

Draft
MEMORANDUM

FY I

Gene Miller

931023609 / 53
PD-AAM-599
DATE: 1/15/81

TO: DS/AGR, Gil Corey/Richard Suttor

FROM: NE/TECH/AD, Robert Morrow

SUBJECT: ~~Evaluation of Technical Assistance on Water Resource Economics~~: Planning and Policy Analysis for Irrigation (931-0236.09) A Sub-Project of Expanded Agricultural Sector Analysis (931-0236).

I. To What Extent Are Project Objective Being Met?

This sub-project has a dual set of objectives, research and technical assistance, (more on this under general comments). Very little has been done, or seemingly will be done, under the technical assistance portion of the project. Hence the project is titled wrong and one wonders why it is so titled. With respect to the research portion of the project rather ambitious objectives are set forth regarding generation of new knowledge on (a) methodologies of analyzing irrigation systems and (b) how irrigation systems perform as a function of differing water policies and management institutions.

The sub-project appears to be reasonably on track - although a bit delayed - with respect to the phase one planning work i.e. background activities, identification of research sites and identification of research collaborators. It appears that there may - in the final project effort- ~~be~~ be only two principle field research sites and thus a heavy burden will be placed upon these two case studeis to generate new primary knowledge. Additional knowledge may be derived from review and analysis of secondary data but only four studies are listed using this type of information. It would appear that more effort may be called

for in the analysis of secondary data, perhaps using the resources originally programmed for the third field site for technical assistance.

In summary, it would appear the project can make a contribution to the stock of knowledge on performance of irrigation systems and perhaps even something on methodologies of analysis. The latter contribution might be more accidental as this reviewer heard nothing about new or unique methodologies to be tried. The research team will need to finalize their research work plan very shortly or there will not be anywhere near enough time to complete the project as presently scheduled.

II. Research Methodology - Egypt Site

The linear programming model proposed for Egypt seems appropriate as a technique for illustrating possible impacts of alternative water allocation and utilization schemes. However the quality of the data base is, of course, critical and any L.P. results would need to be interpreted with great caution. For example; as mentioned in the research proposal a debate rages on whether farmers are overusing water with respect to optimal production. It seems clear that production responses to different water use regimes are not known. Answers to such questions should be already at hand, and not debatable, in order to build real world models. If the topic is still truly still debatable it will likely be resolved only by time consuming and painstaking crop and irrigation field research by crop, by soil type and with numerous replications of experiments. The models developed by this project may be useful "first cuts" and serve

to give new insights into possible changes in water allocation policy. If they do this then useful purposes will have been served but the models will likely have to be used with considerable reservation.

General Comments

The project under evaluation reveals some characteristics which may be of interest for future consideration in the management of AID's research and "technical assistance and service to Mission's" efforts.

1. Combining Research and Technical Assistance

On the face of it combining the separate functions/^{of} research and service projects has some appeal since it appears the immediate relevance of the project would seem to be enhanced. The reality of the usefulness of this approach is questioned on the basis of the project under evaluation. The findings may be similar with other projects with combined functions of research and service.

- (a) This particular project proports to be a technical assistance project while it is mainly a research project. Any combined project might have similar identity crisis. While identity per se might not be important it would seem of significant concern to the implementing institutions to know what they are primarily responsible for.
- (b) If the project is a research effort - which this project is - then the interests of the key personnel on the project are most likely in doing research - not in providing technical assistance which may be biewed as a fire fighting or rat killing operation.
- (c) If a project is a research project the mix of skills available - (i.e. the research team) may be quite different than what is needed by host governments and USAID Missions. In the present case the research team are primarily "agricultural social scientists" whereas addressing host government and Mission irrigation problems ususally require a much broader mix of skills - engineers, irrigation specialists, agronomists etc. While a university may be able to organize a team of diverse skills, either from among its own,

staff, or from sister universities, the present project leaders do not perceive that sort of operation as a major part of the project. In addition developing a team of specialists for Mission and host government use requires a fitting of the teaching and research schedules of professors against overseas needs. This has proven to be a difficult fit and commercial engineering or consulting firms are more responsible to AID requirements and, of course, they can draw from universities.

Since research and provision of technical services are separate activities they could be contracted for separately. Thus, the scope of work and level of effort could be more appropriately developed for each set of needs, thus clarifying what is to be done and who is to do it.

2. Division of Responsibility Among the Contractor, AID/W Mission and Host Governments.

AID/W and Missions appear to retain a degree of control over location of research sites and travel of researchers which seems of questionable utility. Such control creates unnecessary dependence of the contractor upon AID.

If AID/W, in its wisdom, feels a certain topic, of international interest, should be researched why should the presence of an AID Mission, and a particular USAID Mission welcoming the research, be a pre condition to having the research done? Why does AID/W maintain identity with the funding and hence travel clearance etc.? (We don't maintain such tracking of U.S. funds granted to the International Research Centers, FAO etc.) The contractors have seemingly felt it necessary not only to obtain Mission clearance to work in the country but they have, on occasion, felt the need to solicit mission financial and administration support. If a topic is of sufficient interest as to merit research
central/funding it is felt AID/W should fully fund the research

with contractors sufficiently experienced that they may undertake the research with host governments. Clearance from the U.S. Embassy could be in accordance with the university, or private sector procedures and policies rather than with AID's procedures. The nature of the research to be done should be the guiding light on where the research is done, not a particular, USAID Mission's interest in the topic.

3. Partial Review of the DSB/Agr. Water Resource and Irrigation Portfolio.

As in the case of evaluating any specific project a problem arises if one lacks knowledge of the total portfolio which DSB/Agr and AID has on a given sub-sector. A given project may seem to make sense (or perhaps not make sense) on its own merit, whereas if seen in the context of everything else which AID is financing in the sub-section one might come to different conclusions.

During the course of evaluating the present project it come to light that DSB/Agr has several other centrally funded irrigation research and service projects in place, about to be finished or being developed for future financing i.e. Determinants of LDC Irrigation Problems; Water Management Synthesis; and The Water Management Support and Service Project. In addition there are several country projects which might conceivably have been a host for the field research in the first instance rather than going through the protracted negotiations which eventually led to their being hosts for the field work.

Without having reviewed the total set of projects there is no informed basis for concluding that the total set of projects, or any given project, is just right or in some way deficient. Nevertheless since the various projects were started by various project managers and by different Divisions or Office Directors for a variety of reasons prevailing at the time of project initiation this reviewer comes away with a feeling that the irrigation related research and technical services offered by DSB/Agr might be improved by closer collaboration between the engineering, soils and crop management^{specificity} and the social scientists. If at all possible the project evaluation process should include a more thorough review of most, if not all, efforts in the sub-sector - both research and service.

To carry out such a review is, indeed, a formidable task since it is difficult enough to find talent and time to adequately review even single projects let alone the total portfolio. Perhaps the total portfolio is adequately evaluated by DSB management but perhaps that process might benefit from outsiders reviewing the several projects in the cluster.