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**Integrated Rural Development;
The Central Tunisia Rural Development Project Experience**

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Foreward

The purpose of this paper is two-fold:

- 1.) to examine the Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) Project experience within the analytical framework provided by Development Alternative, Inc. (DAI) under the Organization and Administration of Integrated Rural Development Project, and
- 2.) to provide a historical perspective on the development and implementation of the CTRD Project from August 1978 to August 1981 from the standpoint of an active participant in the processes of project design and implementation from its initial conception during the second half of 1977 to the first subproject evaluation in mid-1981.

In line with the first of the above two objectives, the paper reviews the CTRD project experience from the standpoint of seven (out of nine) critical implementation problems identified by DAI in late 1980 (IRD Research Note No. 1; Integrated Rural Development: Nine Critical Implementation Problems, Feb. 1981) and subsequently studied through a review of selected AID projects (IRD Research Note No. 2; Implementation Issues in Integrated Rural Development: A Review of 21 USAID Projects, May 4, 1981).

The seven problems selected were:

- 1.) Participation and Decentralization;
 - 2.) Political, Economic and Environmental Constraints;
 - 3.) Differing Agendas;
 - 4.) Information Systems;
 - 5.) Effecting Integration;
 - 6.) Timing; and
 - 7.) Managing Technical Assistance.
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Of the two remaining critical problems identified by DAI, the first, counterpart shortage, is certainly relevant to the CTRD project but it requires for its solution GOT policy measures designed to attract and retain qualified civil servants in rural areas such as Central Tunisia.

Consideration of such policy changes are beyond the scope of this paper.

Finally, in light of the fact that CTRD project implementation has not reached yet its midway point, it was considered premature to discuss the last critical problem identified by DAI (sustaining project benefits).

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Integration versus Coordination

Is the Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) Project an integrated rural development project? The answer depends on whether or not one draws a sharp dividing line between projects using an "integration" strategy and those using a "coordination" strategy.

In the Executive Summary of its state-of-the-art paper entitled Integrated Rural Development: Making it Work?, DAI makes a clear distinction between integration and coordination:

These two terms -- "integration" and "coordination" -- are used with uninhibited exuberance in many IRD projects, sometimes to hide a lack of understanding of the practical issues involved. The principal difference between an integrated as opposed to a functional organization is indicated by the level where authority over the full range of organizational activities converges. In a functional organization it occurs near the top. In an integrated organization, on the other hand, convergence occurs closer to the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. For example, in an integrated area development project, engineers, agriculturalists and medical personnel may all be accountable to a single project manager in a subdistrict area. Thus integration denotes structure and implies comprehensiveness (a multi-sectoral focus) and control (direct lines of authority).

Coordination, on the other hand, describes the type of managerial behavior required to produce the results visualized in the project design. The word itself provides a clue to the behavior it describes: "co" suggests joint or shared activities and "-ordination" implies the ranking of these activities. This ranking refers to the timing, type, quality and magnitude of resources applied and goods or services produced. It also includes the distribution of implementation responsibility. The joint effort refers to sharing resources and information to guarantee the needed mix of goods and services.

To apply multi-sectoral resources to rural development objectives, then, either integration or coordination strategies can be used.

In the case of the CTRD project, AID's intent was to combine an "integration" strategy with respect to program planning and evaluation and a "coordination" strategy with respect to program implementation. To that

effect, a preliminary Central Tunisia development strategy was developed jointly by the GOT and USAID prior to CTRD project design and provisions for developing an institutional capacity for program planning and evaluation at the regional level became the central element of the "core" (Central Tunisia Area Development) subproject.

As the Project Identification Documents (PIDs) for the first four CTRD subprojects were being prepared in July 1978, the GOT announced the creation of a new regional development authority to promote the development of Central Tunisia. Since this step was taken with practically no consultation with USAID, it is difficult to say what the GOT had in mind at that time, but testimony given by the then Minister of Agriculture to the National Assembly on the pending enabling legislation indicates that an "integration" strategy with respect to program implementation was under consideration.* When the new regional development authority was physically established in the Central Tunisia town of Kassein during the early part of 1979, however, the GOT Ministry of Agriculture (the parent agency) was no longer supporting the "integration" option and, in the course of the year increasingly advocated a coordination role for the Central Tunisia Development Authority (OOTC)**.

The final design of the CTRD project in the latter part of 1978 involved the participation of an overall CTRD Project Paper (PP) as well as the preparation of separate Subproject Papers. After considerable debate, a decision was made by AID/Washington in the Spring of 1979 to approve the Central Tunisia assistance effort as a single project with separately funded

* See Section VI and my Memorandum to the File, June 10, 1980. Subject: Siliana Rural Development Project: Lesson of Experience (A View from Tunis), pp. 15-17 and Attachment.

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subprojects. The intent was to encourage unified project management by both USAID and the GOT while retaining separate fund control and accountability for each subproject (no transfer of funds between subprojects was allowed).

It was AID's intent from the beginning that funds allocated through the CTRD project be managed by the ODTC but not that project-funded activities be necessarily implemented by the ODTC. The ODTC, however, took a rather narrow view of what "management" meant and attempted to implement, or at least tightly control, all project-funded activities but the attempt did not meet with success due to the resistance of the various bureaus and field services of the Ministry of Agriculture which usually won the Minister of Agriculture over to their side of the bureaucratic infighting. As it turned out, the ODTC retained responsibility for management and implementation of the Area Development, Smallholder Irrigation and Rural Extension and Outreach subprojects (the latter in collaboration with the Ministry's agricultural extension services); it retained overall project management responsibility for the Dryland Farming Systems Research and Rural Potable Water subprojects but their implementation was in fact contracted out to other agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture. Finally, two subprojects (the development of a potable water system for three semi-urban agglomerations and Rangeland Development and Management) were managed and implemented by autonomous authorities under the Ministry of Agriculture with the ODTC retaining a vague "coordination" role but no control over funds.

In addition, there were several AID-supported Central Tunisia development activities which were funded through other projects such as the Rural Community Health project and grants to private voluntary agencies such as CARE

and Save the Children Foundation. As for activities financed entirely by the GOT, budgetary resources (and consequently implementation responsibility) were in some instance, allocated to the OOTC (e.g. for construction of storage facilities and improvement of rural roads) and in other instances to other agencies (e.g. for potable water development and reforestation). It was both GOT and AID policy to encourage the OOTC to contract with private or public organizations for the implementation of as much as possible of its program activities (including activities financed jointly by the GOT and AID under the Area Development Experimental Fund) and to focus on its role as promoter, advocate, planner, and manager/coordinator of Central Tunisia development. While the results during the first two years of CTRD project implementation did not meet AID's expectations, the lessons learned should be useful for designers and managers of IRD projects.

B. Background*

Underlying Objectives

The Central Tunisia Rural Development Project, and initial loans and grants were authorized in March 28, 1979. Actual obligations under the project reached a total of U.S. \$21.4 million at the end of FY 1981, and A.I.D. dollar obligations for activities in the project area actually total over \$35 million dollars. This total in part is the result of a deliberate policy to "front load" the pipeline and make a highly visible development push in one of the

* Extracted with minor changes and a few deletions from a December 1981 USAID Position Paper on the CTRD program.

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poorest areas of Tunisia where infrastructure and public services were minimal. U.S. assistance for Central Tunisia at its inception set forth the following objectives:

1. "Stimulate the GOT into undertaking a minimum critical effort in Central Tunisia.
2. Encourage and assist the GOT to design and test cost-effective delivery systems for public goods and services which then can be replicated by the GOT in other parts of Central Tunisia.
3. Encourage and assist the GOT to address the problems of small dryland farmers who are and will constitute the vast majority of small farmers.
4. Encourage local participation in decision-making, for instance by further involving the governors and delegates (district administrators) and by organizing training programs for members of delegation (district) -level local committees.
5. Encourage the participation of other donors either through the provision of technical assistance or through the financing of selected components of the integrated CTRD program.
6. Encourage and assist the GOT in its effort to achieve better integration of rural development interventions."

The passage of time has and reinforced the validity of these objectives. The Tunisian Government's growing awareness of the potential instability of its most disadvantaged regions has strengthened the priority it attaches to Central Tunisia.

Decentralization of Tunisian planning and administration, particularly of development activities, has been gaining public and governmental support. The new Sixth Development Plan, which is to be launched in 1982, has "decentralization," "deconcentration" and improvement in public sector management as major themes.

Decentralized planning, in particular, has taken on new significance with the recent establishment of a Regional Planning Commissariat. Clearly key to success is greater participation by local populations and organizations in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of development activities. There are signs that this is becoming increasingly apparent to Tunisian decision-makers.

The Role of the ODTC

The ODTC as a multi-disciplinary and regional planning institution is an innovation. There has been no such institution before in Tunisian practice. The ODTC absorbed the staff and functions of the OMVVI*, a semi-autonomous

* Office de Mise en Valeur de la Vallée' de la Medjerda (Medjerda Valley Development Authority).

agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, responsible for building, maintaining and managing a scattered set of public irrigation facilities, called "perimeters," in Central Tunisia. In retrospect, it seems there was no clear consensus about an elaborated set of additional authorities the OOTC would have, or how it would relate to governors and regional commissioners for agricultural development (CRDAs).

One role that A.I.D. envisaged for the OOTC was project manager of the Central Tunisia project, (contracting, directing contractors, managing, controlling, and maintaining all equipment procured under the project). The OOTC would provide all administrative and back-up support needed by U.S.-financed contractors, although with the assistance, if necessary, if an A.I.D.-financed logistical support unit. It was not clear, however, what additional powers, staff, or facilities the OOTC would need to do this, shortcoming in program design, given A.I.D.'s institution-building experience in Tunisia and elsewhere.

Another role both A.I.D. and the GOT saw for the OOTC was "planner" for Central Tunisia. GOT development budget funds for Central Tunisia must be vetted by the OOTC so its planning role does have teeth. But this was a new role, under a new, decentralized system running essentially parallel to an old one entirely controlled in the capital. It was a role in which OOTC would lean heavily upon the help of its A.I.D.-furnished technical assistance contractor team. This assistance was not effective. Closely related to its role as planner was OOTC's role as evaluator. In this role also, heavy

reliance was expected to be placed initially upon the technical assistance contractor, whose principal task would be the training of OOTC planning and evaluation staff.

