

A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY PART I

(BEFORE FILLING OUT THIS FORM, READ THE ATTACHED INSTRUCTIONS)

IDENTIFICATION DATA

<p>A. REPORTING A.I.D. UNIT: <u>USAID/Thailand</u> <small>(Mission or AID/W Office)</small></p> <p>(ES# _____)</p>	<p>B. WAS EVALUATION SCHEDULED IN CURRENT FY ANNUAL EVALUATION PLAN? yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> slipped <input type="checkbox"/> ad hoc <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Eval. Plan Submission Date: FY <u>87</u> Q: <u>3</u></p>	<p>C. EVALUATION TIMING Interim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> final <input type="checkbox"/> ex post <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em; text-align: center;">PD-<u>AAV-989</u></p>			
<p>D. ACTIVITY OR ACTIVITIES EVALUATED (List the following information for project(s) or program(s) evaluated; If not applicable, list title and date of the evaluation report)</p>					
Project #	Project/Program Title <small>(or title & date of evaluation report)</small>	First PROAG or equivalent (FY)	Most recent PACD (mo/yr)	Planned LOP Cost ('000)	Amount Obligated to Date ('000)
	Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME) (493-0339)	"The Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project: Interim Review," February 16, 1987.	FY 1984	10/30/88	\$5 Mn. \$5 Mn. USAID Loan

ACTIONS

<p>E. ACTION DECISIONS APPROVED BY MISSION OR AID/W OFFICE DIRECTOR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Action(s) Required</p>	<p>Name of officer responsible for Action</p>	<p>Date Action to be Completed</p>
<p>Per the Evaluation Team specific recommendations to modify each project component, USAID and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), agreed to pursue 6 actions to respond to the team recommendations as follow:</p>		
<p>1. To procure microcomputer (of a total not to exceed 41 units at the initial stage) and allocate them to provinces, cooperating Departments and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), in support of the provincial management information system, PMIS. Further procurement will be contingent upon a review of the PMIS with the first micro-computers' procured.</p>	<p>NESDB and USAID</p>	<p>Dec. 31, 1987</p>
<p>2. To provide for O&M for the 41 microcomputers throughout the life of the project while Royal Thai Government (RTG), will finance all O&M cost after project termination.</p>	<p>NESDB and USAID</p>	<p>Sep. 30, 1988</p>
<p>(Attach extra sheet if necessary)</p>		

APPROVALS

F. DATE OF MISSION OR AID/W OFFICE REVIEW OF EVALUATION: mo 12 day 15 yr 1986

G. APPROVALS OF EVALUATION SUMMARY AND ACTION DECISIONS:

	<p>Project/Program Officer</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">David A. Delgado</p> <p>Date: <u>7/8/87</u></p>	<p>Representative of Borrower/Grantee</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">Pairoj Suchinda</p> <p>Date: <u>8/3/87</u></p>	<p>Evaluation Officer</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">Roger D. Montgomery</p> <p>Date: <u>July 23, 1987</u></p>	<p>Mission or AID/W Office Director</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">John R. Eriksson</p> <p>Date: <u>July 23, 1987</u></p>
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E. ACTION DECISIONS APPROVED BY MISSION OR AID/W OFFICE DIRECTOR - CONTINUED:

- | | | |
|--|--|---------------|
| 3. To reduce the SOW of the present TA contracts so that it will end on September 30, 1987. Any further TA will consist of local Thai expertise. | NESDB and
USAID | Sep. 30, 1987 |
| 4. To hold special conference and site visits for provincial and district level officials in order to encourage the greater use of data and info for decision-making from PMIS. Specific programs will be included in the FY 1988 Financial Plan. | NESDB, USAID
and 5 Depart-
ments of
Cooperating
Ministries | Sep. 30, 1988 |
| 5. To continue support for system operations based upon its analysis of the RTG budget allocated for this activity and the RTG financial request to support this activity beyond the project assistance completion date (PACD).
<u>Note:</u> IPIED stands for Information Processing Institute for Education and Development. | NESDB,
USAID,
IPIED and
5 Depart-
ments | Sep. 30, 1988 |
| 6. To carry out some special studies which contribute to the achieving of the objectives of the Project. | NESDB and
USAID | Sep. 30, 1988 |
| 7. To negotiate and issue PIL, to ratify the agreements made during meetings concerning the project assessment and the future of the RDME project. | USAID | June 30, 1987 |

SUMMARY (continued)

7

ii. EVALUATION COSTS (do not exceed the space provided.)

The purpose of the Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME) Project is to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) so that it will provide reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers to plan, manage and implement the RTG's Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP).

This mid-term evaluation was conducted in November-December 1986 to focus on current issues and to provide a basis for decision making on fundamental aspects of the project. These include basic design, implementation constraints, administrative feasibility, emerging trends in the RTG and implementing agencies and a realistic assessment of the current project environment.

Major findings related to the Scope of Work are:

- The Project Paper did not have an adequate institutional analysis. Although analysis in the Project Paper was often clear and insightful, project design did not flow from the logic of the analysis. In some cases, good analysis led to good design, but was not implemented.
- Planned activities of the first stage of the project have not been accomplished.
- Implementation of the RDME project has been troubled by a combination of personnel changes, procedural and logistical difficulties, poor communications and a lack of problem-solving leadership by both USAID and the RTG. The consequence has been a very limited set of project accomplishments and a regrettable sense of frustration. As a result, the RDME project has not played a significant role in enhancing the capabilities of National Rural Development Coordinating Center (NRDCC), or implementing ministries to perform effective monitoring and evaluation.
- There is no evidence that the RTG agencies and organizations involved in the RDME project will assign sufficient qualified staff and provide adequate levels of support to ensure the further development and institutionalization of the M&E system implemented through RDME.

(Continued)

I. EVALUATION COSTS

1. Evaluation Team

Name	Affiliation	Contract Number	GR Person Days	Contract Cost GR (US\$)	Source of Funds
Dr. Suchitra Punyaratabandhu-Bhakdi,		NIDA	33	\$ 7,596	PD&S
Mr. Jerry Van Sant		DAI	24	\$21,090	PD&S
Mr. James C. Gibbs		BUCEN	20	\$12,723	PD&S
Ms. Susan H. Holloran		PSC	32	\$10,560	PD&S

2. Mission/Office Professional Staff Person Days (estimate) 15

3. Borrower/Grantee Professional Staff Person Days (estimate) 40

MINISTRY

COSTS

- In total, only 20 percent of the project loan has been disbursed. Excluding training, less than seven percent has been disbursed in the first two years, halfway through the life of the project.
- The planned long term 5-person technical assistance team has not materialized. The current 2 members are isolated from the real agenda of NRDC.
- Only 2 of the 4 proposed special studies fall within the scope of the original RDME design, and the quality of the proposals is problematic.
- Progress on the delivery of loan-funded project inputs has been limited to training, and a portion of the technical assistance and commodities.
- Most of the RDME trainees are still abroad. As a result there has been a relative ineffectiveness of technical assistance. Also, given the absence of most of the commodities, RDME project outputs have been negligible.
- The RDME project calls for systemic change and overhaul, whereas the approach NRDC favors is piecemeal and incremental. This is a fundamental difference which leads to conflicting strategies.

The review team concludes that the project cannot be implemented successfully as currently designed. The alternative options were: to continue the project as is, to terminate the project, and to re-design the project. The team provided recommendations in regard to each option.

A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY PART II

J. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Do not to exceed the 3 pages provided) Address the following items:

- A o Name of mission or office
- B o Purpose of activity (ies) evaluated
- C o Purpose of the Evaluation and Methodology Used
- D o Findings and Conclusions
- E o Recommendations
- F o Lessons learned

A. Name of Mission: USAID/Thailand
"Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project
(493-0339): Interim Review, February 16, 1987"

B. Purpose of activity evaluated:

The original purpose of the Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME) Project was to strengthen and institutionalize Monitoring and Evaluation functions in Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP) areas, covering 38 provinces in North and South Thailand, so that reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers to plan, manage and implement the RTG's RPAP would be available. It was expected that after the basic systems for the RPAP program were in place, the project would assist in extending these systems to the whole range of rural development programs throughout the country. Basic policy decisions of the RTG for rural development in the 6th Five Year Plan will directly affect the scope and implementation of the project. Under these policies, the information systems are to become the basis for planning, allocating budgetary resources, and monitoring and evaluation of all rural development program for the whole country (72 provinces). Thus, this major expansion in the scope and coverage of these systems necessarily also expands their significance as tools of management and in the allocation of resources.

The Project includes four major components which have specific purposes:

B.1. Technical and Professional Services: The Project design provides for about seven person-years of long-term and 16 person-months of short-term expatriate technical assistance.

The technical assistance component is designed to assist the NESDB/NRDCC in the coordination of the Rural Poverty Alleviation Program through the design, development, refinement, application and institutional utilization of the monitoring and evaluation system.

B.2. Commodities: The project design and loan agreement anticipated the procurement of \$693,000 worth of commodities, including micro-computers, calculators, copy machines, and public relations equipment to improve the speed and accuracy of data recording, transmission, and analysis; vehicles to increase staff mobility and interaction; and books, manuals and materials on monitoring and evaluation techniques and procedures to improve M&E skills.

Date this summary prepared: June 1, 1987

- B.3. Training: The project design calls for both U.S. and in-country training during the first two years to develop the wide range of skills required to develop, institutionalize and maintain an effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation system for a program as complex as RPAP and eventually the NRDP.

Extensive long-term training in statistical methods systems analysis and program management was provided for under the project. This included masters degree and diploma level training for the core group of professionals who will carry the principal technical responsibilities for the M&E operations of their respective agencies and departments. The project includes \$600,000 for 16 participants who are to receive this training in the U.S.

- B.4. System Operation and Special Studies: The project design provides for \$236,000 to cover the transitional costs of equipment operation and maintenance and \$927,000 for hiring additional local staff for data collection, processing and analysis, and other miscellaneous costs during the first 30 months of the project.

In addition, the project provides \$400,000 for special in-depth studies by outside contractors.

C. Purpose of the Evaluation and Methodology:

The objectives of this interim evaluation are to: (a) measure progress toward the achievement of the project's purpose; (b) identify and analyze problems that are inhibiting progress; (c) recommend actions to resolve the problems identified; (d) determine whether the project as structured can improve information systems throughout the country or determine whether and how it could be modified to do so; (e) ascertain whether appropriate information is being gathered to guide project implementation and to support future evaluations; and (f) recommend a plan and schedule for future evaluations.

The team composed of 4 persons spent a total of 27 work days including six work days in the field outside Bangkok to interview provincial officials and to collect data. The team reviewed relevant project and background documents, interview relevant USAID, NESDB, NRDC, IPIED, implementing ministry personnel in Bangkok and representatives of these agencies/organizations at the Provincial, District and Sub-district levels.

D. Findings and Conclusions:

Strengths and Weaknesses of the RDME Project Design

Validity of the basic assumptions underpinning the project

Since the RDME project design that appears in the Project Paper has not been implemented, it is not possible to check the ex post validity of the basic assumptions underpinning the project. The review team does conclude, however, that implementation failure has stemmed in

part from flawed design assumptions, particularly assumptions about administrative capabilities and bureaucratic coordination.

Validity of the logic linking inputs to outputs

Except for the training component, inputs to date have been negligible. Trainees have not yet returned from the U.S., so their performance cannot be assessed. Therefore, outputs have been negligible. The review team concludes that there have been management problems resulting in the slow disbursement of funds, and that it is unlikely that the funds available will be spent by the EOP. RDME cannot expect to achieve the purposes specified in the Project Paper. Without major revisions to the RDME project design and implementation, RDME will be a failure.

Moreover, given the apparent fundamental difference in approach to the problem of designing M&E systems between IPIED and the Technical Assistance team, the review team concludes that in order for the Technical Assistance project component to be successful in achieving targeted outputs, these differences have to be resolved.

With respect to the Commodities component, our assessment is that this input (the microcomputers item, in particular) can be carried out and will assist in the improvement of monitoring and evaluation given current levels of administrative capability. Our conclusion is based on the finding that there exists a strong felt need and receptivity to innovation on the part of potential users, especially at the provincial level.

Given the three preceding paragraphs, and given the developments that have taken place within the Thai National Rural Development Program's own planning and information systems, the review team concludes that the project cannot be implemented successfully as currently designed. The review team also concludes that major design revisions appropriate and responsive to the current project environment must be carried out to improve the likelihood of success.

E. Recommendations

The Team recommended three alternative courses of action for NRDC and USAID consideration. The first alternative is to continue with the RDME project as is with various limited adjustments. The second option is to terminate the project and deobligate all undisbursed funds. The rationale for this option would be that the RDME project as originally designed is not implementable. The third alternative is to revise the RDME project design altogether. This is a major undertaking, worth risking only if: (a) both NRDC and USAID are committed to expending the time and energy to jointly revise the project design; (b) the revised project design contains reasonable grounds for believing that (revised) planned inputs will result in expected outputs leading to managerial/administrative capacity for project implementation is present.

Selection among the options listed above is basically a policy decision to be taken by key policy makers in the NRDC and USAID. The review team does, however, have some recommendations in each case.

Option 1 (Continue As Is):

Recommendation. The review team recommends explicitly against this option. There are no reasonable grounds for believing that continuing with the project as is will result in the accomplishment of the project purpose.

Option 2 (Terminate):

Recommendation: Termination of project components should be phased.

- (a) Equipment procurement already in the pipeline should continue as scheduled.
- (b) The TA component may be phased out.
- (c) The special evaluative studies may be cancelled.
- (d) Trainees abroad should be allowed to complete their programs as scheduled.

Option 3 (Revise Project Design):

Recommendation: NRDCC and USAID should first decide whether a revised RDME project is to consist of an assortment of loan-supported activities that individually and independently feed into the existing National Rural Development Planning Information system and Monitoring and Evaluation Information system, or whether it is a self-contained entity consisting of a set of interrelated components with a specific scope of work. Either arrangement could be justified as serving the project purpose which is "to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the NRDP to provide the reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers."

Based on its assessment of current levels of managerial capabilities, existing structural arrangements for administering the project, and NRDCC's current plans for NRDP and MEI, the review team's judgment is that the first alternative (assortment of loan-supported activities) is probably more feasible than the second alternative (systematically designed set of activities that together form a cohesive whole). This first alternative can also make a contribution to the overall purpose of strengthening monitoring and evaluation, although it must be recognized (by USAID) as essentially loan-funded budget support of on-going activities.

F. Lessons Learned:

The RDME Project experience is instructive. It provides a number of lessons--some generic, some specific to Thailand--which, if heeded, may prove of value in the planning and implementation of future AID projects. The review team observations are listed below, in descending order of generality.

- F.1. Should there occur the need for a radical modification of projects during the pre-implementation stage, a thorough re-examination of project design and viability should be undertaken.

The original RDME project design called for the Bureau of the Census (BUCEN), USDA to provide technical assistance and training and to carry out procurement. Adherence to original design of the technical assistance component of RDME was crucial to successful project implementation. Once this design plan was abandoned, USAID should have reconsidered the project. Pressures to go along with the project should have been met by USAID with strong and constructive alternatives to accomplish original design objectives. Alternatively, the project should have been completely redesigned or cancelled.

- F.2. In Thailand, it is inadvisable to use loan funds to procure technical assistance.

The role of technical assistance consultants is often determined by the method of financing. In comparison with loan-funded technical assistance with its stringent contractual requirements and tax implications for TA personnel, grant-funded technical assistance can be provided to recipient agencies under terms and conditions that are more conducive to the TAs finding a useful "niche" for themselves where they can deploy their expertise in developmental activities that are supportive of host agency goals and objectives.

- F.3. Critical implementation issues do not belong in the "Important Assumptions" category of the project logical framework.

When relegated to this category, removed from the focus of project activity and unresolved, these issues are likely to contribute to project failure. It should be understood, not only by project designers but also by project managers and decision-makers, that assumptions are legitimately only those factors which can realistically be expected to occur or things over which the project can have no control. If something is necessary to the success of a project, ministerial coordination in particular then a strategy must be devised and specific actions designed to facilitate it.

