

PD-NEA-527

65006

Prepared for

Office of Population
Bureau for Science and Technology
Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C.
Under Contract No. DPE-3024-Z-00-8078-00
Project No. 936-3024

**ASIA FAMILY PLANNING
OPERATIONS RESEARCH PROJECT:
RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON
A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT PROJECT**

by

Shyam Thapa
Sallie Craig Huber

Fieldwork
June 12 - July 11, 1989

Edited and Produced by

Population Technical Assistance Project
Dual and Associates, Inc. and International Science
and Technology Institute, Inc.
1601 North Kent Street, Suite 1014
Arlington, Virginia 22209
Phone: (703) 243-8666
Telex: 271837 ISTI UR
FAX: (703) 358-9271

Report No. 88-034-095
Published February 2, 1990

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
Glossary	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Executive Summary	vii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Project Background	1
1.2 Scope of Work	1
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Limitations	2
2. Overview of Current Project	5
2.1 A.I.D.'s Request for Proposals	5
2.1.1 Objectives	5
2.1.2 Requested Activities	5
2.2 University Research Corporation's Approach	6
2.2.1 Role and Scope of Operations Research	6
2.2.2 Proposed Activities	6
3. Findings	9
3.1 Approaches to OR	9
3.2 Technical Assistance	10
3.2.1 Concentration of Subprojects	10
3.2.2 Levels and Types of Technical Assistance	10
3.3 Dissemination and Utilization of OR Findings	11
3.3.1 Production and Dissemination of Findings	11
3.3.2 Utilization of Findings	12
3.3.3 Documentation of Impact of OR Efforts	13
3.4 Institutionalization of OR Skills	13
3.4.1 Technical Assistance	13
3.4.2 Skill Building	14
3.5 Project Management Issues	17
3.5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Parties to the Project	17
3.5.2 Approval Process for Project Activities	17
4. General Conclusions	19
4.1 Overall Assessment of OR in Asia	19

4.2	Response to This Assessment	19
4.3	Setting Country Priorities	19
4.4	Approaches to OR	19
4.5	Subproject Location	20
4.6	Non-Subproject Technical Assistance	20
4.7	Dissemination of OR Findings	20
4.8	Utilization and Documentation of OR Findings	20
4.9	Institutionalization of OR Skills	20
4.10	Project Management Issues	20
4.10.1	OR Clients	20
4.10.2	Subproject Approval and Funding Process	21
5.	Recommendations for the Future FP/OR in Asia Project	23
5.1	Renewal of the Project	23
5.2	Priority Countries	23
5.3	Types of OR Activities	23
5.3.1	High Prevalence Countries	23
5.3.2	Low Prevalence Countries	23
5.3.3	Some Special Situations	24
5.4	Project Components	24
5.5	Project Implementation	24
5.5.1	Preproject Activities	25
5.5.2	First-year Activities	25

List of Tables

Table 1	Expected Number of Principal Project Outputs	16
Table 2	Expected Number of Proposals To Be Developed, by Country	16

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Scope of Work
Appendix B	Bibliography
Appendix C	Persons Contacted
Appendix D	Questions for Field Interviews
Appendix E	Priority Themes for Follow-on Project

Glossary

A.I.D.	Agency for International Development
CA	Cooperating Agency
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
FP	Family planning
ICDDR,B	International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh
IUD	Intrauterine device
LDC	Less developed country
MCH	Maternal and child health
MORE	Maximizing Results of Operations Research (project)
NIPORT	National Institute for Population Research and Training (Bangladesh)
OR	Operations research
RFP	Request for proposals
S&T/POP	Science and Technology Bureau/Office of Population, A.I.D.
TA	Technical assistance
URC	University Research Corporation
USAID	A.I.D. field missions

Acknowledgments

The invaluable assistance of all who participated in making this effort a success is gratefully acknowledged. Staff of University Research Corporation, both in the field and at headquarters, were very responsive to our many requests for information and patiently answered our questions. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the special assistance provided by Neeraj Kak of the Jakarta office and Barkhat-e-Khuda of the Dhaka office in arranging our meetings and other activities during the field visits. Dr. Kak graciously accompanied us on our field visits outside Jakarta as well. Subproject personnel with whom we met -- researchers and service delivery staff - - were also most helpful in answering our many questions with candor and sincerity. All A.I.D. personnel, both in Washington and in the field, were very responsive to our task and met our requests for interviews and information. We also wish to thank the many individuals with whom we discussed this assessment by telephone. Finally, the staff of the Population Technical Assistance Project, who arranged our travel and coordinated the briefings, debriefings, and production of the final report, were unfailingly responsive and went about their tasks with gracious good humor and efficiency.

Executive Summary

This assessment of the Family Planning Operations Research (OR) in Asia Project was undertaken to assist A.I.D. in designing the follow-on OR project in Asia. The evaluation team was instructed to focus specifically on the "effectiveness of technical assistance, institutionalization of OR skills and application of OR findings" in carrying out this task. Briefings by A.I.D., review of project documents, telephone interviews, and discussions during field visits to Indonesia, Thailand, and Bangladesh were the main sources of information for the assessment. Field staff of A.I.D. as well as local institutions and host governments welcomed the assessment. They reacted very positively to being consulted about the future of OR in Asia and readily provided suggestions for the follow-on project. An in-depth technical assessment of the OR subprojects and the research methodology was not part of the Scope of Work.

The activities of University Research Corporation (URC), the contractor, now in the fourth year of a five-year contract, and of the preceding contractor, the Population Council, generally were found to have been successful in testing new family planning service delivery mechanisms and in improving the delivery of existing services in Asia. Many additional opportunities exist in the region, however, for continued technical assistance to local institutions for the implementation of OR studies. The follow-on project can play a very important role both in fulfilling existing needs and in exploiting new opportunities.

A number of areas require greater emphasis or more work in the follow-on project. Country priorities must be established, based on family planning program maturity and contraceptive prevalence, to enable better planning and more rational placement of the appropriate type of project staff. This task should be coupled with clearer delineation of and agreement on regional and country OR strategies to be used by all parties to the project --the contractor, A.I.D./Washington and USAID missions, local service delivery organizations, and researchers. The roles of each of these parties in carrying out the project must be more clearly specified and project approval and funding processes should be streamlined in the follow-on project. Successful priority setting, strategy development, role clarification, and the streamlining of processes and procedures should ensure more efficient management and smoother operation of the project than in the past.

Performance with respect to dissemination and utilization of findings has been mixed and needs improvement in the follow-on project. In a number of subprojects, OR findings have been put to use within the service agency doing the study, but broader dissemination and application to similar programs have not taken place. Further, given the relative maturity of some of the Asian family planning programs and the possibility of reduced OR funding in the future, institutionalization of OR skills within local institutions must be a primary objective of the next phase of OR activities in Asia in order to ensure the continuation of OR in this region if A.I.D. funding is reduced or discontinued. This could be achieved through various means, including skill-building training and workshops and placement of local researchers as fellows within the OR contractor's office. Another viable option in some countries in the region would be to place the contractor's staff within a local institution to provide technical assistance and skill building from within.

The Asian OR activities are part of a larger A.I.D.-funded OR project. The overall OR project was evaluated in 1988 and the extension of the project for another five

years was recommended. Other major recommendations in that evaluation included greater flexibility in establishing research topics and design, less "hands-on" involvement of A.I.D./Washington staff in research design, quantification and better recognition of the technical assistance provided by the project contractors, and greater sharing of information and OR expertise with other A.I.D.-funded cooperating agencies. All of these recommendations were found to apply to the Asian OR activities and are endorsed by the current evaluation team for follow-on activities in that region.

Additional recommendations for the follow-on OR project in Asia follow:

- Greater emphasis should be placed on management-based, process-oriented subprojects and technical assistance.
- At least 25 percent of total project resources should be devoted to non-subproject technical assistance and the current emphasis on producing a specific number of subprojects should be reduced accordingly.
- Block grants should be made available to the contractor so a limited number of small-scale subprojects can be approved in the field.
- Contractor field staff and consultants should have experience with A.I.D. procedures and family planning programs in addition to having skills in OR.

Other specific recommendations in Section 5 relate to steps to be taken prior to and early in the next OR contract to ensure that the follow-on project has the greatest possibility of success, taking into account the stage of family planning in Asia and the activities of the current contract.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The basic goals of the current phase of the Agency for International Development's (A.I.D.) Family Planning Operations Research (OR) Program have remained the same since 1984: "to improve the acceptability, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of Family Planning (FP)/Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service delivery systems and to develop LDC [less developed countries] institutional capabilities to design and carry out OR so that they can use this tool more broadly for the improved design and management of programs."

