

PD-AAZ-048

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A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY - PART I

- 1. BEFORE FILLING OUT THIS FORM, READ THE ATTACHED INSTRUCTIONS.
- 2. USE LETTER QUALITY TYPE, NOT "DOT MATRIX" TYPE.

IDENTIFICATION DATA

A. Reporting A.I.D. Unit: Mission or AID/W Office <u>USAID/TUNISIA</u> (ES# <u>89-1</u>)	B. Was Evaluation Scheduled in Current FY Annual Evaluation Plan? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Slipped <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ad Hoc <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Plan Submission Date: FY <u>87</u> Q <u>11</u>	C. Evaluation Timing Interim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final <input type="checkbox"/> Ex Post <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
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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.)

Project No.	Project /Program Title	First PROAG or Equivalent (FY)	Most Recent PACD (Mo/Yr)	Planned LOP Cost (000)	Amount Obligated to Date (000)
664-0331	Tunisia Computer Technology	85	3/89	3,500	3,500

ACTIONS

E. Action Decisions Approved By Mission or AID/W Office Director Action(s) Required	Name of Officer Responsible for Action	Date Action to be Completed
-PACD justification, prepared and approved.	Mark Karns USAID	2/28/89
-IRSIT strategic plan developed for PACD extension period and beyond.	Karns, AID Denny, AED Ellouze, IRSIT	2/28/89
-IRSIT business plan developed, including financial, marketing, technical aspects of IRSIT activities.	Karns, Denny, Ellouze	2/28/89
-Continue to implement omnibus project training plan.	Karns, Denny, Ellouze	

APPROVALS

F. Date Of Mission Or AID/W Office Review Of Evaluation: (Month) 01 (Day) 20 (Year) 89

G. Approvals of Evaluation Summary And Action Decisions:

	Project/Program Officer	Representative of Borrower/Grantee	Evaluation Officer	Mission or AID/W Office Director
Name (Typed)	Mark Karns, PDO	Noureddine Ellouze IRSIT	Nancy Hooff, PROG	George Carner
Signature				
Date	<u>2/14/89</u>		<u>2/14/89</u>	<u>3/2/89</u>

ABSTRACT

H. Evaluation Abstract (Do not exceed the space provided)

IRSIT can contribute to computer technology in Tunisia if it takes an active role within the Government. The Project began slowly. The work began approximately 8 months late because the original resident advisor pulled out at the last minute. A new advisor was then selected and hired; he is currently working at IRSIT and has contributed to some of IRSIT's expansion. However, more needs to be done.

IRSIT's organizational structure and management have been major problems. Recently, IRSIT has begun to address some of the problems. However, it is unlikely that talked about changes will occur in the immediate future. IRSIT is a very young organization which needs to develop stronger management capabilities to be able to promote their organization within Tunisia and the Arab world. IRSIT needs improved business management skills and needs to develop some criteria for selecting its clients and to determine a potential client's ability to pay for services rendered. This will allow IRSIT to continue without donor financing. Currently, activities are concentrated on consulting with local organizations.

IRSIT is also involved in other projects in Tunisia, one of which is now beginning to show signs of being a success -- the PT&T (Public Telephone and Telegraph) Project. Other projects are very slow to develop and the future of IRSIT is uncertain. However, it is the Team's belief that IRSIT, with the correct direction, management, and commitment can make a major impact on informatics in Tunisia.

C O S T S

1. Evaluation Costs

1. Evaluation Team		Contract Number OR TDY Person Days	Contract Cost OR TDY Cost (U.S. \$)	Source of Funds
Name	Affiliation			
Stephens Cappa	Louis Berger Int'l, Inc.	79	\$60,937	Project No. 664-0334
Salim Hammoud	Louis Berger Int'l, Inc.			
Joy Hecht	Louis Berger Int'l, Inc.			

2. Mission/Office Professional Staff
 Person-Days (Estimate) 10

3. Borrower/Grantee Professional
 Staff Person-Days (Estimate) 30

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In general, these are not research projects. Rather, most of them involve identification and introduction of technologies which, although new for Tunisia, are already well-established in other countries. The work on Arabization, which involves design of new techniques, and in some cases developing them for commercial use, is the only exception. The predominance of technology transfer, although not how the Tunisian Government views IRSIT's activities, is probably appropriate.

Although the project design envisioned that the pilot projects would be carried out by other Tunisian institutions receiving grants through IRSIT, in practice most of them involve in-house work. IRSIT management is quite explicit that they do not want to operate in "foundation mode" and are interested instead in creating an institution capable of doing research itself. In all except the higher education projects, for which an RFP has been issued and proposals are now being evaluated, IRSIT's preferences have prevailed, and the institute is using the project to build its capacity to undertake research rather than to evaluate the proposals of others. Consequently, rather than building its capability to evaluate and select among research proposals, IRSIT is developing the ability to work with clients to define manageable research projects for in-house work.