- F.4. In projects with extensive interagency coordination requirements, linkages and how they will be managed should be clearly defined before implementation, not left to chance or simply assumed. Undefined linkages are highly unlikely to develop in the course of implementation.

The RDME project assumed a relationship between NRDC and other government units involved in the NRDP that did not exist and has not developed. No clear mechanism for managing the supposed linkages was identified or defined. As a result, conditions essential for realization of the RDME project purpose to not exist.

- F.5. Project designs should be subjected to independent and external review in order to identify design weaknesses and flawed assumptions. Failure to do so may lead to breakdown in implementation.

It is quite frequently the case that project designs are based upon erroneous or unrealistic assumptions, which make project implementation difficult if not impossible. The RDME Project provides a classic illustration of this. Unfortunately, is not an isolated instance. Had there been prior, thorough, independent review of the project design and assumptions, it is likely that flaws would have been identified that would have led to a design modification. Identification of logic design flaws should take place in the pre-implementation phase of a project, rather than in the results of ex post or mid-term evaluations. The review team is aware that the Project Paper was subjected to internal review by USAID, but the process does not appear to have had adequate critical analysis.

- F.6. When an implementing agency has no experience in managing AID loans and grants, AID must recognize the fact and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the implementing agency fully understands what is entailed, before the start of project.

When AID projects are located in agencies that have had little or no experience in managing external loan (or grant) funds, it cannot be assumed that the implementing agencies have the requisite management and personnel skills to cope with the onerous task of learning new sets of standard operating procedures (both host country and U.S.), or developing new repertoires to meet unforeseen contingencies. In the case of loan projects in particular, unless precedents within the agency already exist, the greater the number of planned activities (including technical assistance consultancies and commodity procurement), the more likely it is that the project will encounter procedural difficulties in implementation. The cumulative effect may be partial or total paralysis.

In the instance of RDME, however, this weakness was recognized by the project designers, who recommended a PASA with BUCEN to deal with the situation. When the PASA proved infeasible, project managers neither realized or accepted that the RDME project was seriously undermined and probably unimplementable.

- F.7. There is potential benefit to USAID and the counterpart agencies to assign their staff to participate in project reviews and evaluations.

As described in detail earlier, one of the problems with the RDME project was the lack of communication and continuity in project management on the part of NRDCC/NESDB and USAID. Throughout our meetings with ministry officials, field trips and group deliberations, we were struck by the fact that we were hearing more items of importance than could be conveyed in our final report. It is our view that future mid-term reviews/evaluations of projects generally regarded as failures should include, as full team members, one representative each from USAID and the RTG implementing agency. We understand that, in this case, USAID quite deliberately chose to absent its own staff to insure objectivity in

this review. Its arguments to this effect are well-taken. With all the advantages of hindsight, however, the team still believes that it would have been worth risking a potential loss of objectivity to secure at first-hand what this report can convey only in broad outline.

K. ATTACHMENTS (List attachments submitted with this Evaluation Summary; always attach copy of full evaluation report, even if one was submitted earlier)

Full evaluation report.

ATTACHMENTS

L. COMMENTS BY MISSION, AID/W OFFICE AND BORROWER/GRANTEE

The RDME assessment report was a thoughtful and honest review of a troubled project. The somewhat harsh tone of the draft report and the recommendation to terminate the project forced both the RTG and USAID officials to examine the project extremely carefully, resolve long standing problems and open communication links in an effort to move the project forward without further delay. The review of the assessment report led to needed revisions of the project and an agreement on the deobligation of funds.

The modification of the project recommended by the team and accepted by USAID and the RTG will lead to increased decentralization of information for planning and monitoring of rural development projects. The revised project will focus resources upon the development and testing of the Provincial Management Information System (PMIS). It will also provide corollary support to departments within the Ministry to improve national management information systems.

The assessment team was well guided and the member participated actively in a team sense.

MISSION COMMENTS ON FULL REPORT

XI AAV-929-A
IN 51346

THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROJECT

INTERIM REVIEW

Review Team:

Suchitra Punyaratabandhu-Bhakdi

Jerry VanSant

James C. Gibbs

Susan H. Holloran

February 16, 1987

Bangkok, Thailand

USAID Contract No. 398-0249-C-00-7002-00

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Basic Project Identification Data Sheet

Executive Summary

PART TWO

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- A. The Evaluation Scope of Work
- B. The Project Design Logical Framework
- C. Methodology Used in the Evaluation
- D. Bibliography of Documents Consulted
- E. Individuals and Agencies Consulted
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BASIC PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

(Outline)

1. Country: Thailand
2. Project Title: Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME)
3. Project Number: 493-0339 Loan Number: 493-T-037
4. Project Dates:
 - a. First Project Agreement: June 28, 1984
 - b. Final Obligation: FY 1984
 - c. Project Assistance Completion Date (PACD): September 30, 1988
5. Project Funding:
 - a. A.I.D. Bilateral Funding (Loan): \$5 million
 - b. Other Major Donors: To complement IBRD \$50 million loan
 - c. Host Country Counterpart Funds: \$19.975 million

Total: \$24.975 million
6. Mode of Implementation: Host Country contracting
7. Project Design:

USAID/Thailand
The Royal Thai Government
The National Rural Development Coordinating Center (NRDCC)
The Information Processing Institute for Education and Development (IPIED), External Consultants provided by USAID/Thailand
8. Responsible Mission Officials: (For the full life of the project.)
 - a. Mission Director(s): Robert Halligan (prior), Lee Twentyman (acting prior), John Eriksson (present)
 - b. Project Officer(s): Jerry Wood (original), Jeffrey Evans (prior), David Delgado (current)
9. Previous Evaluations: None
10. Cost of Present Evaluation:

	<u>Person Days</u>	<u>Dollar Costs</u>
a. Direct Hire:		
(1) AID/W TDY:	None	-
(2) USAID staff:	None	-
b. Contract:		
Dr. Suchitra Punyaratabandhu-Bhakdi, NIDA	33	\$7,596
Mr. Jerry Van Sant, DAI	24	\$21,090
Mr. James C. Gibbs, BUCEN	20	\$12,723
Ms. Susan H. Holloran	32	\$10,560
c. Other:		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project Review

USAID/Bangkok

January 1987

The purpose of the Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME) Project is to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) so that it will provide the reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers to plan, manage and implement the RTG's Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP). This project purpose is to contribute to the broader objective of increased efficiency and cost effectiveness in the planning and implementation of the National Rural Development Program.

It is acknowledged by all parties that the RDME project has suffered severe implementation problems for some time. A mid-term evaluation was planned for the current period (September/October 1986), when it was assumed that the project would be sufficiently mature to measure outputs and effects. It became clear, however, that with only seven percent of the project funds expended on activities other than training, many of the project inputs were not in place. A project review or assessment of progress was more appropriate. This review, therefore, focuses on current issues and provides a basis for decision-making on fundamental aspects of the project. These include basic design, implementation constraints, administrative feasibility, emerging trends in the RTG and implementing agencies and a realistic assessment of the current project environment.

The team reviewed project documents and interviewed project designers and managers to gain an understanding of the history of the project. It soon became apparent that assigning responsibility for a myriad of implementation problems would be fruitless and counterproductive. Rather, the team turned toward gaining a fundamental understanding of the environment in which the project was functioning, assessed what it could or could not be expected to accomplish and what aspects were most likely to produce positive results.

During the 4-week review, a 4-member team, met with relevant personnel in USAID, the National Rural Coordinating Center (NRDCC), the Information Processing Institute for Education and Development at Thammasat University (IPIED), NESDB, RTG ministry representatives, the Bureau of the Budget, and the expatriate technical assistance team. In addition, field observations were conducted in 5 provinces (3 in the northeast, 2 in the south), and further meetings were held with ministry representatives and other persons at the provincial, district, tambon and village levels.

Major findings related to the Scope of Work are:

- The Project Paper did not have adequate institutional analysis; although analysis in the Project Paper was often clear and insightful, project design did not always flow from the logic of the analysis; in some cases, good analysis led to good design, but was not implemented.
- Planned activities of the first stage of the project have not been accomplished.
- Implementation of the RDME project has been troubled by a combination of personnel changes, procedural and logistical difficulties, poor communications and a lack of problem-solving leadership by both USAID and the RTG. The consequence has been a very limited set of project accomplishments and a regrettable sense of frustration. As a result, the RDME project has not played a significant role in enhancing the capabilities of NRDC or implementing ministries to perform effective monitoring and evaluation.
- There is no evidence that the RTG agencies and organizations involved in the RDME project will assign sufficient qualified staff and provide adequate levels of support to ensure the further development and institutionalization of the M&E system implemented through RDME.
- In total, only 20 percent of the project loan has been disbursed. Excluding training, less than seven percent has been disbursed in the first two years, halfway through the life of the project.
- The planned long term 5-person technical assistance team has not materialized. The current 2 members are isolated from the real agenda of NRDC.
- Only 2 of the 4 proposed special studies fall within the scope of the original RDME design, and the quality of the proposals is problematic.
- Progress on the delivery of loan-funded project inputs has been limited to training, and a portion of the technical assistance and commodities.
- As a result of the RDME trainees still being abroad, the relative ineffectiveness of technical assistance and the absence of most of the commodities, RDME project outputs have been negligible.
- The RDME project calls for systemic change and overhaul, whereas the approach NRDC favors is piecemeal and incremental. This is a fundamental difference which leads to conflicting strategies.

The review team concludes that the project cannot be implemented successfully as currently designed.

There are three alternative courses of action to be taken with respect to RDME. Selection from among the alternatives is a policy decision to be taken jointly by NRDC and USAID. The review team does, however, have recommendations in regard to each option.

Option 1: Continue As Is. We recommend against this option.

Option 2: Terminate. If NRDC and USAID select this option, then termination of project components should be phased. Equipment procurement already in the pipeline should continue as scheduled; the technical assistance component may be phased out; special studies may be cancelled; trainees abroad should be allowed to complete their programs as scheduled.

Option 3: Re-Design the Project. This is a major and risky undertaking, involving commitment of time and management effort on the part of both USAID and NRDC. USAID and NRDC must first decide whether the revised RDME project is (a) to consist of an assortment of loan-supported activities that individually and independently feed into the existing National Rural Development Planning Information system, or whether it is (b) a self-contained entity consisting of interrelated components with a specific scope of work. The first alternative is more feasible. Our recommendations are to redirect and reschedule some inputs and terminate others, with the purpose of strengthening provincial capabilities. RDME project goals and purposes should be revised to focus on strengthening monitoring and evaluation by implementing agencies and provincial administrations, rather than designing highly centralized M&E systems. Specific recommendations are given below:

- The RDME microcomputer procurement and distribution strategy should be revised. Support should be provided to 15-20 provinces and to 10-15 implementing departments. Procurement documents should require the capability for maintenance and user training. It is essential that extensive training, long term operational support, and system design accompany the installation of computers.
- Systems operations support should be provided to all provinces for the next collection and processing of NRD2(c) data only in 1988.
- The special studies may be cancelled.
- Technical assistance should be phased out by the end of June, 1987. The Senior Advisor should focus on selected technical aspects of M&E design, and the Information Systems Advisor should focus on systems design. No additional long or short term consultants should be hired.

The RDME project provides a number of lessons, some generic, some specific to Thailand. The lessons call attention to key factors affecting the planning and implementation of AID projects:

- Should there be radical modification of projects during the pre-implementation stage, a thorough re-examination of project design and viability should be undertaken.

- The use of loan funds to procure technical assistance consultants is inadvisable.
- Critical implementation issues do not belong in the "Important Assumptions" category of the project logical framework.
- In projects with extensive interagency coordination requirements, linkages should be clearly defined before implementation.
- Project designs should be subjected to external review in order to identify design weaknesses and flawed assumptions. Failure to do so may lead to breakdown in implementation.
- When an implementing agency has no experience in managing AID loans and grants, AID must ensure that a new implementing agency fully understands regulations and procedures before the start of project.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
AID/W	Agency for International Development, Washington
BMN	Basic Minimum Needs
BOB	Bureau of the Budget, RTG
BUCEN	Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce
DOLA	Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior
EOPS	End of Project Status
IPIED	Information Processing Institute for Education and Development
MEI	Monitoring and Evaluation Information (system)
MOAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
MOE	Ministry of Education
NOI	Ministry of Interior
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board, RTG
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRDCC	National Rural Development Coordinating Center
NRDP	National Rural Development Program
NRDPI	National Rural Development Planning Information (system)
PASA	Participating Agency Service Agreement
PDCC	Provincial Development Coordination Center
PSC	Personal Services Contract
RDME	Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project
RPAP	Rural Poverty Alleviation Program
RTG	Royal Thai Government
TA	Technical Assistance
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS REVIEW

- Budgeting: The process of allocation of resources to planned activities within a given timeframe.
- Evaluation: An analysis of the effects and preliminary impact upon target beneficiaries of projects/programs in which inputs and outputs have been sufficiently in place over time to assess, with reasonable accuracy and assurance, the achievement of project purposes.
- Ex-Post Evaluation: A retrospective analysis, done long enough after close out of a project/program to determine whether goals have been met and to describe and analyze both intended and unintended impacts of the project. Ex-post evaluation focuses on issues such as impact on beneficiaries, replication and sustainability, macro-economic impact and lessons learned for broader sectoral policy considerations.
- Monitoring: On-going retrieval and analysis of information/data related to project inputs, outputs and effects in micro timeframes which enable the identification and implementation of adjustments required to achieve project/program purposes.
- Planning: The process of preparing future strategies, project activities and programs based upon an assessment of needs.
- Project Review: An overview and assessment of progress in a project/program done in the context of the the project's design and implementation experience, focusing primarily on the achievement of inputs and outputs.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This interim review has been a particularly difficult one, largely because of the complexity of the project environment and the number of institutional actors involved. The purpose of the review was to assess factors of design and implementation to provide information on which to base decisions about the future of the RDME project. The review team therefore focused its inquiry on the extent to which there was a supportive environment for the project. This included assessment of management capabilities and staffing levels and determination of extent to which there was agreement on approaches and project structure between USAID and the implementing agencies, as well as between the implementing agencies and the ministries and line departments which the project is designed to serve. The team paid particular attention to the views of all of the institutional actors involved with RDME. These included USAID staff, RTG central government officials (from NRDCC/NESDB, IPIED, the Budget Bureau, the Ministries of Finance, Interior, Education, Agriculture and Cooperatives, and Public Health), and potential users at the provincial and district levels. Our findings, conclusions and recommendations are informed by the divergences in perspectives that we encountered.

A. Project Background

The Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project (RDME) begun in 1984, was designed in support of the Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP) of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) National Rural Development Program (NRDP). The NRDP began in 1982 as an integral component of the RTG 5th National Development Plan (1982-1986) which emphasized the alleviation of rural poverty. A National Rural Development Coordinating Center (NRDCC) was created as the coordinating unit for the NRDP. Having no permanent staff positions or office space of its own, the NRDCC is housed within and utilizes personnel from the Rural Development Coordination Division of the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). Staff of the Rural Development Coordination Division serve in the dual capacities of Division staff and NRDCC staff.

The RPAP initiative focused on village poverty as the basis for incremental support through a menu of 33 project options implemented by participating ministries/departments but coordinated by NRDCC/NESDB. In support of this program, NESDB and the World Bank negotiated a \$50 million loan for rural poverty programs. The Bank agreed to this loan pending arrangement of certain supporting components which included data processing equipment (provided by Japan), human resource development (supported by the UNDP), and increased monitoring and evaluation capabilities (requested from USAID).

With the Bank loan as a catalyst, the RDME concept was approved by the Thai Cabinet prior to actual project design. NRDCC/NESDB had a strong interest in the project and was selected as the implementing agency over other agencies such as the Bureau of Budget (in the Prime Minister's office) which nominally chairs the NRDP Monitoring and Evaluation Subcommittee but has withdrawn from active participation.

The stated project purpose of RDME is to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the NRDP to provide the reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers. Thus the RDME aimed to mesh and "rationalize" existing monitoring and evaluation systems while also strengthening the capabilities of the agencies involved in the poverty program. (In addition to NRDC/NESDB, Thammasat University's Information Processing Institute for Education and Development (IPIED), and the Bureau of the Budget (BOB), these included the Ministries of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Education, Interior, Public Health, and, later, the Ministry of Industry.)

