well informed of issues AFSA is working on (86%) which are important to them (82%).

Analysis: We are committed to increasing this indicator to be more responsive to a higher level. On the topic of voter participation, one curious result is that the actual percentage of voters for the 2011 election was 20% while the survey responses indicate that 44% voted. We will have to investigate why the numbers diverge. It is possible that a problem exists in the mailing of the ballots, for example. AFSA is looking at implementing an electronic voting system to make it easier for members to participate in our elections.

On another topic, some members state that they are not sufficiently informed by us although we regularly send AFSANET emails, the Foreign Service Journal, AFSANEWS, The Vanguard, General Notices and other correspondence to them. One reason could be that we do not have their current physical or email addresses. Our website has a feature for updating contact information (http://www.afsa.org/addressChange.cfm).

Comments from members:
"For the most part, yes (feel informed). Progress with locality pay was probably most important recent achievement."

"Absolutely. I met with an AFSA staff member over an issue for the first time. He was proactive and involved and provided outstanding advice in the situation which was resolved beyond my expectations. You guys are doing a fantastic job. We're fortunate to have AFSA as a resource."

"I would like to get more regular updates from AFSA on its efforts on our behalf. I would also like to know how AFSA, and particularly the USAID rep, uses the information gained from these surveys. Clearly, people are dissatisfied with many issues affecting the Foreign Service but AFSA seems to pick and choose involvement when it is known how AFSA is involved."

25. With regard to AFSA's Governing Board, committees and elections, which of the following initiatives and ByLaws amendments would you support? Please check all that Apply.

Use of online or similar electronic voting for future elections	494	92%
Limit the number of terms that AFSA Governing Board members can serve	176	33%
Limit the length of time that AFSA Governing Board members can serve	141	26%
Require AFSA President to be active duty Foreign Service (not retired).	225	42%
Require that Chairs of AFSA committees be elected by the membership	114	21%
Limit the number of terms of service or length of service of AFSA committee members	104	19%
Require a certain balance between Entry Level, Mid-level and Senior Level representatives on the Governing Board	387	72%
Other, please specify	20	4%

Results: Clearly the members agree that electronic voting for future elections is needed (92%). Also, there was a strong call for a balance of representatives at the AFSA Governing Board (72%).

Analysis: AFSA is already working on the electronic voting system and hopes to have it functioning by the time the next election comes around. The AFSA board is in the process of modifying the Bylaws and will review the issues above during their upcoming meetings.

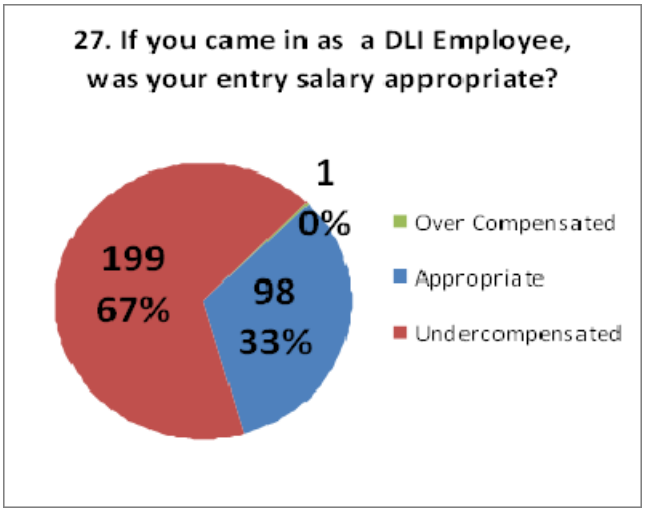
Please note that for the two vacancies on the Governing Board, only one candidate ran. For the position of Vice President, only one candidate ran. While term limits may make sense in a more competitive electoral environment such as happens routinely for State Department positions, limiting terms where there is insufficient or only limited interest could mean that the USAID membership is