It is not yet clear whether these projects will give IRSIT enough experience to be self-financing in the future. At present some clients are apparently willing to pay part of the cost of IRSIT services (although none of these contracts have been signed yet), but this may be because the AID subsidies make the institute less expensive than commercial firms. Some pilot projects are being wholly subsidized by the Tunisian Government and the project, because they are expected to bring non-monetary returns to IRSIT. Such benefits include training its staff in skills which may be marketable in the future, or establishing its reputation in Tunisia. If the Computer Technology Project is to help IRSIT move onto a sound financial footing without subsidies, direct attention to the importance of the subsidies and the prospects for future commercial work is essential.

The education and research components of the Computer Technology Project are totally separate from each other, reflecting the organizational structure of these activities in Tunisia and the personalities of the individuals involved in carrying them out. Future work in Tunisia would do well to separate them entirely, instead of trying to link them under one general project.

The ability to travel overseas and to fund consultants in Tunisia has proven essential in order for IRSIT to develop linkages with individuals and institutions in the U.S. The ability to sustain the linkages established under the project will depend on the continued availability of foreign exchange for travel, and on whether IRSIT staff can take the initiative for establishing and maintaining contacts without a resident advisor to help them. So far they have taken little such initiative in most areas.

A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY - PART II

SUMMARY

J. Summary of Evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations (Try not to exceed the three (3) pages provided)

Address the following items:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of evaluation and methodology used • Purpose of activity(ies) evaluated • Findings and conclusions (relate to questions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal recommendations • Lessons learned |
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Mission or Office: USAID/TUNISIA	Date This Summary Prepared: 12/13/88	Title And Date Of Full Evaluation Report: Tunisia Computer Technology Project Mid-Project Evaluation, December 1988
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The Computer Technology Project is designed to encourage the adoption of new forms of information technology to improve public and private sector performance in Tunisia. It does through support to the Institut Regional des Sciences Informatiques et Telecommunications (IRSIT), a regional research institute created by the Tunisian Government in 1987. IRSIT is intended to be a center for applied research on innovative uses of information technology, serving both Tunisia and the region. The project supported a series of pilot research projects, through which IRSIT could develop its capacity to evaluate research activities, establish connections with U.S. institutions, and develop ties between the academic research community and industry. The project also called for IRSIT to coordinate Tunisian institutions in order to develop national strategy on the use of information technology in secondary and higher education. Project support has taken the form of funds and other professional visits, and bringing consultants to Tunisia to assist on the pilot projects. A resident advisor has worked with IRSIT staff on implementing the project.

In assessing the project, we must note a few important points from the start. First, work began eight months late, because the original resident advisor pulled out literally on his way to Tunisia and had to be replaced. Consequently, none of the project activities are as far along as might have been hoped by this time. Second, when the resident advisor arrived April, 1987, IRSIT had only three staff members, and had not yet even been legally chartered by the Tunisian Government. Consequently, some time and project resources had to be devoted to creating the institute, rather than directly into developing and implementing pilot projects. This further delayed the results which can be observed for IRSIT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES. Moreover, the project design does not acknowledge that IRSIT did not exist, and so does not call upon the resident advisor to engage in basic institution building activities, nor does it identify this as part of the project. The project would have run more smoothly had this been part of its function. In light of these caveats, the evaluation has focussed on how much progress has been made in accomplishing immediate project objectives, rather than looking for research results or significant influences on the society.

IRSIT is making reasonable progress towards establishing a group of pilot projects. These fall into three general areas, telecommunications, arabization, and sectoral activities. In the first two areas IRSIT is building up groups of skilled staff, and the projects are linked to one another. The sectoral projects involve the oil and phosphate industries, the stock exchange, and use of satellite data to assist in combatting the anticipated locust plague, and form a less coherent group. None of the projects has progressed far beyond the task definition stage, and a number of them will require hiring additional staff in the next year if they are to be completed. However IRSIT has made significant progress in defining manageable projects, and the existing staff are enthusiastic and well-qualified. They show promise of being able to accomplish a reasonable amount of what they are proposing, and of being able to learn what they do not already know.

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Organizational structure and management have been major problems at IRSIT. Recently, however, they have begun to address problems, developing a more hierarchical organizational structure, recruiting mid-level management and research staff and introducing a project management system for keeping track of the research projects. The Computer Technology Project itself has not been able to contribute directly to resolving these problems, however, as it was not within their authority. The resident advisor did make some efforts in this area, but these were not welcomed by IRSIT management.

Hiring and retaining qualified staff is a problem at IRSIT. IRSIT recruits primarily among students returning from Europe or the United States, so the pool of potential staff is quite small, especially for those with the experience to manage research projects. Salaries are competitive with the public sector and the universities, but not with industry. Moreover, researchers are hired on contract, which is typical for Tunisia and keeps some potential employees away. Consequently, the institute may have trouble finding the staff to carry on the projects on which it has already embarked.

Contrary to the hopes expressed in the project paper, IRSIT does not have a major role to play in informatics policy in the foreseeable future. The institute's mandate does not give it a role in this area, and the planning and national coordination functions are already clearly assigned to other institutions.