USAID's allocation policy at the time was to rely on loans rather than grant funds to emerging middle-income nations. As such, Thailand was offered only loan funding for this project. A loan agreement with no grant component was signed in June 1984.

B. Purpose and Nature of the Interim Review

The purpose of this interim review was to assess the overall progress of the project in terms of:

- o Validity of design;
- o Delivery of project inputs;
- o Realization of project outputs; and,
- o Achievement of original project objectives (see Appendix A for the complete Scope of Work for this review).

During the course of discussions on the preliminary draft of this report, it became clear to the review team that a basic misconception existed within some of the implementing agencies concerning what was being reviewed. The review team wishes to make clear that the purpose of the present review was to focus specifically on the RDME project as conceived in the Project Paper and as reflected in the Loan Agreement. Our review does not extend to the NRDP Monitoring and Evaluation System as such. The inputs specified in the Project Paper are seen as a set of integrated system components or systematically related activities that lend structure and coherence to the RDME (USAID loan) project. The Project Paper contains a plan and a design for RDME. In no way does the Project Paper imply that project inputs are merely an assortment of loan-supported activities that individually and independently feed into the existing NRDP Rural Monitoring and Evaluation System.

In addition to examining the original project design assumptions and implementation, the review team was instructed by USAID to recommend changes in implementation over the remainder of the project.

The review team was composed of four persons:

- o A Thai familiar with RTG administrative systems;
- o A U.S. Census Bureau specialist familiar with large information collection and analysis systems;
- o A U.S.-based consultant familiar with rural development monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries; and,
- o An institutional analyst familiar with the design, management and evaluation of development assistance projects.

Over the course of the 4-week review, the team met with relevant personnel in USAID, MRDCC/NESDB, IPIED, the four implementing line ministries (Agriculture and Cooperatives, Education, Interior and Public Health), the Ministry of Finance, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB), and the two expatriate technical assistance consultants. In addition, the team divided into two 2-person groups for the purpose of field observations. During the field observations, 5 provinces were visited (3 in the northeast and 2 in the south) and further meetings were held with RTG officials and other persons at the provincial, district, tambon and village levels. (See Appendix E.)

Often reviews of this kind treat, in sequence, each of the points raised in the Scope of Work, restating each of the main topical areas, summarizing major points, and addressing questions and issues in the order in which they appear in the Scope of Work. We have not followed this convention in our discussion of findings. We believe that many questions that appear in the Scope of Work (i.e., what are the strengths and weaknesses of project design, what are the critical factors affecting successful implementation?) assume a degree of implementation has occurred sufficient to review and analyze project issues in light of experience gained during project execution. This has not occurred with RDME. RDME is in what is best described as a "pre-implementation phase."

A combination of factors has made RDME a "non-starter." These include misjudgments during the design phase, lack of common understanding between USAID and the implementing agencies on conceptual as well as procedural issues, and insufficient management to move the project forward.

II. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A. Project Design

In an assessment of project design, some aspects become clearer with benefit of hindsight and the experience of project execution. Other aspects, however, notably those which involve flawed logic or incomplete analysis, can be as clearly seen while they are being developed as they can be later, provided that they are viewed with a critical perspective. Without such perspective, however, the ramifications can be fundamental and serious as has been the case with RDME.

The design issues discussed here are those which the team believes could have reasonably been foreseen and corrected during the design review and pre-implementation phases of the project.

There were several design elements which went into the thinking about implementing the project. First was the choice of co-implementing agencies, a "lead" agency to serve as coordinator and a co-implementing agency to provide the necessary information services resources for the project. Second, a well-grounded, broad based, experienced and responsive technical assistance component for information systems development and refinement. Third, upgraded staffing within the implementing agencies to handle the increased and new activities associated with the project, and finally, leadership and advocacy for the project in a key decision-making level within the implementing bureaucracy.

Weaknesses within all of these have led to critical implementation problems which have combined to contribute to the project's failure to adequately mature as it now reaches its half-life. In a number of these cases, the root of these problems can be traced to project analysis and design.

Although analysis in the Project Paper was often clear and insightful, project design did not always flow from the logic of the analysis. Statements in the Project Paper such as:

Integration of development programs...has been difficult to bring about due to the centralization of decision-making in Bangkok, the autonomy of implementing departments, poor coordination between departments, the high ratio of Bangkok to field staff, and...limited authority to coordinate across departmental lines. The problems caused by these structural aspects of the RTG bureaucracy have become increasingly evident in recent years as the RTG attempted several forms of rural development programming and found them to be seriously hampered by these administrative weaknesses.

Were followed in the Logical Framework as:

Important Assumption

- (1) That an improved and strengthened MES can be implemented in spite of the constraints of existing horizontal and vertical bureaucratic organizational arrangements.

and

- (5) That the RTG will move toward the devolution of responsibilities necessary to make effective use of M&E systems at the field level.

These assumptions are, of course, completely unfounded. One could more correctly conclude that, without a strategy and a targeting of resources to alleviate basic structural constraints, failure was likely. The correct assumption to be drawn from the analysis was that, without significant change in these areas (for which the Paper provides no evidence), the project would be unimplementable.

Similarly, project design did not accommodate the dichotomy between the needs of the two primary users of the proposed information system, policy makers and field managers, and project resources were targeted primarily to the center. This was done despite statements in the Project Paper which cautioned against the skewed relationship in which the field is seen primarily as an information provider rather than an information user (p. 13). Project resource allocation has, therefore, contributed to a relatively diminishing return to the "field" despite its increasing contribution to data collection in the RTG's expanding efforts to develop plan-oriented information.

The Project Paper did not have adequate institutional analysis. Although the Project Paper treats project/program monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as the major functional targets of the RDME project, functions which occur in the rural development operations of the RTG ministries, a central planning agency was designated to implement RDME. NRDC's charter does specifically include implementation responsibilities. The fact of the matter, however, is that NESDB/NRDC as a central rather than field oriented organization, as a planning rather than implementing body and without strong ties to the implementing ministries, and an inexperienced rather than experienced actor in project development, management and implementation, was saddled with project expectations which it was not equipped to fulfill.

Attributes of the co-implementing agency did not fill these gaps. At the time of the project design, IPIED at Thammasat University was only beginning to develop its capability to use the new NEC mainframe computer provided by the Japanese government to support information processing for education and development. Neither organization, therefore, had experience with monitoring or evaluation, neither had project experience or field staff/operations, neither was particularly well linked into the operating ministries and neither

was adequately staffed. Sound analysis of administrative constraints and of institutional capabilities/capacities to achieve project purposes within the four year timeframe of the RDME project would likely have provided the basis for a more feasible administrative design for RDME.

In its feasibility analysis, the Project Paper makes no assessment of NRDCC/NESDB's capacity to manage a project as administratively complex as RDME. This complexity stems from the number of project components and corresponding procedural requirements of the RTG and USAID and from the coordination required with line ministries and operating departments.

In some cases, good analysis led to good design, but was not implemented. The first, and perhaps most critical blow to the project, compounding inherent design problems, occurred when agreement with BUCEN could not be reached due primarily to RTG regulations and procedures. Rather than recruiting a firm of like competence and resources, the RTG chose to hire individual consultants. A total of seven were to be hired incrementally.

Despite the competence of the individual hired, the task was far greater than a single person could be expected to perform. Subsequent augmentation of project staff has not been sufficient to create an effective technical core. The initial error was in not recognizing that a comprehensive TA resource was a crucial design component of the project and in not ensuring that it was implemented in such a way as to keep its essential elements intact.

Several reasonable project assumptions, based upon a project design which included a BUCEN PASA and USAID procurement, have since proved to be faulty. Among the assumptions which did not hold up when the original project design was not implemented are the following:

- o Required funding (is) available on a timely basis, as well as flexibility in procurement of technical services and commodities.
- o Expatriate and domestic consultants are available and obtainable.
- o Technical assistance/commodities (are) in place according to schedule, and
- o Management entities will come to see M&E systems as one of their tools for better planning and decision-making.

As the basic underpinnings of the project began to erode following actions which eliminated the BUCEN PASA as a structural framework for the TA component, discarded USAID procurement as a means to get commodities in place within reasonable timeframes and which saw the intellectual leader and advocate for the project promoted out of its sphere of influence, it seems reasonable to conclude that some action should have been taken. The project's premises and assumptions were altered to such an extent that re-design or termination of the project should have been considered very early on.

B. Overall Project Status

Early in the review, it became apparent to the review team that the RDME project had got off to an exceedingly slow start. Two years into the life of the project, RDME is still in a pre-implementation stage. According to the Project Paper, the "first stage of the project--including arrival of consultants and activity planning--is expected to take six months... By the end of this first stage, NRDC/IPIED will have developed (together with the advisors) a detailed analysis of perceived needs to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system, and a life of project work plan based on that analysis which will be submitted to USAID" (p. 40).

Planned activities of the first stage of the project have not been accomplished. The planned technical assistance component, consisting of 3 expatriate and 2 or 3 Thai members has not materialized. A detailed analysis performed by NRDC/IPIED with the technical advisors of perceived needs to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system has not been undertaken. No life of project work plan based on that analysis has been submitted to USAID.

Implementation of the RDME project has been troubled from the start by a combination of personnel changes, procedural and logistical difficulties, poor communications and a lack of problem-solving leadership on both the USAID and Thai sides. Major factors adversely affecting the implementation potential of RDME are the following:

1. Changes in Key Personnel. As a result of key personnel changes in both NESDB and USAID, the RDME project lacked effective advocacy on either side and an atmosphere developed in which problems tended to be magnified rather than solved. Leadership and project management have been neither consistent nor responsive to the problems encountered early in project implementation.

2. Technical Assistance Contracting Problems. The RDME loan agreement "anticipated" that technical assistance would be secured through a PASA between AID and the U.S. Bureau of the Census (BUCEN). Immediately after the agreement was signed, however, the Thai Ministry of Finance determined that loan funded technical assistance must be secured through an arrangement directly with the RTG. As a result, almost a year was spent attempting to negotiate a contract between the RTG and BUCEN. Finally, these negotiations broke down and the senior advisor personally selected by the then departed Assistant Secretary General in charge of Rural Development was hired in September, 1985 under a personal services contract with NESDB.

In November 1986, the NRDC issued a progress report on development of the monitoring and evaluation system. The report cites the problems encountered in contract administration for the expatriate consultants, in particular the payment of Thai income taxes, which has adversely affected the progress of the RDME project. The report recommends that in order to avoid such problems in the future contracts should be negotiated with consultant firms only, and that PSCs should be avoided.

3. Procedural Difficulties. In addition to TA contracting, procurement has been seriously delayed and has occupied an inordinate amount of time, paperwork, and energy. The effect of endless disagreements and negotiations over these procedural issues has so occupied the RDME project committee that issues of substance have been crowded out and ministerial representatives are now reluctant to participate. Given the inherent coordination difficulties between a planning body and line agencies, this is a particularly unfortunate development.

The consequence has been a very limited set of project accomplishments and a regrettable sense of frustration among the actors involved. As a result, the RDME project has not played a significant role in enhancing the capabilities of NRDCC/NESDB or implementing ministries to perform effective monitoring and evaluation.

The impact of these problems is that bureaucratic barriers are magnified, relationships between NRDCC, NESDB and USAID have soured, the consultants are isolated from the mainstream of activities and the project is not keeping pace with developments in NRDCC. There has been a particular failure in the critical project purpose of linking NRDCC to the ministries for purposes of coordinated information collection, analysis, and use; nor has the project had any impact on ministerial capacities in this area.

NRDCC staff point out that administrative problems and delays could happen to any project. The team believes, however, that the breadth and depth of the problems which have plagued RDME reflect the severity of fundamental design and implementation failings which continue to inhibit the project.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Section of NESDB's Rural Development Coordination Division serves in dual capacities as NRDCC and NESDB staff in charge of the RDME project. The entire Section consists of only thirteen persons, including typists and clerical staff. Three of the thirteen have either recently joined or are about to return from training abroad. The Monitoring and Evaluation Section is divided into the following subsections: Data Systems (4 staff persons); Monitoring (2 staff persons); Evaluation (3 staff persons); and Area Impact Assessment (3 staff persons).

There is no evidence that the RTG agencies and organizations involved in the RDME project will assign qualified staff and provide adequate levels of support to ensure the further development and institutionalization of the M&E systems implemented through the RDME project. Nor is there evidence that the RTG gives high priority to the refinement, operation and use of the M&E system. There is no evidence that the RTG will take serious steps to define more clearly and, to the extent necessary, modify roles and responsibilities of the agencies/organizations involved in RDME project implementation to insure success in the refinement, operation and use of M&E systems. For RTG agencies (ministries and departments) to provide qualified staff and other forms of support to the RDME project, it is necessary first that they be convinced of the potential of the RDME project and the utility of M&E systems

as tools for improving management planning and decision making. The responses to the RDME project that the interview team encountered from implementing ministry officials who were knowledgeable about the project ranged from lukewarm at best to downright skeptical. At the provincial level, the team encountered some cynicism regarding the development of information systems for management planning and decision making. It was felt that provincial authorities had very little say in such matters, since all important allocation decisions were made by the central ministries and departments in Bangkok.

C. Status Report on Project Inputs

As indicated by the following RDME budget summary, progress on delivery of project inputs has been limited except in the area of training.

In total, only 20 percent of the project loan has been disbursed. Excluding training, less than seven percent has been disbursed after two years, halfway through the planned life of project. As of December 20, 1986, the Financial Plan for fiscal 1987 had not been submitted to USAID. The following table is based on the USAID Pipeline Report as of 30 November, 1986. Amounts are in thousands of U.S. dollars.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Obli- gated</u>	<u>Com- mitted</u>	<u>Dis- bursed</u>	<u>Ear- marked</u>	<u>Unli- quidated Obligation</u>	<u>Unear- marked Balance</u>
COMMODITIES	707.7	26.5	26.2	706.7	681.5	1.0
OPERATION/ MAINTENANCE	236.0	62.9	0	62.9	236.0	173.1
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	1340.0	472.9	131.0	472.9	1209.0	867.1
SPECIAL STUDIES	400.0	0	0	100.0	400.0	300.0
TRAINING	1147.0	982.3	755.9	1130.0	391.1	17.0
SYSTEM OPERATIONS	927.0	410.3	109.3	410.3	817.7	516.7
OTHER	242.3	0	0	0	242.3	242.3
TOTAL	<u>5000.0</u> =====	<u>1954.9</u> =====	<u>1022.3</u> =====	<u>2882.8</u> =====	<u>3977.7</u> =====	<u>2117.2</u> =====

Comments on the status of inputs follow:

Commodities

Two minivans and a few minor items have been procured. Much time has been expended in review and discussion concerning the numbers and types of commodities, especially computers and related equipment for various central agencies and provincial offices. Tender documents for much of the currently planned procurement are now being processed in the RTG. We found, however, that inadequate consideration has been given to criteria and conditions essential to effective computer use.

In all of our interviews at the provincial level, we were impressed by the urgency of requests for micro-computer support. Given the enormous quantities of data that provinces must collect, it seems reasonable that provinces should possess some facilities for storing and filing data, and should be encouraged to process and analyze data that is useful for provincial planning, monitoring, and evaluation. A pilot project has already been undertaken in Surat Thani, with notable success. During the RTG 6th Plan, the NRDP hopes to install microcomputers nationwide.

Operations and Maintenance

Project plans called for funding of transitional costs of equipment operation and maintenance for a 30 month period. In view of the lack of progress in procurement, no funds have been disbursed. The operations and maintenance component of the RDME project is the source of considerable perplexity and dissatisfaction for NRDCC, which maintains that the "30 month period" should be operative after procurement, instead of becoming operative on the date on which the Loan Agreement was signed.

Technical Assistance

The planned long term technical assistance component comprised of 3 expatriate and 2 or 3 Thai members has not materialized. Failure to contract with BUCEN for this assistance resulted in a piecemeal approach and an ineffective TA component.

