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The Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN)

Evaluation Report: 2008-2016

The Presidential Policy Directive on Global
Development (PPD-6) and MFAN's Influence

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Acronyms

MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFAN	Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
PPD-6	Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development
PSD	Presidential Study Directive
QDDR	Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USTR	Office of the United States Trade Representative

The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (PPD-6) and MFAN's Influence

As part of a retrospective evaluation of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network's (MFAN's) first eight years (2008-2016), the evaluation team explored in depth four outcomes to which MFAN members believed MFAN contributed significantly. The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (PPD-6) was among these four.

PPD-6: Outcome of Interest

The content and issuance of PPD-6 in September 2010, and the key changes that flowed from it.

President Barack Obama issued the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development (PPD-6) on September 22, 2010 – “The first of its kind by a U.S. [a]dministration,” according to its [fact sheet](#). The Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) evaluation advisory committee members and other interviewees pointed to PPD-6 as a key outcome of MFAN's work.¹ One committee member said: “[PPD-6] captured the essence of MFAN's agenda. It was the first print out from the U.S. government on development policy, and it tracked with MFAN's agenda.”

Consensus View

MFAN's internal work on shared principles and its external advocacy before the 2008 elections and during the Obama transition appear to have provided some content and political momentum for PPD-6. MFAN members influenced each other's thinking during MFAN's formation in early 2008 and the writing of *New Day, New Way* in mid-2008. MFAN's first set of co-chairs included Gayle Smith, who entered the Obama administration and led the PPD-6 process. The priorities and framing in *New Day, New Way* were carried into the administration by influential thought leaders from MFAN and were reflected in PPD-6. MFAN, and its members also played some role in securing bipartisan support for reform principles as expressed in both party platforms in 2008.

Interviews do not support an earlier hypothesis that MFAN influenced PPD-6 by pursuing reform through multiple avenues, including the White House, Congress, the State Department, and multiple networks of MFAN members. Instead, once the new administration was in place, most observers and participants agree that MFAN was not a key player in influencing the specific content of PPD-6. The exception is in country ownership. Some believe MFAN members contributed to the PPD-6 commitment to this concept. External interviews also contradicted an earlier suggestion that MFAN may have influenced PPD-6's issuance as a stand-alone document. They believed MFAN played little or no role in this.

MFAN engaged in efforts to serve as a watchdog of PPD-6 implementation. Some activities appear to have been influential within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), but MFAN may also have missed opportunities to encourage further action.

Absent MFAN, what would likely have occurred regarding PPD-6?

- PPD-6 would likely have been issued as a stand-alone document with similar if not identical content, assuming the same thought leaders entered the Obama administration.

¹ References to MFAN in this document include its fiscal sponsor, New Venture Fund. New Venture Fund serves as the official legal and fiscal entity for MFAN and exercises management oversight over the project.

- However, the global financial crisis and other priorities might have edged out global development without MFAN’s earlier work to spotlight and promote the consensus view on foreign assistance reform.

MFAN’s Contribution

Most influential action occurred before 2008 election

In early 2008, grant funding supported a variety of disparate foreign assistance reform efforts. Leaders of those efforts and staff at the Hewlett Foundation agreed they could amplify impact through a more coordinated approach. This developed first into the Wye River Consensus Group, with meetings and discussions on a set of shared principles. This group pursued bipartisan outreach. In particular, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition and the ONE Campaign engaged in campaigns that pressed the presidential candidates to go on record on aid reform, and other reform leaders participated in high-level events at both party conventions. This effort culminated in key planks in both the Democratic and Republican party platforms in summer 2008. Some observers interviewed for this research said this bipartisan consensus exerted more influence on the eventual issuance of PPD-6 than did MFAN’s advocacy.

MFAN launched officially as a coalition in June 2008, with the release of *New Day, New Way*, which outlined its five core principles and four priority actions.

Outside the United States, several factors put pressure on the U.S. government to pursue aid effectiveness at high levels. These included the Accra Agenda for Action, which emerged from the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the rising influence of the U.K. Department for International Development, and the peer reviews of U.S. policy by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee.