Since its inception, the OR program has been implemented through contracts and cooperative agreements with U.S.-based agencies, working primarily on a regional basis. Those agencies have assisted research and family planning service organizations throughout the world by providing technical assistance in carrying out OR studies. Most of this technical assistance has been provided by technical advisors -- working either in a single country or in several countries within the same region. A large proportion of the technical assistance is dedicated to the development and implementation of discrete subprojects or OR studies. The latter, in some cases, follow the more systematic format of identifying and analyzing problems in family planning service delivery, developing solutions, and testing and evaluating those solutions in the field. A variety of approaches have been used in implementing the subprojects, and different emphases have emerged based on the technical advisors' differing areas of expertise, A.I.D.'s and contractors' philosophies of OR, as well as the changing climates and circumstances in which OR has been applied over the years. The quality and rigor of the research and its impact on services have also varied.

The overall OR program was evaluated in 1988 to obtain authorization for continued funding of OR projects through FY94. Information provided by that evaluation assisted A.I.D. in managing existing OR activities and designing new ones. One new initiative, Maximizing Results of Operations Research (MORE), is an ongoing support mechanism to assess the lessons learned in the OR program and to develop refinements in the program to respond to emerging needs and priorities in the field.

The Population Council implemented the first A.I.D.-funded OR project in Asia. Initially funded for the period 1981-1984, that project was later extended to 1986. University Research Corporation (URC) is implementing the current five-year, \$8 million OR contract in Asia, which began in August 1985. This is a field-based project with two regional offices. One regional office, located in Jakarta, Indonesia, is staffed by two advisors and an intern, who serve project activities in Thailand and the Philippines, as well as Indonesia. The second regional office, located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has three resident advisors, who provide technical assistance in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Two additional resident advisors, each serving the project half-time, are based in Bangkok and provide services exclusively in Thailand. The rest of the project staff are geographically scattered. The part-time project director is based in Honolulu, but he makes frequent visits to the regional offices. Administrative staff, including an administrative coordinator and the corporate financial management and support staff, are located in the Bethesda, Maryland, headquarters of URC.

1.2 Scope of Work

The focus of this assignment is the ongoing (1985-1990) FP/OR in Asia project, in particular the "effectiveness of technical assistance, institutionalization of OR skills, and application of OR findings." (See Scope of Work in Appendix A.) Given the recent evaluation of A.I.D.'s overall OR program (Williamson, 1988; see Appendix B) and the creation of the MORE project, a full-scale evaluation of the Asia OR project was considered by A.I.D. to be unnecessary at this

time. Hence, this assignment was structured as a forward-looking exercise in that the experience and lessons learned in the ongoing project were to be examined to provide a basis for recommendations to A.I.D. for the design of the follow-on (third round) OR project for Asia. The team was not provided the project contract because the assignment specifically did not include a requirement to assess project output against objectives.

Activities of the assignment, as specified in the Scope of Work, included a review of project documents; interviews in the field with URC staff, local researchers, program managers, service providers, USAID staff, and staff from other relevant agencies; and telephone interviews with selected similar individuals in the United States and in countries not included in the field travel.

1.3 Methodology

The assignment, carried out by Shyam Thapa (Team Leader; research specialist) and Sallie Craig Huber (program specialist), began in Washington, D.C., with a review of project documents and other materials (see Appendix B) and an initial briefing by the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) for the project at A.I.D. A formal briefing, attended by staff of A.I.D.'s Office of Population (S&T/POP), followed (see Appendix C for a complete list of persons contacted during this assessment).

Personal and telephone interviews were held with numerous individuals both in the United States and in the field. These individuals represented A.I.D. and USAID missions (current and former Asia regional staff), A.I.D.-funded contractors, and cooperating agencies (CA). All of URC's current technical staff and several former staff were interviewed, as were current and former project interns. Host government officials, family planning program managers, subproject directors, and researchers were also interviewed.

An interview guide (see Appendix D) was developed to ensure that the same issues, as appropriate, were examined in all the interviews. Interviews with more than 100 individuals were completed; some were carried out in group sessions and others were done individually. To encourage openness and avoid possible bias, URC staff did not participate in the interviews with OR subproject directors and researchers. URC field staff did, however, attend the debriefings for the USAID missions in Jakarta and Dhaka.

Approximately three weeks were spent in the field -- 10 days in Indonesia, 9 in Bangladesh, and 1 in Bangkok. In Indonesia, several subproject sites were also visited (see Appendix C). The field visits provided the opportunity to discuss OR activities and future needs on location with a number of the individuals who are now or had been involved with the project. Briefings and debriefings were held with USAID mission staff in Jakarta, Dhaka, and Bangkok. Debriefings were also held with S&T/POP Research Division staff at A.I.D. prior to a formal debriefing for staff of the entire S&T/POP office. Findings of the assessment were also discussed with staff at URC headquarters.

1.4 Limitations

Countries selected for field visits in this evaluation -- Indonesia and Bangladesh -- are regional office locations. These two countries, in addition to Thailand, are the sites of the bulk of the OR project subproject activities in terms of number of subprojects and funding. Thailand was not scheduled originally for a field visit; however, the team's travel itinerary allowed a one-day stop in Bangkok where discussions were held at the USAID mission, with representatives

of the host government and with one project researcher. Given time and cost constraints, the other countries of the region were not visited. Assessment activities for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka were limited to a few telephone interviews, and no contacts were made with the USAID missions or local institutions in Burma, Pakistan, or the Philippines. Although both URC and A.I.D. consider the latter two countries to be of high priority for OR, very little headway has been made in either, due mainly to the influence of their respective political situations on family planning programs. Thus, the two countries were given low priority for field visits in this assessment even though the potential role for OR in family planning there remains high.

Given that this assignment was not intended to be an evaluation of URC's performance as such, project documents were reviewed but a technical appraisal of the documents was not undertaken. Nor were project outputs evaluated against the activities as set forth in the contract, which, as mentioned in Section 1.2, was not provided to the team. These limitations, however, did not have an adverse impact on the team's ability to make recommendations regarding the role and scope of the follow-on project.

2. Overview of Current Project

2. Overview of Current Project

2.1 A.I.D.'s Request for Proposals

The A.I.D. request for proposals (RFP) for the current FP/OR Project in Asia acknowledges that different types of OR may be needed depending on the maturity of family planning programs in the target countries. Pilot demonstrations of innovative service delivery mechanisms, for example, are considered more relevant for newer, less established programs, and OR activities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery systems (a management approach) are considered more appropriate for mature programs. Countries moving toward "graduate" status in terms of the need for external funding and technical assistance -- generally the more mature programs -- are described in the RFP as needing OR efforts to improve program management and self-sufficiency.

2.1.1 Objectives

In keeping with the above assumptions, the objectives of the current OR project, as stated in the RFP, are to

- Improve the cost effectiveness of FP/MCH service delivery systems in Asia,
- Improve user accessibility, and
- Better satisfy the desire for family planning services.

The RFP further states that the intent of the project is to assist LDC institutions to institutionalize OR, i.e., to incorporate OR techniques into their regular management functions.

2.1.2 Requested Activities

To achieve the above-stated objectives, the RFP set out the following activities to be undertaken by the contractor:

- Identify opportunities to meet regional and country-specific needs for family planning OR in Asia; and
- Provide technical assistance to local researchers and program administrators.

Identification of opportunities to meet needs was to be carried out through visits to family planning service delivery and research institutions in the countries of the region. USAID and A.I.D./W officials, as well as staff of other A.I.D. contractors, were also to be involved in this process of identifying OR needs and opportunities. The identification process was to take into consideration the following:

- A.I.D.'s population policy,
- country development/population policies and institutional needs,
- local interest and institutional capacity to implement OR and utilize the results for policymaking,

- policy implications of the research for the region and the world,
- uniqueness of the research approach, and
- the contractor's fiscal and staffing capabilities.

The RFP indicated that approximately 35 subprojects, averaging \$90,000 each in cost, would be funded over the life of the project.

following: Technical assistance activities by the contractor were to include participation in the

- subproject protocol preparation,
- implementation of the research design,
- encouragement of local administrators and researchers to use OR as a tool for program management, and
- dissemination of OR subproject results in the country and region.

2.2 University Research Corporation's Approach

2.2.1 Role and Scope of Operations Research

OR as follows: URC, in its proposal for the FP/OR in Asia Project, defined the role and scope of

The systematic application of research techniques to develop, analyze, and test and, finally, to recommend solutions to operational problems.

Operations research ... is practical, pragmatic, and flexible research with the principal objective of helping policymakers and program managers find solutions to operational problems.

The role and scope of OR as envisioned by URC encompass a much broader, management-oriented application of OR than did the preceding OR project in Asia. This broader application of OR was proposed to achieve the three main objectives stated in A.I.D.'s RFP for the project (see Section 2.1.1 above).