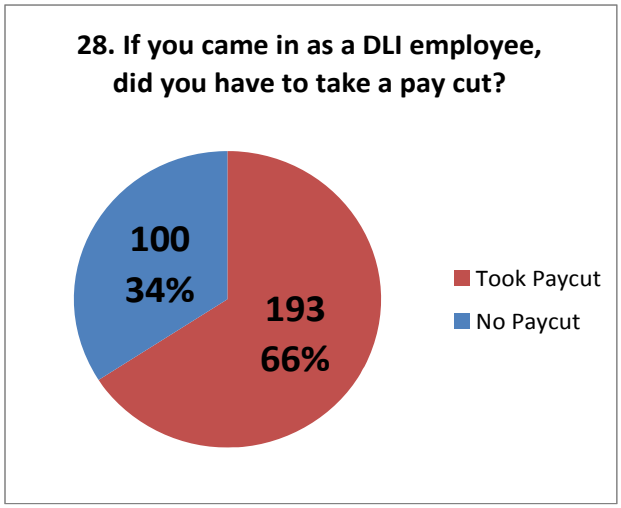
either not represented on the AFSA Board, or that the AFSA Board, which is dominated by State representatives, chooses who will represent AFSA members from USAID.

26.	If AFSA needs more resources to serve you better, would you rather see us:		
Raise annual dues		203	36%
Solicit contributions for a specific purpose		284	51%
Focus more narrowly and "do less with less."		191	34%
Other, please specify		36	6%

Result: About half (51%) voted for soliciting contributions when needed.

Analysis: Members are more amenable to soliciting contributions for specific needs. Note that AFSA is very careful in managing the assets and funds of the organization and has had many years of impecable independent financial audit results.





Result: 67% of the DLI officers answered that they were undercompensated and an almost equal percentage (66%) claimed they took a pay cut to join the agency.

Analysis: There are major differences in policy and procedures between the State Department and USAID on how entry level salaries are determined. This is causing serious morale problems and economic hardships for our new junior officers thus giving the appearance that the leadership has lower regard for USAID employees. To our knowledge, there is no business or logical reason for paying starting salaries which place many employees in extremely difficult survival mode situations while in Washington. Whatever the justification put forth by USAID, the fact is that the **Foreign Service Act of 1980** specifically states that there should be maximum compatibility between FS Agencies regarding personnel policies.

AFSA approached the Board of the Foreign Service to decide on this and was told to engage USAID management in discussion of this topic. AFSA did this numerous times but the problem remains unresolved except for some small procedural changes related to hiring at the FS-5 level. We believe that USAID's procedures are extremely complicated, burdensome and unfair when compared to State's. Even HR staff have problems managing the salary setting procedures which run several pages long compared to one or two paragraphs used at the State Department. This places our FSOs and their families at significant disadvantages when compared to State employees. The biggest

issue is USAID's insistence in considering previous salary history to establish entry level salaries. The usual retort from management is that applicants are free not accept USAID employment (i.e., take it or leave it) if they are not willing to take the salary offers. In addition, they claim that there are plenty of others who can take their place. These arbitrarily set salary levels have no basis on either a scientific comparative salary study or good business practices.

There is only one way to become a Foreign Service Officer involved in Development and that is with USAID. Faced with not taking the job they always sought to have and accepting a subpar salary, many applicants decide to make the sacrifice for an opportunity that may never materialize again. Such punishment mentality from the agency contributes negatively to the low morale scores which exist (see question 34). The situation can change by an executive decision to correct such unfairness but there seems to be no interest in that.

Comments from members:
"I make a third of what I made and I didn't know I could negotiate for my salary."

"Before, I was a USAID-PASA working as GS-14 and came in at FS-06. It was insulting and no relocation bonus".

"HR would not give me credit for over 30% of my previous salary and placed me only at Grade 6 step 7! They tried step 1 at first. They did not even make this determination according to their own guidelines sent to me with my offer letter!!"