Meanwhile, the financial crisis of 2008 was roiling markets and economies worldwide and led to a recession in the U.S. that continued for several years. The incoming administration – regardless of party or stated priorities – would necessarily focus attention on preventing and managing the worst effects of the global crisis. This created a new hurdle for an effort such as a PPD on global development.

Early Obama administration and 2009 congressional action

Importantly, MFAN leaders were recruited to the Obama transition team – including Sheila Herrling, Steve Radelet, Gayle Smith, and Larry Nowels, and some took permanent positions in the administration. In early and mid-2009, MFAN worked closely with the House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA) on legislation to advance reform: H.R. 2139 (Initiating Foreign Assistance Act) and H.R. 2140 (Foreign Relations Authorization Act). MFAN also worked with Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) and Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) on S. 1524 (Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act). At the same time, MFAN held discussions with new senior State Department officials, who expressed little interest in pursuing an aid reform agenda – especially structural reform – or working with Congress to write new legislation.

Some MFAN participants and its internal reports interpreted the maintenance of congressional pressure through legislation as important leverage in advancing PPD-6. However, no stakeholder interviews confirmed that view. Instead, interviewees said that PPD-6 would likely have been issued regardless of congressional action.

Executive action on aid reform became publicly evident in the summer of 2009 through two key actions:

1. In July, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the first-ever State/USAID Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR). The QDDR process extended through December 2010 – after PPD-6 was released.
2. In August, President Obama signed a Presidential Study Directive (PSD-7), authorizing National Security Advisor James Jones and National Economic Council Director Lawrence Summers to launch a first-ever, cross-government review of U.S. development policy, which led eventually to PPD-6. Gayle Smith, National Security Council (NSC) senior director (and former MFAN co-chair) led the review, with Jeremy Weinstein, the NSC director for democracy. This process was initially set to take 120 days. However, it took one year, and PPD-6 was released September 22, 2010.

From late 2009 through early 2010, MFAN coordinated the development community's response to questions posed by the PSD team, as well as a grassroots petition asking the White House to create a national strategy for global development. Thirty groups participated in this petition effort, and the MFAN website captured over 40,000 signatures for delivery to the White House on December 23, 2009. Through this petition, MFAN hoped to support efforts inside the White House to create an institutionalized global development strategy that would be periodically refreshed. It was also a clear and actionable request on which MFAN could engage grassroots activists.

MFAN mostly relied on its informal relationships with high-level administration officials, especially Gayle Smith and Jeremy Weinstein. One MFAN member said, "It was a closed, insider process ... [with] no formal consultation process." (However, as seen below, some consultations did occur.) At the same time, this member said, "I don't think this would have happened as is without MFAN. MFAN created a shared, articulated agenda spanning different constituencies ... forged consensus, formalized policy positions ... created political momentum. When you have a group of influential individuals calling for the same thing, that carries weight."

Some MFAN members believed the breadth of organizations involved in MFAN – think tanks, former policy officials, and NGOs – contributed to several positive results. They believe it helped convince Rep. Berman to pursue legislation, offered Gayle Smith protection in her work on PPD-6, and served as a caution against State Department officials interested in subsuming USAID. One MFAN member said, "It changed the political equation for all of those actors ... Gayle would have wanted to do PPD-6 regardless, but it's not clear that the White House would have spent so much political capital, absent development community support." Another said, "Much of this might not have happened without the external push." However, key stakeholders interviewed later in the evaluation process either challenged or did not confirm this view.

PPD-6 process delays and competing efforts

In early 2010, newly-confirmed USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and senior leaders at USAID were developing a reform agenda: USAID Forward. Portions of USAID Forward began to appear by mid-year; the full document was released later in the year and eventually served as a vehicle to implement aspects of what would be PPD-6. According to MFAN internal reports, USAID Forward "emphasized many of the principles of Hewlett's objectives for change." MFAN offered full support to the new administrator in helping him rebuild the agency, put in place key reforms, and engage Congress to build a stronger political base.