The senior advisor, identified and selected by the RTG, was hired in 1985 on a personal services contract after lengthy contract negotiations with BUCEN failed. During this negotiation period the implementing agency moved ahead with its own planning for an M&E system. When the senior advisor actually began his work, conditions were less than ideal. First, the implementing agency had set the priorities and direction for the RDME effort. In the perception of NRDCC, the role of the TA consultants, therefore, changed from one of leading an overall assessment of system design to one of assisting in various tasks that NRDCC had already identified. Second, there was no team of consultants, since the second U.S. member was only recently hired, again after a lengthy search and negotiation process.

The NRDCC has decided that there is no need to hire a third expatriate advisor. The NRDCC has not hired any Thai management systems consultants. In fact, the review team was told on several occasions by key NRDCC personnel that since the technical assistance team has not materialized, the position of senior advisor whose primary responsibility is to manage the technical assistance team is no longer considered necessary.

Two Thai support staff have been hired for the RDME project. Their positions are described as administrative assistant and technical assistant. They appear to perform a liaison role between NRDCC and the two TA consultants. The administrative assistant, hired primarily to handle procurement, has been instrumental in assisting NRDCC to deal with the legal and regulatory aspects of project implementation under the Loan Agreement, while the technical assistant also acts as translator and interpreter for the TA consultants.

There has resulted a great deal of confusion and miscommunication over the role of the expatriate technical assistance. Work products anticipated to be done by the consultants have not been forthcoming and in many cases work requirements have changed. The fact that Thai consultants were not hired is seen by the senior advisor as seriously inhibiting the technical assistance from functioning.

Serious lack of communication between the advisors and the implementing agencies and lack of Thai language capability have also hampered the technical assistance effort and exacerbated its structural problem. In addition, communication between the senior advisor and the participating ministries and departments has been minimal and has not contributed to facilitating NRDCC-implementing agency linkages as had been envisioned.

The information systems advisor hired to work primarily at IPIED has been on board for just over two months. Although it is too early to assess the advisor's effectiveness, there is evidence that the advisor's services at IPIED are not viewed as particularly necessary and that any guidance to achieve RDME project related outputs or a collegial working environment will not be forthcoming.

The result of the series of events which have led to the present project environment is that the technical assistance component of the project is, and will likely continue to be, ineffective under current arrangements.

Special Studies

Several special evaluation studies to be performed through loan-funded subcontracts were planned to assist NRDCC and IPIED while in-house capability was being developed. According to the Project Paper,

In-house capacity of NRDCC/IPIED and participating ministries to undertake special evaluation studies will develop gradually over the course of the project. Emphasis will be placed first on developing the professional capability to design and manage evaluation studies done by outside contracts, while in-house capability is being developed. (p. 51, emphasis added.)

While the four research proposals which the NRDCC has invited may be relevant to the current National Rural Development Planning Information System (NRDPI) and Monitoring and Evaluation Information System (MEI), only two proposals (both from Kasetsart University) fall within the scope of the original RDME design.

A Working Group has been set up in charge of special studies. Chaired by the Director of IPIED from January, 1985 to July, 1986, the Working Group's assignment was to specify project scopes of work and terms of reference and to screen preliminary proposals. On July 30, 1986, the Working Group's tasks were redefined to include approval of proposals. At the same time, the Director of NESDB's Rural Development Coordination Division replaced the Director of IPIED as chairperson of the Working Group. The IPIED Director remains a member of the Working Group, however.

Four proposals have been solicited for studies expected in 1987 dealing with such topics as provincial information systems and the measurement of poverty program impact. Two proposals, both from IPIED, have already been approved at all levels. They are:

1. The Development of Computer Program for Provincial Planning Information System: An Integration with the Current National Rural Development Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, submitted by IPIED to NRDCC in September 1986. The project duration is six months. While the six-person IPIED team (2 of whom are recent college graduates with B.Sc.s in statistics, a third being the IPIED Institute Secretary) appears to have the relevant computer qualifications, none has had extensive experience in rural development.

2. The Study of Provincial Data Management: An Integration with the Current National Rural Development Planning Information System and Monitoring and Evaluation Information System, submitted by IPIED to NRDCC in September 1986. The objective of the 6-month study is "to establish data management policy and information processing procedures" to serve the needs of the provincial information system. The study is complementary to the first study described above. The 8-person project team includes the Director of IPIED.

Although the foci of both of the proposed studies are no doubt relevant to provincial planning and management, the development of information systems for planning and management as such does not fit the description of "special evaluative studies" contained in Project Paper. The Project Paper (p. 17) mentions two types of evaluative studies. The first type, intended to verify or supplement information coming through the M&E system, was to consist primarily of the development of processes for generating non-routine data. The second type was to provide information needed to prepare the next five year economic development plan. It was envisioned that the range of questions to be answered would include examination of the following: Is the distribution of funds and project types among the villages/districts introducing new imbalances between villages, of village perceptions of new imbalances? What kinds of methodologies are best suited to different types of projects under field conditions in rural Thailand?

The two additional research proposals submitted by Kasetsart University have been reviewed and are currently in the process of being revised, pending final approval. They are:

1. The Continuation of Project Activities in RPAP Projects in Thailand, submitted to the NRDC by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Kasetsart University. The proposed 8-month study has two basic purposes: first, to determine the extent to which villagers continue RPAP project activities on their own after the phasing down or termination of government inputs; second, to determine the costs and benefits of inputs contributed to the continuation of project activity, and to identify the sources of those inputs, whether public (government), NGO, cooperative or private. The research team consists of one principal investigator (3 man-months), 2 co-researchers (2 man-months each), and a number of research assistants (for a total of 16 man-months).

2. Review and Formulation of Measures for the Supported Sub-Programs of Thai Poverty Area Program, submitted to the NRDC by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Kasetsart University. The proposed study is an evaluation of RPAP projects with the objectives of: determining the degree to which original targets and objectives have been achieved; investigating the pattern of use of invested capital and personnel trained by each project and how they have affected output volume; recommending government strategies or measures that could increase the benefits from the invested capital and trained personnel from each project. The project duration is 6 months. The project team consists of 2 researchers (3 man-months each), and 2 research assistants (5 man-months each).

Training

Sixteen participants from NESDB, BOB, and Thai line ministries are in the United States for a degree program managed by BUCEN and George Washington University. These persons are specializing in administrative sciences with a concentration in management informations systems. The first group of 13 Thais (6 from NESDB, 2 from Thammasat University, 2 from BOB, 1 from the Office of Policy and Planning/MOI, 1 from DOLA/MOI, and 1 from the Office of Agricultural Economics/MOAC) who left in August, 1985 will return to their agencies in February, 1987. These persons all received diplomas in the computer data systems curriculum of BUCEN's International Training Program in August, 1986. It is expected that all 13 will complete the course requirements for the M.A. degree by January, 1987. Three other Thais (1 from NESDB, 1 from the Health Planning Division/MOPH, and 1 from Thammasat University) who left in August, 1986 are expected to return in February, 1988 after completing the same program. In addition nine persons completed a 2 month workshop at BUCEN and have returned to their posts at NESDB and the ministries. (A complete list appears in Appendix F.)

NRDC plans to keep the returned trainees together for one month so that they can familiarize themselves with recent developments in NRDC planning, monitoring and evaluation. The trainees will return thereafter to their previous posts.

Systems Operations

This input was planned to augment IPIED resources for data collection and analysis and to fund miscellaneous recurrent costs such as meetings and travel for the first 30 months of the project. Little has been spent except for 1986 data collection for the NRD2(c) form and travel and per diem expenses related to meetings. The NRD2(c) form is a 49-page questionnaire to collect village baseline data. Five copies are filled out for each village by the tambon CD Worker in conjunction with his tambon counterparts from the other three key ministries (Agriculture, Education, and Public Health). Thirty-four indicators are extrapolated from the NRD2(c) form and constitute crude measures of a village's level of development. Each village is assigned a 1 ("least developed"), 2, or 3 ("most developed") star rating on each of the indicators. The ratings are used as a planning guideline for allocation of RTG rural development inputs. They also serve as justificatory criteria for rural development project placements. When data are collected over time, they may be used to measure change, but they hardly meet the requirements of ongoing project monitoring or ex post evaluation. NRD2(c) data are collected once every two years; they are not appropriate for project monitoring or evaluation purposes.

D. Status of Project Outputs

As a result of the RDME trainees still being abroad, the relative ineffectiveness of technical assistance and the absence of most of the commodities, RDME project outputs have been negligible.

The NRD2(c) form was revised for 1986 to facilitate data entry, but the form remains long and unwieldy and, most important, lacks a clear analytical plan which could be used to justify the inclusion of items in the questionnaire. The primary purpose of NRD2(c) is for planning, and secondarily to measure changes in the level of village development over time. It is not a monitoring and evaluation instrument in the usual sense of the term. Other forms and procedures have not been significantly altered; nor have they been subjected to the kind of rigorous review anticipated in the RDME Logical Framework.

Monitoring and evaluation benchmarks have not been implemented. NRDC presently is in the process of reviewing the existing monitoring forms used by the various ministries and departments in an attempt to standardize critical performance indicators.

Analysis and interpretation of data also is lagging. At this time, the only input to IPIED is the NRD2(c). These data are available to NRDC and other RTG agencies, but the level of detailed analysis provided is of questionable value. NRD2(c) data do flow back to the provincial level where the data are used for planning purposes and have become a basis for field-level interministerial communication through expanded participation in data collection. This use of the form predates the RDME project, however, and operationally has not been affected by the it.

Ministries and departments are not carrying out effect evaluation per se. Rather, they are using NRD2(c) data, BOB forms, and information collected from their own monitoring systems to gauge, only in the broadest fashion, the general effects of development activities. An exception to this is two provinces in the Northeast where Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) results are being used to annually measure project effects at the village level.

E. The RDME Project in the Context of the National NRDP Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System

The RDME project purpose was to "assist the RTG in developing a phased program to strengthen and institutionalize the rural development monitoring and evaluation system so that it can provide, by the beginning of the Sixth Plan period, the reliable and timely information that will be needed for effective management of the Plan's rural development programs" (RDME Logical Framework, p. 2). Although the Project Paper is unclear about the structure of RDME, a central theme that runs throughout the Project Paper is the emphasis on "greater utilization of and benefit from M&E systems at the local level" (Project Paper, p. 20). Again, the "ideal system would provide each level of management with the monitoring and evaluation data it needs to perform its analytic responsibilities and to support its decision making needs" (Ibid., p. 20). The principles underlying effective M&E articulated by the Project Paper are based on user needs and user participation, especially at the implementation (field managers) level. As the Technical Assistance team has noted, "A basic strategy of (the project) design was to strengthen the monitoring capability and the use of information in the ministries and departments" (p. 2, 12/16/86 memo to Mr. Douglas Clark and Mr. Pairoj Suchinda).

An important question arises as to whether the RDME concept as presented in the Project Paper dovetails with NRDCC's plans for an M&E system. To answer this question we have to examine current systems that are either in place or that are in the process of being installed. We also have to take into account recent national rural development policy modifications as articulated in the RTG 6th Plan.

In March 1984 (before the RDME Loan Agreement was signed), NESDB contracted with IPIED to design a National Rural Development Planning Information System (NRDPI) and a Monitoring and Evaluation Information System (MEI). Established by Royal Decree in 1982, IPIED is charged, among other things, with the creation of a data bank (village and district level data in particular) for use in RTG rural development planning. The NRDPI and MEI as designed by IPIED/NRDCC are based primarily on forms that are part of existing planning and reporting requirements in the Thai bureaucracy. Information processed by IPIED can be classified into 4 categories:

Type of Information	Form
I. Operation Plan	NRD 1 (Tambon Development Plan) NRD 2 (District Development Plan) NRD 3 (Provincial Development Plan) NRD 4 (Project Screening Plan) NRD 5 (Department Development Plan) NRD 6 (Ministry Policy & Framework) NRD 7 (Alternate Area of Implementation) NRDC 100 series (Program Evaluation)
II. Target Programming	NRD2(A) (List of target poverty villages) NRD2(B) (District level basic data) NRD2(C) (Village level basic data) NRDC 200 series (Target descriptions)
III. Monitoring	D314 (Bureau of the Budget form, data on disbursement of project funds)
IV. Evaluation	NRD1(A) (Project assessment)

As presently structured, emphasis is placed on data relevant to planning and target programming. The only monitoring data that are collected are taken from the BOB's D314 form, which routinely records disbursement of project funds. This is not the kind of monitoring that is appropriate to field managers' needs.

No rigorous evaluation of project effects or impact has been undertaken, in the sense of establishing causal linkages between each rural development project and its impact on target populations. What IPIED calls impact evaluation refers to efforts to measure aggregate changes in development levels over time, which are then inferred to be the result of development inputs. The NRD1(A) form contains questions that ask, for each project activity, conditions before and after project inputs are made. It would be difficult, however, to make causal inferences from data such as these, because of the lack of control groups in the research design and lack of data on test factors which can be statistically controlled in the subsequent analysis.

While NRDC through IPIED has directed most of its attention to the development of data systems for planning purposes, little progress has been made with respect to the development of monitoring and evaluation systems for management needs. A November 1986 report by the RDME Technical Assistance team (Review and Assessment of the Information System for Rural Development Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) states that: monitoring is not viewed as a management activity; standardized project inputs, outputs, and timetables are not available; the current monitoring form is not useful or timely (p. v). In regard to evaluation, the same report states: evaluation is not viewed as part of the management process; anticipated effects and preproject measures are not always specified; too much emphasis is put on having common evaluation measures; impact evaluation results are not fully utilized; external factors are not considered in impact evaluation (p. vi).

The Technical Assistance consultants' report also reviews the existing planning information system, and concludes among other things that: village problem indicators need to be revised; program funding priorities need specification; changwat need more useful and accurate information; data volume is overtaxing the system; 6th Plan decentralization planning strategy requires information system changes; changwat/amphur planning requires budget constraints; NRD2(c) needs to be simplified and shortened; duplication exists in village data collection; operations target programming is not utilized (pp. ii-iv).

Significantly, the findings that appear in the November 1986 report are not substantially different from the statement of the problem which appears in the March 1984 RDME Project Paper: "the current monitoring and evaluation system is not influencing policy and operational level decisions in intended ways... (T)he elaborate system of information flow, covering planning and budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation...is basically weak because of incomplete structure and shortcomings of data collection, collation, analysis and feedback" (pp. 9-10).

The RDME Project calls for systemic change and overhaul. The recommendations which the Technical Assistance consultants make in their report is consistent with this notion. NRDC/IPIED, on the other hand, are proceeding incrementally, making small scale adjustments to the information system in place. Given the limited resources at their disposal as well as having other obligations to fulfill, NRDC/IPIED's incremental strategy is probably well advised. In consequence, it should come as no surprise if results are slow in being produced--so much so that after an elapsed time interval of 2 years, this review team and the Technical Assistance consultants can detect no major improvement.

The point that the review team wishes to make, however, concerns fundamental differences between IPIED and the TA consultants in the underlying principles of system development. The TA consultants' approach is user-based and user-oriented. Users include not only policy-makers and strategic planners in NRDC, NRDC and the central ministries, but also operating departments and provincial and district field managers. The TA consultants view system development as involving all these users of the system in the process of identifying information requirements. In fact, however, although the Project Paper targeted field managers as users of monitoring and evaluation information, no project resources were specifically provided for carrying this out.

IPIED, by contrast, appears to be focusing on technical aspects of system development, with the product being a pre-designed package for users. Neither of the IPIED special studies proposals for developing information systems makes reference to user participation in the process.

With the advent of Thailand's 6th Development Plan in 1986, the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation in support of rural development planning and implementation is magnified. Under the 6th Plan, the targeted poverty program of RPAP will be terminated, and 156 project options will be available for all of Thailand's 72 provinces under the NRDP. Resource allocation will be based, in part, on village economic and social indicators of the type now collected for NRDCC. In terms of volume of data that will have to be processed, a four-fold increase at the very least is anticipated. (Instead of some 13,000 villages and 33 project types, we are now talking about 50,000+ villages and 156 project categories.)