The concept of the OOTC as a coordinator of development activities carried out by others was given substance by its budgetary control. What was not clearly recognized was the difficulty of this role in a context where other actors (governorates, CRDAs, ministries) were accustomed to proceeding on their own, or at least with deference only to the central Ministry of Plan.

Still another important role for the OOTC would be as the advocate of Central Tunisia in the GOT. This role it has played well, and publicly. It is one of the reasons the OOTC has become a public symbol of U.S. support for a Tunisian rural development strategy in Central Tunisia. Finally, of course, the OOTC had a role as project implementor. This role it inherited at the outset from the OIVVI. Its record in this respect has been spotty, but it has a number of accomplishments.

It was inevitable that the role of the OOTC would evolve in ways that could not be completely foreseen beforehand and that there would be stumbling and false starts requiring mid-course corrections and a great deal of field flexibility. The CTDA's role continues to evolve. Quite apart from lack of clarity of its role and the resulting uncertainties and related morale problems, what the CTDA has most lacked is a critical mass of senior level, experienced managers and technicians and consequently, effective management.

II. PARTICIPATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

Administrative decentralization was already official policy in Tunisia by the time that the CTRD project was first discussed by GOT and USAID officials in late 1977. The GOT's objective was to make government authorities and services more accessible to the people and more responsive to their "felt needs." The measures taken included the creation of new governorates and delegations, the allocation of "Rural Development Programs" funds to governments and the assignment of rural development staff to administer these funds on behalf of the governors. The A.I.D.-supported Siliana Rural Development project which was initiated in 1976 and terminated in 1979 was aimed at strengthening the Siliana Governorates' capacity to plan and implement rural development projects.

Unfortunately, recently created governorates, such as the Siliana governorate, lacked the staff necessary to plan rural development activities and to supervise their implementation by the field services of technical ministries (which also were understaffed throughout most of central Tunisia). Creating the ODTC was a typical technocratic response to the situation and, to some extent, represented a step backward in terms of decentralization inasmuch as it served several governorates from one central location. While it did establish field offices in most of the project area's delegations, decisionmaking power was centralized in the Kasserine home office and was exercised only by the ODTC director.

At the time the ODTC was created, the concept of local participation was practically unheard of in Tunisia. Any suggestion that the members of a community would cooperate for the purpose of improving their livelihood or living conditions were countered by arguments to this effect that the rural

population lacked community spirit and was suspicious of the term "cooperation" in light of their experiences with production cooperatives in the late 60's (At that time, then Minister of Economy Ben Salah attempted to forcibly collectivize Tunisian agriculture under the guise of establishing cooperatives).

In spite of the skeptical attitude of most Tunisian officials (except for a few in the Ministry of Social Affairs), a modest attempt at introducing local participation approaches in central Tunisia was launched in 1978 by the Save the Children Federation (SCF) under an A.I.D. grant.

Given the fact that the SCF project was barely getting underway and in light of the technocratic, top-down mode of operation of the Ministry of Agriculture, no attempt was made to introduce participatory features in the first set of CTRD interventions designed in 1978. The wisdom of this course of action was later confirmed when the ODTC began operations and it became apparent that the centralization of decision-making in the hands of the ODTC director precluded even ODTC staff participation in the decision-making process.

By the end of 1980, SCF had successfully demonstrated that it was possible for appropriately trained and motivated agents to elicit participation and self-help from rural communities in parts of central Tunisia. Under a one-year extension of its grant to SCF, A.I.D. encouraged it to enlist the collaboration of government authorities and the ODTC in the planning and implementation of Community-Based Integrated Rural Development (CBIRD) activities.

While several CBIRD projects were jointly funded by SCF and the Government of Silliana during the one year extension period, SCF was not successful in persuading the ODTC to program Experimental Fund monies for CBIRD

activities. The staff of the OOTC field office located in Makthar delegation (Siliana Governorate), however, did collaborate with SCF staff on one or two projects and the OOTC planning staff visited ongoing projects. The OOTC director was impressed by the reports he received from his staff and particularly by the enthusiastic reaction of the Governor of Siliana upon visiting a project site (Magrouna) when the community had joined forces to develop and irrigate land which had laid idle since 1969 (when the Ben Salar "cooperative" drive was terminated). The Governor had been particularly impressed by the fact that the local population had taken that initiative with no official GOT assistance and very little material support from SCF.

A.I.D. support of the SCF program was extended in August 1981 for another three years but at a low level of funding which required Tunisian financing of all CBIRD project expenditures. Substantial financial commitments were, in fact, received from the Siliana Government as well as from the Kasserine governorate which requested that SCF activities be expanded to include areas under its jurisdiction. While USAID continued to encourage OOTC to finance CBIRD projects from the Experimental Fund, no pressure was placed on SCF to secure a funding commitment from OOTC. SCF was expected, however, to collaborate with the Ministry of Social Affairs in designing a few projects for Experimental Fund financing. A.I.D. hoped that selected field personnel of governments, technical ministries and OOTC would learn from exposure to the SCF community-based approach to project design and implementation and would develop a more participatory style of operation. It was realized, however, that change was being introduced at the periphery, i.e., at the point where government agents interfaced with beneficiaries, without any attempt to change the basic organizational structure and operational style of the

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agencies involved. It was not anticipated, therefore unlikely that collaboration with SCF on a few small-scale CBIRD projects would result in a major "bureaucratic reorientation" of these agencies from a top-down, technocratic approach to a bottom-up, participatory approach (with the possible exception of the Ministry of Social Affairs field services which already have been exposed in the past to community development approaches and which were forced by budgetary constraints to undertake modest projects on a scale more amenable to a participatory style of implementation).

The recent tide of political liberalization in Tunisia (its most dramatic aspect being the evolution from a one-party to a multi-party system) was accompanied by official pronouncements concerning local participation as well as administrative decentralization. GOT officials who made these pronouncements, however, were not specific about the content of participation and it could be safely assumed that there would be a substantial time-lag between the first mention of the abstract concept of local participation and its actual implementation by government agencies. The first step in that process should be to break the "dependency" relationship between government staff and beneficiaries whereby the latter perceive themselves as powerless to act and perceive the government as a source of handouts, perceptions which are shared by the technocrats who administer government programs. The SCF experiment in Central Tunisia has challenged this stereotype and has attempted to replace it with an operational model of community self-help. This approach, however, cannot become institutionalized unless the regional and local authorities develop decentralized organizational structures which can match community self-help with an appropriate outreach capacity. In the case of the ODTG, this would require as a first step a conscious effort to

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decentralize decision-making to delegation-level field offices, a prospect seriously hampered by institutional constraints as well as by the personal management style of the ODTG director.

III. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

A. Political Constraints

Until the mid-1970's, the GOT's public investment program had been aimed primarily at increasing production and income (The exception being the educational sector which had been allocated considerable public investment over the years). As a result, there had been a tendency to concentrate public investment in the more productive northern and coastal regions of Tunisia and to neglect the resource-poor central and southern regions.

By the time the CTRD project was designed and approved, however, the GOT had become aware of serious dissatisfaction and incipient political unrest in some of the interior regions, including central Tunisia. It became conscious of the fact that the local populations were fed up with studies and promises and were becoming increasingly vocal in their demands for action. The GOT, therefore, perceived U.S. support and advocacy of a "basic human needs" approach focused on the "rural poor" as an opportunity to make good its past promises and to improve its standing with the Central Tunisia citizenry. This was reflected in the haste with which the GOT created a new regional authority, (the ODTG), to promote and direct the development of Central Tunisia, a few short months following signature of a CTRD project loan and grant agreement.

As a matter of fact, the high priority given to Central Tunisia in official speeches and other pronouncements turned out to be somewhat of a liability for the project. In its desire to maximize the short-term political gains from the Central Tunisia program, the GOT, at the time headed by former prime minister Hedi Nouira) advertised the OOTC and the new programs it would undertake as the instant solution to the region's economic and social problems. When the OOTC failed to deliver on a timely basis what had been promised, resentment and criticism of the office replaced the earlier sense of rising anticipation. This no doubt affected both the morale of the OOTC staff and the attitude of other GOT agencies toward the new institution.

B. Economic and Environmental Constraints

It had been recognized from the outset that lack of natural resources, geographic dispersion of the rural population and cultural isolation of the urban centers would make it difficult to increase income and employment, to attract private capital and skilled manpower and, generally speaking, to produce dramatic results over the life of the CTRD project. As a matter of fact, the long-standing aversion of both GOT and A.I.D. agricultural technicians to devoting time and resources to improving agriculture in the area, the GOT's delays in following up with action the numerous studies undertaken since the 1950's, the IBRD's rejection of a proposed Central Tunisia project in 1974 and AID/W's initial reluctance to approve the CTRD project, all bear witness to a general lack of confidence in Central Tunisia's development potential over the years and up to the time of project approval.

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Recognition of these constraints led the GOT to favor allocation of financial and human resources to those geographical areas within Central Tunisia which offered the greatest potential for rapid increases in production i.e., those areas with a potential for irrigation. In its desire for political impact, the GOT also favored highly visible and rather costly potable water and infrastructure projects. These GOT preferences tended to run counter to A.I.D.'s emphasis on meeting the basic human needs of the poorest segments of the population, particularly dispersed rural households in remote areas, through small-scale, low cost interventions.

While the GOT was conscious of the need to attract administrative and technical cadres to the "interior", it moved rather slowly in taking the necessary measures. In late 1980, USAID was informally told that substantial financial incentives would be provided to cadres willing to move to "hardship areas," including semi-urban centers in Central Tunisia, in order to compensate for the lack of cultural and social amenities and the generally harsher living conditions relative to Tunis and coastal cities. By the end of 1981, however, there were still no signs that those financial incentives were being put into effect.