President Obama issued a new National Security Strategy (NSS) in May 2010 which stated, “Development is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative.” That month, *ForeignPolicy.com* published a leaked draft version of the PPD. MFAN issued a statement: “Leaked White House Development Document Has Strong Reform Elements.” At the June 2010 G8 Summit, President Obama outlined a new approach to development, as reflected in the recently-released NSS. He said the PPD would be released in the near future. MFAN issued a statement: “Praise for President Obama’s Development Leadership at the G8 Summit.” In it MFAN strongly supported the administration’s efforts to elevate and institutionalize the idea that fighting global poverty is a moral, strategic, and economic imperative.

As the PPD-6 and QDDR processes both stretched beyond their deadlines – and with some competition and disagreements between the two teams leading these efforts, MFAN viewed the PPD-6 process as the better prospect for alignment with its reform principles. MFAN engaged in a behind-the-scenes campaign to press for the release of the PPD and to frame how it would be received, depending on its contents. MFAN also cautioned against positions that seemed to be emerging in the QDDR that would further subordinate USAID and development to the State Department.

Internal MFAN structures seemed to limit the network’s ability to respond nimbly during this uncertain phase. With the environment constantly shifting, reaching a timely consensus on a congressional letter urging the issuance of the PPD was not deemed possible. In early July, MFAN released a sign-on letter promoting a global development strategy, with a campaign to secure signatures beyond MFAN members. In early August, MFAN released a statement: “More than 200 Endorsers Agree that Aid Reform is Within Reach.”

Some MFAN members remember this as a time when their ability to influence the content and issuance of the PPD was particularly unclear. There was a formal consultation process with the private sector and with foundations, but no formal consultative role for MFAN or for think tanks and the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community. MFAN had coordinated responses from the development community to questions from the PSD-7 teams, but that process had finished months earlier. While some MFAN members did meet regularly with Gayle Smith, they were unsure how best to support her in the PPD-6 process.

In late August, MFAN learned that PPD-6 was finalized and heard that some core MFAN principles were missing from its content. MFAN used a speech in early September by Secretary Clinton as an opportunity to press its reform agenda, issuing a statement: “Secretary Clinton’s CFR Speech Falls Short on Development and Aid Reform.” MFAN leaders were strategizing how to react to a weak PPD-6 that contained few of its reform priorities. While MFAN plus ones vigorously debated how to respond to a weak PPD-6 and QDDR process, all agreed that implementing the PPD would become a major focus of MFAN – especially in the event of a Republican-led House of Representatives after the 2010 elections.

PPD-6 is issued

On September 22, 2010, President Obama signed PPD-6 and issued a public statement. MFAN issued its own statement: “Visionary New Development Policy Lays the Foundation for More Effective Foreign Aid.” According to MFAN members, the reform movement was “celebrating a major victory” with President Obama’s speech about PPD-6 at the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit. MFAN members also noted that the document offered opportunities for progress beyond what had been expected based on the leaked draft and rumored content.

The content of PPD-6 reflects MFAN’s five core principles and most of its priority actions as outlined in *New Day New Way*.

