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PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON
IDENTIFYING CRITICAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

The Urban Development Staff has prepared a paper which attempts to delineate the universe of critical urban development problems and issues. This paper has been reviewed within the Agency, by a group of special graduate students from overseas who are studying urban development at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and by 70 urban affairs specialists in this country, who also have had experience overseas in various aspects of urban development.

The 70 specialists were organized into a series of seven multidisciplinary panels. Each panel held an all-day meeting, and the specialists participated without remuneration. They included professors from 32 universities; officials from 4 governmental agencies and 3 international agencies; other professionals from 5 private organizations and 5 consulting firms; and 3 individual consultants.

Anthropology, architecture, city planning, civil engineering, demography, ecology, economics, geography, history, housing, law, physics, political science, public administration, sociology, transportation, and urban and regional planning were among the disciplines represented on these panels.

The multidisciplinary nature of the panels was surprisingly well received. Some participants said this was the first time they had discussed urban development problems in a multidisciplinary setting. Several panels urged that an extension of this mechanism, both at home and in the LDC's, should become a component of AID's technical assistance in the urban development field.

Results of the Panel Discussions

Generally speaking, the paper was accepted by the latter group at face value. There were some additions, some criticisms of the handling of individual problems, and considerable praise for having produced a credibly comprehensive statement of the major problems and issues.

A brief has been prepared on each panel indicating the specific points and recommendations presented. This report is an attempt to distill these into a fairly concise statement. The topics discussed fall under three categories:

1. U.S. capabilities in the urban development field;
2. Urban development problems in the LDC's
 - a. The underlying problem areas
 - b. Other significant problem areas; and
3. Recommendations for program development.

With respect to U.S. capabilities in the urban development field, the consultations have indicated that:

- a. There are no ready or easy answers to the problems of urban growth. Nor is there an exportable U.S. model of urban development. In fact, it was noted frequently that the U.S. has much to learn about effective ways of addressing its own problems of urban growth. There is great scope for a two-way flow of information, ideas, approaches.
- b. The reservoir of broad-gauged, skilled and experienced manpower in urban development (in contrast to sectoral specialists) is limited in the U. S. Someone ventured an estimate of no more than 50, a figure that met with no objections from the others. Some means of providing field experience and seasoning for young specialists in this field is needed.
- c. The U.S. has training capacity in this area, but it is far from ideal. A comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to urban development training, one recognizing its role in regional and national development, is still nascent in this country. Those few institutions that do offer programs including a focus on developing countries tend to have substantially differentiated approaches to the problem, are usually unstable in terms of quality and duration of programs, and have few meaningful linkages with one another.
- d. In the realm of institutional development in the LDC's, there was disenchantment with the institution-to-institution approach (the LDC institution is too greatly influenced by the parochial interests of the U.S. sister institution) and some support for broadly based, closely monitored consortium arrangements.
- e. In addition to these somewhat qualified capabilities, it was also felt that the U.S. has several other resources or resource areas that can be brought to bear on the problem. These include: the ability to train people in the more narrow specialties related to urban development; research capability; and, competence in policy development, planning and systems analysis.

In terms of the problems of urban development in the LDC's, the panels' comments tended to break down into four underlying problem areas:

- a. Appropriate approach to and basis for addressing urban development problems. There was considerable, almost unanimous, support for the notion that there is a need to create an awareness of the relationship between urban development and national development. The need is nearly as great in our own, in private and in international assistance programs, as it is in the developing nations. There are still many shibboleths in this field. Also, in this same connection, we were urged to minimize the rural-urban dichotomy, to pursue a horizontal rather than a sectoral approach, and to work on clarifying the developmental linkages within and between urban systems.
- b. Administrative bottlenecks. Administrative capabilities tend to diminish with distance from the policy level, both in terms of physical distance from the geographic centers of authority and in terms of hierarchical distance from the seat of authority in a given administrative center. Moreover, efficiency in the decision making process is frequently low at the policy level. These are realities that must be faced in considering prospects for efficient urban development, and in analysis of urban development problems. Important factors in these deficiencies are thought to be institutional weaknesses, lack of information, and a need for more training at all levels of administration.
- c. Development planning. Planning for urban development can be a means of getting at the problem horizontally, across all sectors in a multidisciplinary framework that can involve people at all levels of authority. This, however, is a goal and not a reflection of reality. Planning is also criticized for its frequent departures from real world situations in terms of administrative and technical capabilities, physical and financial resources and time frame for implementation. Frequently too, goals are contradictory. It was suggested that goal-oriented, long range planning (e.g., 20 years) may serve as a "think piece" for officials at all levels, minimizing contradictions in the decision process and helping to keep development on an even keel. All of this assumes some form of linkages between national, regional and urban planning.
- d. Research, information and data gathering. Much discussion was devoted to urban development problems in terms of research needs and the availability of information. Suggested areas of concentration were: standardizing measures of urbanization and urban development; creating non-economic measures in this area; sharing of information; doing comparative studies; developing cross national linkages; relating technology to urban development; and promoting further research on migration, squatter settlements (as solutions as well as problems), cost curves by city-size, primacy in national development, etc. The need for comprehensive field manuals in some of these problem areas was underscored.

In addition to these underlying problem areas, the panels identified a number of important issues affecting urban development, most of which are in one way or another related to one or more of these problem areas.

- a. Capital investment has a significant impact on the nature, scope and pattern of urban development. A real contribution to the knowledge of this relationship could be made by careful research into the urban developmental consequences of past A.I.D. investments; e.g., point-to-point connecting highways, electric power plants, by-pass highways and other major construction projects. An improved insight into the consequences of the nature, timing and location of such investments has obvious policy implications.
- b. In the same vein, certain leverage institutions, such as the construction industry and the military, have a decisive role in urban development. For example, the size, nature and location of a military installation, either foreign or local military, will directly influence the urbanization process around it. Also, the nature and policies of the construction industry make a decided imprint on various aspects of urban development. These kinds of phenomena have not been adequately dealt with nor are they consciously considered as a tool in the development process.
- c. Transportation was viewed as a critical sector in terms of its potential for influencing the nature and functioning of urban centers. Much of this potential is as yet unexplored. There is great scope here for alternatives to the automobile in the developing countries.
- d. The market mechanism (pricing system) is an effective allocative tool in urban development. However, it is grossly underutilized and perhaps misunderstood. Implications for its use should be made widely known.
- e. Land use analysis and planning is another area with broad implications for urban development that is underutilized and not widely comprehended.
- f. In more general terms, it was noted that an anti-urban bias tends to pervade the thinking of most operators in this area. The notion that somehow "keeping them down on the farm" is the answer to the urban problem is strongly engrained in this country and abroad and is reflected in policy measures. It was cautioned that this attitude may tend to obscure some of the more serious problems and some of the more practical solutions.

A broad range of approaches and activities was suggested for both A.I.D. and the Urban Development Staff in addressing problems of urban development. In view of the issues highlighted in the foregoing section, the activities proposed which seem to have the most relevance are as follows:

- a. the strengthening and development of training institutions in the U.S. and the LDC's;
- b. the development of mechanisms for the exchange of information on research, case studies, and technological breakthroughs in urban development;
- c. at the planning and implementation stages of capital and technical assistance projects of a sectoral or geographical nature, the creation of an awareness of their implications for urban development; and
- d. the sponsoring of research in some of the difficult areas of policy, including also research by specialists in their own countries.

Most of these activities have potential for contributing also a by-product to U.S. urban development activities and capabilities. Serious urban problems are universal, and there is scope for useful multilateral exchange.

The consultants were unanimous in stressing the importance of inputs from overseas prior to determining whether or how far A.I.D. should and can go towards a systematic effort to provide assistance to developing country efforts to cope with their urbanization problems. TA/UDS is just beginning this phase of the analysis.