C. Institutional Constraints

The slow pace of administrative reform in Tunisia is indicative of another type of constraint, i.e. bureaucratic resistance to change, which seriously limits the scope of management innovations within the time-frame of an A.I.D.-funded project. Ingrained patterns of administrative behavior, whether formally codified or not, constitute serious institutional constraint on the design and implementation of rural development projects in Tunisia. For instance:

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(1) Although "decentralization" was a stated GOT policy objective, actual progress in carrying out that policy was very slow due to the centrifugal tendency inherited by the Tunisian administration from pre-Independence French and Ottoman administrations. Even when regional authorities -- such as OOTC -- were created and staffed to administer programs in specific geographic areas, decision-making authority remained largely vested in the Tunis-based central administration. For instance, A.I.D. and the GOT had agreed that the OOTC would be responsible for managing small-scale pilot project funded by the Area Development Experimental Fund. In order to encourage innovative behavior by the OOTC, A.I.D. decided not to require mission approval of pilot projects prior to implementation but, instead, to require that pilot projects be evaluated at the end of each year for conformance to agreed-upon selection criteria. The GOT Ministry of Plan, however, insisted on reviewing and approving each pilot project as part of its investment budget approval process and the OOTC itself did not appear to relish the delegation of authority wished upon it by A.I.D.

(2) The complexity of integrated rural development project implementation called for organizational innovation. The Tunisian practice of codifying administration behavior and organizational structure into administrative law (also a French heritage) made such innovation difficult. For instance, the basic organizational structure and statutes of the OOTC, as specified in a Ministerial decree, was a standard model applicable to all offices. Organization charts may differ but they must go through a lengthy approval process and be published in the Official Journal before they can take effect.

This administrative formalism may partly explain the fact that USAID was unable to obtain an OOTC organization chart as late as three years after the enabling legislation had been passed by the national assembly. The OOTC director argued that he did not wish to get "locked" into a permanent organizational structure (including permanent appointments to division chief positions) until he had had the opportunity to assess the merits of alternative organizational structures and to evaluate the capability of his staff. The resulting uncertainty, however, contributed to low morale and lack of motivation among OOTC staff members who complained that they had not been assigned clear-cut responsibility and authority.

Tunisian administrative formalism also contributed to the difficulties encountered by the University of Wisconsin in providing technical assistance to the OOTC in the field of regional planning. While much of the "Sketch Plan" approach advocated by the University of Wisconsin focused on the planning process itself, rather than on planning techniques, the Wisconsin team did not pay adequate attention to the existence of an elaborate formal process of national planning which was itself closely tied to the annual budgeting process. By not even attempting to demonstrate how the proposed regional "Sketch Plan" process could be integrated within the national level formal planning process, the Wisconsin team missed an opportunity to confer legitimacy on a new approach to regional planning.

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IV. DIFFERING AGENDAS

A Project Design and Approval

As DAI points out in its IRD Research Note No. 1 (pp 66-67), host country governments are primarily interested in the resource transfer component of projects whereas A.I.D. officials, at the project design stage, are primarily interested in "packaging" the projects for its own review and approval process. When rural development projects are located in resource-poor areas of a country, these divergences in viewpoints are aggravated by differences between host country and A.I.D. strategies in dealing with economic and environmental constraints.

In the case of the CTRD project, the GOT and A.I.D. agreed on the need to refocus GOT and A.I.D. resources from the more developed northern tier of the country to the poorer interior. From the GOT's standpoint, it was politically advantageous to increase public investment in Central Tunisia. In the case of the AID Mission, it was a matter of survival to concentrate its assistance in the poorest areas in Tunisia, as otherwise it would be difficult to justify continued assistance to Tunisia, a middle-income country.

From the beginning of the CTRD project discussions, it was clearly evident that the GOT and particularly the Ministry of Plan, wanted A.I.D. to finance the Central Tunisia project which had been submitted to and turned down by the IRBRD in 1974. A.I.D., on the other hand, while agreeing to the choice of Central Tunisia as the geographical focus of U.S. assistance, wanted a completely new project design which would emphasize innovative approaches to meeting the basic human needs of the rural poor which constituted the vast majority of the Central Tunisia population..

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Even before project design began, disagreement between A.I.D. and the GOT Ministry of Plan on the issue of A.I.D. funding of infrastructure almost led to a complete breakdown in the negotiations. This was averted by a last minute face-saving compromise whereby it was agreed that PL 430 Title I local currency proceed would be allocated to the financing of infrastructure which A.I.D. would not finance with dollar funds (particularly rural roads).

The final package of A.I.D. dollar-funded interventions included very few of the original components of the project proposed to the World Bank for financing (irrigation infrastructure and a potable water system for three delegation seats was retained in the AID-funded project). On the other hand, it included a number of innovative and/or experimental components which were suggested by A.I.D. such as the development of a regional planning and evaluation capability, the establishment of an Experimental Fund, a dryland farming systems research effort and new approaches to the provision of potable water to dispersed rural populations.

While these initiatives were generally well received and were supported by GOT officials during the initial stage of project design, they resulted in a larger technical assistance package (relative to capital assistance) than would have been the case if the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture had had their way. During the final negotiations leading to the signature of the project loan and grant agreement, Ministry of Plan negotiators (as if fought to increase capital assistance at the expense of technical assistance U.S. technical assistance was the price that had to be paid in order to obtain A.I.D. assistance) and generally succeeded in keeping technical assistance to the minimum acceptable to A.I.D. This emphasis on "hardware" (equipment,

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construction; etc.) as opposed to "software" (technical assistance, new ways of delivering goods and services, etc.) was carried over from the project negotiation process to project implementation. Thus the OOTC assigned top priority to investment projects (irrigation and other rural infrastructure) as against regional planning, evaluation, information system development, Experimental Fund project design and the formulation of strategies for the provision of potable water and outreach services to the rural poor.

B. Project Implementation

Other differences in the agenda of the various participants became obvious in the course of CTRD project implementation. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture showed practically no interest in OOTC activities which did not fall within its jurisdiction, such as health education (in support of potable water interventions) or regional planning. On several occasions, it went so far as to suggest that monies earmarked for the Experimental Fund be reprogrammed for potable water interventions. Under these conditions, it was difficult for A.I.D. to persuade the OOTC management to play a broad inter-sectoral coordination role rather than act as an implementor of agricultural development activities alone.

There also was the inevitable clash of interest between the OOTC and existing field services of the Ministry of Agriculture when the new office moved in on their "turf." For instance, the Rural Engineering Service resisted Ministry approval of a rural potable water strategy developed by the OOTC (with University of Wisconsin assistance) in collaboration with USAID.

Finally, major divergences developed between the two universities responsible for technical assistance to the OOTC under the Area Development subproject concerning the establishment of a Central Tunisia information

system. On the one hand, the University of Wisconsin wanted to limit the collection of data to what it needed for regional planning. On the other hand, Cornell University wanted to develop a mini-computer-based information system which would meet project impact evaluation needs. The failure of the two university teams to collaborate could not but contribute to the lack of progress achieved in the development of a OOTC-based information system. A more important factor impeding information system implementation, however, was the difference between the GOT and A.I.D. viewpoints concerning evaluation activities. On the one hand, USAID was under pressure from AID/Washington to develop a comprehensive CTRD project evaluation plan, as required for every A.I.D.-funded project. From A.I.D.'s standpoint, it was obviously advantageous that, as much as possible of the information needed for project evaluation be collected and analyzed by the OOTC. The OOTC, on the other hand, was not particularly happy about the prospect of being evaluated, while the agencies responsible for monitoring CTRD program performance (the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture) did not allocate the necessary resources to a task which was assigned a much lower priority than plan and budget formulation.

V. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Central Tunisia Rural Development project design provided for the establishment of a regionally-based information system in Central Tunisia. What this system would consist of, however, was not clearly defined at the outset and efforts by USAID to reach agreement with the GOT on the subject during the two years following signature of the Project Agreement met with little success. As a result, little progress had been made in the establishment of an information system by the time the Area Development subproject evaluation began in June 1981.

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Without any doubt, the primary reason for this lack of progress was the fact that proposals for a CTRD information system were largely shaped in terms of the information needs of AID's evaluation system rather than in terms of the GOT's needs.

The Area Development subproject of the CTRD project called for the establishment of a planning and evaluation unit in the OOTC to carry out the OOTC's mandate with respect to the planning and evaluation of the Central Tunisia development effort. This mandate, however, was conferred on the OOTC only by the US/GOT project agreement and not by the legislation creating the OOTC which made no specific reference to planning and/or evaluation. This was not surprising since there was no nation-wide GOT evaluation system and since the existing national planning system operated along sectoral rather than regional lines. Thus both the regional planning and evaluation components of the Area Development subprojects were clearly of an experimental nature and, apparently, were not assigned a high priority by the GOT.

The regional planning component of the Area Development subproject, however, had the support of the Ministry of Plan which was considering the introduction of a regional dimension in its 1982-86 five year plan formulation

process. The evaluation component, on the other hand, had been added at the suggestion of AID/Washington and had no significant constituency within the Tunisian bureaucracy, even though everyone paid lip service to the need for program evaluation. In light of that fact, consideration had been given to assigning the CTRD program evaluation responsibility to a separate autonomous agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Center for Agricultural Center (CNEA). The OOTC director, however, objected to the concept of an outside evaluator and insisted that the evaluation function be assigned to the OOTC.

Well aware of the fact that the OOTC would not be particularly enthusiastic about evaluating its own performance or even gathering data which would facilitate such evaluation, USAID/Tunis sought the establishment of a joint GOT/AID CTRD Evaluation Committee (composed of representatives of the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture, OOTC and USAID) which would make CTRD program evaluation a "collaborative" endeavor. To that end, assistance was obtained from AID/Washington in developing a conceptual framework for the formulation of a joint GOT/AID CTRD program evaluation plan. (Several versions of this conceptual framework were produced, each detailing the various levels at which evaluation could be conducted i.e. regional impact evaluation, appraisal of project inputs and outputs, monitoring project implementation). While alternative evaluation strategies were discussed at one GOT/USAID meeting, decisions concerning the evaluation plan could not be made due to the absence of key senior officials from the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture.

In the absence of an agreed upon-joint GOT/AID evaluation plan for the Central Tunisia program, the only impetus for the development of an OOTC-based

information system came from the two universities responsible for providing technical assistance to the OOTC Planning and Evaluation Unit.

The University of Wisconsin, which had overall responsibility for planning and evaluation assistance, had been opposed from the outset to the collection of baseline data on the ground that this would result in the accumulation of an excessive volume of data, much of it useless to planners. Under pressure from USAID, however, the Wisconsin team did produce a proposal for collecting data on selected economic and social development indicators. The proposal was reviewed and commented on by USAID/Tunis but was ignored by the OOTC management and was never reviewed by the Joint CTRD Evaluation Committee.