2.2.2 Proposed Activities

The URC proposal responded directly to the RFP in detailing the activities and tasks that would be undertaken during the project.

Identification of OR opportunities. To achieve the expected number of 35 subprojects over the life of the project, URC estimated the need to identify at least 50 project opportunities and develop 41 proposals. In direct response to these and other activities outlined in the RFP, URC set out to undertake the following tasks: to

- Conduct country visits to inform officials (USAID, host government, and program managers) about the OR project and help them to start identifying research ideas.

- Prepare jointly with FP/MCH decision makers and researchers in each country concept summaries of OR study opportunities to be used as the basis for developing the work strategies for each regional office and in the preparation of subproject proposals.
- Prepare work strategies, based on the individual country concept summaries, setting out (1) the overall approach to service delivery problems in the region, (2) issues to be studied in each year of the contract, (3) institutions likely to be involved, (4) relevance of the research, (5) potential for comparative analysis, and (6) a schedule for development of proposals and their implementation.

The above activities were to be facilitated by regular meetings in Washington, D.C., of URC field staff and A.I.D. personnel in order to review and revise the strategy and work plans in light of project progress. Regular annual meetings were also proposed to enable field research teams to get together "to review progress, plan coordinated activities and exchange experiences."

Provision of technical assistance. The specific tasks proposed by URC in carrying out this project activity included the following:

- Joint preparation of subproject protocols with local agencies through individual technical assistance from URC staff for an individual applicant, workshops by a URC staff person for several applicants from the same country, or a large workshop by a URC team at a central location for applicants from several countries.

These efforts were proposed to achieve approximately 40 subproject proposals. The proposal also stated that no subproject proposals would be prepared in the final project year because there would not be adequate time to complete new research studies before the end of the contract.

- Provision of technical assistance in implementing OR subprojects, including at least three site visits to each subproject during implementation for both technical assistance and monitoring.

The proposal indicated that the local investigators and program managers would have ultimate responsibility for implementing the research protocols and that URC's role would be to ensure that the activities were carried out efficiently and effectively, providing assistance as needed -- essentially a monitoring role.

- Provision of technical assistance "to routinize OR techniques for management purposes" through establishing a fellows and interns program for Asian researchers, providing training in OR techniques to researchers and managers involved in project-funded OR studies, assisting selected institutions in developing OR units and/or training courses in OR, and developing a regional network of OR researchers, managers, and administrators to promote the use of OR in the region.
- Assistance in the dissemination of research results. This task is linked with utilization of research results, which URC proposed to foster by involving key decision makers in the OR process, from problem identification through implementation and dissemination. The dissemination of research results was described in URC's proposal as "the transfer of messages between resource systems and users through various media." URC proposed to develop a dissemination plan for the Asia OR project along those lines, taking into account "who says what to whom by what channel(s) to what effect and for what purpose." In-country plans for dissemination

were to be built into each subproject proposal. In addition, broader plans for national and regional dissemination of subproject results and research on other OR issues were to be developed and implemented during the project.

3. Findings

This section is based on the numerous interviews, both in person and by telephone, conducted during this assessment. The focus is primarily the key areas identified for concentration in the Scope of Work -- technical assistance, dissemination and use of OR findings, and institutionalization of OR. Two other matters that have bearing on the past and future approach to OR in Asia are also commented on briefly. They are the various applications of OR, discussed in Section 3.1, and several relevant project management issues, discussed in Section 3.5.

3.1 Approaches to OR

The approaches to OR taken by The Population Council in the first round of the Asia OR project and the one taken by URC in the current OR project are somewhat different in their scope and emphasis. The current project places OR in the context of a process involving three overlapping phases: (1) problem analysis, (2) solution development, and (3) solution testing. The first round of the Asia OR project activities emphasized the equivalent of Phase 3 (solution or hypothesis testing). Consequently, less attention was given to other phases.

The value of the multi-phased, broad-based approach to OR, as envisioned in the current project, is well recognized in the field. The missions, researchers (regardless of whether they were directly involved with OR subprojects), and program managers in Asia believe this multi-phased approach can fill a very important role, hitherto less emphasized, in family planning programmatic research. Furthermore, the current project has made efforts to develop OR projects with a focus on specific program management issues. This emphasis is appreciated and considered timely in the field.

The type of subprojects developed and the process of implementation, however, indicate a less than fully effective application of the management-oriented approach. As a result, the full impact that several of the subprojects might have had has not been achieved. Some subprojects that had been designed to resolve management problems included measures that were not entirely appropriate to assess the more immediate impact of the OR intervention. For example, some of these subprojects included ultimate program output measures, such as increased contraceptive prevalence rates (CPR) or new acceptors, rather than such intermediate output measures as quality of service provided and improved job satisfaction, which are more directly related to improved program management. This situation might have resulted from the perceived need on the part of the subcontractor, implementing agency, or A.I.D. itself, to use a "standard measure" (such as CPR) to assess the ultimate outcome.

Because many of the management-oriented subprojects in the current project have included inappropriate measures of impact, some program managers have felt threatened by the OR subprojects. They consider these subprojects, especially those designed to measure outcome impact, to be for evaluative purposes rather than to improve program management, and they equate OR with "research," which they believe is "not meant for us who are not researchers." Hence, the understanding of OR as a management tool and the application of OR techniques to improve family planning programs still remain far short of being institutionalized among these program managers.

The program managers generally do not have the time to prepare OR subproject proposals nor are they enthusiastic about what they term "letting the research disrupt or affect the services." They do, however, recognize the value and, to a great degree, the role of technical assistance not directly related to subprojects ("non-subproject" technical assistance). Local researchers, who are trained in conventional social science research environments, also suffer from

a lack of proper orientation to family planning programs. Reorientation can only be effectively accomplished if the OR project staff who provide technical assistance to the researchers possess the required orientation to family planning programs, and to OR as a management tool for use within these programs. This remains the greatest challenge in the process of institutionalizing the use of OR techniques within normal management systems for the solution of management problems.

The traditional use of OR for testing specific hypotheses and innovative project interventions, where it has been applied in Asia, seems to have been generally successful, probably because this type of OR falls more within the realm of conventional social science research where the current URC resident advisors' expertise lies. Given the scope and maturity of many of the national family planning programs in Asia, however, the development and funding of subprojects of this type must be balanced by process-oriented, management-focused subprojects in future.

3.2 Technical Assistance

3.2.1 Concentration of Subprojects

In the current project, the location of project field offices or resident advisors is highly correlated with the provision of technical assistance and the number of subprojects. It is difficult to separate cause from effect with regard to this issue, however. Bangladesh, for example, was selected as the site for the South Asia regional office at the time the contract was awarded. One factor affecting this decision appears to have been the perception on the part of S&T/POP staff in Washington, D.C., that, because Bangladesh has a large A.I.D.-funded population program, it could use more OR. The USAID/Dhaka staff state that they concurred with this decision largely because they considered that the Dhaka project office would be a regional base from which URC would operate, and assumed that the scope and role of OR project activities in Bangladesh would be limited. The Southeast Asia regional office was established in Indonesia as a result of USAID mission interest in having it there and due to the difficulty in establishing this office in the Philippines as originally planned.

Bangladesh and Indonesia have the highest concentrations of subprojects, followed by Thailand (where there are two part-time staff). In practice, although staff have traveled within the region, these regional offices have functioned, perhaps inevitably, primarily as country offices. This experience suggests that country offices may be more appropriate for high-priority countries in the follow-on project. Another alternative suggested in the field was to place resident advisors within host country institutions, an approach that has the advantage of incorporating OR as a part of the host country's ongoing program efforts.

3.2.2 Levels and Types of Technical Assistance

In Indonesia and Thailand, the intensity and levels of technical assistance provided have been adequate and have been valued greatly and fully utilized -- often beyond the expectations of the project. URC staff in Indonesia have made a significant contribution also in the form of non-subproject technical assistance. In Bangladesh, the level and type of technical assistance has received a very mixed rating, possibly related to the extensive turnover in technical staff and difficulty in establishing an OR strategy for that country. Program managers and researchers in Bangladesh rated some of the project staff who had worked in Bangladesh as providing satisfactory and good technical assistance. Others were felt to be less than fully equipped and capable of providing the technical assistance required. In countries without resident advisors, the level and, more important, the timeliness of technical assistance were reported to have been less than satisfactory.

The current OR project does not have a clear strategy or an output category for non-subproject technical assistance. Hence, there is considerable confusion about how to plan for this activity and how to report the work done. This has resulted in the consistent underestimation of the contribution made, in the current project, by this type of technical assistance. The continuing demand for non-subproject technical assistance, as estimated by USAID and URC project staff, ranges from 25 to 50 percent of total technical assistance. This type of technical assistance is especially useful for program managers as a way to institutionalize OR techniques within management.

