

W/O Exec. Summary

PD ANN-107

CLASSIFICATION

ISN 31372

PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY (PES) - PART I

Report Symbol U-447

1. PROJECT TITLE ABYEI INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT	2. PROJECT NUMBER 650-0025	3. MISSION/AID/W OFFICE SUDAN
	4. EVALUATION NUMBER (Enter the number maintained by the reporting unit e.g., Country or AID/W Administrative Code, Fiscal Year, Serial No. beginning with No. 1 each FY) 650-82-01 <input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR EVALUATION <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL EVALUATION	

5. KEY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION DATES	6. ESTIMATED PROJECT FUNDING	7. PERIOD COVERED BY EVALUATION
A. First PRO-AG or Equivalent FY <u>78</u>	A. Total \$ <u>2,903</u>	From (month/yr.) <u>1/80</u>
B. Final Obligation Expected FY <u>81</u>	B. U.S. \$ <u>2,538</u>	To (month/yr.) <u>2/81</u>
C. Final Input Delivery FY <u>81</u>		Date of Evaluation Review <u>JAN 25 - FEB 1, 1981</u>

B. ACTION DECISIONS APPROVED BY MISSION OR AID/W OFFICE DIRECTOR

A. List decisions and/or unresolved issues; cite those items needing further study. (NOTE: Mission decisions which anticipate AID/W or regional office action should specify type of document, e.g., a/gram, SPAR, PIO, which will present detailed request.)	B. NAME OF OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION	C. DATE ACTION TO BE COMPLETED
Extend project (without additional funding) 3 months July - September 1981 to facilitate preparation of end-of-project reports by ADP/HIID technicians	Dr. Cole - HIID Dr. Weaver - USAID	June 1981
Provide additional local currency support from PL 480 generations to sustain GOS ADP staff after termination.	Mr. Mudge - USAID	March 1981

9. INVENTORY OF DOCUMENTS TO BE REVISED PER ABOVE DECISIONS	10. ALTERNATIVE DECISIONS ON FUTURE OF PROJECT
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation Plan as CPI Network <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PIO/T _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Logical framework <input type="checkbox"/> PIO/C <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Agreement <input type="checkbox"/> PIO/P _____	A. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Project Without Change B. <input type="checkbox"/> Change Project Design and/or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change Implementation Plan C. <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue Project

11. PROJECT OFFICER AND HOST COUNTRY OR OTHER RANKING PARTICIPANTS AS APPROPRIATE (Name and Title)	12. Mission/AID/W Office Director Approval
Jerry L. Weaver, Project Officer	Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>
	Typed Name: Arthur Mudge
	Date: 1-6-83

13. Summary

During the evaluation period, progress has been achieved in construction of staff housing, workshop and warehouse, in agronomic tests, and in providing technical support to local health care delivery. Surveys have been conducted by Abyei Development Project (ADP) staff on livestock and farm budgets. Several water-well drilling technologies have been tested. Vocational Training in vehicle maintenance, carpentry, metal working and masonry has been initiated. We now have a much clearer picture of the conditions under which this project operates. Given these circumstances, progress to date does not seem unreasonably slow.

Major (and unanticipated) problems have arisen that in large measures have attenuated project performance. These include (1) high turn-over rate in ADP - especially HIID - staff; (2) serious logistic difficulties arising from a deteriorating security situation and from unavailability on the local economy of needed commodities; (3) certain deficiencies in implementation and management by HIID; (4) delays in obligation of funds; (5) inadequate level of support to achieve project goals; (6) shortcomings of the OPG framework for effective AID management and monitoring responsibilities in difficult situations; (7) recruitment of long-term expatriate technicians who are well-motivated but inexperienced in IRD project implementation; and (8) difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified Sudanese project staff.

With the exception of construction, results of project activities are not substantial in context of project purpose and goal. While the concept of action research and an evolutionary approach to project implementation remains sound, ADP has fallen seriously short of the objectives expressed in the original and amended project documents. Procedures for field testing and reporting on various technologies and approaches to rural development are not adequately defined or executed. The project's activities have yielded new information disappointing in both quality and quantity. No strong institutional base has been established at the community level to help ensure the continuation of project activities.

14. Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation was designed to provide analysis and recommendations for decision making by AID and the Government of Sudan (GOS) on the status of the Abyei Development Project beyond June 1981. The "experimental" nature of the project and the management arrangements that were used helped to define the evaluation task. A major issue recurring throughout the project's extensive documented and oral history concerns the relationship between research (investigation of rural development strategies and techniques) and action (delivery of services and benefits to the target population). The evaluation team acknowledged that the two elements are interwoven in the ADP and that this poses certain contradictions in assessing project achievements. The evaluation team determined, however, that research activities should be evaluated in terms specific to the project's structure, setting, and objectives. This is the only objective basis for assessing the magnitude and significance of what has been learned.

Data were collected on each of the project's major components with present status measured against objectives that were formulated in the 1978 "Memorandum of Understanding", and modified in the revised project paper of 1979. In each case the findings were analyzed in terms of the resource levels available, the

techniques employed in implementing the activity, and the constraints encountered. Since no logical framework was ever completed and almost no quantifiable outputs were formally agreed to by Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) and AID, progress towards objectives required thorough qualitative assessment.

The evaluation was conducted by a four-person team from Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), through DS/RAD project number 936-5300 (Organization and Administration of Integrated Rural Development), with costs to be shared by USAID/Khartoum when project development and support funds become available.

The team was composed of a team leader/anthropologist (Tony Barclay), a development economist (Edwin Charles), an agriculturalist (Don Humpal), and a management/administration specialist (Gene M. Owens). Sayed Osman Bedri, an agricultural economist, travelled to Abyei with the team and represented the ministry.

The team's preparation included review of reports, files, and documents at HIID in Cambridge, Massachusetts; interviews of HIID staff associated with the Abyei project; attendance at a HIID seminar from January 8-10; and briefings by USAID staff and the Director General of the Planning Office in the GOS Ministry of Agriculture.

The team worked in Abyei from January 15-27, with Owens and Bedri spending two additional days at Kadugli to interview provincial officials. Field work in Abyei included group and individual interviews with a range of local leaders (teachers, Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) officials, omads of Ngok Dinka sections) and members of group farms; with administrators (including the assistant commissioner and inspector of local government); and with representatives of the Messiriya Humr at Abyei and at the Damboloya, a pastoral camp. Thorough interviews with HIID and Sudanese project staff were supplemented by ongoing observation of their activities and detailed study of the data in files and monthly reports maintained at the project site. A debriefing session took place before the evaluation team departed from Abyei. The writing of the evaluation report, followed by USAID and GOS review, and revisions, took place between January 25 and February 7 in Khartoum.

15. External Factors

Implementation of the Abyei Development Project has been constrained by two factors that have changed since the project was first designed:

- . The policy response of the GOS to the country's deteriorating macroeconomic situation; and
- . Social and political tensions involving the two key beneficiary groups in the project area, the Ngok Dinka and Messiriya Humr.

Sudan's severe macroeconomic problems pose a major obstacle to sustained investment in the small farm sector, and particularly to integrated rural development projects such as Abyei where short-run economic returns are likely to be small.

Evolving GOS policy and the consensus view of external donors anticipates the concentration of trained Sudanese manpower and financial resources in export-oriented, "modern" agriculture in an attempt to halt the country's economic decline. The

reduced priority assigned to innovative IRD activities indicates that such projects will experience greater difficulty in competing for qualified technical staff and budget allocations. The ADP has already been set back by staffing problems and delays in the arrival of GOS and AID funding. These constraints are likely to become more severe in the near term, rather than being alleviated.

The influence of the ADP's sociopolitical environment on project implementation is controversial, and therefore harder to assess than macroeconomic factors. The project's initiation in 1978 took place less than a year after a series of violent Messiriya/Dinka clashes resulting in numerous deaths. This level of violence declined between 1977 and mid-1980, but tensions have risen over the past several months with the southward advancement Messiriya groups in search of pasture and water. Shooting incidents and burning of Dinka homesteads occurred in June and July, 1980, and with some regularity since November. Three shooting incidents (one resulting in seven deaths) occurred during the evaluation team's 12-day field visit. Although police and army units are now stationed at several sites outside Abyei to keep the peace, large areas normally inhabited by Ngok Dinka to the west and north of Abyei have been evacuated during this dry season.