"I took a 25% pay cut in my salary and came in as a FS 6/14 Program Officer - maxed out at your entry level and with 15 years experience could have come in as a FS 3 or 2.

"Took a $55,000 pay cut!!!!"

"Came in as an International Development Intern (IDI) and am only now making what I made at my pre-USAID job. It has substantial long-term consequences (TSP matching, ability to save individually, etc)."

"I worked for an NGO just prior to joining USAID so my salary was quite low. However, my salary is still below what I was making as an engineer in the US in 2000 (that is when I moved overseas to start working with INGOs)"

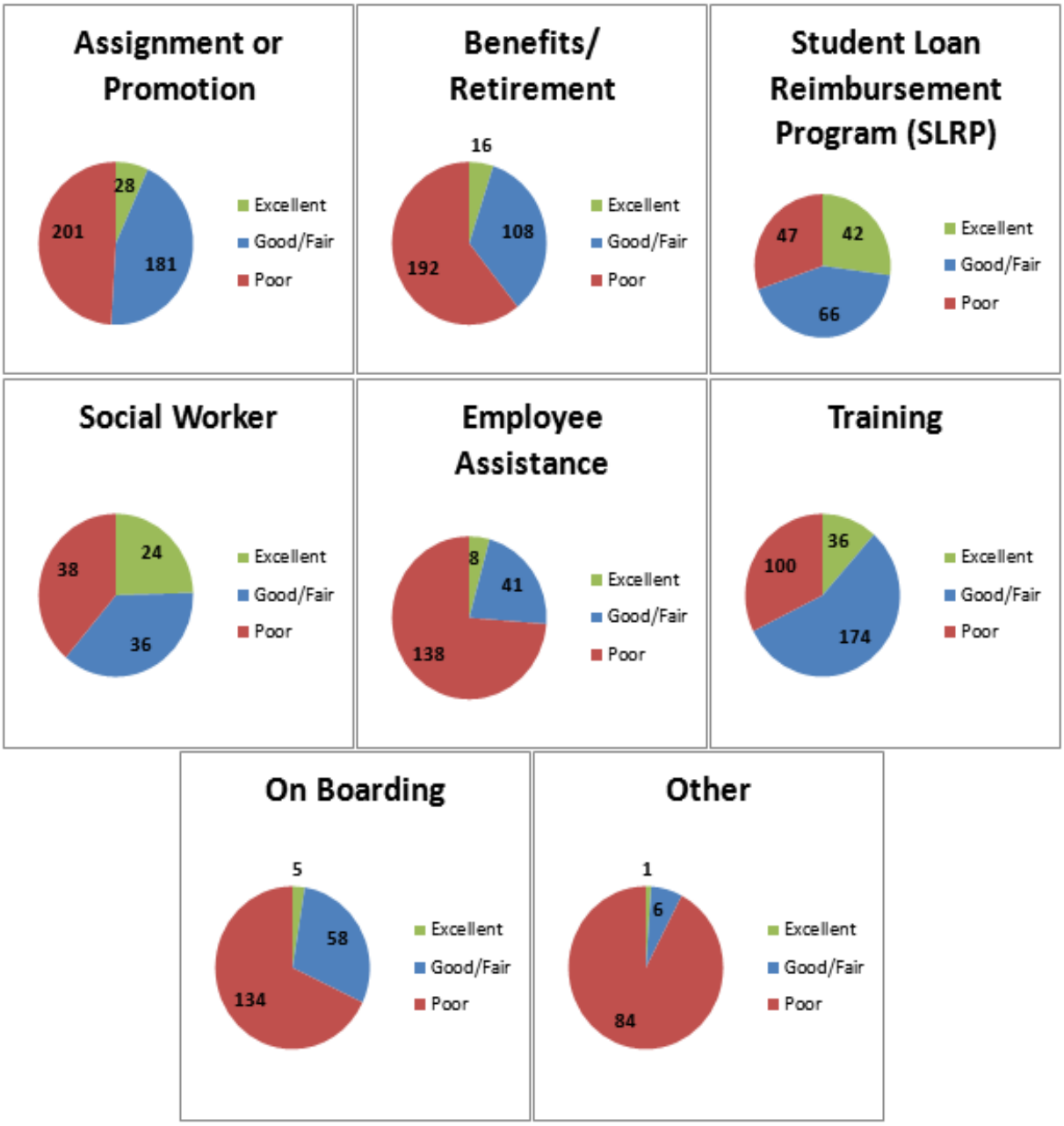
"A significant pay cut. If I had it to do over again, I would not have joined the Agency."