Cornell University, which was responsible for the "macro-social accounting" component of evaluation assistance to the OOTC, had advocated from the outset the collection of baseline data for later use in evaluating the regional impact of the Central Tunisia development effect. Its main motivation for participating in the CTRD project (under a broad cooperative agreement with AID/Washington) had been to test an "informant survey" methodology aimed at producing base-line data on key development indicators at a low cost relative to the more sophisticated sample survey approach. While the proposed methodology was criticized from the standpoint of reliability of results by AID statisticians, the "informant survey" of secteur* leaders conducted by the Cornell team in 1979 ended up being the major source of base-line data for the project area since the OOTC refused to consider undertaking, or contracting for, a sample survey of households in Central Tunisia. (It did not even act on a USAID/Cornell recommendation to request the National

* the secteur is the lowest unit of territorial administration in Tunisia.

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Statistical Institute to modify the design of an already planned national household survey so as to obtain a more representative sample at the delegation level for Central Tunisia).

Through sheer perseverance, the Cornell team succeeded in mobilizing the OOTC to conduct the "informant survey" and in getting the data computerized for use by the Planning and Evaluation Unit. (It was also responsible for the procurement and installation of two AID-funded Apple mini-computers.) While the team ended up doing much of the data interpretation work (under pressure from the OOTC management to complete the final, comprehensive survey report) it did elicit a fair amount of participation from the OOTC planning and evaluation staff.

In spite of the effective performance of the Cornell team and the demonstrated usefulness of some of the data collected (for instance, for the selection of potable water intervention sites), the OOTC showed little or no interest in undertaking additional surveys (such as a survey of irrigated areas). The Cornell team, however, did elicit positive responses from OOTC project managers when it offered to assist in the establishment of a mini-computer-based project monitoring system (beginning with irrigation interventions.) In addition, staff members of other agencies operating in Central Tunisia demonstrated considerable interest in learning to use the mini-computers.

Some have argued that a mini-computer-based information system was too sophisticated for the OOTC. This may be more true from the standpoint of equipment maintenance and repair than from the standpoint of utilization. A more relevant question in the light of the OOTC/Wisconsin/Cornell experience is whether it was realistic on the part of AID to expect the OOTC to move

ahead with the development of a program evaluation system. The alternative would have been for AID to finance a contract between the Ministry of Agriculture and an organization such as the CNEA for the collection and evaluation of data (preferably in collaboration with the OOTC). In that case the organization selected would have had a clear financial incentive (as well as a contractual obligation) to get the job done. In retrospect, it was clear that the same concern which motivated the OOTC director to oppose this alternative would deter it from undertaking any serious effort to establish an effective evaluation capability.

Viewed from a decision-information systems perspective, information flows in response to the needs of decision makers and implementors. Thus, the primary function of the OOTC Planning and Evaluation Unit should have been to transform information inputs into information outputs which met the needs of the OOTC director and program managers. It is questionable, however, whether the regional planning and evaluation outputs called for by the CTRD Area Development subproject were the kind of information inputs required by the OOTC management as a basis for making programmatic and budgetary decisions. In retrospect, it appears that the regional planning emphasis was somewhat premature, that the program evaluation component was based on unrealistic expectations and that a focus on project design and monitoring would have been more responsive to the immediate management problems faced by the OOTC.

The OOTC appeared to suffer from several of the information system problems identified by DAI in its IRD Research Note No. 1 (pp. 14-18): perception of an information system as a threat to management, particularly when it emphasizes the type of evaluation which grades the overall success of a project; management inability to anticipate information needed for planning,

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monitoring and evaluating projects; top management predilection for "crisis management." The main lesson to be drawn, however, is that technical assistance aimed at increasing the supply of information is useless unless there is a demand for the information on the part of top decision-makers. In other words, information systems must be demand-driven.

VI. EFFECTING INTEGRATION

A. Organization Placement

The CTRD project experience clearly supports the DAI contention that it is extremely difficult to move from an integrated rural development (IRD) concept to the actual coordination of planning and implementation activities. It confirms the observation that organizational placement (i.e. the placement of an IRD project within the existing government structure) is usually determined by political and institutional factors. It also illustrates the difficulty of (a) convincing decision-makers to consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative organizational placement strategies in the light of past experience and, consequently, (b) influencing the organizational placement decision-making process.

From an A.I.D. standpoint, it was logical to consider the organizational placement of the CTRD project in the light of the experience previously gained from the A.I.D.-supported Siliana Rural Development project. On the other hand, the GOT Ministry of Agriculture looked upon the proposed CTRD project as the updated version (with significant modifications required for A.I.D. approval) of a project presented to, and rejected by, the IBRD in 1974. A considerably scaled-down version of that project (consisting primarily of irrigation improvement and rural infrastructure) had been launched in 1976 by the GOT without any support from multilateral or bilateral donors. In the eyes of the Ministry of Agriculture, A.I.D. financing would make it possible to expand the scope of the project, accelerate its implementation and transfer its management from the OMVH* (an existing regional authority primarily responsible for the Medjerda Valley irrigation system near Tunis) to a new

*Office de Mise en Valeur de la Vallée de la Medjerda.

regional authority located in central Tunisia. (Plans for the establishment of such a regional authority were included in the 1974 proposal to the IBRD).

While the general concept of a central Tunisia development authority was incorporated in the CTRD Concept Paper submitted by the Mission to AID/W in late October 1977, this did not reflect the existence of a consensus within the GOT or A.I.D. as to the appropriate organizational placement strategy for the CTRD project. In fact, discussions with a number of GOT officials in different ministries in early 1978 revealed the existence of significant differences of opinion on that subject.

In the course of these discussions, four different organizational placement strategies were considered:

(1) Working through line ministries (Agriculture, Health, Social Affairs, etc.) with the responsibility for inter-agency coordination resting with an executive committee chaired by representatives of the Ministry of Plan and USAID.

(2) Working through one governorate with the responsibility for program planning and coordination assigned to a strengthened rural development staff under the supervision of the secretary-general of the governorate.

(3) Establishing a regional development authority (office) responsible for CTRD project management, or

(4) Establishing an autonomous but temporary program planning and coordination unit which would be disbanded once the project was completed.

Surprisingly enough, there was considerable opposition to option (3) from officials in several ministries, including some Ministry of Agriculture

officials. Offices were criticized as being costly, top-heavy and technically-oriented; as (a) constituting a duplication of efforts with existing field services, (b) competing with them for scarce managerial and technical talent; (c) stifling local initiative (d) creating a sense of dependency among the people served by the office and (e) generating friction between the office staff on the one hand, and the governorate and line agency staff on the other.

The official in charge of government decentralization in the Office of the Prime Minister favored option (1) but recognized the difficulty of adequately strengthening the rural development staff in each of the resource-poor, often recently created, governorates of central Tunisia. He was reminded that the Siliara Rural Development Project Agreement had called for the creation of a special project management unit in the governorate administration. Not only was the unit never created but the governorate's rural development unit remained under-staffed throughout the life of the project. As a result, the burden of project management was shifted to the USAID resident representative in the project area.*

While everyone recognized the desirability of strengthening the governorate's capacity to administer rural development programs, it was generally felt that provincial governors were too busy with political and administrative matters to take on major responsibility for managing development programs. It was also considered politically ill-advised to build up a program planning and coordination capacity in one central Tunisia governorate unless such a build-up could be duplicated in neighboring governments (an unlikely prospect over the near future).

*See my Memorandum to the Files from P. Demongeot, June 10, 1960, Subject: Siliara Rural Development Project - Lessons of Experience (A View from Tunis), pp. 10-11.

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Option (1) did not receive much support except in the Ministry of Plan which endorsed it as an interim measure until such time as the level and complexity of the CTRD program justified the creation of an autonomous program management entity.

Option (4) appeared to be the preferred organizational placement strategy but there were disagreements among GOT officials as to what the role of the unit should be. For instance, the Ministry of Interior favored a small, interdisciplinary planning and coordinating staff which would collaborate closely with governorates and other local government officials in the formulation of a development strategy for the area and which would be disbanded as soon as the governments were able to assume its functions. The Ministry of Plan favored the assignment of program coordination functions to an autonomous regional entity while retaining in its own hands development planning responsibility.

It is difficult to evaluate the effect of these informal discussions with senior civil servants on the actual organizational placement decision-making process. While the creation of a regional authority (office) had been agreed upon by an inter-ministerial committee before these discussions took place, it had not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers (i.e. the full cabinet), the Economic and Social Council and the National Assembly. It also appeared that a final decision as to the type of regional authority to be created (an agricultural development authority versus an IRD regional authority) had not yet been made. In March 1978, USAID suggested that a joint US/GOT committee be established to formally discuss the institutional framework of the CTRD project but this suggestion was rejected by the Ministry of Plan on the

grounds that organizational placement was an internal GOT matter not subject to negotiation with a foreign donor. A few months later, draft enabling legislation was hurriedly circulated through the agencies concerned and approved by the council of Ministers. The enabling legislation was passed by the National Assembly in August 1978.

In retrospect, it appears that the expectation of A.I.D. support of the central Tunisia program acted as a catalyst with regard to the actual creation of a regional authority. In other words, the GOT decision to expand the program, contingent on A.I.D. assistance, justified the added investment and recurrent costs of establishing and operating a separate regional authority. The timing of the GOT action, however, reflected a strong sense of political urgency, as the publicity surrounding the creation of the new office well indicates. This political urgency, in turn, acted to limit internal GOT discussion of the draft enabling legislation in the context of the project negotiations being conducted with A.I.D. A clear indication of this haste was provided by the fact that the project area defined in the proposal sent to the National Assembly was "lifted" from the 1974 proposal to the IBRD and thus did not conform to the boundaries agreed upon by the GOT and A.I.D. The Ministry of Agriculture's responses to questioning by members of the National Assembly concerning possible duplication of functions and overlap with existing agencies also suggests that little attention to these issues had been paid during the drafting of the enabling legislation.

B. Organizational Linkages

The legislation establishing the OOTC was very broad in its definition of the new regional authority's mission. It gave the OOTC a general mandate to promote the integrated rural development of the area under its jurisdiction

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and specified only a few of the functions that it might perform, such as agricultural land development, contracting for rural infrastructure development and promotion of small industry. Thus, a number of decisions remained to be taken concerning the OOTC relationship to other developmental agencies operating in the region.

