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End of Tour Report

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this report is to highlight major activities and achievements during my tenure with AED Islamabad's Participant Training Unit. During my four years with AED, I had the pleasure of working with three chiefs of party and three DST project officers. During this time, the scope of AED's DSTP contract encompassed a management training effort, an in-country agriculture training unit, the Center for Intensive English Language Studies (CIELS), participant training administration, and follow-up activities.

When I began working for AED in January, 1990, there were 874 participants in training. During my tenure approximately 571 academic and 1,876 technical participants began training programs. During this period approximately 3,000 participants completed their programs. This tremendous volume of participants presented many management challenges over the years.

In June, 1991, I was promoted to Director of Participant Training. When I began with AED, a number of changes were taking place within the Participant Training Unit. AED's Participant Training Unit and USAID/HRD's training unit were merged to reduce redundancies and to streamline administration. At this time, AED assumed responsibility for writing PIO/Ps and amendments and monitoring allocations against funding.

With the merger, the number of case officers increased to seven. Over the course of the year, I assisted the Director in recruiting and training six case officers, an administrative assistant, several secretaries, and temporary staff. Three regional representatives were also hired and trained for positions in Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta. To meet the increase in contract responsibilities, system controls were created. The following outlines the issues and resolutions surrounding these new systems.

Participant Training Database System (PTDS)

Issue: Before the HRT and AED offices merged, there were two hard files for each participant as well as two databases.

Resolution: A team of three temporary staff were hired to merge the two hard files of each participant into one. This process took several months. Kanwar Nasir joined AED and began programming the Participant Training Database System (PTDS), which combined data from the two existing systems and added additional fields and functions.

PTDS was designed to generate all standardized letters and forms. An award letter, call forward letter, medical authorization letter, and three confirmation of return letters were all computer generated. PIO/Ps and amendments were also integrated into the system. Producing accurate letters and forms using PTDS required that data used in these letters and forms be kept current in the system.

Report generation using the PTDS was used as a management tool to enable me to review each case officer's case load. I also reviewed PTDS generated data on each participant before signing any letter or PIO/P to ensure that related data had been entered into the system.

Production of PIO/Ps

Issue: With the merger, AED was given the responsibility for issuing PIO/Ps.

Resolution: An academic advisor was hired and given the responsibility of drafting the paragraph describing the training objectives of the participants (PIO/P page two). PTDS was programmed to generate PIO/Ps on pre-printed forms. PTDS was later programmed to recalculate the balance of PIO/Ts as PIO/Ps were issued by our office. First as program manager and later as director, I was responsible for reviewing and clearing all PIO/Ps issued.

Supervision of Case Officers

Issue: One of my primary responsibilities as supervisor of staff was to ensure that participant processing was carried out in accordance with Handbook 10 and Mission policy.

Resolution: In order to ensure that every requirement was fulfilled, a system of checks was established. The requirements below were reviewed at each stage to ensure they were carried out and in sequential order:

1. Nomination received, entered in PTDS and approved by project officer
2. All documentation from participant received including Application for Training, credentials, letters of reference
3. TOEFL, GRE, GMAT cleared
4. Medical cleared
5. PIO/P issued and approved by project officer
6. PIO/P forwarded to PPTP for placement
7. Action Request/TIP received and program approved
8. Call forward issued, ETA sent, participant departs
9. Participant monitored and supported while in training
10. Confirmation of return obtained

Regional Representative Offices

Issue: Processing participants coming from all over the country burdened the USAID Liaison Offices. In addition, there was no assistance at the provincial level for Management Training and TOEFL activities.

Resolution: Regional representative offices were opened in Karachi, Lahore and Quetta, reporting to the Director of Participant Training. The scope of work for the representatives included processing participants for departure, arranging TOEFL tests, and supporting the Management Training Unit efforts in the region. Establishing offices required the negotiation with USAID regarding provision of office space, telephones, and furniture. Zara Ahmed Hyder, transferring from the Islamabad Management Training Unit, assumed the Karachi position; Mushtaq Ahmad, transferring from the Islamabad Participant Training Unit, manages the Lahore regional office. Riffat Gillani was recruited for the Quetta position.