"Most of people in my class had to take 20-40% pay cuts, if not more. It was surprising that while Master's degree was required, some of my colleagues came in as FS 6-1, which will haunt them for the rest of their careers. Don't take me wrong, we all took the jobs because we love working overseas and see this as public service. But there are limits to what a person/family can endure."

The starting salary of DLI seems illogical. Salary is based on the paycheck the prior 3 years but if a DLI worked for a NGO, who paid low salaries, or had been in grad school (after several years of field experience) they were not recognized for their experience but rather judged solely on their past pay check …Why does a person with a lower base salary have a lower cost of living than one who has a larger base salary?

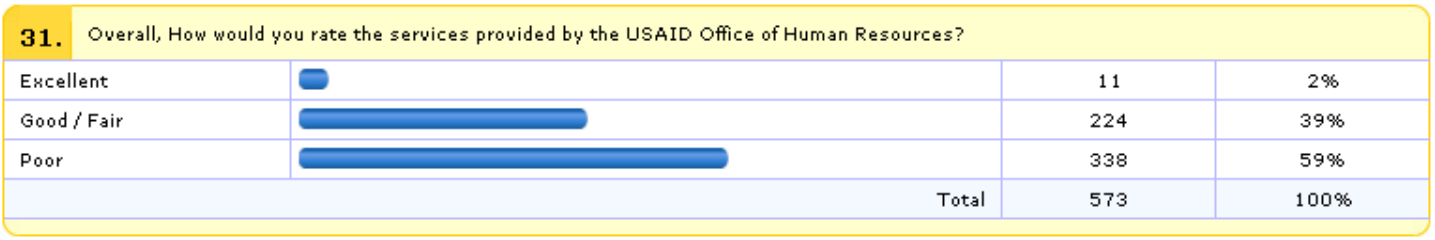
29. Have you requested HR assistance or services in the last 6 months? How would you rate the following services:

30. Have you requested HR assistance or services *prior to the last 6 months*? How would you rate the following services:



Results for Questions 29 & 30: The data for these two questions need to be studied together for comparison.

Analysis: We asked these two questions to detect any improvements in services provided by the Human Resources Office during the previous six months—a period in which HR initiated an intensive program to improve customer service. In fact, if one judges by the decrease in Poor ratings and the increase in excellent and good/fair ratings, there does seems to be an improvement during the previous six months in six of eight areas: Assignment or Promotion, Benefits/Retirement, Social Worker, Employee Assistance, Training, and On Boarding. While the changes is still modest, and the overall rating is still poor, we encourage HR to continue with their improvement program which seems to be having positive effects.



31. Overall, How would you rate the services provided by the USAID Office of Human Resources?			
Excellent		11	2%
Good / Fair		224	39%
Poor		338	59%
	Total	573	100%

Result: Overall, Human Resources still has a high (59%) disapproval rate. Much higher that the poor ratings for the other offices supporting FSOs.

Analysis: The employees served by HR have a long memory which is reflected in these poor grades above. The comments below show the frustrations and problems experienced by FSOs in their interactions with HR. Nevertheless, as explained above, during the last six months there seems to be an upward trend of improvement which some employees have acknowledged.