The missions and host country institutions in South Asia expressed a deep sense of frustration over the lack of continuity in the style and extent of technical assistance due to the frequent turnover of technical staff in the Dhaka regional office. Conversely, the more successful OR activities in Thailand and Indonesia seem to be related to the continuity of qualified staff, who have built trust through regular collaboration with USAID and the various programs and agencies with which the project works in those countries.

The types of technical assistance provided and the subprojects developed were found to have a greater impact where the role of OR project activities is understood and valued equally by the USAID mission, host country institutions, and the contractor. This does not imply that all the subproject ideas must originate from within the mission or even the host country. In this regard, however, resident advisors must be skillful, diplomatic, and familiar with A.I.D. processes and procedures in order to serve all parties to the project effectively. In other words, the quality and expertise of the project technical staff were found to account for the difference in the relative successes of project activities. Project staff point out quite appropriately, however, that technical staff with the requisite mix of skills and experience are difficult to find.

The involvement of program managers and principal investigators in all aspects of project activities (design, development of research instruments, data analysis and measurements) was found to be a key factor in the overall effectiveness and applications of the study findings. Most of the projects in Indonesia and Sri Lanka were characterized by a high degree of involvement of both managers and investigators, whereas projects developed in Nepal and Bangladesh generally were not. Similarly, in Indonesia all levels of project personnel were involved in project activities through periodic meetings and field visits, allowing for feedback on a continuing basis and preventing excessive delegation of responsibilities by principal investigators. This mechanism did not exist in Sri Lanka or Nepal and was inadequate in Bangladesh.

The role of expatriate interns in the subprojects has been ambiguous, and their contribution to the OR project has been mixed. The role of an intern is often perceived differently by the intern, the project manager, and the intern's direct supervisor. One reason for this may be the mechanism through which the interns are recruited. If the OR project were permitted to recruit directly rather than having to depend on another A.I.D.-funded institution to identify and hire interns, the role of interns could be more clearly defined and their skills and experience better matched with specific OR project needs. On balance, internships, although theoretically an attractive idea, have not played a significant role in the current OR project.

3.3 Dissemination and Utilization of OR Findings

3.3.1 Production and Dissemination of Findings

The current project prepares and disseminates several types of reports during and at the end of OR subprojects. One-page interim and summary reports are prepared for wide distribution to researchers both in-country and internationally. Detailed final reports are prepared

at the conclusion of research studies. They are distributed to a smaller list, which includes A.I.D. staff, USAID missions, interested parties within the country, and others having a special interest in OR and in family planning in Asia.

The contractor reports that the intent of the one-page interim and summary reports is to disseminate subproject results rapidly to the public. A.I.D. has subverted this process, however, by its insistence on reviewing, editing, and clearing the reports before distribution. The production of the detailed final reports has been delayed by the press of other work in the field as well as by the A.I.D. review and clearance process. Moreover, there is general confusion about expectations for project reports -- specifically whether the contractor or A.I.D. has prime responsibility and control over the contents.

Another difficulty has arisen over production of a few reports that program managers thought reflected badly on the performance of their programs. This concern primarily arose from what was perceived as the inappropriate use of output indicators to measure the impact of management-type OR interventions, as discussed in Section 3.1. In one case, it arose from a manager's lack of confidence in the ability of the researchers, and in others from a lack of understanding of the intent of OR.

Several of the individuals interviewed during the evaluation expressed great appreciation for the reports produced by the project. Others, while appreciative of report content, mentioned the long delay between the research and the distribution of reports as a negative feature of the project. One-page summaries and interim reports have been found especially useful in Bangladesh, where the National Institute for Population Research and Training (NIPORT) has translated and/or reproduced some of the documents for publication in its Bengali and English newsletters. The newsletters are distributed to all program managers and field staff.

Dissemination workshops are held in-country at the conclusion of each OR study to describe the study and present the findings. The workshops are usually attended by USAID personnel, officials of the host government, managers and staff of the service delivery agency studied, and other interested members of the research community. In addition, the regional office in Bangladesh holds "work in progress" seminars, attended primarily by the research community and some managers, for the purpose of soliciting input and sharing experiences during study implementation. Both of these mechanisms for disseminating OR techniques and findings are greatly appreciated.

To date in the present OR project, there has been little attempt to disseminate the OR findings from Asia to larger regional or international audiences through presentations in workshops or conferences or through articles in international journals. Several of the people interviewed, especially the researchers, thought such efforts would have given greater exposure to the project and enabled them to build their own OR skills through international peer review of their work. At the time of this evaluation, few of these projects had been completed and, therefore, had not yet begun to disseminate results. URC claims, however, to have plans for a dissemination strategy. Whether the caliber of the research warrants dissemination through international forums is outside the scope of this assessment, however.

3.3.2 Utilization of Findings

During the field visits, the team was given anecdotal reports on how research findings were used for broader program modification or wider application. Some examples, in addition to the one noted above about publication of findings and recommendations in the NIPORT newsletter in Bangladesh, are summarized below:

- In Thailand, an OR project demonstrated that decentralizing certain management and administrative functions to the provincial level increased contraceptive prevalence. This three-province demonstration will be expanded to eight additional provinces with funding from A.I.D.'s Asia/Near East Bureau Regional Population Project.
- The presentation of initial research findings from a private sector, factory-based family planning subproject in Indonesia induced the management of the private hospital providing services for the project to modify systems and procedures for its entire outpatient clinic structure.
- Also, in Indonesia, steps are being taken to transfer elements or concepts between subprojects, e.g., staff from the subproject just described have been encouraged to assist a private hospital from another city to develop a similar project and the management information system developed in an urban subproject is being studied for adaptation by a subproject in another city.
- Government officials who attended the end-of-project dissemination workshop about an IUD study in Bangladesh sent a circular to clinical staff throughout the national program to inform them of the study findings and to delineate action that should be taken as a result of the study.
- In the previous FP/OR project in Asia, a Population Council-supported OR subproject in Sri Lanka demonstrated that IUD use can be promoted and increased considerably through the efforts of satisfied acceptors. A subproject supported in Sri Lanka under the current OR project is an attempt to replicate this model in a larger area in the country and to improve the cost-effectiveness of the model.

Undoubtedly there are additional examples of utilization of OR research findings for program modification, but the above are the only ones uncovered as a result of probing questions during the interviews. Moreover, all of these examples were reported first by USAID staff, host government officials, or subproject personnel, not by the contractor. This may indicate a lack of focus on or interest in utilization of OR findings by the contractor.

3.3.3 Documentation of Impact of OR Efforts

The project staff seem to be of the general opinion that their responsibility ends with the completion of the final reports of each OR subproject. This may be the result of the relatively limited attention given to the application or utilization of findings by A.I.D. Neither the RFP nor the URC proposal made provision for technical assistance in the application of OR findings. Also, because the project has not incorporated program managers fully in the OR process in many of the subprojects, the importance of documenting and utilizing findings may have been lost on the researchers.

3.4 Institutionalization of OR Skills

3.4.1 Technical Assistance

Institutionalization of OR skills is defined in the RFP for the current project as assisting "local institutions to incorporate OR techniques into their normal management functions." This notion is listed as the intent of the project rather than as an objective. Interviews with both contractor and A.I.D. personnel and field findings indicated some confusion and mixed assumptions

about the scope of the current project with regard to the meaning and application of this institutionalization intent. As is often the case with large, complex projects of this type, greater attention seems to have been given to the quantity of outputs, as measured by the number of subprojects, than to the quality of the interventions. Relatively less emphasis has been given to the processes of OR, including especially, technical assistance aimed at both skill and institution building.

The effort to produce a specific number of subprojects (see Tables 1 and 2) was much in evidence in the field, as indicated by the continued development of additional subproject proposals at this late stage of the project. According to the contractor, this flurry of project development activity was encouraged by A.I.D., based on the perception that too small a proportion of the project's resources had been utilized for subprojects.

Number of subprojects is a very easy and convenient output to measure. Some of the subprojects undertaken in this project have had or promise to have an important impact, but the stress on numbers of subprojects has diverted attention from accomplishing critical institution building. The effort put into developing and monitoring a large number of subprojects leaves little time for the relatively more time-consuming and less measurable technical assistance and training efforts through which skills are built and institutional capability developed to carry out OR independently when external funding is no longer available.

3.4.2 Skill Building

Current Activities. Most OR subprojects in the present project have been carried out through complex subcontractual arrangements between URC, public or private service delivery agencies, and external research institutions or individual researchers. This approach has not been fully effective in developing skills within the service delivery agency and in some cases it has negated the ownership of the OR study by the program managers. It is acknowledged that some service delivery agencies do not have the human or financial resources to devote to implementing OR independently.