The future political status of the Abyei area is uncertain. Many Ngok Dinka spokesmen favor a shift in the Bahr el Ghazal - South Kordofan boundary that would place Abyei and adjacent Dinka-occupied areas under the jurisdiction of the Southern Region. The GOS is currently weighing the pros and cons of a plebiscite on this issue. If the decision is made to proceed, several controversial questions will have to be resolved prior to the actual voting: these include voter eligibility criteria, the timing of the vote in the dry season/rainy season cycle, and the location of the proposed revised boundary.

Continuation of present conditions pose three major constraints to successful implementation of the ADP:

- . Staff mobility and commitment to extension activities will be restricted (Ngok Dinka staff are generally unwilling to travel in areas where Messiriya normally reside or are presently found);
- . Access to beneficiaries will be limited if settlement patterns remain disrupted; and
- . There are risks of exacerbating the potential for conflict in the delivery of services (such as water or dura storage facilities) at sites where both groups claim "traditional" rights.

16. Inputs

Funding approved for the ADP includes \$1.5 million in foreign currency, LS 525,000 (US\$ 1,050,000) in counterpart funds and LS 182,500 (US\$ 365,000) in GOS annual budgetary contributions. With the exception of the 1977 grant to HIID for design-related studies, significant delays have occurred in the release of funds and in the case of GOS contributions, in their receipt by the project. A schedule of financial inputs appears in table I.

A second, equally serious problem concerns the adequacy of funding in relation to the project's broad scope and ambitious objectives. Inputs were scaled to the requirements of a modest project of an "experimental" type that would be managed through an operating program grant (OPG) and initiated rapidly under mission autho-

rization. Funding remained at least 50 percent below the minimum level needed to implement the complex IRD project to which HIID, USAID, and the GOS subsequently committed themselves. The type of drastic action needed to correct this problem (scaling up resources or reducing project scope and objectives) was never taken.

HIID was originally required to provide 72 person-months of long-term technical assistance over a two-year period. The revised project paper of 1979 increased this input to 147 months and extended the project's life by 16 months. Current team members' schedules indicate that about 120 months will have been provided by June 1981.

Long-term technicians recruited by HIID have been well-motivated but inexperienced in IRD project implementation. Most have had specific training and interests, (that is, animal traction, agricultural machinery, nursing) which prepared them for only part of their broad responsibilities. Gaps of several months occurred in which the health specialist and training advisor positions were unfilled. HIID's performance in recruiting long-term personnel, within the budget available, underscores the difficulties of attracting seasoned technicians with experience to work in isolated areas such as Abyei.

Institutional support and short-term assistance of high quality can partially compensate for limitations in long-term teams. HIID budgeted 35 months of such assistance for the period from mid-1979 to mid-1981. In terms of quality, timing, and relevance to project needs, these inputs have been suboptimally utilized. Guidance to the field team has been personally supportive but nonspecific in terms of assessing plans and performance. The design, monitoring, and analysis of research activities have been extremely casual, considering the project's overall research mandate.

Identification and placement of qualified Sudanese staff for the project has also proven difficult. Efforts to recruit Dinka personnel from the Abyei area have been partially successful, although the individuals seconded by the Health and Community Development Ministries performed poorly and their secondments are not being renewed. Management and logistical responsibilities have commanded virtually all the time of the project director and deputy director, the two people with the strongest training in agriculture.

Commodity procurement has been affected by shortages in Sudan, by funding delays, and by the extreme isolation of Abyei. Experience gained in the first two years of the project has been applied in the creation of a functioning system of logistical support that serves the project's needs at its present level of operation.