F. NRDCC Self-Assessed Needs

In terms of current self-assessed needs by NRDCC staff who are most closely involved with the RDME project, the RDME Systems Operations component heads the priority list. The NRDCC plans to use this component to support analysis of NRD2(c) data collected in 1986 and collection of NRD2(c) data in 1988. This component also pays the salaries of 3 support staff (2 technical staff, 1 accountant) until arrangements are finalized for the creation of new permanent staff positions (a procedure that normally takes about 2 years and requires authorization from the Civil Service Commission).

The next item on the priority list is the training component, with special emphasis on in-country training. In-country training is perceived as more relevant and more important than training received from abroad. The review team has no disagreement with this viewpoint.

NRDCC has mixed views about the TA component. While high priority is accorded to the 2 Thai support staff, the expatriate consultants are considered far less important. Specifically, the team leader (i.e., senior advisor's) position is seen as unnecessary, because there is no team to be "managed"--which NRDCC staff understood as being the team leader's *raison d'etre*. The information systems advisor is potentially useful, but ways in which to realize the advisor's potential still remain to be specified.

Of the remaining components, the two AID-type evaluations specified in the Project Paper and paid for by loan funds are seen to contribute little to the achievement of the RDME project purpose. Some NRDCC staff would like to eliminate them altogether.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(The Scope of Work specifies that the format for this Report should end with a full statement of conclusions and recommendations. Topics in the conclusions section should be identified by a short sub-heading related to the questions posed in the Scope of Work. Recommendations should correspond to the conclusions.)

A. Conclusions

Strengths and Weaknesses of the RDME Project Design

Validity of the basic assumptions underpinning the project

Since the RDME project design that appears in the Project Paper has not been implemented, it is not possible to check the ex post validity of the basic assumptions underpinning the project. The review team does conclude, however, that implementation failure has stemmed in part from flawed design assumptions (see Findings, II.A), particularly assumptions about administrative capabilities and bureaucratic coordination.

Validity of the logic linking inputs to outputs

Except for the training component, inputs to date have been negligible (see Findings, II.C). Trainees have not yet returned from the U.S., so their performance cannot be assessed. Therefore, outputs have been negligible (see Findings, II.D). The review team concludes that there have been management problems resulting in the slow disbursement of funds, and that it is unlikely that the funds available will be spent by the EOP. RDME cannot expect to achieve the purposes specified in the Project Paper. Without major revisions to the RDME project design and implementation, RDME will be a failure.

Moreover, given the apparent fundamental difference in approach to the problem of designing M&E systems between IPIED and the Technical Assistance team (see Findings, II.E), the review team concludes that in order for the Technical Assistance project component to be successful in achieving targeted outputs, these differences have to be resolved.

With respect to the Commodities component, our assessment is that this input (the microcomputers item, in particular) can be carried out and will assist in the improvement of monitoring and evaluation given current levels of administrative capability. Our conclusion is based on the finding that there exists a strong felt need and receptivity to innovation on the part of potential users, especially at the provincial level.

Likelihood of implementation success with current project design. Changes in project organization or in the procedures of the agencies and organizations participating in the project (including AID) that are needed to improve the likelihood of success.

Given the two preceding paragraphs, and given the developments that have taken place within the Thai National Rural Development Program's own planning and information systems (see Findings, II.E) the review team concludes that the project cannot be implemented successfully as currently designed. The review team also concludes that major design revisions appropriate and responsive to the current project environment be carried out to improve the likelihood of success. Suggested revisions appear in the Recommendations section, although a re-design of the project must be a separate effort carried out with thorough analysis.

Critical factors affecting successful implementation of the RDME project

There are at least two critical factors affecting successful implementation of the RDME project. First, is the requirement for strong management and managerial skills. The absence of proper management and adequate staffing has seriously impeded project implementation (see Findings, II.B and II.C). The review team concludes that unless future management of the project is more effective and capable of anticipating and resolving problems before they get out of hand, the RDME project will be a failure. The second factor concerns the fundamental incompatibility between implementation strategies that NRDCC and IPIED favor on the one hand, and the technical assistance consultants favor on the other (see Findings, II.E). The review team concludes that unless this issue is resolved, the RDME project will be unsuccessful.

After reviewing the evidence, the review team cannot but conclude that the RDME project strategy as described in the Project Paper ("The advisors will ...help the ministries and individual departments review their current monitoring systems and evaluation capabilities, identifying any specific strengths or weaknesses therein, and will help the departments, as needed, to draw up a program for bringing M&E capabilities up to required levels." p. 40) is out of touch with directions NRDP and MEI have taken under IPIED. Although the review team may concur with most of the recommendations made in the technical assistance consultants' November 1986 report, we see no indication that the recommendations will be implemented--for implementation requires a rethinking of NRDCC's current plans to continue with the existing system making only minor adjustments.

B. Recommendations

With respect to the future of the RDME project, there are three alternative courses of action that NRDCC and USAID might consider. The first alternative is to continue with the RDME project as is with various limited adjustments.

The second option is to terminate the project and deobligate all undisbursed funds. The rationale for this option is that the RDME project as originally designed is not implementable (see preceding Conclusions section). The strategies/approaches that are incorporated into the project design are tangential to current NRDCC/IPIED directions and concerns, which are unlikely to change.

The third-alternative is to revise the RDME project design altogether. This is a major undertaking, worth risking only if (a) both NRDC and USAID are committed to expending the time and energy to jointly revise the project design; (b) the revised project design contains reasonable grounds for thinking that (revised) planned inputs will result in expected outputs leading to accomplishment of the project purpose, and (c) evidence is provided that the managerial/administrative capacity for project implementation is present.

Selection among the options listed above is basically a policy decision to be taken by key policy makers in the NRDC and USAID. The review team does, however, have some recommendations in each case.

Option 1 (Continue As Is):

Recommendation. The review team recommends explicitly against this option. There are no reasonable grounds for believing that continuing with the project as is will result in the accomplishment of the project purpose.

Option 2 (Terminate):

Recommendation: Termination of project components should be phased.

- (a) Equipment procurement already in the pipeline should continue as scheduled.
- (b) The TA component may be phased out.
- (c) The special evaluative studies may be cancelled.
- (d) Trainees abroad should be allowed to complete their programs as scheduled.

Option 3 (Revise Project Design):

Recommendation: NRDC and USAID should first decide whether the revised RDME project is to consist of an assortment of loan-supported activities that individually and independently feed into the existing National Rural Development Planning Information system and Monitoring and Evaluation Information system, or whether it is a self-contained entity consisting of a set of interrelated components with a specific scope of work. Either arrangement could be justified as serving the project purpose which is "to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the NRDP to provide the reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers."

Based on its assessment of current levels of managerial capabilities, existing structural arrangements for administering the project, and NRDC's current plans for NRDP and MEI, the review team's judgment is that the first alternative (assortment of loan-supported activities) is probably more feasible than the second alternative (systematically designed set of

activities that together form a cohesive whole). This first alternative can also make a contribution to the overall purpose of strengthening monitoring and evaluation, although it must be recognized (by USAID) as essentially loan-funded budget support of on-going activities.

The review team's assessment is that the most effective way to utilize the project loan is to strengthen selected subsystems of the NRD Monitoring and Evaluation system. Our recommendations are consistent with the Scope of Work provided by USAID and were guided by the present realities of RDME implementation. In particular, two points in the RTG 6th Plan (fiscal years 1987-91) provided the foundation for several of the team's recommendations:

- o The expansion of monitoring and evaluation under the NRDP from the original 38 RPAP provinces to all 72 of Thailand's provinces.
- o The emphasis on decentralized collection, analysis and use of data for planning, monitoring and evaluating rural development.

Our objective here is to recommend modifications and their budgetary outcomes both to re-focus the project goals and purposes and also to bring about delivery of essential project outputs. Our recommendations for each project component follow.

1. Commodities

The RDME microcomputer procurement and distribution strategy should be revised.

1.1 The modified RDME project should be expanded into an initial set of provinces and microcomputer support should be provided to those provinces. In keeping with the focus on decentralized development in the RTG 6th Plan and other recommendations of this report, a set of 15-20 provinces that meet NRDC qualifications should be selected for the modified RDME project. These provinces should receive the range of technical assistance and training programs described in recommendations 3 and 5. Further, the provinces should receive microcomputers and microcomputer training in order to enhance their capability to carry out provincial-level planning, monitoring and evaluation based upon NRD2(c), BMN and other data available at the province level.

Based on its experience and the lessons learned from the Surat Thani pilot project, the review team recommends the following microcomputer configuration for each of the provinces (detailed specifications to be developed by NRDC):

- 2 fully equipped IBM PC-AT or compatible microcomputers
- 1 uninterruptable power supply
- 2 dot matrix printers (1 wide carriage, 1 narrow carriage)

It is our understanding that the NRDC has already decided on the criteria to be applied in determining which provinces will be given priority in the allocation of microcomputers. NRDC plans to accord first priority to the 38 provinces that were in the RPAP program, on the grounds that these provinces have had more exposure to M&E, are familiar with the various M&E forms and understand the data collection procedures and requirements. Current NRDC plans call for the selection of a subset of the 38 RPAP provinces that meet the following additional criteria: commitment by the Governor and his provincial staff; availability of suitable office space and facilities (including air conditioning and a reliable electric supply) for the microcomputers; and availability of support staff (which could be drawn from any governmental unit within the province). Information on these criteria is to be supplied by the each Provincial Development Coordination Center (PDCC), which is chaired by the Governor and includes representatives from the five key line ministries, a representative from the Office of the Provincial Governor, and representatives from other concerned units.

We urge that selection of the initial set of provinces be limited to those which have a provincial level source for microcomputer training and support. This might be provided through a local university, a teacher's college or a vocational school, or by the private sector.

User involvement in the design of the system should be encouraged by the RDME project, as should the use of commercially available software (dBase and Lotus) in order to minimize the amount of custom programming.

It is imperative that extensive training, long term operations support, and system design accompany the installation of microcomputers. Unless these activities are guaranteed in advance, the microcomputers may turn into that highly undesirable (and therefore to be avoided) development input--a "hardware drop."

1.2 Some microcomputer support should be provided to implementing departments. Irrespective of RDME, NRDC plans to install microcomputers in central line departments that are involved in the National Rural Development Program. In the RTG 6th Plan period, about 40 departments will have responsibility for the 156 project categories. The NRDC would like to provide microcomputers to those departments with the largest number of project categories, in order to foster communications and interchange with the provincial implementors. The review team has no disagreement with this strategy. Our recommendation is for microcomputers to be installed in 10-12 departments which do not currently have microcomputer facilities. Appropriate support should be provided along the guidelines suggested previously.

1.3 Procurement documents should specifically require the capability for maintenance and user training. Past experience with microcomputer procurement within AID projects suggests that offshore (U.S.) procurement entails significant monetary and other costs. Without access to vendor installation and warranty services, these key user-support elements must be purchased from third-party sources, often at a high cost. These sources may have limited access to parts or possess weak technical knowledge

of particular system components. The IFB for additional microcomputer procurement should contain a stipulation that service and training be included. Experience, however, has shown that in-country dealers are not responsive to service and training requests for equipment they do not sell. The best arrangement is single local vendor responsibility for all system components, including maintenance and user-support.

1.4 All funds should be obligated within this fiscal year, the microcomputers should be in place by the end of 1987, and maintenance and training services should be contracted out of loan funds for a one year period after the installation of the microcomputers. We make this recommendation only if NRDC and USAID are adhering to the original project termination date of December 1988. Installation of microcomputers by the end of 1987 would allow them to be in operation for at least one year during the project life--enough time for an assessment of their utility by the end of project.

2. Operation/Maintenance

To determine the effective dates for project support under this component, the NRDC and USAID should jointly review the Loan Agreement which clearly stipulates that loan funding be made available to cover transitional costs of equipment operation and maintenance for a 30 month period.

Under the terms of the present Loan Agreement, no O&M funds will have been disbursed. As a matter of logic, however, it seems clear that the time period for O&M support should start upon receipt of the equipment to be maintained, and not be tied to the date at which the project begins. This, of course, is a general policy issue to be decided by USAID with NRDC.

3. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance should be phased out.

The findings discussed in Section II.B indicate that the project management has been unable to make effective use of the technical assistance component. Serious problems of communication have arisen over the past 15 months. There is no indication that these problems will be resolved. We therefore recommend phase out of this component.

The TA consultants have, however, recently produced a report that is an overall assessment of the information system for rural development planning, monitoring and evaluation. The report is being reviewed by the NRDC. We consider the report to contain valuable suggestions regarding improvements to the M&E system currently in place. We recommend that NRDC should request that the TA consultants follow up on some portions of the report, and that the follow up be completed by June 1987. This would allow sufficient time for review and approval, especially for products that relate to computerized M&E at the provincial level.

3.1 The Senior Advisor should focus in-depth on selected technical aspects of M&E design in the RDME project, rather than take on a management role within RDME or a coordinative/liaison role with RTG agencies collaborating in the RDME project. The Senior Advisor should provide recommendations on specific technical areas as requested by the Chairperson of the NRDCC. The project specification called for the Senior Advisor to play a management and coordination role, and to facilitate linkages between NRDCC and participating agencies. Since these functions are already handled by the NRDCC, which does not require assistance or guidance, the role of the Senior Advisor should be modified accordingly so as to make appropriate use of his expertise.

3.2 The Information Systems Advisor should focus on assisting in systems design and serving as a technical advisor to RTG agencies collaborating in the RDME project. It is recommended that the implementing agency and the two expatriate advisors agree on specific work products to be accomplished by June 1987, and that this component along with others in the project be terminated at that date. It is further recommended that the information systems advisor be removed from IPIED and placed with the senior advisor to work in NRDCC for the duration of the project.

3.3 No additional expatriate or Thai long or short term consultants should be hired; it is unlikely that they can contribute to project activities as currently directed.

4. Special Studies

No special studies are required.

The special studies component is inconsistent with our recommendations concerning redirection of RDME inputs, which are intended to focus on development of provincial capabilities. We have examined the 4 proposals submitted to NRDCC (2 by IPIED, 2 by Kasetsart University). Although some of the proposals are rather sketchy, our assessment is that none of the proposed studies will make a significant contribution to M&E for rural development in Thailand (see Findings, Section II.B).

5. Training

The RDME project should finance workshops, meetings and provincial interchange to encourage greater utilization of data in decision making at the provincial, district, tambon and village levels.

A principal finding of the field observations was that data presently are being used to plan development activities and evaluate effects at the subnational level in two provinces: Nakorn Ratchasima and Maha Sarakham. In both locations, the data collection instrument is the Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) questionnaire. In addition, the team has learned that data systems are being installed for planning and monitoring purposes in at least two other provinces, Surat Thani and Lopburi. These systems are not based on BMN. Since the review team did not make field visits to either Surat Thani or Lopburi, only the BMN approach will be discussed.

Throughout the BMN process, emphasis is on the use of data, village participation and self reliance. Such decentralized development should be encouraged and supported in the context of RDME, particularly in view of the fact that the BMN survey, beginning in 1987, will be conducted annually in every village in Thailand. In order to promote cross fertilization of ideas concerning collection, analysis and use of BMN data, the RDME project should finance a series of workshops and study visits by provincial, district, tambon and village personnel from other provinces.

6. Systems Operations

Systems operations support should be provided only for country-wide collection and processing of NRD2(c) data in 1988.

This RDME component will assist the NRDCC in its strategy to engage provincial interest in and commitment to the development of data and information systems for planning and monitoring and evaluation purposes. Once provinces become active participants in the process, it is hoped that they will include systems operations funding as a line item in the regular provincial budget.

The following table summarizes the general budget implications of the review team's recommendations.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Disbursed</u>	<u>Recommended Add'l Expend.</u>	<u>Deobligate</u>
COMMODITIES (1)	707.7	26.2	681.5	0
OPERATION/ MAINTENANCE	236.0	0	0	236.0
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	1340.0	130.9	115.0	1094.1
SPECIAL STUDIES	400.0	0	0	400.0
TRAINING (2)	1147.0	755.9	374.0	17.1
SYSTEM OPERATIONS (3)	927.0	109.3	200.0	617.7
OTHER (4)	<u>242.3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>143.3</u>
TOTAL	5000.0 =====	1022.4 =====	1470.4 =====	2507.2 =====

- (1) includes 1-year support/maintenance contracted through vendor contract
- (2) includes seminars and workshops for provincial interchange
- (3) future expenditures for provincial data collection and processing only
- (4) project evaluation

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IV. LESSONS

The RDME Project experience is instructive. It provides a number of lessons--some generic, some specific to Thailand--which, if heeded, may prove of value in the planning and implementation of future AID projects. Our observations are listed below, in descending order of generality.