In his testimony before the National Assembly prior to the vote on the enabling legislation, the Minister of Agriculture indicated that the OOTC would absorb all the agricultural development functions currently performed by the Ministry of Agriculture field services located in the project area. While this reply apparently allayed the concerns of some legislators with respect to overlap and duplication of functions, it set the stage for an early confrontation between the OOTC and the field services of the Ministry's line agencies. While the situation might have been defused by the nomination of a senior Ministry of Agriculture official to head the OOTC, the appointment of a senior Ministry of Plan official (its chef de cabinet) to that position made such a confrontation inevitable.

When the OOTC began operations in early 1979, it took over the functions, facilities and staff of the OMYM in the area. A later decree formally assigned responsibility to the OOTC not only for the so-called "public irrigated perimeters" (consisting of privately owned land irrigated by government-owned and administered irrigation systems) but also for assisting farmers who irrigate their land from private wells. However, there was no transfer of agricultural development responsibilities from Ministry of Agriculture field services to the OOTC which was thus faced with a choice between the alternative strategies.

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(1) assume a promotional, financing, coordinating role but rely on other existing organization for implementation of activities outside of irrigated agriculture or

(2) attempt to implement all the activities funded through the CTRD project even if it meant duplicating functions already performed by other agencies.

The OOTC chose the second strategy. While the rationale for this decision was never clearly spelled out by the OOTC Directors, the following factors were cited at one time or other: (a) The OOTC felt compelled to deliver on the political promises made by high GOT officials at the time of its creation; (b) It felt pressured by government and local authorities to show immediate results; (c) It felt hostility on the part of existing line agencies in the project area. In any event, its first priority was to undertake visible infrastructure projects, such as rural road improvements and crop storage facilities.

While the OOTC director spent considerable time with the governors concerned by the CTRD project, the OOTC staff was not encouraged to seek contact with, and advice from, technical field services of line agencies. As a result, not only were there no attempts to set up formal organizational mechanisms for coordination and information-sharing (such as inter-agency committees or cooperative agreements) but informal contacts and communications between OOTC and other field-level organizational units were limited to purely personal relationships (such as contacts between relatives or between people originally from the same geographical location e.g. Sfax or Gafsa).

* consisting of privately owned land irrigated by government owned and administered irrigation systems.

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The CTRD project design had proposed two models for establishing organizational linkages between the ODTG and other agencies. For instance, the Area Development sub-project provided for the ODTG's Planning and Evaluation to perform a monitoring and evaluation function with respect to all Central Tunisia development programs and to set up a regionally-based information system which would serve all government agencies operating in the area. The EPU, however, never made any headway in that direction for reasons discussed earlier in this paper. Another model of organizational linkage was provided by the Dryland Farming Systems sub-project which called for a contractual agreement between the ODTG and a regional training and Research Institution to conduct applied research on small landholdings in Central Tunisia. While that agreement was negotiated and signed, it was not adopted by the ODTG as a model of collaboration with regional technical services in the implementation of other CTRD project-funded activities.

As time went by, however, the Ministry of Agriculture became increasingly critical of ODTG attempts to duplicate functions already being performed by existing regional field services. One might attribute this snift to a number of factors: (a) the ODTG's slow start and failure to build up an effective project implementation capacity; (b) successful lobbying by Minister of Agriculture staff; (c) the appointment of a new Minister of Agriculture and the concurrent transfer of the powerful Ministry of Agriculture Chef de Cabinet to a senior position in the Ministry of Plan etc. In any event, the outcome was a logical sequence to the Ministry's failure to follow through with the announced ODTG take-over of agricultural development functions in the project area.

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Thus, the ODTIC was told by the Ministry of Agriculture that it should contract out the well-drilling component of the Rural Potable Water Subproject to the Ministry's own well-drilling organization (including the use of A.I.D.-funded drilling equipment) and that it should rely on the Ministry's rural engineering services for technical advice on all potable water interventions. It was hinted that extension services aimed at dryland farmers would remain the responsibility of the appropriate Ministry of Agriculture field services under the supervision of the government-level Regional Commission for Agricultural Development (CRDA's), contrary to what had been agreed upon under the Rural Extension and Outreach sub-project. Finally, in the case of the Rangeland Improvement sub-project, implementation responsibility was assigned to the Livestock and Pastures Authority (OEP), a national-level office, with the ODTIC responsible for "coordination." The ODTIC was reminded by the Ministry of Agriculture, however, that it was the CRDA's responsibility to coordinate agricultural field services within each government: the ODTIC's responsibility was to coordinate between governments or between sectoral line agencies.

C. Institutional Development

The CTRD project experience indicates that failure to establish a new pattern of organizational linkages in Central Tunisia following the creation of the ODTIC adversely affected prospects for institutionalization of the ODTIC's regional role. Part of the problem may be attributed to the fact that, even after the creation of the ODTIC, the GOT Ministry of Agriculture remained unable or unwilling to make a clear-cut choice between three alternative organizational models:

(1) A regional planning, coordinating, monitoring agency - While such a role was consistent with the broad legislative mandate given to the OOTC, it did not coincide with the functional responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, which supervised the OOTC's activities.

(2) A regional agricultural development authority responsible for all agricultural sector activities in the project area -- While this concept was initially endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture, it probably ran into opposition from the governors and governorate-level Regional Commissioners for Agricultural Development who would have lost their supervisory authority over agricultural development activities in those parts of their governorates located within the project area. Such a regional agricultural development authority, however, is being considered for one of the Central Tunisia governorates (Sidi-Bouzyd) where it would operate under the supervision of the governor.

(3) A regional irrigation authority -- such authorities have been established in several governments to take over the management of public irrigated perimeters previously administered by the Tunis-based OIVII.

By mid-1981, the OOTC combined some elements of the three types of organization at a relatively low level of effectiveness. However, even while some Tunis-based officials argued that the OOTC should be given more time to improve its performance and institutionalize itself, its very existence was being threatened from two different directions. On the one hand, Central Tunisia governors were pushing for the creation of governorate-level agricultural development or irrigation authorities. On the other hand, the National Assembly approved in late July 1981 legislation creating a national

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General Commissariat for Regional Development, under the supervision of the Ministry of Plan and Finance and with a field office in each region. Among other tasks, these field offices would eventually be responsible for regional planning and for coordinating and monitoring IRD projects, functions which the ODTC was expected to perform under the terms of the CTRD project agreement of May 1979. Whether or not the new agency would perform these functions better than the ODTC would depend on its ability to participate in, and influence, the budgetary allocation process currently managed by the Ministry of Plan and Finance. If the new agency's regional field offices are able to affect the allocation of budgetary resources between and within regions through their planning and evaluation activities, there is a good chance that they might succeed in establishing the necessary linkages with other agencies operating within their region.

Should the blame for the ODTC's poor performance be attributed entirely to a faulty organizational placement strategy? Or could it be argued that a more adaptable and innovative ODTC management might have successfully addressed some of the weaknesses of the initial placement strategy?

The July 1981 report prepared by a joint Tunisian-American team of consultants, as part of the mid-term evaluation of the Central Tunisia Area Development sub-project, severely criticizes the ODTC management for its failure to pursue a policy of systematic coordination with regional technical services and for not making use of their technical expertise when its own staff lacked such expertise. It also argues persuasively that poor management practices (such as failure to delegate responsibility and to specify tasks) have resulted in the loss of competent staff and the demoralization of the

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existing staff which consequently lacked the authority and motivation to establish effective working relationships with technical staff personnel in other agencies. The report did recognize, however, that the GOT's failure to clearly define the role and functions of the OOTC did contribute to the paradoxical situation whereby the creation of the new office only added an additional structural component in the regional organizational patchwork without bringing about the improvement in coordination which was the initial justification for setting it up.

While the GOT never formally accepted the findings of the evaluation consultants, senior officials unofficially have recognized the validity of those criticisms, even though they have argued that it was unreasonable to expect the OOTC to accomplish much after only one and a half years of existence (January 1980 - June 1981).

The GOT Ministry of Agriculture's reaction to the consultants' report demonstrated some sensitivity to the charge that it had failed to clearly define the role and functions of the OOTC. It directed its various departments to close ranks behind the OOTC and give it their full cooperation. It also gave the OOTC a vote of confidence by finally making the long-delayed decision to assign to it responsibility for extension services to dryland farmers as well as to farmers in irrigated areas.

While no action was taken by the Ministry of Agriculture with respect to the OOTC's management problem, the Area Development subproject evaluation provided a framework for a frank and constructive dialogue on that issue between USAID and the OOTC. While, initially, relations were strained by the

presentation of the consultants' report, progress was made in getting the CTDA to acknowledge the deficiencies in its management and organization and their impact on program performance and to request technical assistance in the management field. It is too early to predict, however, whether these efforts will be successful in strengthening the OOTC and enable it to carry out its development mandate in Central Tunisia.

VII. TIMING

DAI identified three timing issues which interfere with the effective implementation of IRD projects. (a) excessive time between project identification and start up; (b) inaccurate estimates and (c) inappropriate phasing of project-related activities. Although these three issues often are interrelated, we will try to address each one separately.

A. Excessive Time from Project Identification to Startup:

A total of 18 months elapsed between submission of the CTRD Concept Paper (November 1977) to signature of the CTRD Project Loan and Grant Agreement (May 1979) and another month between that event and startup of the first project activities, or a total of 19 months. If submission of the CTRD Project Identification Papers (PIDs) is taken as a starting point, the total time elapsed from project identification to start up is 13 months, which is relatively short for an IRD project. However, the first activity undertaken under the project was a reconnaissance survey by a University of Wisconsin technical assistance team and it was financed under the centrally-funded Area Development project. The first physical accomplishment (improvement of springs under the Smallholder Irrigation subproject) did not in fact take place until the first quarter of 1980.

In retrospect, it is possible to identify the major factors responsible for these delays:

1) Lengthy arguments between the GOT, the Mission and AID/Washington resulted in a 8-9 month lapse of time between AID/Washington approval of the CTRD Concept Paper in November 1977 and Mission submission of the PID's in July 1979. It was first necessary to convince the AID agricultural community that there existed a potential for agricultural Development in Central Tunisia. This was achieved with an agricultural assessment carried out by a Univeristy of Missouri team early in 1978. The Mission was then faced with the task of reconciling the GOT's insistence on AID financing infrastructure projects with AID/Washington's uncompromising stand on this issue. As mentioned earlier a confrontation was side-stepped through a face-saving compromise whereby it was agreed that local currency proceeds from PL 430 Title I sales but no dollar funds would be allocated to infrastrucure other than irrigation and potable water facilities (the door was left open to rural electrification under certain conditions which did not materialize).