Comments from members:
"HR is too complicated for its own good. I believe most of the employees try their best, but are continually swamped, and therefore deliver poor service. Every HR process should be clear and easy. Old HR forms should be updated and made intuitive. There should be a clear avenue for employees to report HR experiences, because there just doesn't seem to be enough motivation for HR to improve itself."

"The service of HR is terrible and has an outsized impact on the work experience. In order to protect yourself it is important that you know Agency policy better than they do. It is hard to get attention on an HR-related issue if you are not physically in the building. From overseas it's virtually impossible to get a response."

"HR is non-responsive half the time (ignore e-mails, telephone messages, are never at their desks). Their delay or refusal to respond costs employees hours of their time and effort. Its extremely frustrating and demoralizing. The agency is so focused on streamlining the FS and working smarter, but it NEVER makes any attempt to seriously revamp our HR support services. Where is the accountability? Why is FS held to a higher standard (we get report cards with grades) and HR can underperform repeatedly with no consequences?"

"On the basis of my experience, whenever I deal with HR I assume I am in an adversarial relationship. Top management of USAID needs to fix this. A recent government-wide survey rated USAID 30 out of 33 in terms of employee satisfaction. This unacceptably poor performance is caused by HR."

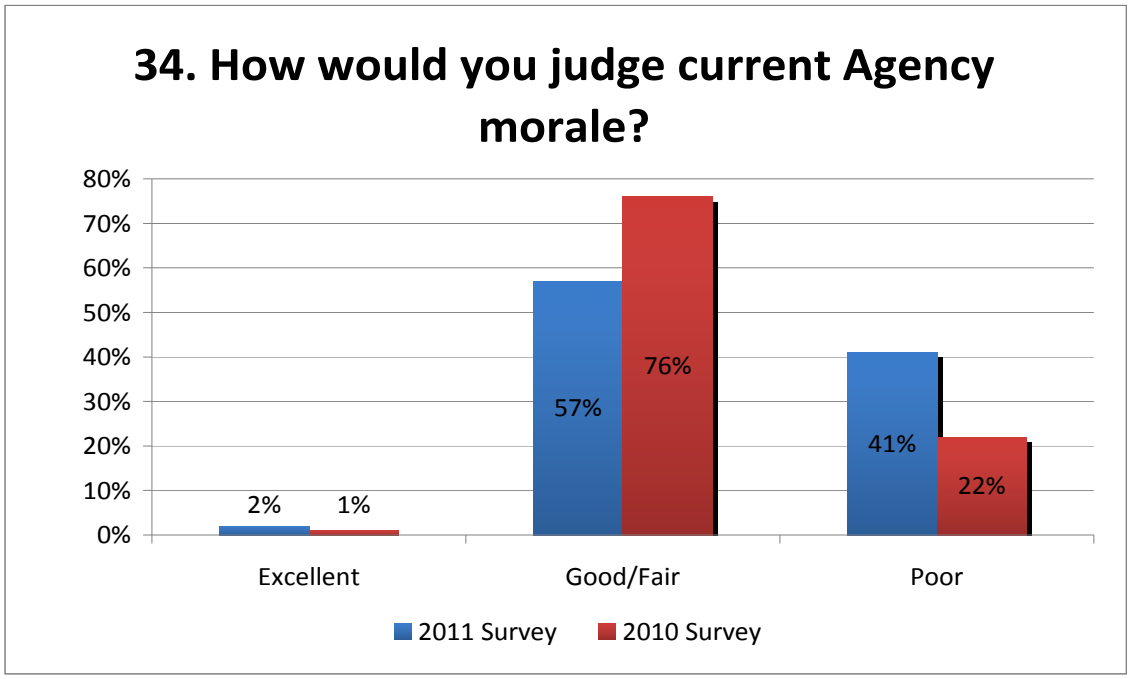
"I had some real difficulties initially regarding retirement/leave calculations, but was one of the lucky ones in that I had all my issues resolved--things suddenly got a lot better around June 2011. My interaction with HR significantly improved from June-August as I was preparing to leave DC."