A limited number of skill development workshops have been sponsored by the current contractor and attended by OR subproject participants and others. The subjects covered have included an introduction to OR, qualitative research methodology, rapid survey methods, and use of microcomputers. Participants found the workshops very useful, but staff and subproject personnel thought they have been insufficient in number.

Future Alternatives. In the future, an alternative strategy to building OR skills within service delivery agencies would be to train program managers to "manage" OR. Managing OR should be viewed as creating an ability among managers to identify the need for OR as a management tool and developing their capability to

- identify appropriate management problems and issues for research,
- identify appropriate external researchers and articulate the problem to them,
- assist in the formulation of alternative solutions,
- cooperate with the researcher during OR activities, and
- utilize the OR findings.

Table 1

Expected Number of Principal Project Outputs

	Year					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Proposals	15	14	8	4		41
Subcontracts	13	12	7	3		35
End of Project Seminars	2	10	13	6	4	35
Regional Conferences					2	2

Source: University Research Corporation, proposal for Family Planning Operations Research (OR) in Asia Project, May 1985, p. 139.

Table 2

Expected Number of Proposals To Be Developed, by Country

Priority	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Bangladesh	2	2	2	1		7
India	2	2	2			6
Nepal	2	1				3
Pakistan	1		1			2
Sri Lanka	2	2		1		5
Burma		1		1		2
Indonesia	2	2		1		4
Philippines	2	2	2	1		7
Thailand	2	2	1			5
Total	15	14	8	4		41
Subprojects Expected	13	12	7	3		35

Source: University Research Corporation, proposal for Family Planning Operations Research (OR) in Asia Project, May 1985, p. 135.

Another mechanism for building local and regional OR skills is to employ national and regional residents as project staff. This can provide the opportunity to impart on-the-job training in OR skills leading to ultimate withdrawal of all expatriate staff and full institutionalization of OR. Although several individuals from the Asian region have participated as project staff, those employed early in the project were residing in the United States when they were hired, and it is doubtful they will continue living and imparting their skills in the region after the project ends. Other local and regional staff hired more recently have not received adequate on-the-job training or direct supervision so that it is unclear what contribution they will be able to make to the continuation of high-quality OR in Asia after the present contract.

Another method for building OR skills would be to place technical advisors within local agencies or institutions for a period of time to build skills within the host agency. This has not been attempted in the current project, nor does it seem to have been considered by A.I.D. Such a mechanism has great potential if acceptable to local institutions, which may be more likely in some countries of the region than in others. This mechanism would probably be a more cost-effective way to build skills than either establishing separate project offices as a regional or national base for technical assistance or holding a great number of skill-building workshops facilitated by expatriates.

3.5 Project Management Issues

3.5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Parties to the Project

All parties to this project -- A.I.D., USAID missions, the contractor, host governments, service delivery personnel, and researchers -- remain confused about which of them is the ultimate client or consumer of the OR project. The roles and responsibilities of each party are unclear, thus creating confusion in terms of relationships between the parties. As noted in the Williamson (1988) evaluation and corroborated in this assessment, the technical backstop unit in A.I.D. has been much more involved in the implementation of this contract than is the case with most other centrally funded projects. Project field staff, however, expressed appreciation for this interest -- perhaps because guidance from the contractor's own management at times has been scattered and not always clearly delineated and applied (see Section 1.1).

3.5.2 Approval Process for Project Activities

Several interrelated factors in the current project have constrained smooth project functioning and negatively affected project impact and credibility in the field. These include a lengthy proposal preparation and subproject approval process that involves multiple parties (A.I.D., USAID missions, and local authorities); the lack of a mechanism whereby the contractor can make a rapid funding response to immediate research opportunities; and the continued confusion about how to approach, respond to requests for, fund, and account for non-subproject technical assistance. Some of these factors may also account for the shortfall in subproject expenditures perceived by A.I.D. (see Section 3.4.1).

4. General Conclusions

The following general conclusions evolve from and directly relate to the assessment findings discussed in Section 3.

4.1 Overall Assessment of OR in Asia

Despite the weaknesses and remaining deficiencies in project implementation noted in Section 3, most individuals interviewed indicated that the A.I.D.-funded OR activities in Asia have played an important role in family planning programs in the region. Local researchers have found their affiliation with the project to be very positive and educational. They believe OR has made a unique contribution to the conduct of family planning programmatic research in the region. These observations are shared generally by USAID personnel. Not all program managers have completely accepted the concept and usefulness of OR; those who have, however, believe the project has had a positive impact in program improvement.

4.2 Response to This Assessment

The reaction to the evaluation team's task -- developing a strategy and recommendations for the follow-on FP/OR in Asia Project, based on the role and experience of the current project and the exploration of potential needs -- was positive, especially among USAID mission personnel. This appears to be a unique effort; USAID staff indicated they are usually consulted by cable after centrally funded projects are well into the design stage.

4.3 Setting Country Priorities

The target countries for the FP/OR in Asia Project vary considerably in prevalence of contraceptive use, ranging from less than 20 percent in Pakistan, Burma, and Nepal to over 60 percent in Indonesia and Thailand. These prevalence rates generally correlate with the maturity of family planning programs in the country. Taken together, these two measures provide a rationale for setting country priorities for future OR funding and suggest the need for different types of OR subproject and technical assistance activities for the various countries in Asia.

4.4 Approaches to OR

The approach taken to OR in the first phase of the FP/OR in Asia Project (during the Population Council contract) was limited primarily to testing family planning service delivery innovations and the impact of those interventions on program effectiveness. The URC project is taking a much broader management-based, process-oriented application of OR. This is timely and appropriate for most of the current family planning programs in Asia, but the intended process orientation has not been fully met by the current project. USAID personnel and almost everyone else interviewed expressed the opinion that process-oriented OR should be emphasized over the next five years, while still leaving room for the traditional application of OR to test specific research hypotheses. This has ramifications for the types of technical assistance to be rendered, the design of OR subprojects, and the process of subproject implementation.

4.5 Subproject Location

The contribution of the current OR project has been greater in the countries in which qualified field staff were based. This effect has been further enhanced in countries in which subproject development and implementation have received full support of both the USAID mission and the host country government.

4.6 Non-Subproject Technical Assistance

Technical assistance for activities not directly related to a specific subproject has been greater than realized or documented. Such assistance has included data analysis, preparation of reports and papers, presentation at workshops, or training in computer or research methodology. There is a considerable demand for and appreciation of this type of technical assistance, especially by the family planning service delivery agencies; however, in some cases responding to these requests may have diverted attention from subproject-specific technical assistance needs.

4.7 Dissemination of OR Findings

Dissemination of the results of OR studies within the countries in which subprojects have been implemented has been adequate and well received. Dissemination at the regional or international level has been limited, however.

4.8 Utilization and Documentation of OR Findings

Although there is some evidence that OR findings have been used to improve the programs that are direct beneficiaries of subprojects and project-related technical assistance, documentation of the use of findings to modify and/or expand service delivery programs on a broader scale is inadequate.

4.9 Institutionalization of OR Skills

Although they acknowledge the importance of OR in family planning research, a considerable number of the family planning program managers who have been involved with OR activities still feel somewhat threatened by the word "research" in the term operations research.

Efforts to impart OR skills and institutionalize their application for improved management of service delivery systems have not been given due emphasis. This was considered to be a weak aspect of previous OR efforts in Asia and continues in the current project, with the possible exception of project activities in Thailand. In this sense, there is still some way to go before OR techniques are incorporated into routine family planning management functions.

4.10 Project Management Issues

4.10.1 OR Clients

Projects of this nature have different clients depending on the application of OR used and what organization identifies the problem to be studied. In general, the ultimate client should be an in-country entity (the host government or service delivery agency) if OR activities are

of the management-oriented, problem-solving type. OR subprojects should be identified and developed in full consultation with and participation of, all the appropriate in-country entities (namely, USAID missions, contractors and implementing agencies).

4.10.2 Subproject Approval and Funding Process

The follow-on project must include a mechanism for rapid funding response to subproject proposals developed as part of workshops and training activities. In addition, the approval process for other subprojects needs clarification and streamlining.

**5. Recommendations for the Future
FP/OR in Asia Project**

5. Recommendations for the Future FP/OR in Asia Project

This assessment afforded the opportunity to examine an ongoing field project in order to identify problems and unmet needs that might be addressed in a follow-on project. This strategic planning exercise led to the recommendations that follow. Some of the recommendations address the priority to be given various countries in Asia and the types of OR needed. Others outline components to be added or emphasized in the follow-on project. Finally, specific steps that should be taken in planning and implementing the next OR project in Asia are outlined.

5.1 Renewal of the Project

The FP/OR in Asia Project should be renewed for another five years (1990-1995), but with some significant modifications in its design and implementation. Modifications, suggested below, are needed to rectify the deficiencies in the current project and to meet future needs for family planning programs in Asia.