2) While PID approval was secured by October 1978, preparation of the Project and Subproject Papers (for three initial subprojects) was hindered by a change in the composition of the GOT negotiating team. During the formulation of a preliminary Central Tunisia development strategy and the preparation of the initial CTRD PIDs, the GOT negotiating team had been headed by the Director of Public Irrigated Perimeters at the ONVVIH who also was the manager of the Central Tunisia Project initiated by the GOT in 1976. By October 1978, however, he dropped out of the negotiating process when it became known that the Ministry of Plan Chef de Cabinet had been named to head

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the newly created OOTC. The new OOTC director, however, did not take up his functions until early 1979 and, consequently, the Project and Subproject Papers were initially prepared without adequate participation on the GOT side and had to be modified and expanded in the first few months of 1979. Uncertainties concerning the OOTC's role, functions and future performance also contributed to lengthening the negotiating process as AID attempted to compensate for them by requiring that the Project Agreement include a relatively large number of conditions precedent to disbursement.

3) Because there was considerable opposition to the CTRD project in some quarters in AID/Washington, a large volume of documentation, including studies, was generated in support of the project. While not all of the documentation prepared may have been necessary, it would be more accurate to blame delays in project startup on the difficulty of getting AID/Washington to reach a consensus on the issue of CTRD project approval rather than on the time needed to prepare and process documentation.

4) Finally, delays in project startup subsequent to project approval were due in part to GOT slowness in meeting the numerous conditions precedents imposed by AID and only reluctantly accepted by the GOT.

B. Inaccurate Time Estimates

It is evident that A.I.D. underestimated the time it would take for OOTC to become operational and, particularly, to recover from the disruption caused by the replacement, as GOT project manager, of a Ministry of Agriculture insider (the Director of Public Irrigated Perimeters at the ONVVM) by an outsider (the Chef de Cabinet at the Ministry of Plan). In retrospect, this factor appears to have contributed, to a larger extent than was perceived at the time, to the inability of both the Ministry of Agriculture and the OOTC (its subordinate agency) to mobilize GOT resources for an increased level of effort in Central Tun.

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The CTRD project design, however, contained an inbuilt bias toward under-estimating the time needed for the OOTC to become operational inasmuch as (1) it provided that all subprojects other than the initial three would be designed in collaboration with the OOTC and (2), since CTRD project approval was granted by AID/Washington in the context of a broader policy decision to terminate U.S. Development Assistance to Tunisia by the end of FY 1981, it required that all CTRD project funds be obligated before that date. This implied that all the subprojects would be designed and approved during the first three years of CTRD project implementation and, consequently, that the OOTC would be able not only to collaborate effectively in project development (with the assistance of the University of Wisconsin) but also to assume management responsibility for these subproject early on during the CTRD project implementation period.

That assumption proved to be unrealistic and the attempt to "force-feed" new subprojects to the OOTC became a cause of further delays in project implementation. Although only two subprojects (Rural Potable Water and Rural Extension and Outreach) were designed in collaboration with the OOTC, both of them experienced implementation difficulties and delays which reflected not only OOTC weaknesses in management, organization and staffing but also the fact that the OOTC's role in potable water development and agricultural extension had not been clearly established and, consequently, was open to challenge by line agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture already operating in the project area.

C. Inappropriate Phasing of Project Activities

Time phasing of project activities is relatively simple when the activities are of a primarily technical character and when performance

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standards are available for scheduling purposes. This is the case with most construction projects even though there are factors such as weather conditions which cannot be accurately forecast (in addition to the human error factor which increases in direct proportion to the complexity of the tasks involved.)

In the case of rural development programs, the phasing of component activities is complicated by the institutional development dimension of the program. It is not simply a matter of determining an optimum (or at least reasonably efficient) sequence of inputs and outputs but it also involves the introduction and institutionalization of new ways of combining inputs in order to obtain new configurations of outputs. The CTRD project, for instance, called for the designing and testing of new ways of providing potable water and rural extension services as well as for the development of an institutional capacity to plan, innovate and evaluate.

Under these circumstances, it does not make sense to prepare detailed project implementation "blueprints" as in the case of capital projects where technical considerations are foremost. On the contrary, such "blueprints", when they are prepared, foster an illusionary sense of certainty when in fact uncertainty prevails. The usefulness of such "blueprints" is often diminished by the fact that they are prepared by missions without adequate consultation with the host country government.

Even if host country officials collaborate in the preparation of a project implementation plan, they often do not share the A.I.D. commitment to the "blueprint" approach. Firm plans and cost estimates are legally required as a basis for obligation of U.S. Government funds and, consequently, they also are

required in support of A.I.D. project agreements which obligate project funds. From the standpoint of many recipient countries, however, a project agreement commits the government to making funds available but there is no requirement that such a commitment be backed up by detailed plans and cost estimates. In the case of Tunisia, funds are not obligated (in the U.S. sense of the word) until such time as annual expenditure budgets are approved. It is therefore difficult, even under normal circumstance, to obtain from GOT officials the kind of detailed project planning data which are required on the U.S. side.

In the case of the CTRD project, the difficulty was compounded by the fact that the ODTIC was a new agency and that its newly appointed director had not participated in the project design process. Furthermore, not being an agricultural program administrator, the new director was unable and/or unwilling to make decisions about key project implementation issues or to ask for specific revisions on the project design. Therefore, the ODTIC found it difficult to meet GOT budget submission deadlines, let alone A.I.D. requirements for project documentation.

In the face of uncertainty concerning the successful and timely development of a host country IRD project management capability, it would be advantageous to replace the "blueprint" approach to project implementation planning by a more flexible approach which may be described as "project implementation planning in stages." Under that approach, a project agreement would be signed on the basis of a long-term overall project strategy. For obligation purposes, however, the project would be divided into discrete

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In the face of uncertainty concerning the successful and timely development of a host country IRD project management capability, it would be advantageous to replace the "blueprint" approach to project implementation planning by a more flexible approach which may be described as "project implementation planning in stages." Under that approach, a project agreement would be signed on the basis of a long-term overall project strategy. For obligation purposes, however, the project would be divided into discrete

"phases" of two to three years duration, with funds for Phase I obligated at the time of signature of the agreement, on the basis of a detailed implementation plan for that first phase. Before the end of Phase I implementation, progress to date would be evaluated and detailed plans and cost estimates for Phase II would be developed and approved, thus providing a basis for obligating a second tranche of funds.

It should be noted that incremental funding of A.I.D. projects is a common practice and dividing a project into discrete phases is not unusual. Incremental funding, however, is usually dictated by factors other than a desire to retain flexibility in implementation planning (e.g. a lack of current year funds and/or a desire to keep a low pipeline). On the other hand when a project is broken down into "phases", each "phase" is usually treated as a separate project requiring separate approval and authorization.

The proposed approach, within the framework of a single project agreement, would link incremental funding to implementation planning with obligation of funds coinciding with mission/ host country government agreement on a detailed implementation plan for each specific project "phase". It would offer the following benefits:

(a) eliminate the necessity of making unrealistic time estimates for project implementation.

(b) allow detailed implementation plans for later "phases" to be developed during implementation of the first phase, thereby reducing the period of time between project design and startup.

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(c) make it possible to delay implementation of the next "phase" if the evaluation of a previous "phase" indicates that the host country's institutional capability for project management is not developing as planned.

(d) spread over time the documentation burden imposed by A.I.D. on the host country government's project planning capability, and

(e) preclude the obligation of A.I.D. funds on the basis of implementation plans which have not been fully worked out collaboratively with the host country government.

VIII. MANAGING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The basic structure of technical assistance to the GOT within the framework of the CTRD project was established at the time the overall project and the three initial subprojects were designed. It included:

1) Technical assistance to the ODTG in the field of regional planning and evaluation to be provided by the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University under contractual arrangements between AID/Washington and the Universities (with the bulk of the services funded by the Mission through amendments to the applicable cooperative agreement).

2) Technical assistance to the ODTG and a regional training and research institution in the fields of dryland farming systems research and irrigation water management to be provided by a land grant institution under a host country contract with the GOE. (The contract concluded between Oregon State University and the Ministry of Agriculture was later expanded to include technical assistance in the fields of rural extension and outreach and rangeland improvement under two subsequent subprojects).

Since technical assistance in the field of agriculture did not get underway before 1981, CTRD Project implementation to date has been with technical assistance in the field of regional planning and evaluation which was initiated in 1979. In the next section, we will see how the institutional development objectives of the CTRD project were affected by the way that technical assistance was structured. In a subsequent section, the actual management of that technical assistance will be examined in light of the factors identified by DAI in its IRD Research Note No. 1 (page 28).

A. Impact of Project Design on Institutional Development Performance

With the benefits of hindsight, one can readily see that the CTRD Project design inadvertently set the stage for conflict between long-term institutional development objectives of the Project and, shorter term area development objectives. On the one hand, the Central Tunisia Area Development Sub-project was aimed at developing an institutional capacity for regional planning, project design, evaluation and experimentation at the regional level. On the other hand, the CTRD Project called for the OOTC to manage and/or coordinate various area development interventions (irrigation, potable water, etc.) funded by AID and/or the GOT in Central Tunisia. The OOTC's Planning and Evaluation Unit was obviously created to accomplish the specific functions called for by the Area Development subproject. The OOTC itself, however, was established by the GOT to activate the implementation of Central Tunisia area development programs. This was understandable in light of the GOE's desire to maximize the short-term political impact of its development program on Central Tunisia's population. Thus, while the OOTC and its overseer, the Ministry of Agriculture, might have disagreed as to the exact role to be performed by the OOTC (i.e. coordination versus direct implementation), they both agreed that getting area development programs moving was the top priority.

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AID's attitude was more ambiguous. Whereas at the project design stage, the emphasis had been on the more innovative aspect of the OOTC's role, (possibly in response to AID/Washington's concerns), once the project was approved, the Mission came under increasing pressure to move ahead with the design and implementation of CTRD subprojects. Thus, when it became apparent that the OOTC, as program manager, was becoming a bottleneck which impeded the timely obligation and expenditure of AID funds, Mission management made it clear that it was prepared to bypass the OOTC altogether (In one instance, the Rangeland Development and Management subproject, the OOTC was actually bypassed).