1. Related to MFAN's call to "elevate global development as a national interest priority in actions as well as rhetoric," PPD-6 commits several times to "elevate development as a core pillar of America's power" and have the distinct development, diplomacy, and defense efforts "mutually reinforce and complement" one another. It directs the USAID administrator to be included in NSC meetings – although it also adds "as appropriate." It intended to reestablish the U.S. as the global leader on international development.
2. PPD-6 echoes MFAN's second principle – "align foreign assistance policies, operations, budgets, and statutory authorities" – in its call for a "modern architecture that elevates development as a key pillar ... and harnesses development capabilities spread across Government" and to "identify distinct policy objectives, prioritize among them, and then align resources and attention accordingly." It also commits to "generate greater coherence across the United States Government" and "build and integrate the capabilities that can advance our interests."
3. MFAN's third principle – "rebuild and rationalize organizational structures" – is referenced in several PPD-6 sections. PPD-6 describes "a long-term commitment to rebuilding USAID as our lead development agency – and as the world's premier development agency" through several concrete actions, as well as "enhanced level of interagency cooperation." However, it does not call for the degree of structural reform MFAN had promoted.
4. PPD-6 emphasizes a commitment to "hold all recipients of U.S. assistance accountable for achieving development results" and a new partnership with Congress in which the administration will "seek greater flexibilities, including a reduction in earmarks and ability to reallocate funding from less to more effective programs, while committing departments and agencies to a much higher standard of accountability for results." These passages capture MFAN's fourth principle: "commit sufficient and flexible resources with accountability for results."
5. Lastly, MFAN's principle to "partner with others to produce results" is included in several sections of PPD-6. "We will pursue development through partnership, not patronage," PPD-6 asserts. "To make these programs more effective, we are working closely with recipient nations, other donors, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, UN agencies, and multilateral development banks," and "[t]o reach beyond government and provide greater coherence with our nongovernmental partners, we will create a U.S. Global Development Council."

In December 2010, the first State Department QDDR was issued. Interviewees in an August 2011 internal MFAN report frequently pointed to the QDDR, rather than PPD-6, as an influential executive action. One expert noted that the "QDDR is a real commitment." A policymaker added, "Actual implementation is taking place." Another policymaker said, "The QDDR was a success. We can declare victory." Another expert agreed: "They [USAID] have a functionality that was missing in the past."

Implementation: the true test

After issuance of PPD-6, MFAN and its members shifted to a focus on implementation of PPD-6 principles. For example, InterAction held an off-the-record discussion in October 2010 with senior government officials on PPD-6, with an emphasis on economic growth, scientific evidence, and other development components beyond aid. In December 2010, MFAN released "From Paper to Product: Key Benchmarks for Effectively Implementing the President's Development Policy" to assess PPD-6.

In 2011, MFAN continued its effort to influence the implementation of PPD-6. One strategy was to publicly identify criteria to assess its implementation, and then monitor progress through consultation with key officials and allies in Congress. Publicly, MFAN would place pressure on policymakers through

media and academic outlets. In June, it activated that strategy by releasing "[Key Benchmarks for Global Development Policy Reform](#)" to assess both PPD-6 and the QDDR. MFAN publicized the benchmarks in Devex and other media.

MFAN released "[The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development: A First Anniversary Assessment](#)" in September 2011 and hosted a town hall discussion on PPD-6 implementation progress with the State Department, USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the Department of the Treasury, and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). MFAN leaders noted that the event highlighted some changes inspired by PPD-6, including a degree of coordination across agencies. However, the event did not explore how PPD-6 improved activities in the field. A dashboard with MCC data was soon to be released, and planning for the Partnership for Growth was advancing. MFAN reports at the time note that MFAN pushed to include all relevant agencies' data in the dashboard as part of PPD-6's implementation.

Also in September, USAID released a new five-year [Policy Framework for 2011-2015](#) that described the agency's vision in support of PPD-6 and the QDDR. USAID began introducing cross-cutting policies and sector-specific strategies, including a new evaluation policy intended to make its programs more measurable, results-oriented, and accountable, as well as a gender policy. MFAN continued to hope for a comprehensive global development strategy, and viewed USAID's renewed emphasis on these cross-cutting policies as a potential foundation for a future global development strategy.

From late 2011 through early 2012, MFAN sent inquiries to 16 U.S. government agencies, asking how they were implementing guidance from PPD-6. MFAN received responses from USAID, MCC, USTR, Peace Corps, Health and Human Services, and Treasury. MFAN published these documents on a microsite it launched in April 2012 to highlight PPD-6 implementation. MFAN intended to update the site with other agency feedback, content from MFAN principals and other stakeholders, perspectives from the field on how the PPD was working in partner countries, and discussion and reaction from the broader development community. The microsite eventually spawned two blog series: one from MFAN principals and other community leaders assessing individual agencies; and another highlighting efforts by MFAN implementing partners. However, the site was not as active as originally planned.