The contractor and resident advisor have effectively met most of the demands placed on them, particularly with respect to linking IRSIT with U.S. institutions, interfacing between IRSIT and AID and handling logistics. The problems which have arisen may be attributed to the problems a development consulting firm has been working on a high-tech field. This applies to procurement, to identifying the best consultants for technical tasks, and to convincing those consultants to work at AID rates. These are problems which will have to be addressed over time as AID undertakes more projects in this kind of field.

Recommendations

The evaluation team wholly supports extending the termination date of the Computer Technology Project to allow IRSIT to continue its activities using the funds which remain. During this time, we recommend that some effort go into reflecting on what has been learned in the past year and a half, and developing a more structured process for planning future activities. The ongoing efforts to strengthen organizational structure and management are crucial, and we recommend that they be given high priority.

If AID/Tunisia is interested in continuing to work in the information systems area, we recommend that they give additional support to IRSIT. The institution has made significant progress in the last year and a half, but the benefits to be obtained from foreign assistance are still significant, and the institute is not well enough established to be able to float comfortably without it. Future funding of IRSIT should allow it to continue working on the current projects and devote particular attention to management, and to developing strategies to ensure stable funding in the future.

Information technology may be expected to play an important role in mid-level developing countries, as a direct input to productive activities, as a form of infrastructure, and as a productive sector itself. AID must therefore investigate how it can best support this developing thrust. The Computer Technology Project offers an interesting model, but it may not be directly applicable where an organization like IRSIT does not exist and the focus is more properly on technology transfer than research. However, it is worth considering in designing strategies for other countries.

ATTACHMENTS

K. Attachments (List attachments submitted with this Evaluation Summary; always attach copy of full evaluation report, even if one was submitted earlier; attach studies, surveys, etc., from "on-going" evaluation, if relevant to the evaluation report.)

Matrix of Findings and Recommendations attached.

COMMENTS

L. Comments By Mission, AID/W Office and Borrower/Grantee On Full Report

The evaluation team did a fair job in complying with a very detailed scope of work. However, the recommendations could have been more explicit as regards the details of the various pilot projects at IRSIT, their problems and potential viability, and comparative strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses of the evaluation were due in large part to the inappropriate training and experience of the team leader and the computer science members of the evaluation team coupled with their lack of diligence and full participation. This lack of effort was compensated in large part by the third team member, the institution specialist, who in effect became the de facto team leader and principal drafter.

The evaluation addresses the majority of the questions spelled out in the SOW. No unforeseen issues surfaced during the evaluation. The recommendations of the evaluation were accepted by the Mission with the exception of continued institutional development support to IRSIT.

MATRIX OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
PRIMARY	
1. Management and organizational structure have significant problems for IRSIT. Little systematic planning has occurred.	<p>The current contractor's Resident Project Manager has been serving in a technical and coordinating capacity.</p> <p>IRSI currently needs a technical, planning, marketing and public relations expert. USAID should review this issue in light of future directions for technology transfer in Tunisia.</p>
2. IRSIT management is now spread thin among many pilot projects.	<p>No new pilot projects should be developed. If funds are needed for the management assistance they should be taken from the higher education pilot projects, which have not yet begun.</p>
3. Future IRSIT funding is uncertain.	<p>The planning process should be started. It should include development of marketing and financial plans which detail potential sources of funds (earnings and subsidies) and an anticipated 5 year budget.</p>
4. Pilot projects (i.e., Arabitization, PTT, and Auto- and Tunisia Stock Exchange) show some promise of being successful.	<p>IRSI needs to establish the ability of clients to pay for IRSIT's services.</p>
5. No dialogue or joint cooperation exists between IRSIT and CNI. Very little dialogue currently exists between IRSIT and CBMI.	<p>Communication needs to be established between IRSIT, CNI, and DBMI with a view to merging IRSIT and CNI.</p> <p>CNI has the potential of being a paying client.</p> <p>CBMI is the link to technology transfer training at the secondary school level which could promote computer technology throughout the Tunisian society.</p>
SECONDARY	
i. IRSIT pilot projects meet many objectives and are selected according to many criteria.	<p>Planning process should include specification of criteria for choosing projects and identify funding.</p>
ii. IRSIT staff are interested in building in-house research capacity, not operating as a foundation which disburses funds.	<p>Funding extension should focus on in-house work, not grants through IRSIT to others.</p>
iii. Overseas travel has made it possible for IRSIT to develop linkages to U.S. institutions which would not have developed otherwise. IRSIT is not yet ready to sustain such linkages on their own.	<p>Additional funding for IRSIT should be provided for overseas travel, training linkages, and promulgating IRSIT's informatics ideas.</p>
iv. IRSIT has played no role in informatics policy development, and this function is handled by other institutions.	<p>IRSI should be expected to play a role in policy formulation and have a higher profile in order to be identified with informatics.</p>

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