As the prime contractor responsible for assisting the OOTC to develop a regional planning and project design capability, the University of Wisconsin found itself under pressure to show results very early in the game. Conscious of the fact that new CTRD subprojects had to be designed and ready for implementation within three U.S. fiscal years (1979-81), the University of Wisconsin moved ahead with plans to field a "reconnaissance" team in January of 1979. The recently created OOTC, however, was not ready to host such an effort and, consequently, the team's visit was postponed until the following summer. Another postponement was barely averted through the USAID-funded provision of logistical support by the National Center for Agricultural Studies (CHEA) which also provided interpreting services and background data. The "reconnaissance" backfired, however, when the team's report (which was critical of the GOT's past efforts in the area) was distributed by the University of Wisconsin to GOT ministries as well as to the OOTC. The OOTC

director, angered by the fact that he was not given the opportunity to review the draft report and decide on the final report's distribution, ruled out further visits by large teams and insisted that further regional planning efforts should be carried by fewer experts spending longer periods of time in the field.

When it became evident that the University of Wisconsin's regional planning assistance would not bear fruit in time to provide a conceptual framework for the design of new CTRD subprojects pressure was applied on the University to move ahead with project design assistance to the OOTC. In response to these pressures, the University of Wisconsin fielded two project development teams in the first half of 1980. The first team of two consultants, fielded in February-March 1980, was to assist the OOTC establish criteria and procedures for selecting rural potable water intervention sites and modes. However, because of the short period of time spent in Central Tunisia (9 working days) as well as language problems, the team's report was really a unilateral product rather than a collaborative effort with the OOTC.

A second team, which included five University of Wisconsin members and two outside consultants, was fielded in March 1980 to prepare a background document for a Rural Extension and Outreach Project Paper. In that particular instance, the team's report did reflect a substantial degree of collaboration with the OOTC agricultural staff. In both instances, however, the participation of the OOTC's Planning and Evaluation Unit was minimal. While one could assign part of the blame for that situation to the somewhat antagonistic attitude of OOTC "technicians" towards the "economic planners" in the Planning and Evaluation Unit, the principal reason for the planners' lack of participation was their lack of training and experience in project design.



There is little doubt that if USAID had waited for the OOTC to develop a project design capability before initiating the design of the Rural Potable Water and Rural Extension and Outreach subprojects, not only the FY 1980 obligation target would not have been met but subproject funds would probably not have been obligated before the end-of-FY 1981 obligation deadline. This can be gauged from USAID experience in trying to bring about OOTC implementation of the Area Development subproject's Experimental Fund component. A team of five University of Wisconsin experts (including the resident advisor-designate) was fielded in April 1980 to assist the OOTC Planning and Evaluation Unit in the development of criteria for the use of the Fund. It was not until the Summer of 1981, however, that a set of criteria satisfactory to both the GOT and AID was finally developed. By the end of 1981, the OOTC had solicited from the private and public sectors proposals for Experimental Fund projects and was considering twenty responses. As a result of these delays in implementation a second tranche of \$1.3 million which had been scheduled for obligation in FY 1981 (in addition to an initial tranche of \$1.5 million obligated in FY 1979) was reallocated by the GOT and USAID to Rural Community Health Project activities in Central Tunisia.

In the case of the Experimental Fund, the Area Development subproject guidelines had made it practically impossible to bypass the OOTC, short of redesigning that subproject component. Thus, in effect, the potential for conflict between institutional development objectives (the development of a project identification and design capability within the OOTC Planning and Evaluation Unit) and the accomplishment of short-term subproject outputs (the identification and design of an acceptable number of Experimental Fund

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projects) had been minimized. In the case of other Area Development subproject components, however, the potential for conflict was far greater, inasmuch as they provided the University of Wisconsin with a better opportunity to achieve a primary purpose of the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development (RPAD) Project, namely to devise and test new approaches to regional development planning.

For instance, the training of OOTC personnel in regional planning, from the Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject standpoint, was only a means to the achievement of the project purpose, namely to develop a regional planning capability within the OOTC. For the University of Wisconsin, however, it was primarily a means of devising and testing new concepts and approaches to training in regional planning. As it turned out, the University of Wisconsin training effort in Central Tunisia was not successful and was terminated in the Spring of 1981. This did not prevent the University of Wisconsin from presenting the training concept tested in Tunisia in a state-of-the-art paper (Concept Paper No. 2: A Normative Training Program for Regional Planning) issued in July 1982, "in the belief that it can serve as a model for us by other organizations involved in planning and development" (page 2). While the paper asserts that "evaluation is at the heart of the training process," (page 30) no reference is made to the Central Tunisia experience.

The major objective of the centrally-funded RRPAD Project was the development of a regional planning methodology appropriate to rural area development in developing countries. The University of Wisconsin was anxious to demonstrate the usefulness of its "sketch plan" approach for academic

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prestige as well as contractual reasons. Therefore, when it could not reach an agreement with the ODTG concerning the kind of plan which should be prepared for Central Tunisia and the kind of technical assistance which should be provided to the ODTG by the University, the latter went ahead with the preparation of a Central Tunisia "sketch plan" in Madison, Wisconsin (later issued as Country Report No. 6, September 1981, An Illustrative Strategic Plan for Central Tunisia). A separate regional economic plan was prepared in Kasserine, Central Tunisia, by the ODTG with the assistance of the University of Wisconsin Resident Advisor and short-term Tunisian consultants funded under the Cooperative Agreement. Obviously, the ODTG planning staff did not learn much from the planning work done in Madison, Wisconsin.

What had happened, in effect, was that the initial GOT commitment to Central Tunisia Area Development subproject objectives did not hold up to the pressures of CTRD project implementation. As it became clear to the ODTG that its primary mandate was not to plan and experiment but to get basic development programs implemented, the newly created regional development authority became increasingly dissatisfied with technical assistance concerned with what it considered to be superfluous activities ("spatial" planning and evaluation). Which the ODTG might have benefited from technical assistance in the area of program management, it was not prior to the June 1981 Area Development Subproject mid-term evaluation, really aware of what its technical assistance needs were, even though it was critical of the formal on-site training sessions conducted by the University of Wisconsin on a quarterly basis. The University of Wisconsin, on the other hand, while recognizing the need for more training in project design and willing to accommodate it, was

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reluctant to give up the testing of its training approach. Similarly, with regard to regional planning, the ODTIC was concerned with meeting the requirements of the GOT Five Year Plan process, whereas the University of Wisconsin was concerned with applying its "sketch plan concept" (see University of Wisconsin RPAD Project Concept Paper No. 3 July 1981) to the Central Tunisia planning and development effort.

Thus, while the cooperative agreement framework was flexible enough to allow major changes in the technical assistance provided by the University of Wisconsin to the ODTIC, the gap between the University's "applied research" interest and the ODTIC's institutional development needs had grown too wide to be bridged through mutual accommodation by the two cooperating institution. It had become evident by the time of the 1981 mid-term Area Development subproject evaluation that the relationship could not endure.

B. Technical Assistance Management Issues

TA Strategy

The way technical assistance is managed is obviously determined by the mode of contracting for technical services and the characteristics of the contractor selected. In its IRD Research Note No. 1, DAI identifies four basic strategies (individual, academic, bodyshop and management team strategies). Within the academic strategy, however, one can identify at least three basic subsidiary strategies: (1) the Title XII strategy (involving collaboration in project design between a land grant university, the mission and host country; (2) the host country contract strategy (selected for all agricultural technical assistance in Central Tunisia) and (3) the direct AID contract, a strategy variant of which is the cooperative agreement mode

utilized for the provision of regional planning and evaluation assistance to the ODTC. It is with the third sub-strategy that we are concerned here, and particularly with the cooperative agreement between AID and the University of Wisconsin.

The typical cooperative agreement between AID and a university provides that:

(a) the university, as a resource center in the particular subject matter covered by the cooperative agreement (i.e., regional planning and area development in the case of the University of Wisconsin), will develop and test new methodological approaches responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries and

(b) the university will carry out four types of activities, namely (1) applied research and consulting in selected countries, (2) special studies and state of the art papers (3) development of a professional resource network and (4) information dissemination.

Technical services beyond the levels and types specified in the cooperative agreement could be provided by the university to missions under mission-funded amendments to the cooperative agreement. For instance in the case of Tunisia, a mission-funded amendment to the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development Project provided for additional consulting services, in-country training, the assignment of one or two resident advisors, as well as for the provision of equipment and supplies.

In its request for a waiver of the usual competitive award procedures, the Mission argued that, because of three year funding constraint on the CTRD project, it was essential to contract rapidly for the services of an institution which could assist the ODTC in the design (in collaboration with

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AID) of subsequent CTRD subprojects. There were of course other factors which influenced the thinking of the project design team: The concept underlying the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development (RPAD) Project was intellectually attractive and it was felt that a higher caliber institution could be attracted by the possibility of working in several countries rather than in Tunisia alone.

During the two and a half years of experience with the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University Cooperative Agreements, no major problem arose which could be blamed primarily on the use of that contracting mode. However, two areas of friction are worth discussing:

1) Project Management sharing between AID/W and the Mission. In the case of both the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University Cooperative Agreement, management of centrally-funded activities was the responsibility of the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration in the Bureau for Development Support* (DS/RAD), whereas the Mission was responsible for CTRD Project-funded activities. While such a division of management responsibilities is a potential source of conflict (and a dispute actually did arise concerning responsibility for the University of Wisconsin's difficulties in providing technical assistance to the OOTC), compromises between the positions of the AID/W and mission project management can usually be worked out satisfactorily as long as personality clashes or "turf" disputes between AID/W and mission management do not get in the way. In any event, with AID travel funds in short supply, it makes sense for AID/W to rely on the mission for monitoring of field activities and for the mission to rely on AID/W

* Later redesignated as the Bureau for Science and Technology (S&T)

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to monitor university management of technical assistance and other on-campus activities. While the host country government must have no doubt that the mission is in charge, participation by the AID/W project officer in reviews and evaluations conducted in collaboration with the host country government can be both helpful to the mission and informative for AID/W.