5.2 Priority Countries

Based on field observations and interviews held during this evaluation and on past OR experience, it is recommended that Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nepal be given high priority in the follow-on project; Thailand and Sri Lanka, because of their advanced capability in OR, lower priority; and India, because of the difficulty of providing central A.I.D. funding, should be given medium priority. Because Pakistan and Burma were not visited and individuals from those countries were not contacted during this assessment, it is difficult to assess the prospects for OR in these two countries. The potential role it could play, however, appears to be high, given the state of their family planning programs.

5.3 Types of OR Activities

5.3.1 High Prevalence Countries

In the high prevalence countries (Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand), future OR activities should be limited largely to addressing issues related to fine-tuning established programs. Some potential areas for OR in these countries include privatization, efficiency in management, and quality of care. Family planning programs in these countries have the capacity to support several large-scale subprojects. Large-scale subprojects can be defined as those having a relatively complex research design and involving several agencies, a large number of people, and a heavy investment in terms of funding.

5.3.2 Low Prevalence Countries

In the lower prevalence countries, e.g., Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, OR should be aimed at addressing the more basic management issues. These are the issues related to accessibility, acceptability, supervision, and worker-client interactions. Programs in these countries can support no more than one or two large-scale subprojects at a time due to the limited number of skilled research personnel and inadequate infrastructure to support OR activities of this size. Hence, small pilot-type subprojects are appropriate for these countries.

5.3.3 Some Special Situations

Because Bangladesh already has a well-established and highly respected family planning OR component with the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) and because the provision of central A.I.D. funding to India will probably remain difficult, future OR support for these two countries should be limited largely to technical assistance and skill building through training, instead of discrete subprojects. Thailand, which has achieved high contraceptive prevalence and institutionalization of OR skills, should be considered as a possible regional resource country for technical assistance and for testing issues of regional and global importance that require a well-established infrastructure.

5.4 Project Components

The following specific project components are recommended for the follow-on project in Asia:

- Institutionalization of OR skills should be one of the major objectives of the follow-on project. All subproject activities and technical assistance should be developed and rendered with the explicit objective of institutionalization.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on management-based, process-oriented subprojects and technical assistance.
- The emphasis on an expected number of subprojects should be considerably less than in the current project.
- At least 25 percent of total resources and effort should be devoted to the provision of non-subproject technical assistance. Funding levels for this type of technical assistance will have to be determined on the basis of past experience and anticipated need.
- Block grants that allow rapid response funding for a limited number of small-scale subprojects should be included in the follow-on project. The amount of funds reserved for this activity and the countries designated for block grant funding must be determined in planning the follow-on project. An amount of about \$10,000 per subproject and perhaps no more than four or five such subprojects per country would probably serve this purpose adequately.
- Any internships or fellowships in the follow-on project should be limited to hands-on training in OR for local mid- to senior-level staff.

5.5 Project Implementation

The following general steps are recommended for implementation of the follow-on project:

- The roles and responsibilities of each executing agency (A.I.D., USAID missions, and the contractor) should be clearly defined and understood by each party.
- A.I.D. should consult with missions in the region about the relevance and appropriateness of the goals and intent of the project for each country. This should occur as early in the RFP and contracting process as possible.

- To ensure greater effectiveness and success in the follow-on project, all field activities should be largely mission and host country driven. This implies a reduced level of micromanagement (hands-on involvement) of the project by the technical backstop office of A.I.D. Increased field visits by the A.I.D. CTO would improve general communication and understanding about the project between A.I.D., the field personnel of USAID, and the contractor, thus possibly minimizing the problem of micromanagement.
- Field staff and project consultants selected for the project should possess a combination of qualifications that include a familiarity with A.I.D. policies and procedures and experience with family planning programs, in addition to strong OR skills. Because of the continued need for both management and social science research skills for the follow-on project, field staff should have a mix of knowledge and skills in both areas.
- Although expatriate staff may be selected to provide technical assistance in the early years of the next project, emphasis should be placed on moving indigenous staff into positions of greater authority as they gain on-the-job training and experience. Some mechanisms to achieve this could be to have host country professional staff seconded to the OR project office, where applicable, or to have the OR technical advisor placed within a host country institution.

5.5.1 Preproject Activities

Most of the activities recommended in this section should be implemented by A.I.D. (S&T/POP/R) prior to preparation of the RFP and the letting of the next contract. Other organizations, as well as other units within A.I.D., may have to be consulted, as noted below.

- In planning for the next OR project in Asia, A.I.D. should consult the headquarters of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the World Bank, and any other likely OR donors to ensure coordination and to avoid duplication in funding.
- Recommendations for future OR activities, which are to be developed at the regional meeting of the current project in February 1990, should be considered in planning the future project.
- A.I.D., in consultation with USAID missions in Asia and with the major A.I.D.-funded CAs working in Asia, should give serious consideration to the list of priority OR themes collected during this evaluation (see Appendix E) as the priority areas or themes for research in Asia during the next project.
- The next RFP should call for the presentation of an overall regional strategy for OR and illustrative country strategies for high-priority countries, based on the themes delineated for the project and in consultation with A.I.D. (Asia/Near East Bureau and S&T/POP/R), USAID missions, A.I.D.-funded family planning CAs with projects in the region, and the countries involved.

5.5.2 First-year Activities

The following recommendations closely follow the strategic planning activities that were proposed but not implemented in the current project. Those activities still have merit and should be undertaken early in the follow-on project.

- Soon after the contract is awarded, the contractor should call a meeting of all past and current A.I.D.-funded OR contractors to share ideas, techniques, experience, and topics/themes for research to strengthen the planning for the new project.
- Within the first quarter, the contractor should review the overall regional strategy for OR developed in the project proposal and revise the strategy as needed.
- The country strategies, developed as part of the proposal, should also be revised after the contractor's technical staff have visited the countries to review the strategies with the USAID mission, host government, representatives of the family planning service delivery agencies (public and private), AID-funded family planning CAs, other donors, and researchers. The following elements should be considered in this process:
 - National population program plans,
 - USAID's country strategy for population and the availability of bilateral funding for OR activities,
 - Other donor plans for OR in the country,
 - The state of development and maturity of population activities in the country,
 - Applicable OR themes delineated during preproject planning, and,
 - The relevance of and continued support for selected subprojects initiated or undertaken during the current project.
- Strategies should be developed in the same manner for the other countries (those not covered in the original proposal) of the region, following the priority order noted in Section 5.2.
- Based on the country strategies and in consultation with A.I.D. and USAID missions, the contractor should determine which strategies warrant the placement of field staff. Full-scale country offices may not be required everywhere; an alternative arrangement for some countries may be to place staff in existing organizations and programs to provide technical assistance from within.
- Technical assistance requirements for countries in which a country office is not established and for non-subproject needs throughout the region should be planned and met by a pool of staff or consultant advisors based in the region or in the United States so that country advisors can fully concentrate on subproject technical assistance needs.

Appendices

Appendix A
Scope of Work

Appendix A

Scope of Work

26 April, 1989

SCOPE OF WORK

Evaluation of University Research Corporation Family Planning Operations Research in Asia Project

The scope of this evaluation will be limited, for reasons explained below, to two important issues: technical assistance, and utilization of OR findings in service delivery programs.

BACKGROUND

The basic goals of A.I.D.'s Family Planning Operations Research (OR) Program have remained the same since 1984: 1) "to improve the acceptability, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of FP/MCH service delivery systems and 2) to develop LDC institutional capabilities to design and carry out operations research so that they can use this tool more broadly for the improved design and management of programs."

In the course of its 15-year history, the OR program has been implemented through contracts and cooperative agreements with a number of U.S.-based organizations which, in turn, have assisted a wide variety of research and FP service organizations throughout the world. Technical assistance in operations research is provided by resident technical advisors, some of whom work in a single country and others cover a group of countries. Much of the TA is directed towards developing and implementing discrete subprojects or OR studies which, typically, entail analysis of FP service delivery problems, solution development, and testing and evaluation of solutions in the field. In developing and implementing subprojects a variety of approaches and differences in emphasis have emerged, related in part to the different philosophies and areas of expertise of the technical advisors and in part to the circumstances, needs, and resources in the countries where they work. The quality and rigor of the research itself and its apparent impact on service delivery programs also has varied considerably.

University Research Corporation (URC) has a five year, 8 million dollar contract to conduct operations research in the Asia region. Like the other S&T/POP-funded OR projects, URC's Asia OR Project is field-based. From a regional field office in Dhaka, three resident advisors support subprojects in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. A regional office in Jakarta, with two resident advisors and an intern, covers Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines (however so far

there are no subprojects in the (Philippines). URC also has a "mini office" in Bangkok with two resident advisors who work in Thailand only. The Project Director, currently based in Honolulu, makes frequent visits to the field. The project's administrative coordinator and the corporate financial management staff are located in URC's Bethesda office. The contract completion date is August 13, 1989.