1. Should there be radical modification of projects during the pre-implementation stage, a thorough re-examination of project design and viability should be undertaken.

The original RDME project design called for BUCEN to provide technical assistance and training and to carry out procurement. Adherence to original design of the technical assistance component of RDME was crucial to successful project implementation. Once this design plan was abandoned, USAID should have reconsidered the project. Pressures to go along with the project should have been met by USAID with strong and constructive alternatives to accomplish original design objectives. Alternatively, the project should have been completely redesigned or cancelled.

2. It is inadvisable to use loan funds to procure technical assistance.

The role of technical assistance consultants is often determined by the method of financing. In comparison with loan-funded technical assistance with its stringent contractual requirements, grant-funded technical assistance can be provided to recipient agencies under terms and conditions that are more conducive to the TAs finding a useful "niche" for themselves where they can deploy their expertise in developmental activities that are supportive of host agency goals and objectives.

3. Critical implementation issues do not belong in the "Important Assumptions" category of the project logical framework.

When relegated to this category, removed from the focus of project activity and unresolved, these issues are likely to contribute to project failure. It should be understood, not only by project designers but also by project managers and decision-makers, that assumptions are legitimately only those factors which can realistically be expected to occur or things over which the project can have no control. If something is necessary to the success of a project, ministerial coordination for example, then a strategy must be devised and specific actions designed to facilitate it.

4. In projects with extensive interagency coordination requirements, linkages and how they will be managed should be clearly defined before implementation, not left to chance or simply assumed. Undefined linkages are highly unlikely to develop in the course of implementation.

The RDME project assumed a relationship between NRDCC and other government units involved in the NRDP that did not exist and has not developed. No clear mechanism for managing the supposed linkages was identified or defined. As a result, conditions essential for realization of the RDME project purpose do not exist.

5. Project designs should be subjected to independent and possibly external review in order to identify design weaknesses and flawed assumptions. Failure to do so may lead to breakdown in implementation.

It is quite frequently the case that project designs are based upon erroneous or unrealistic assumptions, which make project implementation difficult if not impossible. The RDME Project provides a classic illustration of this, but unfortunately, is not an isolated instance. Had there been prior, thorough, independent review of the project design and assumptions, it is likely that flaws would have been identified that would have led to a design modification. Identification of logic design flaws should take place in the pre-implementation phase of a project, rather than in the results of ex post or mid-term evaluations. The review team is aware that the Project Paper was subjected to internal review by USAID, but the process does not appear to have had adequate critical analysis.

6. When an implementing agency has no experience in managing AID loans and grants, AID must recognize the fact and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the implementing agency fully understands what is entailed, before the start of project.

When AID projects are located in agencies that have had little or no experience in managing external loan (or grant) funds, it cannot be assumed that the implementing agency/agencies have the requisite management and personnel skills to cope with the onerous task of learning new sets of standard operating procedures (both host country and U.S.), or developing new repertoires to meet unforeseen contingencies. In the case of loan projects in particular, unless precedents within the agency already exist, the greater the number of planned activities (including technical assistance consultancies and commodity procurement), the more likely that the project will encounter procedural difficulties in implementation. The cumulative effect may be partial or total paralysis.

In this instance, however, this weakness was recognized by the project designers, who recommended a PASA with BUCEN to deal with the situation. When the PASA proved infeasible, however, project managers did not realize or accept that the RDME project was seriously undermined and probably unimplementable.

7. There is potential benefit to USAID and the counterpart agencies to assign their staff to participate in project reviews and evaluations.

As described in detail earlier, one of the problems with the RDME project was the lack of communication and continuity in project management on the part of NRDCC/NESDB and USAID. Throughout our meetings with ministry officials, field trips and group deliberations, we were struck by the fact **that we were hearing more items of importance than could be conveyed in our final report.** It is our view that future mid-term reviews/evaluations of projects generally regarded as failures should include, as full team members, one representative each from USAID and the RTG implementing agency. We understand that, in this case, USAID quite deliberately chose to absent its own staff to insure objectivity in this review. Its arguments to this effect are well-taken. With all the advantages of hindsight, however, the team still **believes that it would have been worth risking a potential loss of objectivity to secure at first-hand what this report can convey only in broad outline.**

APPENDIX A

SCOPE OF WORK

The material provided below is the overall scope of work for the team which will carry out the evaluation of the Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project.

To perform this scope of work the person selected for this contract will serve as a team member who through knowledge of AID's project evaluation process and requirements and knowledge of the evaluation of development assistance projects will assist the team in performing the scope of work by carrying out tasks that will be assigned by the team leader.

I. OBJECTIVE:

The original purpose of the Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation (RDME) Project was to strengthen and institutionalize Monitoring and Evaluation functions in Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP) areas, covering 38 provinces in Northeast, North and South Thailand, so that reliable and timely information needed by policymakers and field managers to plan, manage and implement the RTG's RPAP would be available. It was expected that after the basic systems for the RPAP program were in place, the project would assist in extending these systems to the whole range of rural development program throughout the country. Basic policy decisions of the RTG for rural development in the 6th Plan will directly affect the scope and implementation of the project. Under these policies, the information systems are to become the basis for planning, allocating budgetary resources, and monitoring and evaluation of all rural development program for the whole country (72 provinces). Thus, this major expansion in the scope and coverage of these systems necessarily also expands their significance as tools of management and in the allocation of resources.

The objectives of this interim evaluation are to: (a) measure progress toward the achievement of the project's purpose; (b) identify and analyze problems that are inhibiting progress; (c) recommend actions to resolve the problems identified; (d) determine whether the project as structured can improve information systems throughout the country or determine whether and how it could be modified to do so; (e) ascertain whether appropriate information is being gathered to guide project implementation and to support future evaluations; and (f) recommend a plan and schedule for future evaluations.

II. BACKGROUND:

A. Overview

The Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project (RDME) was authorized April 30, 1984, and the loan agreement signed June 28, 1984. The project involves a \$24.975 million effort, including a 5 million AID loan and \$19.975 million Government of Thailand contribution. The goal of the project is to foster increased efficiency and cost effectiveness in the planning and implementation of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP). The purpose is to assist the Royal Thai Government (RTG) to strengthen and institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation system of the NRDP such that it will provide reliable and timely information needed by policy makers and field managers to effectively and efficiently manage and implement the RTG's Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP).

The RPAP covers 38 provinces in the Northeast, North and South of Thailand. The project is being implemented by the National Rural Development Coordinating Center (NRDCC) which is located in the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). Other major participants in project implementation are the Bureau of the Budget (BOB), the Information Processing Institute for Education and Development (IPIED) of Thammasat University, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Interior (MOI), and the Ministry of Public Health (MOH). Assistance for institutional development and program financing has also involved the World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and UNDP.

The strategy employed involves strengthening the capacity of field staff of the implementing agencies to collect and report relevant data to the NRDCC/IPIED; and strengthening the capacity of NRDCC/IPIED to process and analyze data and to provide monitoring and evaluation feedback to the implementing agencies at the operational, planning and policy making levels in a form which is usable in carrying out their respective mandates. This requires: (1) the systemization of data collection and flow by developing improved data forms and collection procedures, establishing realistic reporting frequencies, standardization of collection procedures, minimization of duplication, and maximizing the compatibility of data collected; (2) refinement of monitoring and evaluation measurements including activity milestones and performance indicators; (3) improving the data processing and analysis interface between IPIED and NRDCC; and (4) systematic assessment of the RPAP program's impact.

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B. Project Components

To assist the RTG in attaining project objectives, the Project includes the following components:

- 1) Technical and Professional Services: The Project design provides for about seven person-years of long-term and 16 person-months of short-term expatriate technical assistance.

The technical assistance component is designed to assist the NESDB/NRDCC in the coordination of the Rural Poverty Alleviation Program through the design, development, refinement, application and institutional utilization of the monitoring and evaluation system.

The Project design calls for three expatriate and two Thai long-term consultants. Although it was expected that these consultants would be on board within six months of the signing of the loan agreement, actual progress has been slow.

Only two of the five full-time professional positions have been filled. The senior advisor began work in August 1985 and the information systems advisor began work in September 1986. AID and the RTG agree that while a third expatriate was expected to be required for systems engineering, this position does not appear to be necessary. A decision to hire a third expatriate for other project requirements has not been made.

None of the long-term Thai consultants positions have been filled. Terms of reference have been prepared for these positions and, discussions have been held with prospective candidates. No short term expatriate technical assistance has been provided. Progress toward achievement of consultant assisted project output includes: (1) the completion of a descriptive framework for the RD program management process and of the information requirements at each step in that process; (2) the submission of a plan for developing a changwat information system; (3) the submission of a proposal for a special study of the extent to which RPAP villages are continuing the activities initiated by the government; and (4) an evaluation of the problem indicators and their use.

- 2) Commodities: The project design and loan agreement anticipated the procurement of \$693,000 worth of commodities, including micro-computers, calculators, copy machines, and public relations equipment to improve the speed and accuracy of data recording, transmission, and analysis; vehicles to increase staff mobility and interaction; and books, manuals and materials on monitoring and evaluation techniques and procedures to improve M&E skills. Progress under this component has also proved difficult. The period since the signing of the loan agreement have been marked by considerable review and discussion concerning the numbers and types of commodities, and procurement, procedures and specifications. The status of commodity procurement is as follows: two vehicles have been procured and are in use. Invitations for bids have been completed and approved by the RTG and AID for 100% of local and shelf items and 48% of offshore items of the remaining commodities and will be issued shortly. The RTG is substantially revising the proposed list of remaining items to be procured.
- 3) Training: The project design calls for both U.S. and in-country training during the first two years to develop the wide range of skills required to develop, institutionalize and maintain an effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation system for a program as complex as RPAP and eventually the NRDP.

Extensive long-term training in statistical methods systems analysis and program management was provided for under the project. This included masters degree and diploma level training for the core cadre of professionals who will carry the principal technical responsibilities for the M&E operations of their respective agencies and departments. The project includes \$600,000 for 16 participants who are to receive this training in the U.S. Good progress has been made under this activity, with all long term participants currently undergoing training in the U.S.

Also, in accordance with the project implementation plan, nine participants have completed short-term training in the U.S. and are applying their skills in implementing the M&E system.

The project design also called for extensive in-country training using workshops and seminars covering a wide range of task-specific skill development, data collection, collation, transmission, analysis, reporting and application. However, none of this training has taken place to date.

- 4) System Operation and Special Studies: The project design provides for \$236,000 to cover the transitional costs of equipment operation and maintenance and \$927,000 for hiring additional local staff for data collection, processing and analysis, and other miscellaneous costs during the first 30 months of the project .

Data forms have been updated by IPIED and are in use by the four action Ministries. The source of funds for recurrent costs to keep the systems operations going after the first 30 months of the project remains uncertain.

In addition, the project provides \$400,000 for special in-depth studies by outside contractors while in-house staff capability is being developed. These include impact and cost-effectiveness studies. While none of these studies has been implemented, four proposals involving such studies have been approved by the Project Committee and are expected to begin soon. These studies are:

- a) Framework, Operational Procedures, and Model of Information System for Rural Development at Provincial Level;
- b) Computer Program Development for Rural Development Information System at Provincial Level;
- c) Continuity of RPAP activities;
- d) Effects and Impact of RPAP Projects.

III. TECHNICAL DIRECTIONS:

The evaluation team shall address the critical evaluation questions indicated below, draw conclusions from the findings, and make recommendations responding to those conclusions. The evaluation will also contain a discussion of lessons learned during project implementation.

The evaluation shall include a detailed examination of overall project progress in terms of the delivery of project inputs, the realization of project outputs and the achievement of initially planned project objectives as well as the broader country-wide objectives now envisioned. In addition, the evaluation will examine the continuing validity of project administrative arrangements, and the economic, technical and institutional soundness of the project based on implementation experience. At each of these levels, the evaluation will examine the validity of the original design assumptions. Based on the analysis of these design components, the

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evaluation will assess whether project design changes are necessary and if so, will present a detailed discussion of the rationale for and scope of such proposed changes.

A. Critical Evaluation Questions

- 1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the RDME design?
 - a) How valid are the basic assumptions underpinning the project?
 - Is there evidence that the constraints imposed by the existing horizontal and vertical RTG administrative arrangements can be overcome?
 - Is there evidence that the RTG agencies organizations involved in the project will select and assign qualified staff and provide adequate levels of support to ensure the further development and institutionalization of the M&E systems implemented through the project?
 - Is there evidence that the RTG gives high priority to the refinement, operation and use of M&E system?
 - Is there evidence that the RTG will take serious steps to define more clearly and, to the extent necessary, modify roles and responsibilities of the agencies/organizations involved in project implementation to insure success in the refinement, operation and use of M&E systems?
 - Is there evidence indicating that managers in the agencies/organizations involved in the project will use M&E systems as tools for improving management planning and decision making?
 - b) How valid is the logic linking inputs to outputs? Have project inputs resulted in:
 - refinement and standardization of forms and procedures for data collection?
 - improvements in the performance of field staff in the use of these forms and procedures?
 - rational reductions in the amount of data collected and reported?

- rational aggregation of data collected over wide geographic areas and over a wide range of villages, projects and subprojects?
 - more timely submission of data to processing units?
 - improved procedures and mechanisms for generating non-routine data (e.g. through special studies) permitting the isolation and measurement of causation related to changes at the project and subproject levels?
 - increased precision in the selection of performance indicators or output measure?
 - improved data processing and reporting by IPIED?
 - improved NRDCC analysis of progress data and reporting and dissemination of the results.
 - increased understanding and application of the M&E systems by policy makers, planners, and managers operating at all levels under the RPAP as planning and management tools?
- c) Can the project be implemented successfully as currently designed? What changes in project organization or in the procedures of the agencies organizations participating in the project (including AID) are needed to improve the likelihood success?
- are current project related authorities and responsibilities of the respective agencies organizations (including AID) involved in the project clear to each party?
 - are these authority/responsibility relationships internally consistent and are they consistent with the management requirements of the project, in particular the requirement for ministry-level oversight and coordination of the M&E development and institutionalization process?
 - are the RTG internal agency/organization personnel procedures (e.g. concerning staffing, salaries, promotions, etc.) and support systems (e.g. materials, equipment, transportation, per diem, communications, etc.) appropriate? Do necessary incentives exist to support the behavioral changes required for project success? Have sufficient staff been assigned to the project?

- are RTG and AID regulations and procedures for procurement of the commodities and services required under the project sufficiently compatible and/or flexible to permit timely procurement? What changes are needed to overcome past procurement delays?
- 2) What are the critical factors affecting successful implementation of RDME?
- a) What actions by the involved agencies (NRDCC, BOB, IPIED, MOAC, MOE, MOI, MOPH) are accelerating or hindering implementation?
 - b) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy for developing and institutionalizing the M&E system under the NRDP?
 - c) What can be done to improve the delivery of project inputs?
 - d) ^{the} All the project inputs, especially technical assistance and commodities, appropriate to attaining the project outputs and purpose? What can be done to improve the delivery of project inputs and to improve the accomplishment of outputs and project purpose? What additional inputs, if any, are needed?
 - e) What aspects or components of the project are experiencing the fastest and slowest implementation progress? Why? How can obstacles to implementation be overcome?

B. Recommendations

The evaluation team shall make recommendations concerning:

- 1) The advisability of broadening the project.
- 2) Modifications that are needed to improve project design and implementation covering:
 - the makeup, quantity, procurement/delivery mode, and timing of project inputs, including technical assistance;
 - the structure quantity and timing of project outputs;
 - the geographical, sectoral and institutional scope of the project and the EOPS;

- project administrative arrangements in terms of the allocation of authorities and responsibilities and interdependencies of key organizations and agencies participating in project implementation.