SCHEDULE OF FINANCIAL INPUTS, 1977-81

Funded Activity	Date	USAID dollar funds (Thousand US\$)	USAID counterpart funds (Thousand LS) ^a	QOS funds (Thousand LS)
HIID design studies	7/77	186.0	0	0
OPG start-up ^b	3/78	495.0	225.0	30.0
OPG start-up	6/78	0	0	75.0
OPG extension ^c	6/79	0	0	50.0
OPG extension	8/79	702.0	0	0
Water program ^d	6/80	0	0	27.5
Water program	2/81	105.0	300.0	0
Total		1,488.0	525.0	182.5

Notes:

- a US\$ 2.00 LS 1.00
- b Project paper submitted 10/77
- c Request for additional fund submitted 3/79
- d Request submitted 8/80
- e Notice of approval given (8/80) but fund not yet released

17. Outputs

The main difficulty in evaluating ADP outputs is the variability and inconsistency in targets and criteria for project activities, and in the timing and sequencing of those activities. HIID's project coordinator has maintained, with considerable justification, that field conditions require flexibility, improvisation, and opportunism. This point is not disputed by the evaluation team, nor does it appear to have been rejected by USAID as a valid principle. But this does not eliminate the need for implementation plans. USAID interventions at three critical points in the life of the project (May 1978, May 1979, and January 1980) were made with the expressed intent of producing implementation plans that all parties could accept. None of these efforts achieved the desired effect. In briefing the evaluation team, HIID's project coordinator stated that the 1979 revised project paper contained all the elements of an implementation plan, with outputs described in sufficient detail to permit an objective assessment.

This dilemma was resolved in the course of the evaluation by distinguishing between research products and physical outputs at the Abyei project site. Accomplishments in each category will be discussed separately.

Research Products

The record of guidance and design for field data collection and the timeliness and focus of the analysis in relation to implementation needs was found generally unsatisfactory. This conclusion does not ignore the practical difficulties of executing research in Abyei or the problems inherent in coordinating a long-distance team research enterprise. These factors have been well documented, but they do not justify the ad hoc management of information activities.

In terms of the six specific "products" mentioned on page 53 of the revised project paper (Agency for International Development, 1979) only one document has appeared with form and content corresponding to the research mandate.

Reports on animal traction (by Wynn) and construction (by Parr) were never written and are unlikely to be since the individuals have no further association with HIID. Larson's report on health (1980) is a narrative of her own activities at Abyei, rather than an analysis of preventive health strategies, and it was produced 16 months after her departure. Huntington's paper (1980) is brief, contains relatively little data and does not analyze government linkages. A Socioeconomic Profile of Abyei District in edited form has never been published, although such a publication would be useful, since the 1977-78 "Baseline Study" was incomplete and of mediocre quality.

The potential for further analysis, writing, and dissemination will exist beyond the life of the ADP. To date, outputs in this category do not match the plan laid out in the revised project paper.

Physical Outputs

This category of outputs is more problematic because of its vulnerability to logistical, financial, and staff constraints. As a general observation, the field team has placed special emphasis on completing construction of housing and project facilities. This decision has involved trade-offs in terms of the resources and

staff time, particularly at the senior level, that have been diverted from other activities, especially agriculture. Diminished outputs from these other activities have not been formally acknowledged, although they can be rationalized when ex post analysis is done.

With the exception of construction, the numerical "targets" cited in the text of the 1979 revised project paper have not been approached.

In the agriculture program, for example, the beehive and ox-training programs have lapsed; many of the planned equipment, production, and agronomic trials have never been carried out; and group farm areas under cultivation and cost-covering performance have fallen below expectations. Only a small number of the training courses planned for health workers have been implemented; annual brick production capacity is nowhere near the one million target foreseen for 1979; and the timetable for local organization initiatives was not followed.

These results are not an absolute measure of success or failure, because the targets set in 1979 were provisional and subject to revision. Yet the process of revision was so casual and ad hoc that few clear performance standards survive by which the staff -- let alone external evaluators -- can measure accomplishments in an objective fashion.

18. Purpose

There is no formal statement of the ADP's purpose to which HIID, USAID, and the GOS officially subscribe. However, substantial agreement appears to exist between USAID's characterization in Khartoum telex number 933/ ("to test, through a program of action research . . . a package of services [to meet basic human needs] that can be replicated successfully in areas of Sudan similar to Abyei") and the statement derived from the evaluation team's briefing session at HIID. The latter defined the purpose as "to test the feasibility of alternative techniques to meet basic human needs and organizational arrangements for participatory development."

A summative assessment of project success, in the case of Abyei, should focus on whether feasibility testing has refined a rural development strategy for Abyei to the point where implementation (and eventual replication) can begin. An evolutionary approach to strategy formulation and implementation remains conceptually sound, in the view of the evaluation team. However, the rate and direction of the evolution must be measured and verified.