The OR program as a whole was evaluated last May in order to obtain an authorization to continue funding OR projects through FY94. The information it provided was timely and has proved useful to A.I.D. in managing existing OR activities and designing new ones. One of our new initiatives is an OR support project called MORE (Maximizing Results of Operations Research). The MORE project will provide an ongoing mechanism for assessing what we are learning in the OR program and for refining the program to respond to emerging needs and priorities in the field.

Given the recent overall evaluation and the new MORE Project, a fullscale evaluation of the URC Project is not needed. However, there are some questions of particular relevance for the design of the follow-on OR project in Asia, which the MORE project cannot be expected to answer soon enough or in enough depth. These are questions concerning effectiveness of technical assistance, institutionalization of OR skills, and application of OR findings.

In the current URC project, as in other regional OR projects, subprojects are concentrated in countries where OR advisors reside, and the subprojects in countries with resident advisors tend to be of better quality. For the future, the comparative advantages of establishing a "critical mass" of OR advisors (for example 2-3 expatriates, perhaps with 2-3 local OR staff) working collaboratively in a regional office, in contrast to a network of resident advisors, each working in a single country, need to be assessed. Because of resource constraints, difficult decisions will have to be made regarding the countries to receive assistance in OR over the next five years, the level of technical assistance that each country can receive, and the types of OR studies and other activities to be supported. The evaluation is intended to derive lessons from URC's experience in Asia to help A.I.D. make these decisions.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A. Technical assistance

1. Did URC provide timely and adequate TA to the organizations it worked with in operations research? What did URC accomplish in working with weaker versus stronger service delivery and research organizations?

2. Briefly summarize URC's strengths and accomplishments in the area of TA.
3. In at least one study, it appears that the follow-up survey was conducted too early to provide an adequate assessment of the project's impact. To what extent, if any, did inadequate or poorly timed TA to local researchers result in failure to modify research designs to accommodate changed circumstances?
4. One problem observed in Asia is that senior researchers tend to delegate data collection to subordinates who were not involved in conceptualizing the OR problem and developing the research design and who, therefore, take a mechanical approach to data collection. The problem is potentially most serious in studies where design of interventions is based on interpretation of initial findings, and when open-ended, qualitative data are involved.
 - a. In selected URC subprojects, to what extent were local Principal Investigators involved in all phases of the OR project: design, development of research instruments, data collection, analysis and interpretation?
 - b. To what extent was URC's training and TA directed to the appropriate individuals? Did URC staff make an effort to work with personnel at all levels in OR projects? How often did they interact? How many people received training formally and informally, and at what levels?
 - c. What could be done through the follow-on project to direct training resources effectively, in order to strengthen the implementation of OR, and to discourage excessive delegation by PIs?
5. Compare the number of person hours and frequency of TA provided by URC in conjunction with selected subprojects in countries with and without resident advisors. Assess its adequacy.
6. What was the contribution of interns working with URC? What skills did interns bring to the OR program? What do the interns feel that they gained in working with URC in the OR program? What could be done to utilize interns most effectively in the future, and to maximize the benefits to interns who work in the OR program?

7. Does the impact of the OR program in countries without a resident advisor justify the resources invested?
7. Did regional travel of resident advisors have a negative impact on activities in the countries with field offices (by making advisors less accessible)?
8. Briefly describe the TA provided by URC that was not specifically related to development and implementation/monitoring of subprojects. In what countries did "non-subproject" TA take place and what contributions did it make? Should special emphasis be given in the follow-on project to technical assistance that is not tied to OR subprojects? If so, what would an appropriate balance be in allocating resources?
9. In the follow-on OR project in Asia, what provisions should be made to maximize the quality and effectiveness of TA? Should subprojects be confined to countries with a resident advisor? Make a recommendation regarding regional office(s) vs. a network of single-country resident advisors.

8. Institutionalization of OR skills and utilization of OR findings

The general objective of the five-year OR contract is to develop and test strategies for improving access to FP services and to make them more cost-effective. The project is also intended, according to the contract, to "assist LDC institutions to incorporate operations research techniques into their normal management functions."

1. Generally, what were URC's contributions in building skills and institutionalizing OR in the countries where it worked? If possible, identify features in the project design that promoted or impeded this.
3. What were URC's successes and failures in working with FP service organizations to apply findings and lessons learned from OR subprojects? To what extent have findings been disseminated beyond the "client organization?" What in the design of the project promoted or discouraged this?
3. Describe any URC approaches to dissemination that were particularly innovative and successful.
4. Provide specific examples of improvements in FP service delivery that resulted from URC OR projects.

5. Are there clear cases in which OR findings were not utilized because the topic of the OR study was inappropriate or unimportant?
6. A sense of "ownership" of the research by key decisionmakers is thought to be an important factor contributing to utilization of research findings to improve programs. To what extent were local policy makers and program administrators involved in identifying the issues that were addressed through URC's OR subprojects? To what extent did URC collaborate with other ST/POP service delivery CAs in designing and implementing OR subprojects? To what extent have OR subprojects been linked to bilateral programs? To what extent have bilateral funds been utilized in URC's OR subprojects, through direct funding of field costs or through buy-ins? In cases where OR projects have already had an impact on service delivery programs, is there evidence that any of these factors were particularly important?
7. If appropriate, recommend activities that URC might consider in the final year of the project to promote greater utilization of findings from OR subprojects, both within client organizations and by other organizations.

C. Design of the Asia OR follow-on project

1. A.I.D. inevitably will face budget constraints in designing the follow-on project. Project activities should be concentrated in areas where the pay-off will be greatest. What are some of the trade-offs that will have to be considered in selecting countries and organizations to work with and in selecting research topics? Based on URC's experience and assuming that the follow-on project budget will be about the same or somewhat smaller, propose a strategic plan for maximizing the impact of the follow-on OR project in Asia. The plan should include the number and types of countries to work in, number and types of local institutions to work with, number of subprojects per country, placement of resident advisors, priority issues for OR and strategies to ensure application of OR findings to improve FP service delivery. Discuss the degree of difficulty of working in each country mentioned, and explain how this factor is taken into account in the recommendations.
2. At this point, what are the prospects for institutionalizing OR in Asia over the next five years? Is it likely that there will be a continued need and role for S&T/POP-supported OR after 1995? Could OR be

supported more effectively through bilateral programs? What should be done in the follow-on project to build up OR capabilities, with an eye to eventually "phasing out" our support. Which countries, if any, should be considered "graduates" upon completion of the URC project. In which countries is there a good prospect for building up OR capabilities through the follow-on project, to the point where OR would be expected to continue without further support from a regional OR project.

EVALUATION PROTOCOL AND PROPOSED TIMETABLE

The evaluation will be conducted by a team of two people over a period of three to four weeks starting in May or June, 1989. Most of this time will be spent in the field, with a brief stop-over in Honolulu, to interview the Project Director. Information will be collected through:

- Review of project documents, mainly in the field, to facilitate questions regarding the documents and to enable comparison of initial drafts prepared by host-country researchers with final drafts of proposals, reports, etc.
- Interviews in the field with URC resident advisors, Project Director, local researchers and service providers who participated and who did not participate directly in URC subprojects, USAID mission staff, and staff from other donor agencies and research organizations with field offices in countries where URC's activities were concentrated. Countries to be visited: Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, (Pakistan?)
- A limited number of telephone interviews with same in countries not visited.

COMPOSITION OF EVALUATION TEAM

Both team members should have extensive experience working in Asia, particularly South Asia. They should be familiar with Asian family planning programs, both government and NGO, in the countries where URC has worked.

One of the evaluators should have an advanced degree in one of the relevant social sciences (sociology, demography, public health, etc.). He or she should be familiar with the philosophy and methodologies employed in A.I.D.'s OR program but, to ensure against bias, should not have worked in the program. He/she should have extensive experience in providing TA to Asian researchers and knowledge of the research institutions in the countries where URC has worked.

The second evaluator should have extensive experience in design and management of family planning service programs and extensive first-hand knowledge of FP service delivery organizations in Asia. While the research specialist will focus primarily on questions concerning technical assistance to local researchers, the FP program specialist will focus primarily on the broader issues concerning relevance of subprojects, dissemination and utilization of findings.

Both should have strong analytical capabilities and writing skills.