3) Relationships with other donors.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

A. Timing

The team will spend 27 work days in Thailand beginning o/a November 20 and ending o/a December 20 and will work a six day week. The team will spend approximately six work days in the field outside Bangkok during this period interviewing provincial officials and collecting data. During the first three work days in Thailand the team will be briefed by USAID and RTG officials and will review background material. The team will provide USAID and the RTG with a draft report of the team's findings at the end of approximately 21 work days (o/a December 19). The team will meet with USAID and RTG officials during the following six work days and will initiate preparation of a final evaluation report. This report will be provided to USAID by the team leader within 30 calendar days of the completion of the team's work in Thailand.

B. Basic Information Collection Techniques

- 1) Review of Documents: The team will review relevant project and background documents. These documents will be provided by USAID and the RTG and will consist of the project paper, the project agreement, periodic project reports, and project files.
- 2) Interviews: The team will interview relevant USAID, NRDC, NESDB, NRDCC, IPIED, implementing ministry personnel in Bangkok and representatives of these agencies/organizations at the Provincial, District and Tambon levels. They will also interview a sample of Tambon Council and Village Committees.
- 3) Field Observations: To the extent feasible, the team will make field observations of data collection, collation, transmission, processing, analysis, and information reporting and utilization in terms of policy making, planning, activity, design, management, monitoring and evaluation.

V. TEAM COMPOSITION:

The evaluation team shall be composed of:

- 1) a Thai familiar with RTG administrative systems;
- 2) a BUCEN specialist familiar with large information collection and analysis systems;
- 3) a person familiar with rural development monitoring and evaluation systems in LDC's;
- 4) an institutional analyst familiar with the management and evaluation of development assistance projects;
- 5) a locally hired secretary.

VI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:A. Draft Report

One week (7 days) prior to departing from Thailand, the design team will present a written draft report of findings for review by USAID, NRDC/NRDCC, NESDB and IPIED. Shortly thereafter the team will discuss the report with these agencies/organizations. These groups will provide comments on the report within four calendar days. During the last 3 days, the team will incorporate into the report, as appropriate, feedback derived from the review.

B. Final Report

Within 30 days of completion of field work in Thailand, the team leader will complete a final report and submit 10 copies to USAID. The final report will follow the format outlined in Annex A hereto.

APPENDIX B

PROJECT DESIGN SUMMARY
LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Project Title and Number: Rural Development Monitoring/Evaluation (493-0339)

Life of Project : 4 years
Total U.S. Funding: U.S.\$5.0 million
Date Prepared : November 14, 1983

NARRATIVE SUMMARY	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	IMPORTANT ASSUMPTION
<p><u>Program or Sector Goal:</u> <u>The broader objectives to which this project contributes:</u> 1) Increased efficiency in the planning and implementation of the Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (RPAP); and 2) A basis established for broader integration of RPAP with other programs into the overall National Rural Development Program (NRDP) at the beginning of the 6th Plan period.</p>	<p><u>Measures of Goal Achievement:</u> 1) Adjustment/modification of RPAP projects either planned or underway; 2) Fewer problems, more successes in project implementation and outputs; 3) Changes in the economic and social well-being of people in poverty districts. 4) Continued and increased support by the IBRD and other external institutions. 5) Revision of RTG policies and institutional arrangements which demonstrate greater coordination and integration of all elements of the overall NRDP.</p>	<p>RTG/HRDC/RPAP Reports. Evaluation reports resulting from the annual co-financing reviews and the mid-course reviews. IBRD Reports.</p>	<p>Assumptions for Achieving Goal Targets: NRDC and the Ministries/Departments use the improved monitoring and evaluation systems for monitoring project implementation, decision-making in targeting investments, and adjustment of policies and program composition based on evaluation results</p>

Project Purpose:

To assist the RTG in developing a phased program to strengthen and institutionalize the rural development monitoring and evaluation system so that it can provide, by the beginning the Sixth Plan period, the reliable information that will be needed for effective management of the Plan's rural development programs.

Conditions that will indicate the Achievement of this purpose:

1) The existence of effective monitoring and evaluation systems for the Rural Poverty Alleviation Program.
 2) The institutional capability in the M&E unit of NRDCC, and in the IPIED, to a) coordinate ministerial, NRDC and field level M&E functions so that early in the Sixth Plan period the rural development programs are being served by a well-articulated system of M&E; b) provide technical assistance to strengthen and rationalize ministerial M&E functions; c) carry out its assigned responsibilities for general monitoring and evaluation of rural development programs.
 3) Use by the NRDCC, and the ministries and implementing departments, of the information and reports flowing from the M&E systems in the planning and decision-making processes of the RPAP;
 4) A reliable data base on conditions in the poverty districts of RPAP, and on the programs and projects designed to alleviate those conditions.
 5) The capability established in NRDCC, with technical assistance from IPIED, to carry out the analytical processes necessary to evaluate the effects and impacts of the RPAP and its sub-programs/projects.

1) Reports of NRDCC TO NRDC.
 2) Analytical outputs from IPIED.
 3) Evaluation study reports results.
 4) Changwat Annual Operational Plans.
 5) Reports to the FECSC.
 6) Regulations of NRDC on policies and responsibilities.
 7) Staffing patterns in ministry planning offices.
 8) Analyses of reporting patterns from field levels.
 9) Reports from Ministry RPAP coordinators.

1) That an improved and strengthened MES can be implemented in spite of the constraints of existing horizontal and vertical bureaucratic organizational arrangements.
 2) That the RTG organizational entities; particularly NESDB, BOB, and the four rural development ministries, will select and assign staff with the potential to further develop and operate the M&E systems implemented through the project.
 3) That a high priority will continue to be given to the continued refinement, operation and use of the M&E systems.
 4) That steps will be taken to implement the more clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
 5) That the RTG will move toward the devolution of responsibilities necessary to make effective use of M&E systems at field levels.
 6) That management entities will come to see M&E systems as one of their tools for better planning and decision-making.

- 6) The roles and responsibilities of the several agencies in the NRDP programs, especially as they relate to the RPAP, clarified and in place.
- 7) Increased capability established at the ministry level to coordinate program planning, project implementation monitoring and effects evaluation among the ministerial departments.
- 8) The existence at IPIED of the necessary data processing capability and analytic capacity to record and process the flow of M&E data, and the skills to continue to refine the systems design for production of the required analyses and management information to be used by NRDCC and the line agencies.
- 9) More timely and accurate reporting of M&E data by the changwat and amphoes, and the flow of reports back to these units for field-level monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- 10) The monitoring systems of the ministries/departments being more effectively rationalized and coordinated within the overall M&E system.

Outputs:Magnitude of Outputs:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Data Collection and Flow Systematized | All forms and procedures reviewed and refined. Some revised; some eliminated. Reporting frequency reexamined; collection procedures standardized. Duplication minimized; compatibility enhanced. | Reports of NESDB/IPIED, BOB, NRDC, FECSC, changwat annual operations plans. Staffing reports, Education/ Training program evaluation reports. Feedback from beneficiaries, local officials, contractors. | Expatriate and domestic consultants are available and obtainable. Technical assistance/commodities in place according to schedule. Capable RTG staff selected and assigned to M&E units. Cooperation of all involved agencies and organizations. |
| 2. Monitoring and Evaluation Measurements Refined and Implemented in the MES. | Activity milestones/bench marks reviewed and revised. Performance indicators (output measures) defined, evaluated, revised. | | |
| 3. Data Analysis and Interpretation Steps Implemented. | IPIED to produce reports of data outputs and make preliminary implementations. NRDC and other users to analyze results and prepare reports. Reports of changwat activity to flow to that level for comparison of results with plans. | | |
| 4. RPAP Project Effect Assessments Undertaken | Ministries/departments complete analyses of project effect evaluation. Matched against broader evaluations of sub-program and project results done by IPIED/BOB. | | |

5. Evaluation Studies Implemented
- Impact evaluations based on analysis of performance indicators, supplemented by in-depth surveys and analysis of non-program economic information. Cross referencing of impacts from related projects evaluated. Evaluations of the systems are studied. The management process is analyzed. Village impact measurement criteria refined and simplified.
6. Institution - building steps completed
- Terms of reference and roles of participating agencies reviewed and revised and where necessary, formally assigned (NRDCC, IPIED, BOB, FECSC, ministries/departments, local units).
- Long-term academic training in the U.S. undertaken and completed. (15 persons - MA, MS degree programs)
- Short-term technical training planned, scheduled and completed. (50 p.m.).
- Field level orientation and training planned and carried out - changwat and amphoe officials.
- Staff Augmentations in NRDCC.

Inputs

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>USAID LOAN</u> <u>(\$000)</u>	<u>RTG FUND</u> <u>(\$000)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>(\$000)</u>
1. Commodities	878	400	1,278
2. Technical Assistance	1,340	350	1,690
3. Evaluation Studies	400	-	400
4. Training	936	100	1,036
5. System Operations	1,156	4,200	5,356
6. Mid-Project and Final Evaluation	100	-	100
7. Contingency	<u>190</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>190</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>5,000</u> <u>=====</u>	<u>5,050</u> <u>=====</u>	<u>10,050</u> <u>=====</u>

USAID and RTG records
and reports

Required funding available on
a timely basis, as well as
flexibility in procurement of
technical services and commodities.

APPENDIX C

METHODOLOGY USED IN THE EVALUATION

A four-person team composed of:

- o A Thai familiar with RTG administrative systems;
- o A U.S.-based consultant familiar with rural development monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries;
- o A U.S. Census Bureau specialist familiar with large information collection and analysis systems; and
- o An institutional analyst familiar with the design, management and evaluation of development assistance projects

spent approximately 20 working days reviewing the project from its pre-design history through to its present implementation circumstances. After completion of the draft report, two members left Thailand and the two remaining members (the team leader and the institutional analyst) met with USAID and RTG officials to discuss views and comments to be incorporated in the final report.

Particular attention in the review was given to the relationships between data sources (local level), data interpreters (IPIED and others) and information users (central and provincial government). In addition to extensive and intensive personal interviews throughout this review, the team assessed data collection instruments and analysis capabilities and did its own analysis of institutional factors. Included in the line of inquiry throughout were questions relating to the type and level of information that would be useful to these different organizational entities in the "information system."

During the first week, the team reviewed the project documents and files and met with individuals involved both in the design and implementation of the project. With the assistance of the implementing agency (NRDCC/NESDB), travel to the provinces in the northeast and in the south was arranged at the team's request. The team split for the field work, two members traveling northeast to Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, and Maha Sarakham provinces, and two south to Songkhla and Pattani. Although the team expected little if any awareness of the RDME project in the provinces, our purpose in the field trips was to see and hear about the kind of data that were in use and for what purposes, at the Changwad (province), amphoe (district), tambon (sub-district), and village levels. Specifically, we would ask about NRD2-C, a detailed village questionnaire which was then being administered in the villages.

Upon the team's return to Bangkok, further interviews were conducted with Ministry representatives, NRDCC officials, the technical assistance consultants and their support staff, and with USAID staff. For the interviews, the review team again split up into two-person interview teams, but members were switched around so that each person had a chance to work with the other three members of the review team. Re-interviews were conducted in many cases. Since RDME is a project whose success ultimately depends on the continued cooperation among a great many organizational actors and individuals, the team felt it was imperative to obtain a clear understanding of how each different actor viewed RDME.

Despite the very different backgrounds of the members of the review team, and in spite of somewhat different field experiences, it was surprising, although reassuring, to find that similar conclusions with respect to RDME were independently reached by each member of the review team. Methodologically speaking, the reliability of our findings consists of a high degree intersubjective agreement. Given a set of findings in common, we have drawn on our individual areas of expertise to reach consensus on the strategy and recommendations we have made for a re-focus of the RDME project.

APPENDIX D

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

English Language Documents

- IPIED, Thammasat University. The Development of Computer Program for Provincial Planning Information System. A research proposal submitted to the NRDC. September 1986.
- IPIED, Thammasat University. The Study of Provincial Data Management. A research proposal submitted to the NRDC. September, 1986.
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- Kasetsart University. Review and Formulation of Measures for the Supported Sub-Programs of Thai Poverty Area Program. A research proposal submitted by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration to the NRDC. n.d.
- National Rural Development Program. Draft Questionnaire on Village Basic Data: the NRDC(c) Form. (For Use in Data Collection Pretest in 1986/87)
- Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation Project. FY 1987 Financial Work plan.
- . Review and Assessment of the Information System for Rural Development Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. A report written by the Technical Assistance Team. November, 1986.
- Thailand Development Research Institute. Report No. 1. Main Report: Management Improvement of National Rural Development Programme. October, 1986.
- USAID/Thailand. Thailand Rural Development and Evaluation Project Paper. March, 1984.
- _____ . RDME Project Loan Agreement. June, 1984.

In addition, the review team was given copies of memos from Dr. Sumet Tantivejakul, Director RDME Project, to Warren D. Exo, Senior Advisor, dated 9/9/86; from Dr. Warren D. Exo to Dr. Sumet Tantivejakul, Director RDME, dated 9/25/85, and 11/20/86; and to Mr. Pairoj Suchinda, Secretary, NRDC, dated 9/5/86.

Thai Language Documents

IPIED, Kasetsart University. Summary of IPIED Activities During the Fifth Plan Period. September, 1986.

Ministry of Interior, Office of Policy and Planning. Management Structure and Responsibilities in Drawing Up the Ministry of Interior Plan. 1985.

----- . The Rural Development Monitoring System at the Changwad Level. March, 1984.

NRDCC, National Economic and Social Development Board. Summary of Rural Development Projects at the Changwad Level for Fiscal 1987. NRDCC Document No. 029/2529

----- . Handbook for Rural Development Planning at the Changwad Level in the 6th Plan (1987-1991).

----- . Rural Poverty Area Development Plan, 1985-86.

----- . Progress Report on the Development of a Rural Monitoring and Evaluation System. November, 1986.

In addition, documents were consulted concerning the creation of committees, subcommittees, and task forces related to the RDME project; and concerning organizational structures and duties and responsibilities of the NRDCC and the Rural Development Coordination Division of the NESDB.