In the context of a development project, that verification requires assessment of the strategy's component parts in terms of their specific objectives. Table 2 summarizes material with regard to indicators that were formulated collaboratively with HIID staff and consultants during the preevaluation briefing. These indicators were chosen to reflect the types of end of project status (EOPS) conditions that were generally anticipated but never formally stated.

The results shown in the table are consistent: they indicate that the project will fall far short of achieving its purpose, as defined above, by the time of its scheduled termination in June 1981. There is little evidence that this conclusion would change if the project were to continue for an extended period under its present mode of operations.

Table 2 Indicators of Purpose Achievement

Indicator	Status as of January 1981
Improved agricultural technologies developed for crop production.	No breakthrough and no systematic comparisons made; results to date impressionistic.
Improved water supply facilities developed.	No new water points yet in operation; serious problems with technologies tested to date. One test well operational 2/81.
Improved medical facilities and services developed.	Minor improvement in physical facilities; services temporarily augmented by HIID health advisor who departed 1/81.
Experimental cooperative farms established.	Four group farms receiving subsidized tractor services with little experimentation introduced by project.
Low-cost, locally adapted building technologies developed.	Cost data not compiled or analyzed for comparative purposes; techniques have been adapted to conditions and appear sound.
Local development organization established and operating.	None in existence and no proposals developed.
In-service and formal training programs developed.	On-the-job training system functions for project employees, but with no significant outreach.
Administrative links with province and district strengthened.	Total absence of support to project except from national level.
Monitoring and evaluation in place to guide ongoing IRD activities.	Structure of system poorly defined; decision making roles unclear; data collection and analysis functions not responsive to project needs.
Improved transportation and communication links.	No change in transport situation except improved airstrip; logistical support and radio system operating reliably.

19. Goals

Goal statements for the ADP have been framed in several different ways over the life of the project. No logical-framework was completed and no alternative methods were used to clearly differentiate broad, long-term rural development objectives from intermediate (purpose-level) objectives. Similarly, critical assumptions were not made explicit. The absence of formal agreement on the project's goal corresponds to the conflicting perceptions of project purpose and outputs that were noted in the preceding sections.

In preparatory sessions at HIID in early January 1981, the evaluation team sought to define the ADP's goal in terms that would be consistent with logical-framework analysis and with HIID's perspective on the project. The result, with minimal paraphrasing, was: "Improved well-being of the people of Abyei and South Kordofan, based on enhanced local capabilities to sustain participatory development." At present, there is little solid evidence of progress towards this goal that can be attributed to the ADP. Health and employment benefits have been realized by the target population, but these are results of a resource transfer initiated by the project.

While the time period involved is relatively short, the basic purpose-to-goal linkage appears sound. In other words, if the ADP had achieved greater success in identifying, testing, and applying technologies and participatory organizational arrangements, the potential for goal achievement would have been significantly enhanced.

20. Beneficiaries

The ADP began with a mandate to benefit the entire rural population of the Abyei area, although no precise geographical limits were attached to the area that would be served. This mandate specifically included the Messiriya as well as the Ngok Dinka. Accurate census data were also lacking. Rural women and dependent children were identified as an important target group for food production and preventive health care activities, although the techniques for measuring impact on this group were not specified.

Most project activities have yet to reach large numbers of people. Direct beneficiaries to date comprise 150 group farm members and 180 salaried project employees (almost exclusively male), and numerous health care recipients of all ages in Abyei town and in certain adjacent Dinka areas. The agricultural program has concentrated on full-time farmers, thereby excluding merchants and civil servants from participation in the group farms. The preventive health care training offered by the project has placed emphasis on women of child-bearing age and their children. Important questions were raised in this evaluation concerning the sustainability of these benefits beyond the life of the project.

Taken as a whole, the outreach of the project is not commensurate with the original design, in terms of either direct impact or the capacity to serve a wider area and larger population. This has two serious consequences:

- . Expectations within the Ngok Dinka community of rapid service delivery
- . Messiriya groups perceive the project as being exclusively Abyei-oriented that is, responsive only to Dinka needs, and their spokesmen question the project's expressed commitment to equity.