Appendix B
Bibliography

Appendix B

Bibliography

- Blumenfeld, Stewart N. *Operations Research Methods: A General Approach in Primary Health Care*. PRICOR, Monograph Service: Methods Paper 1, 1985.
- Destler, Harriett. *Strengthening the Relationship between OR and Service Delivery*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council for International Health, June 20, 1989.
- Fisher, Andrew, et al. *Handbook for Family Planning Operations Research Design*. New York, The Population Council, 1983.
- Gallen, Moira E. and Ward Rinehart. *Operations Research: Lessons for Policy and Programs*. Baltimore, Md: Population Information Program, 1986.
- University Research Corporation. *Family Planning Operations Research in Asia: A Proposal Submitted to the Agency for International Development (Technical Proposal)*. Chevy Chase, Md.: URC, 1985.
- University Research Corporation. *Family Planning Operations Research/Asia Project: Progress Reports*. Bethesda, Md.: URC, Various dates.
- Williamson, Nancy. *First Phase Evaluation of the A.I.D. Operations Research Program (1984-Present)*. POPTECH Report No. 87-142-072. Arlington, Va.: Population Technical Assistance Project, 1988.

Appendix C
Persons Contacted

Appendix C

Persons Contacted

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Briefings)

A.I.D/Washington

Sigrid Andersen
Gerald Bailey
Sarah Clarke
Duff Gillespie
Sidney Schuler
Jim Shelton

HONOLULU, HAWAII

Tony Bennett
John Laing
Jack Reynolds

INDONESIA

URC/Jakarta

Paul Richardson
Neeraj Kak
Dr. Suprianto
Ms. Nita
June Eichner

USAID/Jakarta

M. Voulgaropoulos
John Rogosh
Carol Carpenter-Yeman
Sri Lestari

BKKBN/National Headquarters

Haryono Suyono
Soetedjo Moeljodihardjo
A. Cholil
Soengeng Walejo
Ms. Kasmiyati

Consultants to BKKBN/National Headquarters

David Denman
Peter Hagul
Andrew Kantner
Marc Mitchell

Amy Steinberg
Russell Vogel

BKKBN/Field Staff

Dr. Soedjono-Yogyakarta
P.N. Gorde-Bali
Komana Doni-Bandung City
Ipit Rapih-Bandung City

Subproject Researchers and Staff

Jakarta-Yayasan Kusuma Buana
Joedo Prihartono
Adi Sasongko

PKMI

Endang Basuki
Sumedi Sudarsano
Reduo Armann

Atma Jaya Foundation

Professor Mailanghay
S.H. Gunawan
Atlas Habsyah
Dr. Regis
Bayu Rahardjo
Mr. Cyprianus
Susy Y.R. Sanie

Yogyakarta-Bethesda Hospital
Yohana Domihus
Kusumo Adinugroho
Mr. Armunanto

Denpasar-YDK

D.N. Wirawan
Mrs. Wirati
Mrs. Suseni

PKMI

I. Wayan Kandra

Bandung-BKKBN/City

Eko Budiarto
Mr. Kunorat
Mrs. Komariah
Nawang S. Rudijanto
Titi Maryati
Evis Rosmaeti

THAILAND

USAID/Bangkok

Edwin McKeithen
Karoon Rugvanilnjb

Ministry of Public Health

Nanta Auamkul
Suthon Panyadilok

Health and Population Research and Consulting Corporation

Peerisit Kumnuansilpa

BANGLADESH

URC/Dhaka

Barkat-e-Khuda
Khin Muang Kywe
Abdullahel Hadi
Lily Kak (Consultant)

USAID/Dhaka

Gary Cook
Jinny Sewell
Dana Vogel
Sheryl Keller
Jatinder Cheema

Ministry of Health and Family Planning

Quazi Md. Manzur-e-Mowla, Additional Secretary
Taslimur Rahman, Joint Secretary
Mahe Alam, Director General of NIPORT

Subproject Researchers and Cooperating Agency Representatives

Halida H. Akhter-Bangladesh Fertility Research Program
Fatema Alauddin-Quest for a Better Life (QBL)
K. Balakrishnan-Association for Voluntary Surgical
Contraception (AVSC)
S.R. Chowdhury-Organization for Population and Development (OPD)
Abul Hashem-Family Planning International Assistance (FPIA)
Shushil Ranjan Howlader-University of Dhaka (QBL)
Zakia Hussain-University of Dhaka (OPD)
M. Kabir-Jahingir Nagar University (Development Researchers and
Associates)

Ghulam Mustafa Kamal-Associates for Community and Population Research
Md. A. Mabud-Planning Commission (OPD)
Quazi Md. Mafizur Rahman-OPD
G.R.A. Taylor-Asia Foundation

Others

Michael Koenig-ICDDR,B (MCH/Family Planning Extension Project)
S.N. Mitra-Mitra and Associates

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Md. Alauddin-Pathfinder/Bangladesh
Marianne Burkhart-Pathfinder/Boston
David Calder-USAID/Kathmandu
Dennis Chao-Research Triangle Institute
Victor de Silva-Family Planning Association/Colombo
Karen Eng-Pathfinder/Boston
Sharon Epstein-A.I.D/Washington (formerly USAID/Dhaka)
Andrew Fisher-Population Council/Nairobi
Anrudh Jain-Population Council/New York
Terrence Jezowski-AVSC/New York
Suzanne Olds-A.I.D/Washington (formerly USAID/Dhaka and New Delhi)
Ram Risal-Integrated Development Systems (IDS)/Kathmandu
Roger Rochat-USAID/New Delhi
Prem J. Thapa-IDS/Kathmandu
Jayanti M. Tuladhar-Ministry of Health/Kathmandu

Appendix D

Questions for Field Interviews URC Operations Research Evaluation

Appendix D

Questions for Field Interviews – URC Operations Research Evaluation

Technical Assistance

1. Did URC provide timely/adequate TA?
2. Who determined TA visit schedules? Was timing of TA always adequate to the needs of the research?
3. What was accomplished by working with (providing TA to) weaker vs. stronger organizations? With service delivery vs. research organizations?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of URC in providing TA?
5. Did URC adequately involve/support "junior" researchers and/or was too much of the research responsibility delegated to these workers without adequate preparation or TA?
6. What was the extent of involvement of local Principal Investigators (PI)? What and how much of the research was delegated? Did these individuals (PIs and junior researchers) receive adequate training and other TA support?
7. What were the contributions of project interns to the OR subprojects? What did the OR project experience contribute to the interns?
8. Did regional travel of resident advisors have a negative impact on projects in field office countries?
9. Was non-subproject TA provided? If so, describe and indicate its impact?
10. How can the quality and effectiveness of TA be maximized in a follow-on OR project?

TA Questions for Countries without Resident Advisors

How many TA visits (number of person-hours) were made by URC personnel during the course of this project? Was this time adequate for the needs of the subprojects?

What was the impact of OR subprojects in these countries? Did the absence of a resident advisor have a negative impact?

Institutionalization of Skills/Use of Findings

1. What was URC's contribution to OR skill building? to institutionalization of OR skills? to utilization of OR findings?
2. Did URC work with institutions to apply findings and disseminate findings? How?
3. What service delivery improvements resulted from OR findings (if any)?
4. Were there any cases where findings were not used? Why? (Were they inappropriate to topic being studied or was timing incorrect)?
5. What was involvement of policymakers/program managers in the design/implementation/analysis/application of OR findings?
6. Can the project be described as "reactive" or "proactive"?
7. What has been the collaboration of the project with other A.I.D.-funded service delivery cooperating agencies? with bilateral programs?
8. What suggestions can be given for promoting the use of OR findings for the balance of this project (through Aug. 1990)?

General/Strategic Planning Questions

1. What are the comparative advantages of regional offices vs. a network of single country RAs? Are there any other options?
2. What should be the key features of a follow-on project for Asia: what countries, organizations, issues (and how should they be identified)?
3. Is continued S&T/POP involvement needed or should these OR efforts be carried out through bilateral support?
4. Should some Asian countries be considered "graduate" countries with regard to OR support by 1990? by 1995?
5. Will OR be "institutionalized" in Asia by 1995?

(Institutionalization="to assist LDC institutions to incorporate OR techniques into their normal management functions")

Other Questions -- not included in SOW

1. What is the ideal balance between "short and sweet" diagnostic studies using existing data and information and large-scale detailed studies requiring extensive new data collection?
2. Which institutions are most appropriate for OR subproject implementation -- to ensure application of findings?
3. Are there any countries with existing or which are ready to develop national OR/Evaluation units?
4. Who is/are the real client(s) of URC's OR work in Asia? Who should be?

Appendix E
Priority Themes for Follow-on Project

Appendix E

Priority Themes for Follow-on Project

The following list represents the themes which evolved from this assessment as priority areas for future operations research in Asia. Most were mentioned by a number of respondents.

- Use of management information systems
- Sustainability of family planning/self-sufficiency/cost recovery
- Involving the private sector in family planning
- Contraceptive pricing strategies
- Quality assurance
- Counseling
- Decentralization of program management
- Worker performance
- Supervision