Some administration officials interviewed for this evaluation did not independently identify MFAN as very influential in PPD-6 implementation. Others believed MFAN played an active oversight role on PPD-6 implementation in the area of evidence-based decision making. Still, these interviewees noted that MFAN could have conducted other activities to monitor and highlight the level of implementation across multiple government agencies.

MFAN drafted a scorecard on agency implementation of PPD-6 at the directive's two-year mark in September 2012, but did not release it. MFAN's focus on PPD-6 implementation seemed to decline around this time. After President Obama's re-election in 2012, MFAN hosted several off-the-record consultations with key NSC and MCC officials. These discussions informed the development of MFAN's transition recommendations to the president, which were organized around the three pillars of PPD-6.

MFAN Capacities

A few of MFAN's capacities related to governance and structure seem to have influenced MFAN's work on PPD-6, either by amplifying MFAN's role or presenting challenges.

- Membership
 - Many interviewees cited the value in the PPD-6 process of having influential leaders among early MFAN members – including several who served on the Obama transition team and/or entered the administration. The actions of this network of powerful players was repeatedly noted as the central factor in setting the context for PPD-6, carrying MFAN’s principles into the administration, and delivering whatever influence was possible in a somewhat closed process.
 - The breadth of the network, with its connections among think tanks, NGOs, former policymakers, and international development experts, was also noted as an influential external force able to exert pressure on the executive branch to prioritize development policy. However, it is unclear whether PPD-6 would have been issued (and with the same content) without that pressure.
- Governance
 - MFAN’s near-consensus decision-making process may have interfered with its ability to respond nimbly to a quickly changing environment in summer 2010, just before the release of PPD-6. Notes and interviews indicate MFAN may have missed opportunities to press its agenda due to slow decision making, although whether this had a negative impact on the directive is uncertain.

PPD-6 Timeline of Key Events

Late 2007: Candidate Barack Obama issued a statement “Strengthening Our Common Security by Investing in Our Common Humanity” that outlined his priorities on foreign assistance reform, including some that aligned with MFAN’s eventual priorities (e.g., the establishment of development as a key pillar in foreign policy; the restructuring and strengthening of USAID).

Early 2008: The Wye River Consensus Group² began discussions on shared foreign assistance reform principles (supported by the Hewlett Foundation).

June 2008: The consensus group was formally launched as the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN) with the release of *New Day, New Way*, which outlined five core principles and four priority actions. The MFAN co-chairs were Steve Radelet of the Center for Global Development and Gayle Smith of the Center for American Progress. The stated principles were: (1) elevate global development as a national interest priority in actions as well as rhetoric; (2) align foreign assistance policies, operations, budgets, and statutory authorities; (3) rebuild and rationalize organizational structures; (4) commit sufficient and flexible resources with accountability for results; and (5) partner with others to produce results. The priority actions were: (1) develop a global development strategy; (2) enact a new Foreign Assistance Act; (3) create a Cabinet-level global development department; and (4) increase funding for and accountability of development assistance.

Summer 2008: The Democratic and Republican party conventions featured high-profile events on global development; both party platforms reflected a commitment to foreign assistance reform greatly aligned with MFAN’s priorities; and both major party candidates expressed support for some type of foreign assistance reform.

² The Wye River Consensus Group grew out of a Hewlett-funded gathering of global development experts from think tanks, NGOs, and individuals who had worked on U.S. foreign assistance for much of their careers to develop a consensus on how to reform and restructure the U.S. foreign aid system, in order to amplify the impact of their disparate foreign assistance reform efforts. This two-day Wye River retreat took place in Maryland in January 2008. At the conclusion of the retreat, the group agreed on key principles and a set of potential action items.

Late 2008: Several core MFAN members served on the Obama transition team, guiding foreign assistance reform discussions.

April 2009: H.R. 2139 (Initiating Foreign Assistance Act) was introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Berman. It called for drafting a national strategy for global development. MFAN influenced the act's introduction and content, and helped secure 125 co-sponsors.