Both of these consequences were observed directly by the evaluation team in the course of individual interviews and group discussions. The comments reflect the fact that expectations were high to begin with perhaps unrealistically so--and that the theory and practice of "action research" are not well understood by the project's client group.

Significant opportunities to maximize participation in the "action research" process remain unexploited, and no local institutional base exists to sustain such participation beyond the termination of project funding.

21. Unplanned Effects

The region around Abyei is characterized by widespread seasonal migration, as both Messiriya and Ngok Dinka move their herds in search of limited pasture and water resources. There is a long history of ethnic hostility and occasional violence between the two groups, with some evidence of increasing conflict over the past several months. While one of the goals of the ADP is to facilitate reconciliation through involvement in an equitable development process, the nomadic Messiriya have been bypassed entirely by the project 1/. Whether the presence of an externally-funded project with expatriate technicians has partially dampened the potential for violence, or heightened feelings of relative deprivation (the opposite of what the project's sponsors intended), is very difficult to determine. To a significant degree, the issue is moot until development initiatives in the area can offer tangible benefits with a capacity to reach large numbers of people.

1/ Messiriya who are permanently settled in Abyei Town have had access to health care services.

22. Lessons

The experience of the Abyei Development Project offers several instructive lessons relating to the theory and practice of integrated rural development. That it would do so was one of the project's original justifications: the entire effort was represented as an "experiment" that would advance the state of the art in IRD design and implementation. In this sense the ADP was always destined for comparison with other projects, both within Sudan and elsewhere. HIID has already undertaken such comparisons in its publications during the lifetime of the project. Much of the argument presented in those publications is philosophical, contrasting process-oriented "action research" with conventional project models in which "blue-prints" are developed with inflexible timetables and input/output schedules. In this evaluation, however, it is the application of the "action research" philosophy in the ADP that provides the most interesting and provocative lessons.

The evaluation team attempted to derive generalizable lessons or hypotheses from the ADP experience under four categories: management, design, implementation, and development strategy. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but they provide a convenient way of organizing the conclusions that were reached.

Management

The system that was used in this project is unusual in terms of the roles that were taken by the donor (USAID), the grantee (HIID), the field team, and the host

- "Experimental" projects are management-intensive by nature, but this ~~aspect tends to be underestimated.~~ ~~Abyei demonstrates the limitations~~ of a field team staffed by technicians with specialized backgrounds and with neither the preparation, the time, nor the mandate to carry out key managerial functions.
- Clear lines of decision making need to be established between a home office and its field team, particularly when the former assumes responsibility for definition and coordination of basic project strategy. Total delegation to the field--as reflected in a "bodyshop approach" in which the home office abdicates all such responsibility--has obvious weaknesses. But the model employed at Abyei appears equally unsatisfactory: too many key operational decisions were made outside of the field setting, while some critical policy decisions were never dealt with or were resolved in an ad hoc fashion.
- The management and monitoring demands posed by an "experimental" project in which USAID took a substantive interest were poorly suited to the OPG framework. The OPG is designed to minimize USAID's management role, while allowing a PVO, contractor, or university to carry out known activities in which it has a proven track record. The ADP, however, was a high-risk project and HIID had almost no prior implementation experience relevant to the situation found at Abyei. As difficulties arose, the OPG framework did not provide accountability to the degree that USAID desired and expected.
- The remote location of Abyei and similar IRD project sites contributes to a syndrome of "management by anecdote," in which the field team is judged on the basis of fragmentary (and not always accurate) information. The impact on team morale is negative and this undermines the work, which is difficult enough to begin with. USAID staff must be prepared to spend far more time in the field, directly experiencing the project environment of an IRD activity, if this syndrome is to be avoided.

Design

Within the philosophical frame work that was articulated for the ADP, various project design strategies and techniques can be applied. The fact that an evolutionary approach is preferred does not provide a formula for design: There are options available, and the options selected for the ADP can be weighed against alternative design models. Several lessons can be drawn when such an analysis is performed:

- An IRD project with "experimental" content and flexibility to permit modifications should be designed with clear specification of the structure and timetable for decision making. Without this, information use and management will be inefficient, crucial decisions will be deferred or made precipitously, and project implementation strategy will drift. Both structure and process are essential ingredients in evolutionary designs. The ADP ~~emphasized~~ the second at the expense of the first.
- The initial reconnaissance of a potential IRD project area must be sufficiently thorough to define technical parameters, particularly for the natural resource base. Disdain for "master-planning" and a shortage of relevant HIID institutional expertise produced a flawed design that grossly underestimated the significance of the livestock sector--a curious

outcome of reconnaissance in South Kordofan.