32.	How would you rate the Office of the Chief Financial Management and the services provided to you?		
Excellent		53	9%
Good / Fair		283	49%
Poor		80	14%
N/A		156	27%
	Total	572	100%

33.	How would you rate the Travel and Transportation Division and the services provided to you?		
Excellent		72	12%
Good / Fair		310	54%
Poor		133	23%
N/A		61	11%
	Total	576	100%

Results for Questions 32 & 33: Most FSOs seem relatively satisfied with FM and Travel and Transportation services.

Analysis: While the above is true, the poor ratings of 14% and 23% respectively should be looked into more carefully.



Results: Morale has worsen from 22% Poor in 2010 to 41% Poor in 2011.

Analysis: The data speaks for itself, the agency's Poor morale has doubled. An institution such as USAID cannot continue at this pace if it is going to fulfill its mandate. Top leadership has to address many of the serious problems identified in this and other surveys (www.bestplacestowork.org) which placed USAID at the bottom of comparable agencies.

Comments by Members:
“I think morale is fair but may be worsening due to all of the different political initiatives coming out of USAID in Washington. There are too many new and competing political priorities that are frustrating to those in the field.”

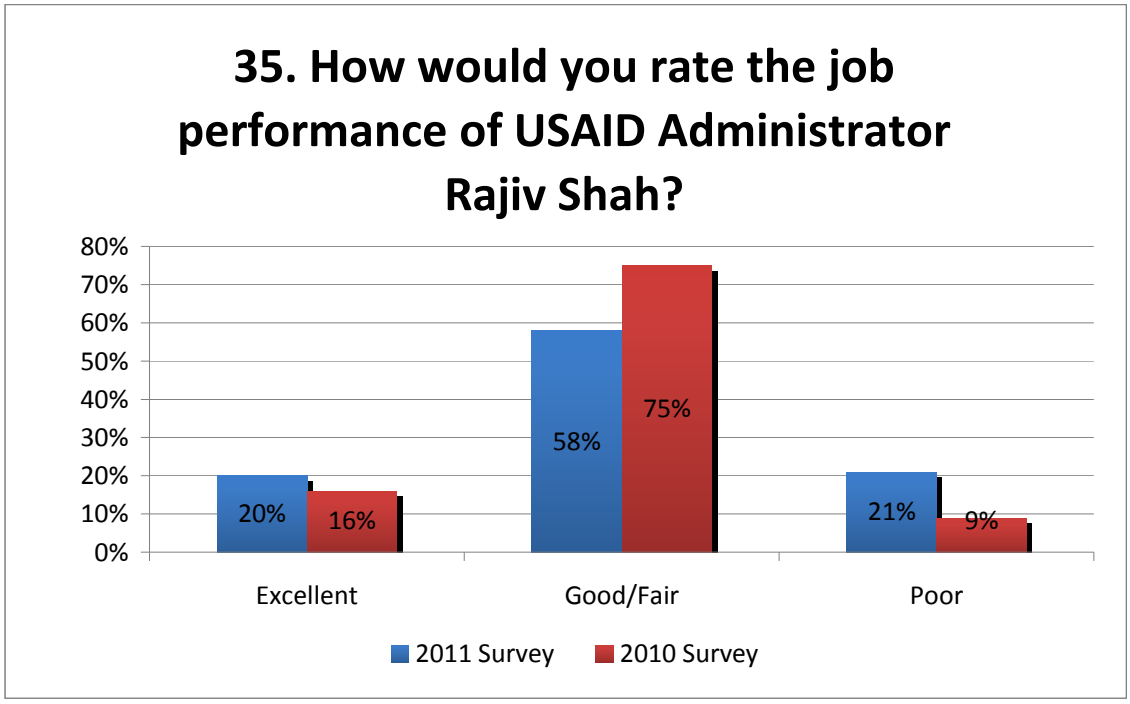
The uncertainty of salaries and benefits is taking a toll on the morale along with reduced services and added stress with co-location with State.”

