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**Medical Equipment Maintenance and Repair Project**

USAID - c/o U. S. Embassy

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QUARTERLY REPORT: February 1979 - April 1979

While technical and training activities continued at their previous rapid pace, progress on other fronts this quarter has been disappointing. The Ministry of Health has been unable or unwilling to fully support this project in several critical areas, and there appears to be little desire or interest in expanding the capabilities of the Engineering Office beyond what now exists.

1. Training

a. All workshop staff members participated in extensive repair and maintenance activities under the supervision of Eng. Charaf of myself. As usual, there was a wide range of equipment on which to gain experience, from mimeograph and photocopy machines to laundry equipment, to X-ray and EKG machines. The staff also spent a considerable number of man-days in the field, largely in the northern provinces.

b. I have sent requests for information to approximately 50 U.S. educational institutions which are reputed to have programs in biomedical equipment technology. Several have responded which seem to have suitable programs for participants from this project. Engineer Fouad Na'ameh has successfully completed English training at ELTC and will be ready to go to the U.S. in several months. There are no other candidates at present due to a general shortage of technical staff.

2. Personnel

a. The Central Workshop staff was reduced by one this quarter by the transfer of the technician Fariz Bazerbachi to the Technical Health Institute. This assignment had been requested by USAID, and the Ministry responded but unfortunately does not seem to be considering hiring anyone to replace him at the Central Workshop.

b. In a similar vein, the Engineering Office requested that two other technicians who had been in training with us since September 1978 be transferred to hospitals in their home towns, but the Ministry refused to make these transfers for a variety of weak reasons, but apparently related to the policy or desire not to hire any replacements for the Central Workshop. It is painfully clear to this contractor that the continued failure of the Ministry to transfer trained

technicians to sites outside Damascus where they are needed, replace them with new trainable technicians, and to expand the Engineering Office staff to levels agreed upon at the start of this project, will result in the failure of this project to meet its objectives. I have already brought this problem to the Deputy Minister and to USAID's attention, and suggest that some effort on the part of USAID would be appropriate to ascertain the Ministry's commitment to the project and to determine the cause of the difficulties we are encountering in the personnel area. The overall conception of the Engineering Office in the eyes of the Ministry also seems to have varied from what it was when the project was planned. The Ministry now regards the Engineering Office as a static organization which can be pushed as far as necessary to "put out fires". As long as there are sufficient personnel to do this, and the Director of the Engineering Office can be directed accordingly, there seems to be complete satisfaction with the status quo.

### 3. Commodities

a. Six qualified bids for the prefabricated workshop building were opened on Feb. 26. A committee of four designated by the Ministry (including me) selected the lowest offer based on a technical comparison, and the recommendation was officially sent to the State Planning Commission in mid-May. Due to the inadequate details included with most of the bids, it was necessary to Telex or write the companies for additional information.

b. The Dodge van for the mobile workshop is at the Ministry garage. We plan to move it in back of the Ministry to work on equipping it as soon as some interfering construction work is completed.

c. None of the commodities ordered last September under a PIO/C have arrived yet.

d. We have used AID Purchase Orders to buy small electronic parts and other items from the U.S., having them shipped by pouch. This method appears to be subject to long delays also.

### 4. Problem Areas

a. All of the problems mentioned in Part 5 of the last quarterly report are still unsolved. Although the Engineering Office and Central Workshop is now keeping up with the workload of equipment maintenance and repair, the work is done in a haphazard fashion and no institutional foundation has been laid.

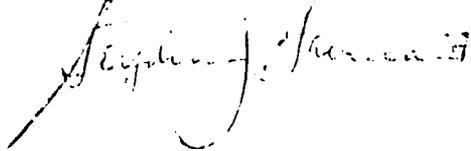
b. A major obstacle is that of personnel, and the Ministry blames the salary scale used and consequent failure to attract qualified technicians. I believe this to be only partly true, and that the Ministry is not using all the flexibility available

in the hiring process, and neither is it actively trying to build the Engineering Office into an effective institution.

c. The result is understaffing in the Central Workshop, with the existing staff, including my counterpart Eng. Charaf, stretched so thin that little time remains for building a management system, planning activities, or organizing for efficient service. A further consequence is that staff morale is decreasing and no expansion of technical capabilities in the provinces is taking place.

d. I have prepared a report covering all of the problems described here and in previous reports, including organization of the Engineering Office, operating budgets, staffing, and objectives. As soon as this report is translated and some creative staffing plans can be made, I will present it to the Ministry.

Stephen J. Fabricant



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