Serious attention must be given to the match between financial and human resources and the scope of "experimental" research to be undertaken. The ADP design did not acknowledge important trade-offs and promised a low-budget program to address very complex socio-technical problems.

Project designers must carefully weigh the timing and sequencing of multiple components in an IRD project. Simultaneous initiation of all components is likely to be the most difficult course of action, even if all of the concerned host government agencies appear to be "geared up" and ready to start. If they are not equally well prepared, as was the case at Abyei, a phased approach may prove more workable. The selection of initial components, particularly the choice between income-generating and social service activities, is a development strategy problem rather than a design issue per se.

Implementation

Implementing the ADP was even more complicated than usual because it included a learning function and a benefit delivery function. This combination produced a conflict in the way the project was represented and perceived. It also led to difficulties in the day-to-day implementation of the project's components. If the need for learning in an Abyei setting is acknowledged, and the realities of host country politics (especially local-level realities) are taken into account, then an either/or approach to the "action-research" dilemma is unjustified. The key problem is then to find ways in which an appropriate balance between the two can be achieved under implementation conditions. There are no "recipes" for doing this and the ADP has had to confront an extraordinarily difficult situation in which a multitude of agendas and special interests collide. The experience gained at Abyei suggests the following:

- . The sponsoring institution undertaking an "action research" project must accept the full burden of implementation support. IID never formally accepted that burden: it did not undertake similar projects elsewhere, nor did it make a long-term investment to develop in-house capabilities in logistics or personnel recruitment. The ADP has remained a peripheral activity, and only the energy and dedication of the project coordinator have maintained support at a survival level.
- . An IRD project's client group--small farmers who are its intended beneficiaries--must be incorporated into the learning process at the outset. If their perceptions remain fundamentally at odds with those of the project staff, that is, one group's problem is the other group's "solution", the project will never develop broad credibility and support in the community. The ADP has been significantly weakened by its failure to foster participatory learning.

Development Strategy

The Abyei Development Project has several features that set it apart from other rural development projects in Sudan. The integration of multiple components and the gradual approach towards improved agricultural production are not typical of GOS interventions in the "traditional" sector. These are other atypical elements in the development strategy adopted for the ADP:

- . The targeting of an area with high political visibility and especially complex socio-political problems:

The decision to assign a very small-scale project special "national" status; and

The proposal for a local development organization (the APDO) with a degree of autonomy hitherto unknown in Sudan.

No single project provides a full test of the viability of IRD approaches or the wisdom of evolutionary project designs in Sudan. The evidence is not yet in on those issues, and the findings of this evaluation indicate shortcomings in the ADP that are specific to that project rather than generic to IRD efforts. Analysis of the three elements in the Abyei strategy cited above suggests the following lessons

- . An area whose future political status is uncertain and which is experiencing even occasional armed violence may be targeted on a need basis, but rarely because the prospects for successful development are considered bright. In the case of Abyei, a donor-assisted development project had a high symbolic content, but multiple meanings were associated with the symbol. The idealistic vision of a project that would transcend politics was never translated into a feasible plan of action.
- . Special status, that is, placement outside the conventional system, has very high costs for a development project that is intended to have a long implementation cycle. The ADP was launched in a manner that effectively bypassed the provincial administration in South Kordofan. Efforts to remedy this situation later did not succeed because no incentives existed to attract provincial support: credit for ADP success would not accrue to Kadugli in any event, and officials there perceived a high risk of failure in the project. As a consequence, the project must depend on its special "national" status in order to survive.
- . Appropriate local organizations evolve as a result of adaptation to changing circumstances. A prescriptive development strategy specifying a model of local control that satisfies "participation" criteria may be counterproductive when there is no frame of reference for the model. The ADP never got off the ground for this reason.