Response to Inspector General's Audit

Issue: In August, 1990, an Inspector General's audit was conducted on training activities. AED's response to the audit coincided with the evacuation of American staff due to the Gulf War in January, 1991. Meetings were held at the AED home office to respond to the audit. Several significant changes took place as a result of the audit, including the enforcement of the TOEFL requirement and the confirmation of return of all participants. The Follow-up Unit was also created in response to the auditor's recommendation.

Resolutions: Confirmation of Returns

As a result of the audit, AED was instructed to step up their efforts to confirm the return of all participants. A review was made of every participant file to determine if adequate confirmation had been received. Since that time, we have confirmed the return of over 4,000 participants.

TOEFL Testing of All Participants

Prior to the audit, no minimum TOEFL score was enforced for technical participants. By Mission order, the TOEFL was not required unless the participant's training exceeded three months duration. After several months of communication between USAID Pakistan and the Inspector General's office, it was concluded that all participants would be required to achieve a minimum TOEFL score of 450. The only exception to this rule would be made to participants who received a TOEFL waiver from OIT.

PIO/T Allocation Tracking System

Issue: Early in 1991, USAID transferred the responsibility for monitoring allocations against PIO/Ts to AED. At this time, USAID provided running balances which were kept using a manual ledger system. In a matter of months, we discovered that USAID had over-allocated many PIO/Ts -- issuing more PIO/Ps than we had funds for under our contract.

Resolution: To better track PIO/T balances, a review was conducted of every PIO/P issued, and the allocation information was verified, entered, and "locked" into PTDS. AED's systems analyst designed a program that would adjust PIO/T balances as PIO/Ps were issued from the PTDS.

Carryover Amendments

Issue: The DSTP1 contract was finally closed with Contract Modification number 58 in May, 1992. Until this time, AED Accounting continued to charge participant expenses to the PIO/Ts indicated in original PIO/Ps. Once the remaining funding from DSTP1 was transferred to DSTP2, PIO/P carryover amendments were required to indicate which DSTP2 PIO/T should be charged for the expenditures incurred under DSTP2.

Resolution: I worked with the systems analyst to develop a method to process these amendments. Once a system was designed, the concurrence of the DSTP Project Officer was obtained. At the time of the writing of this report, all but 200 carryover amendments have been completed.

Pre-Departure Orientations

Issue: Ideally, all departing participants should be provided an in-depth orientation, covering not only the rules governing their scholarship and pre-departure formalities, but also addressing questions regarding their arrival in the U.S., their preparedness for the course of training, and the cross-cultural dimension of their experience.

Resolution: Group orientations were held during the busy call forward season or when large groups were identified as departing from a particular area. Beginning in 1991, case officers were trained to give orientations, and more participants were oriented on an individual basis.

Close out PIO/P Amendments

Issue: In order to monitor the balance of allocations against PIO/Ts, it is necessary to reconcile the final expenditure for participants through a PIO/P close-out amendment. This amendment either credits or charges

PIO/Ts so that the allocation and expenditure are equal. When AED took over the responsibility for issuing PIO/Ps, we inherited a tremendous backlog of PIO/P close-outs which needed to be completed.

Resolution: A finance assistant was hired in 1991 and was assigned the responsibility for PIO/P close-out and carryover amendments. Since that time between 200-300 amendments per month have been produced. Amendment production was integrated into PTDS automating the process as much as possible and providing easier access to financial information.

Balochistan Scholarship Program

Issue: The first two Balochistan Scholarship Programs presented DSTP with many challenges, primarily due to the fact that these were the first undergraduates trained under DSTP.

Resolution: After completion of the selection of the third BSP group in December, 1989, I was designated coordinator of the program. Approximately 50 young people from Balochistan were selected for technical and undergraduate academic training to be held in the U.S. The group was divided into three groups, two needing English language training at CEILS. The third group achieved required TOEFL scores and attended a two week orientation in Islamabad. As coordinator of this program, I counseled the participants regarding training objectives, worked with PPTP in the placement effort, and provided extensive orientation to the U.S. I continued to carry this case load until the final BSP scholar returned to Pakistan in the summer of 1993. Many of the returned BSP participants have been successful in finding employment in Balochistan and continue to keep in touch with AED.