APPENDIX E
INDIVIDUALS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

BANGKOK

Budget Bureau
 Mr. Songkram Krachangnetr

IPIED Dr. Thanet Norabhoompipat, Director

Ministry of Finance
 Mr. Prasit Uchin

Ministry Representatives
 Mr. Udomsak Asvarangkura, Interior
 Dr. Kanok Katikarn, Agriculture and Cooperatives
 Dr. Boonlue Thongyoo, Education
 Dr. Damrong Boonyuen, Public Health

NESDB Ms. Chittra Wongpanit
 Mr. Suparat Manmin
 Dr. Prakob Rakiti (seconded from Ministry of Education)
 Dr. Robert Muscat

NRDCC Dr. Sumet Tantivejakul (Assistant Sec.-Gen., NESDB)
 Mr. Pairoj Suchinda (Director, Rural Dev. Coord. Div., NESDB)
 Mr. Kitisak Sinthuvanich (M&E Section Chief, RDC Div., NESDB)

RDME Technical Assistance Consultants and Staff
 Dr. Susan F. Exo
 Mr. Warren D. Exo
 Mr. Chalard
 Ms. Suphavadee

TDRI Dr. Twatchai Yongkittikul

USAID Mr. Willi Baum
 Mr. Douglas Clark
 Mr. David Delgado
 Mr. Jeffrey Evans
 Mr. Det Trisahd

PROVINCES

- Khon Kaen Mr. Sakda Awpongse, Provincial Governor
Mr. Pira Manatas, Chief, Office of the Provincial Governor
Amphoe Chonabot District Officer
Provincial and District officials
- Maha Sarakam Mr. Sawai Prommani, Provincial Governor
Mr. Chuanlert Thaiyanont, Chief, Office of the
Provincial Governor
Amphoe Borabue District Officer
Provincial and District Officials
- Nakhon Ratchasima Mr. Pramoon Sankamane, Provincial Deputy Governor
Mr. Banthad Singhaputra, Chief, Office of the
Provincial Governor
Amphoe Huay Talaeng District Officer
Provincial and District Officials
- Pattani Mr. Tanwakhom Khemasiri, Planning Section Chief,
Office of the Provincial Governor
Dr. Traiwit Taemahiwong, Provincial Public Health Officer
- Songkhla Mr. Nittisakdi Ratchapit, Chief, Office of the
Provincial Governor
Mr. Permsakdi Polpibul, Planning Section Chief,
Office of the Provincial Governor
Mr. Vinai Kruwanpat, Policy Analyst, Office of the
Provincial Governor
Ms. Kanitta Vanichanont, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Section Chief, Provincial Public Health Office
Mr. Chokedee Chindarom, Provincial Industry Office
Ms. Supit Chandrakao, Provincial Education Office
Amphoe Sating Phra District Officer
Ms. Sumitra Suwannimitr, Sating Phra Community
Development Officer
Sating Phra District officials, subdistrict officials

APPENDIX F

LIST OF TRAINEES

1. Monitoring and Evaluation Course, ISPC, Bureau of the Census.
(March 24 - May 26, 1986)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Kitisak Sinthuvanich	Analyst 7	NESDB
Chittra Wongpanit	Analyst 7	NESDB
Suparat Manmin	Analyst 6	NESDB
Kruapan Srisuphan	Economist 6	Finance Economics Office
Prakob Rakiti	Assoc. Prof.	Teachers' Training Dept. (MOE)
Sadudipon Kranokpirak	Analyst 6	Policy and Planning Office (MOI)
Chatrchai Matachanok	Analyst 6	Permanent Secretary's Office (MOPH)
Banterng Masaeng	Economist 7	Agricultural Economics Office
Pairoj Benjaminon	Researcher 4	Thammasat University

2. Master's Degree Fellowship Recipients

Group 1 (August 1985 - January 1987)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Rewadee Thanopanuwat	Analyst 5	Rural Dev. Coordination Div./NESDB
Panya Rangsipipat	Analyst 5	Rural Dev. Coordination Div./NESDB
Amornrat Orapin	Analyst 4	Rural Dev. Coordination Div./NESDB
Ratanavadi Niemwong	Analyst 5	Res. & Info. Services Div./NESDB
Mana Sittikornkul	Analyst 4	Res. & Info. Services Div./NESDB
Chaiyong Mongkolkiyngam	Analyst 4	Res. & Info. Services Div./NESDB
Wandee Khanti	Computer Prog. 4	Thammasat University
Waraporn Suchitanon	Computer Prog. 3	Thammasat University
Panida Pisankij	Budget Analyst 5	Bureau of the Budget
Montida Ponpanumas	Budget Analyst 4	Bureau of the Budget
Chaninnat Malakring	Analyst 4	Policy and Planning Office (MOI)
Sompong Cherdchai	Admin. Spec. 4	Local Administration Dept. (MOI)
Niramol Kiewbua	Economist 3	Agricultural Economics Office

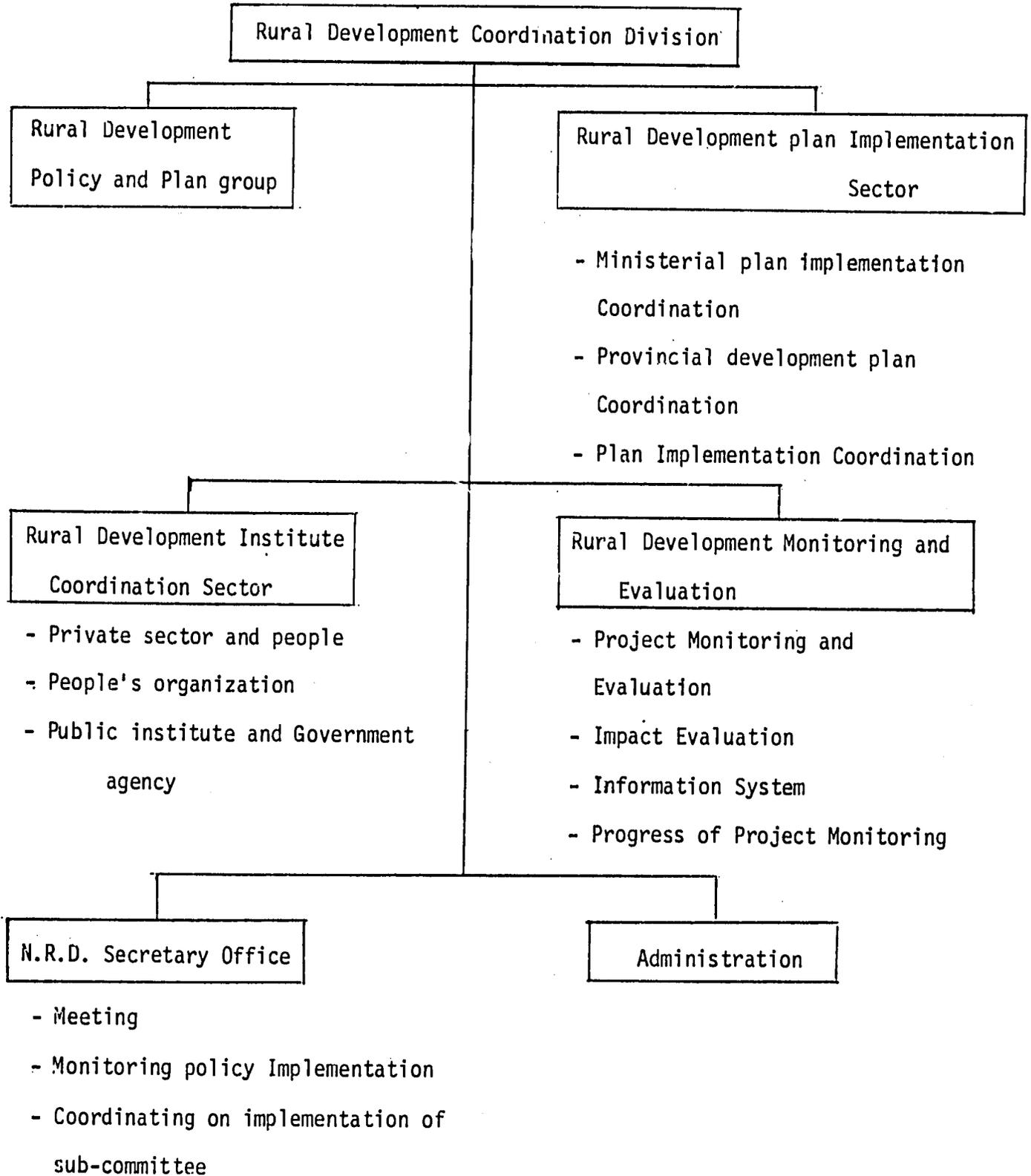
Group 2 (August 1986 - January 1988)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Pochanee Attarojpiyo	Analyst 4	Rural Dev. Coordination Div./NESDB
Chatrchai Trairatpirom	Analyst 4	Health Planning Division (MOPH)
Saengsom Padungchan	Computer Prog. 3	Thammasat University

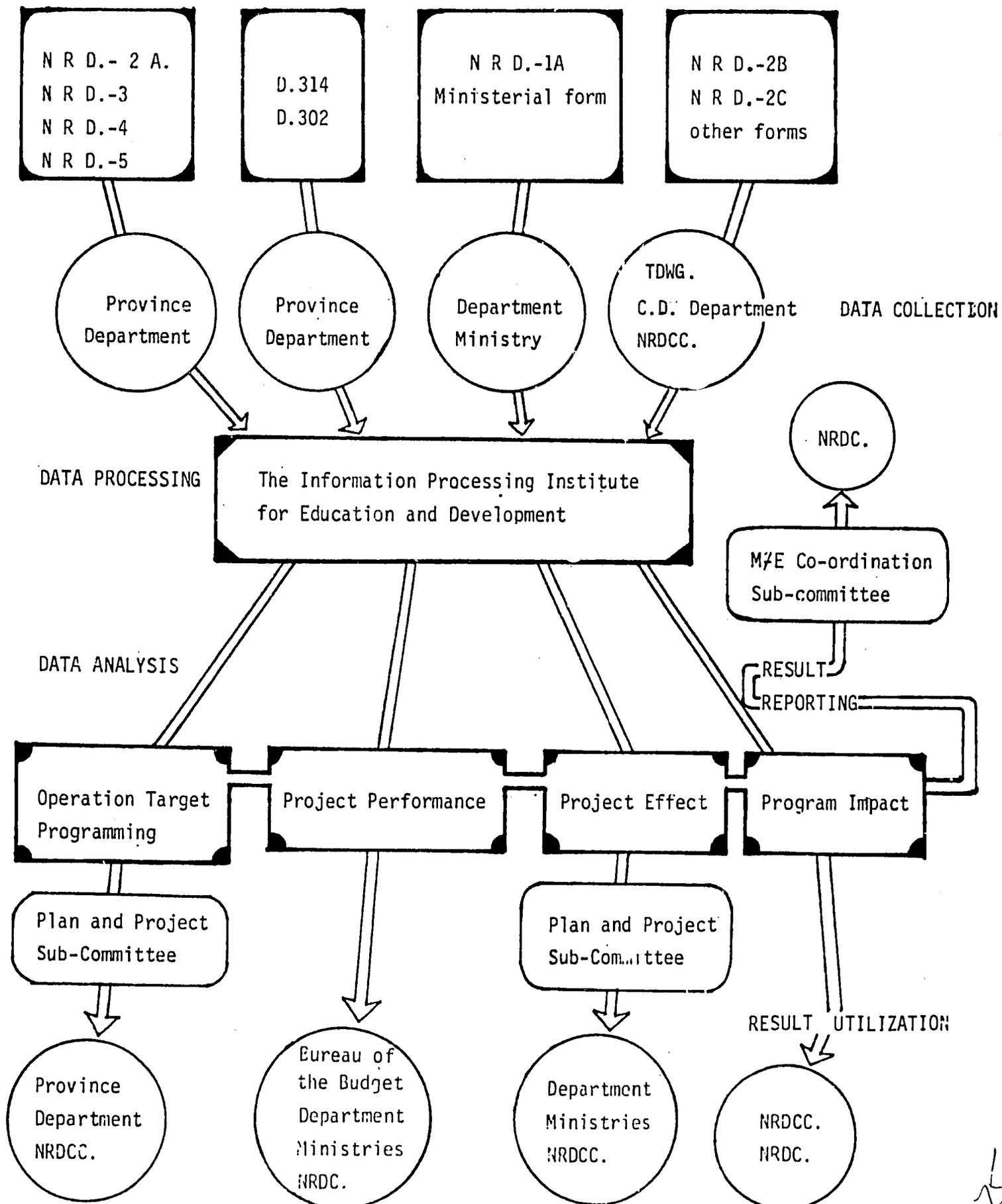
APPENDIX G

Organizational Structure of Rural Development

Coordination Division Chart



Rural Development Monitoring and Evaluation System



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Rural Development Administration in the 6th Five-Year-

	Planning process		Plan implementation		Monitoring & evaluation system			
	Inf ^a input	Inf ^a utilisation	Output.		Output	System operation	Inf ^a input	
Central	NRD6 NRD2c	Policy formulation Project approval Budget allocation	National Rural Development Plan Ministerial Plan	Government project	People organization & MCO project	Annual Plan adjustment	OPP, Performance; Effect, Impact	NRD3 NRD5 N.314 NRD1a NRD2c
Province	NRD6 NRD2c	Identify target areas Matching project with target area	Provincial Plan	Project administration	Project administration	Provincial Plan adjustment	OPP, Performance Effect, Impact	NRD3 NRD5 N.314 NRD1a NRD2c
Amphoe	NRD6 NRD2c	Project scrutinizing	Amphoe Plan	Project administration.	Project administration	Amphoe Plan adjustment	OPP, Performance, Impact	NRD3 NRD5 NRD2c
Tambol	NRD6 NRD2c	Project identification	Tambol Plan	Project administration	Project administration	Tambol Plan adjustment	OPP, Effect Impact	NRD3 NRD5 NRD1a NRD2c
Village	NRD2c	Problem analysis	Problem verification	Project implementation	Project implementation	Project adjustment	Impact	NRD2c

NRD1a= Project effect analysis.

NRD2c= Village basic information.
(include Basic Minimum Need data)

NRD3=Project proposed data.

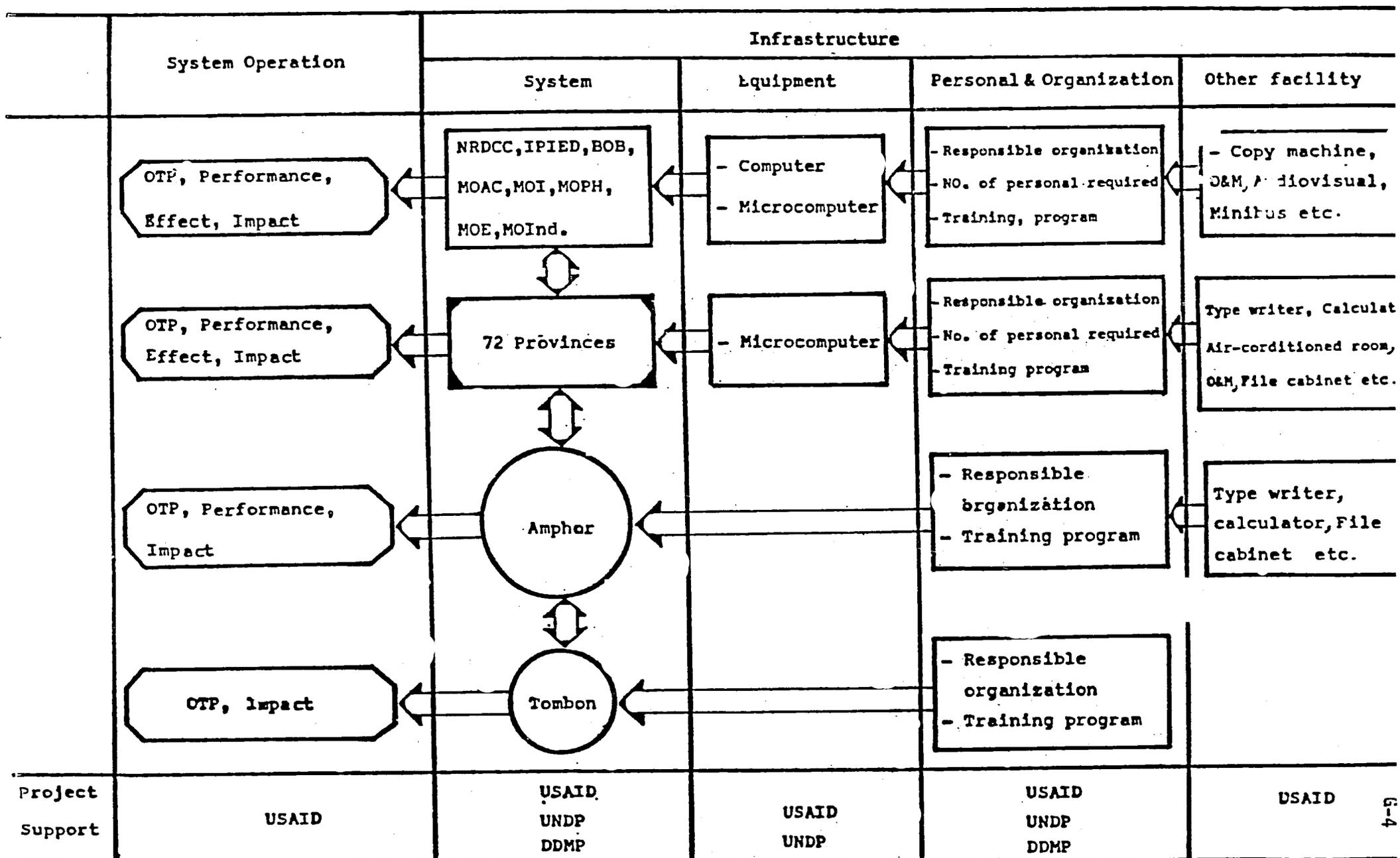
NRD5=Project approved data.

NRD6=Policy guideline from Ministry

N.314=Bureau of the Budget reporting form.

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Information system for Rural Development Administration in the 6th Five-Year-Plan



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