May 2009: H.R. 2140 (Foreign Relations Authorization Act) was introduced by Rep. Berman. It directed the president to develop a national strategy on U.S. diplomacy and development, and to conduct a QDDR.

July 2009: S. 1524 (Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act) was introduced by Sens. Kerry and Lugar. MFAN members worked closely with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the content of the legislation and conducted advocacy concerning co-sponsors and support.

July 2009: Secretary of State Clinton announced the State/USAID QDDR process, co-led by Policy and Planning chief Anne-Marie Slaughter and Deputy Secretary Jack Lew.

August 2009: President Obama signed a PSD authorizing the NSC and National Economic Council to lead a cross-agency review of U.S. development policy. Gayle Smith, NSC senior director (and former MFAN co-chair) led the review, with Jeremy Weinstein, the NSC director for democracy.

November 2009: MFAN coordinated the development community's response to questions posed by the PSD team.

Late 2009: MFAN secured over 40,000 signatures on a grassroots petition asking the White House to create a national strategy for global development.

Early 2010: MFAN conducted outreach to members of the government agency teams involved in the PSD process.

Early 2010: New USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and senior leaders were developing an agenda for action "to make USAID the best development agency in the world." Later, this reform agenda, USAID Forward, also served as a vehicle to implement aspects of PPD-6.

Early to Mid 2010: The White House held PPD consultations with the executive agencies, private sector stakeholders, and foundations.

May 2010: President Obama issued a new National Security Strategy (NSS) which stated, "Development is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative."

May 2010: *ForeignPolicy.com* published a leaked draft version of the PPD. MFAN issued a statement: "[Leaked White House Development Document Has Strong Reform Elements.](#)"

June 2010: At the G8 Summit, President Obama outlined a new approach to development, as reflected in the recently-released NSS. He said the PPD would be released in the near future. MFAN issued a statement: "[Praise for President Obama's Development Leadership at the G8 Summit.](#)"

August 5, 2010: MFAN secured signatures on an open letter to President Obama calling on him to issue a new development policy. MFAN released a statement: "[More than 200 Endorsers Agree that Aid Reform is Within Reach.](#)"

September 9, 2010: MFAN issued a statement: "Secretary Clinton's CFR Speech Falls Short on Development and Aid Reform."

September 22, 2010: President Obama issued PPD-6. MFAN issued a statement: "Visionary New Development Policy Lays the Foundation for More Effective Foreign Aid," which said the reform movement was "celebrating a major victory today" with President Obama's speech at the UN MDG Summit, which outlined the new development approach laid out in PPD-6.

December 2010: The first QDDR, a four-year joint strategic plan for the State Department and USAID, was released.

December 2010: MFAN released "From Paper to Product: Key Benchmarks for Effectively Implementing the President's Development Policy" to assess PPD-6.

June 2011: MFAN released "Key Benchmarks for Global Development Policy Reform" to assess both PPD-6 & QDDR.

September 2011: MFAN released "The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development: A First Anniversary Assessment" and hosted a town hall discussion on PPD-6 implementation with State, USAID, MCC, Treasury, and USTR.

November 2011: USAID Partnership for Growth initiative began. This program – with pilots in the Philippines, El Salvador, Ghana, and Tanzania – embodies PPD-6 principles, using a whole-of-government approach to development. Reports and mid-term evaluations were subsequently made available, and the five-year projects were ongoing.

Late 2011-Early 2012: MFAN sent inquiries to 16 U.S. government departments and agencies asking how they were implementing guidance from PPD-6. MFAN subsequently received responses from USAID, MCC, USTR, Peace Corps, Health and Human Services, and Treasury.

February 2012: Global Development Council launched. It was enacted under the auspices of PPD-6 to provide advice to the president and U.S. government agencies on creating public-private partnerships to boost global development. It later held its first public meeting in April 2014.

April 2012: MFAN launched the "From Policy to Action" microsite on PPD-6 implementation.

November 2012: President Obama was re-elected to a second term.

January 2013: MFAN submitted recommendations to the administration for second term reform actions.

February 2013: MFAN hosted panel discussion with key members of the administration's development team.