“Morale is weak at many of the missions I have seen.”

“Re: Question 34, hard to answer for the whole Agency. Our post morale is particularly low right now but I don't know that that's true for the whole agency. I think morale is low agency-wide among many DLIs and that many of them do not plan to remain with the Agency for lengthy careers.”

“The overall conditions worsening is primarily linked to the budget cuts and the continually unresolved situation in Congress and pay freeze and looming loss of OCP, but there is also the looming consolidation with State which is terrible for morale.”

“The notion that AID Forward and all the reforms are some how liberating the field for more direct program implementation is comical. From the field, these reformers don't seem to be talking to one another in DC. Just a storm of reporting for the field. Certainly impacts morale and career trajectory.”



Result: The rating for the Administrator fell from 9% Poor in the 2010 survey to 21% Poor in the current survey. His excellent score increased by 4% during this two surveys.

Analysis: It seems that many of the initiatives which are now being implemented have contributed to the poorer scores for the Administrator.

“Getting political leadership positions filled is usually a top priority, yet we still have a number of vacancies in our leadership positions. Dr. Shah has not gone to bat for many career people who were simply carrying out his direction.”

“Dr. Shah is a good administrator who is ill-served by the inexperienced staff around him. As the Agency continues to duck many of it's most important challenges, both administrative and programmatic, the administrator's authority will erode over time - which is a shame, given that, unlike some of his predecessors, he clearly has the best interests of the Agency at heart. This cannot just be about the administrator, however. We at the senior level owe it to the Agency's junior officers to help Dr. Shah succeed, whether its USAID-Forward, achieving development results, or improving working conditions for foreign service officers.”

“I don't agree with Admin Shah's approach to only big programs primarily in Africa where there is national impact. I think there are many smaller nations that are so close to getting over the hump or are in danger of slipping into chaos. USAID should be prepared to help in both situations. It seems we are turning away from development and leaning towards humanitarian assistance only to support diplomatic/military aims.”

“Dr. Shah seems all over the board - lots of energy in many good directions but lacking some of the maturity that would better guide prioritization and a sense of what is reasonable to accomplish in a given period of time.”