Contractor Accountability. With the exception of cooperative agreements, it has been AID policy that technical assistance to host country governments be provided through host country contracts i.e., contracts between the host country government and the supplier of technical services. The purpose of this policy has been to convey to the host country government the notion that the contractor is responsible to it and not to AID. In the case of cooperative agreement, the university is clearly working for AID, even though its responsibilities to the host country government (and those of the government to the university) may be defined in a separate "Memorandum of Understanding" signed by the two parties. It would seem that, the host country contract relationship works best when the task to be accomplished is of a confidential character and/or the end product is to be used only by the host country government. (The ODTG's contribution to the GOT 1982-87 Five Year Plan and the training of ODTG planning staff fall in that category). On the other hand, the cooperative agreement approach would seem to work best when the task to be accomplished requires close collaboration between AID, the host country government and the supplier of technical services, and when the end product will be used by AID as well as the host country government. This was the case with the design of CTRD subprojects, the formulation of a potable water development strategy for Central Tunisia and the development of mutually agreed criteria for the use of the Experimental Fund.

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Thus, the Central Tunisia experience suggests that the nature of the technical services required should be the basis for any decision as to whether or not to use ~~an~~ amendment to a centrally-funded cooperative agreement as the vehicle for providing mission-funded technical assistance to a host country government. The anticipated savings in time and effort needed to prepare and issue a request for technical proposals and to select a contractor should be a secondary consideration. If a decision is made to go ahead with the cooperative agreement mode, an understanding should be reached at the outset on the nature of the collaborative relationship between the host country government, the AID Mission and AID/Washington including the following: (1) a clear understanding between the responsible AID/Washington project office, the applicable AID/W regional bureau and the AID mission concerning project management and backstop; (2) agreement between the AID/W project office, and the mission as to when a joint team approach would be used (e.g. in project design) or a privileged relationship between the cooperative university and a host country government institution should be preserved (in the case of Central Tunisia, DS/RAD reluctantly agreed that its staff members would not participate in the provision of regional planning assistance to the ODTG as TA team members); (3) host country government awareness of the applied research/state of the art advancement/knowledge dissemination objectives of AID/Washington and the cooperating university and its agreement to the publication of information gathered in the course of project implementation.

Long-term versus Short-term Assistance.

The CTRD project experience exemplifies the difficulty (cited by DAI in its IRD Research Note No. 1.) of finding a suitable resident advisor who combines the required language and technical skills with a willingness to

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spend several years in an isolated rural area. In the case of the Central Tunisia Area Development subproject, the University of Wisconsin was unable to find an American candidate with the requisite regional planning skills and French (or arabic) language capability. After one year of technical assistance without a resident advisor, the University finally assigned a non-American development economist who had neither training nor experience in regional planning as a discipline. The delay in assignment and the choice of resident advisor had the following consequences for technical assistance to the ODTC:

a. The delay in assigning a resident advisor adversely affected the ODTC's ability to effectively utilize short-term advisory and training services. In the case of in-country training, the needs of the ODTC planning and project management staff were not adequately taken into account in the design of the training program and there was a lack of continuity between training sessions. As for short-term advisory services, inadequate preparations were made for the visit of short-term consultants both in terms of gathering the information needed by them and in preparing the ODTC staff to provide the necessary support and to benefit from the consultants' expertise.

b. The assignment of a resident advisor who did not share the academic background and/or professional outlook of the University of Wisconsin/RPAD Project management staff resulted in a growing "communication gap" which eventually led to the resignation of the Resident Advisor and the suspension (and later termination) of University of Wisconsin assistance to the ODTC. It appears that, partly because of his lack of identification with the University of Wisconsin, the resident Advisor was unable to mediate disagreements between

the OOTC and the University concerning the conduct of technical assistance activities and increasingly supported the OOTC's viewpoint against that of the University, thereby losing the trust and support of the Madison-based project management team.

In its IRD Research Note No. 1, DAI suggests that the problem posed by the small size of the existing TA talent pool could be alleviated by substituting short-term TA for long-term i.e. technical expertise would be supplied by "high-powered short-term" consultants who do not need to be as attuned to the host country's culture whereas long-term advisory services would be provided by managers/generalists who like living in rural areas and are good at working with people of different cultures.

The above approach, however, is more likely to be successful when an IRD project's principal objective is to build up a broadly-based institutional capacity for managing development and where technical expertise in a variety of fields (potable water development, agriculture, health etc.) is needed. In that type of project, it makes sense to rely on short-term consultants to provide the technical expertise whereas the resident advisor(s) should have project management skills and a good understanding of institutional development processes in developing countries. When, however, a particular expertise (e.g. regional planning) is a central element of the technical assistance it is important that the principal resident advisor shares this expertise. Otherwise, it is difficult for the TA team to share what DAI refers to as a "common approach" to project implementation.

One should not underestimate, of course, the difficulty of finding a French-speaking regional planner willing to live and work in the difficult environment of Central Tunisia. The ideal solution would have been the

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assignment of a (French-speaking) faculty member of the University's Department of Regional Planning. If this proved not to be feasible, the second best solution would have been the selection of a French-speaking regional planner from the U.S. academic and/or professional community. Possibly the third best solution would have been the assignment of a generalist from the university of Wisconsin's faculty outside of the Department of Regional Planning. For this solution to work out, however, it would have been essential for the university department supplying the resident advisor to have a good working relationship with the Department of Regional Planning and, particularly, with those staff members responsible for management of the RPAD Project on campus. (S&T/RAD's past experience with cooperative agreements suggests that one cannot assume that such inter-departmental cooperation exists or will result from the fact that agreements are concluded with the University rather than with a particular department.)

With regard to the possibility of conflict between short-term and long-term advisors, the Central Tunisia experience indicates that it is greatest when the University-based project management attempts to impose an approach (such as the "sketch plan" concept) which is not shared by the resident advisor and the cooperating host country institution. The failure to agree on a common approach to the formulation of a regional plan resulted in the university's de facto suspension of short-term technical assistance and, as mentioned earlier, the preparation of two separate planning documents, one in Madison, Wisconsin and one in Kasserine, Central Tunisia, respectively. On the other hand, the possibility of conflict is least when the short-term consultants provide specialized technical expertise not otherwise available to the resident advisor and cooperating host country institution.

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The Central Tunisia experience also supports DAI's contention that the importance attached to leaving a product (i.e. a report) limits the effective utilization of short-term assistance. The potable water development team fielded by the University of Wisconsin in early 1980 was a case in point. Because of time constraints, the team spent the last half of its consultancy writing a draft report and left without giving the ODTG staff the opportunity to review the report and carry out a dialogue with the two consultants with respect to their findings and recommendations. The effectiveness of the consultancy would have been far greater if the team had spent an additional week in country to review and discuss their report with the ODTG staff and, of course, if there had been a resident advisor to help overcome the language barrier and to follow up on the consultants' recommendations. (The AID Mission, however, with TDY assistance from AID/Washington, used the consultants report as the basis for a dialogue with ODTG staff on the formulation of a potable water development strategy for Central Tunisia.)

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IX CONCLUSION

The lessons drawn from the first two years of CTRD project implementation confirm, in general, the validity of AID's current emphasis on institutional development and project management. Beyond such broad generalizations, however, those lessons of experiences may be of some use to missions in shaping program development strategies under conditions similar to those which faced CTRD project design team.

For instance, designers of IRD (and other) projects might take greater care to avoid potential conflicts between institutional development goals and area development (or sectoral/subsectoral) targets. In the case of Central Tunisia, given the time constraints imposed by program phase-out plans, it might have been more appropriate for the GOT to rely on existing organizations to carry out area development interventions (irrigation, potable water) to which it assigned a high priority. Alternatively, if the GOT could not be dissuaded from creating a new agency, it would have been more useful for AID to assist the ODTG in carrying out its program management functions rather than provide assistance in regional planning and evaluation. (On the other hand, the recently created General Commissariat for Regional Development might benefit from technical assistance in the field of regional planning).

This does not mean, of course, that institution-building project agreements should not contain specific output targets. For instance, a supervised credit or agricultural extension project should specify performance criteria which may be output targets (e.g. number of loans made or number of acres planted to new varieties). The essential point, however, is that output targets not be assigned such a high priority that they end up being achieved

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at the expense of institutional development. (For instance, a contractor might place more emphasis on drilling a hundred wells rather than on developing a host country capability for implementing rural potable water development programs.)

One possible approach for reconciling institutional development objectives with area development objectives might be to plan U.S. assistance in two (or more) phases with the success of the initial institution-building phase being made a condition for the approval of the second phase which would emphasize the achievement of area development objectives. Such an approach would be consistent with the flexible, time-phased project design strategy advocated in Section VII C. of this paper.

However, even if institutional development is clearly identified as the project purpose at the project design stage, there still is a risk that the institutional performance indicators selected might be subverted by the TA team in an effort to cover up a failure to achieve institutional development objectives. In the case of the Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject, it was obvious that the preparation of a Central Tunisia "sketch plan" by the University of Wisconsin/RPAP Project team in Madison, Wis. did not reflect, or contribute to, the development of a regional planning capacity within the ODTC. It might not have been so obvious, however, had the "sketch plan" been prepared in Kasserine, with minimal participation by ODTC planning staff members.

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It is therefore essential that institutional development criteria be concerned with process as well as outputs and that technical assistance teams be selected on the basis of their ability to initiate and sustain institution-building processes as well as for their technical expertise in regional planning, project design and monitoring, etc. Under that approach, host country officials not only would be preparing plans, designing and monitoring projects, etc., but would actively participate in the development of planning, project design and program monitoring systems.

Such an approach (combining program planning and management "techniques" with broad-based organizational development process consultation would probably gain the acceptance of host country government officials even in countries (like Tunisia) where the advice of foreign experts is sought only on technical matters. (This reluctance to seek or accept foreign advice on broad management issues is exemplified by the unwillingness of GOT officials to allow AID participation in the drafting of the legislation creating the QDTC and by the official GOT rejection of the Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject evaluation consultants report because it addressed broad management issues rather than confining itself to narrow "technical" issues (such as training in regional planning techniques). By combining the transfer of technical skills with a broad systems approach to program management, within a participatory learning process, technical assistance can address management problems across the board before they become critical constraints on program implementation (whereas in the Central Tunisia case, management assistance was sought only after management problems had reached a critical stage) and without being perceived as a threat by program managers.