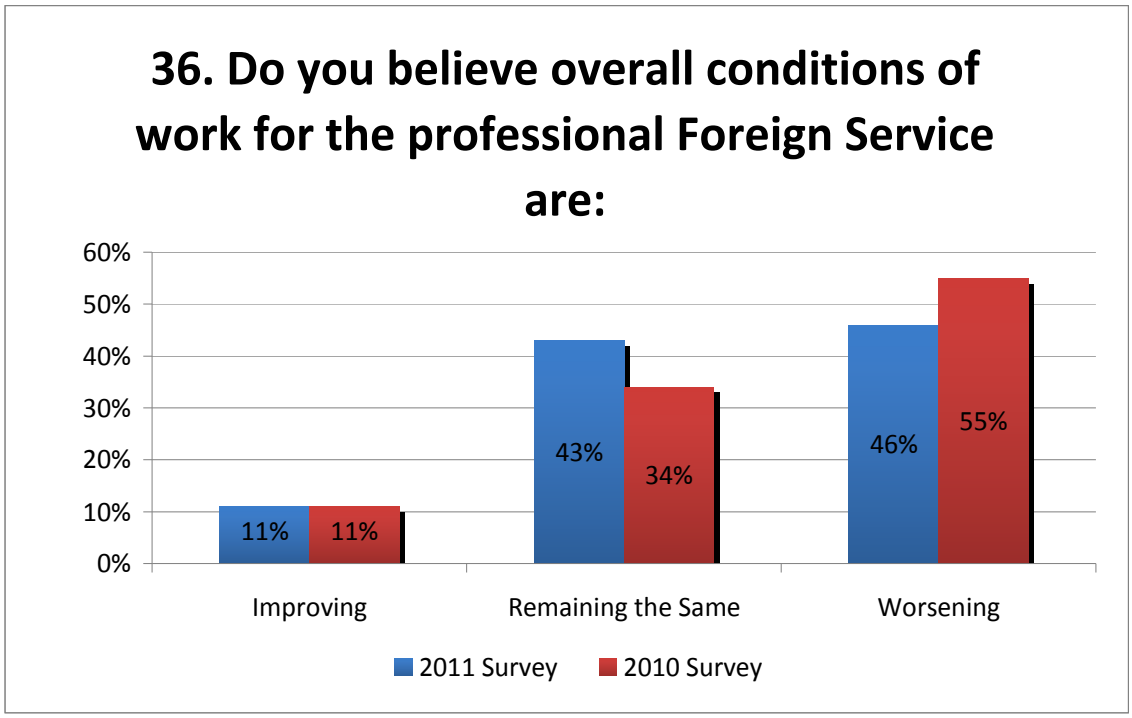
“Admin. Shah brings really important advocacy for the Agency, excitement and expertise - and great new ideas. The only issue is that while trying to accomplish a LOT, the pace of change and the many new initiatives are getting to be too many/too much - we can't keep up with the implementation.”

“Also Admn Shah tried to make too many sweeping changes under the guise of 'reform' which have only resulted in more bureaucratic obstacles to work.”

“Pressure to serve in posts with family separation growing, Raj Shah seems to push a more centralized management style undercutting the strong decentralized model that made USAID strong.”

“As for Shah, I feel he has alienated the field, especially the FSOs who have been with the Agency for a while. He has made inappropriate remarks about our inability to learn and change, about our rigidity.”

“Administrator Shah, while supporting some solid business model initiatives, is linking USAID's development program much too closely to the current administration. In the past, many of USAID's long-term development programs have survived Presidential transitions, but I fear that this will not be the case for FTF and GCC because they are so closely identified as Obama initiatives and not USAID long-term development initiatives. In essence, we are putting all our development eggs worldwide in one very vulnerable basket.”



Result: Comparison between the previous 2010 survey and the current 2011 survey shows high levels of perception that overall conditions of work are worsening.

Analysis: In spite of a lower rating during the current 2011 survey for “worsening” the score is still something to worry about. If close to half of the staff is concerned that things are not improving, there is a real problem here which is also evident in decreases in morale.

Concluding Analysis:

In the introduction, we stated that the survey aimed to clarify several topics. As stated, there is more information included here than came be thoroughly analysed but one can make the following assessments.

Morale has gone down during 2011. FSOs feel that conditions at work have worsen possibly due to the increased demands from the agency on USAID FORWARD, the QDDR, and ICASS. There is also a sense that the ICASS move to consolidate administrative services is putting a lot more stress on USAID officers overseas. Our workforce is tending towards the younger generations and we still have a ways to go to achieve a diverse workforce. FSOs are very concerned about work-life balance and may make career decisions based on that including the option of leaving the agency.

The Human Resouce Office which more than other offices affects everyone's lives more closely is still not judged positively by the great majority of the staff. However, there have recently been actions to improve the services during the last six months including the establishment of a Staff Care Unit and we hope this will continue. Other support offices came out comparatively well in the survey but still have room for improvement.

The membership was clear on what they want AFSA to focus on. Among these are protecting retirement package, equalizing benefits with the State Department, preserving Overseas Comparability Pay, fairness in assignments, and establishing an electronic voting system. The most serious inequity has been and continues to be the poor entry-level salary procedures at USAID which have hurt a great majority of the new officers.

Thank you.