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FINAL REPORT

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FINAL REPORT OF GERALD P. OWENS

CHIEF OF PARTY

AID/Rep, DAI/DA/NACP

Peshawar 28 June, 1991

I arrived in Pakistan on 7 July, 1990 along with Don Micklewait, President of DAI, for project startup. After two days of orientation and meetings with AID/Rep and Mission personnel in Islamabad, we proceeded to Peshawar where we attended to matters of staffing and setting up project accounting procedures. NACP was officed for the first three months in the AID/Rep Annex before moving to permanent offices at 31 Chinar Road, University Town, Peshawar. I remained as Chief of Party until 9 June, 1991 when my resignation became effective and Steven Weerts was appointed Acting Chief of Party.

I. ACTIVITIES

STARTUP AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The first major task, accomplished with the collaboration of Myles Elledge of the DAI home office, was preparation of the Initial Implementation Plan. This was submitted at the end of August, 1990. The Initial Implementation Plan gave details of proposed activities with emphasis on the first six months of project life. Procedures for selection of target areas in Afghanistan and collaborative arrangements with target population were laid out. Special emphasis was given to procedures for compliance with §487 of the Foreign Assistance Act and cooperation with other U.S. agencies involved in anti-narcotics activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. A detailed budget for both Technical Assistance and Program funded activities was prepared. It was understood that authorization from Congress depended in part on review and approval of the Implementation Plan by AID/Rep and AID/W, and their ability to convince Congress of the need for and viability of NACP. NACP assisted AID/Rep in responding to concerns, expressed by Washington (AID or Congress?), about how the Mission would assure that the provisions of §487 were complied with.

To date, NACP has spent only a fraction of program funds budgeted for this point in time. About six percent of program funds have been spent while the project is almost one third through its contract period. Most of the monies for logistics and ordinary procurement have been expended or ~~obligated~~, and Administration

Committed

has spent its share of Program funds, almost 30%. PREU, which was to have been the big spender with its PEP inputs, never got off the starting blocks and spent less than one percent of its total allocation. Technical Assistance expenditures are somewhat below amounts anticipated for year one of the project (about 20%). Due to lack of approval for Local Hire Technical Assistance positions, none of the TA funds budgeted for local staff have been expended. ✓

Long and short-term staffing, both Program and TA hire, is more or less as expected except in PREU where hiring was never authorized. NACP is grateful for the loan of three good men from VITA who conducted investigations and research for PREU under the guidance of the NACP Field Director - Peshawar. NACP also appreciates the assistance and flexibility of AID/Rep in allowing modifications to the staffing patterns and job descriptions as the project matured.

Procurement proceeded about as expected for a project of this nature - slow. AID/Rep was very understanding when NACP rented vehicles for several months (project vehicles have now been delivered and are in use), and computers (those ordered have not yet arrived). Generators arrived but have not yet been installed.

Narcotics Awareness Center

Narcotics Awareness activities began in August, 1990, with the employment of media specialists from the Afghan Media Resources Center (AMRC) and evaluation of anti-narcotics messages and posters produced under a separate contract between AMRC and AID/Rep. Staffing and utilization of short-term consultants continued up to evacuation time in January, 1991, and resumed in April. Additional awareness material of various types was produced, evaluated and distributed. Several "awareness events" have been held in Afghanistan after evaluation in refugee camps. This is the main thrust of NAC; several additional "events" have been scheduled and up to fifty more are planned. NAC is currently preparing to launch its baseline study in eastern and southern Afghanistan in cooperation with IRU.

Information and Research Unit

The major activities of IRU were compilation of area profiles for potential target areas for PREU and participation in special research studies on poppies and other crops. In addition, IRU set up data bases for storage and analysis of information and is well along in the establishment of an archives and library. Other activities included training of monitors and establishment of evaluation procedures.

Poppy Reduction and Evaluation Unit

Skeleton field offices were set up in Quetta and Peshawar. Quetta, in particular, provided invaluable information to IRU and to project management. PREU/Peshawar took the lead in special studies of poppies and other crops. Directors of the field offices provided major inputs into the development of selection procedures and the writing of scenarios for the future of NACP.

II. ISSUES, RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NACP has never been more than half a project during its first year due to lack of authorization for its poppy reduction activities inside Afghanistan. It now appears that this authorization will not be forthcoming and that the project will be redesigned or scrapped. Lack of authorization is clearly the basic problem although the reasons for this lack of authorization are not clear to me. Specific authorization from Congress is not usually required for AID projects, and AID authorization is generally assumed when a contract is let. Some or all of the following contributed to the woes of NACP:

- extreme political and bureaucratic sensitivity to §487 of the Foreign Assistance Act
- lack of liaison/rapport between AID and Congress
- effects of changes in U.S. strategies from the cold to post-cold war situation
- policy changes for Afghanistan after the Soviet pull-out
- political infighting

I can think of no useful recommendation for avoiding this unique situation in the future. Looks like the fickle finger of fate to me and hopefully it will be a long time in recurring.

Many of the specific problems of NACP were a direct or indirect result of the lack of authorization mentioned above. These include the inactivity of PREU, problems in planning and budgeting, morale problems (which I do not consider very serious) and lack of personnel in certain categories due to a hiring freeze, which is understandable in light of the uncertainties facing the project. One vacancy on the core staff will be detrimental to the project if it is continued - coordinator of IRU which has been unfilled since early 1991.

RECOMMENDATION

The Coordinator - IRU position should be filled as soon as possible. The qualifications of the Coordinator depend on decisions regarding the future shape and size of NACP. As originally conceived, the Coordinator should be someone with an intimate knowledge of the Afghan political and social scene and with contacts to update such information for both PREU and IRU. Coordinator should also be a survey specialist, a skilled social/political analyst and skilled at reporting/briefing. Coordinator should also have the technical skills for special studies such as agro-economic studies of crops and benefit/cost studies of engineering activities (canal rehabilitation, road construction, etc.). Some other skills are also desirable such as environmental and women impact studies.

It is unreasonable to expect all of the above in one package and difficult to decide on the most important qualifications until decisions are made regarding the future of NACP. The current rumor as this report goes to press is that the economic incentive and control activities of NACP (PREU) will be deleted in favor of expanded roles for Awareness and Information & Research.

Political and social analysis will be less important if PREU activities are to be deleted from the project, as the necessity of identifying target areas, monitoring development activities and evaluating results fades. Much of the socio-political information is available in reasonable form from other agencies and projects. The Coordinator of a redesigned Narcotics Awareness and Research Project (NARP is as good an acronym as any, I suppose) should therefore be more attuned to "social marketing" and research. Since NAC is already into its baseline survey and will presumably do most or all of the followup work, and is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of its messages, IRU will be primarily responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of project results and research. An ag economist with area and survey experience should fill the bill, especially if heshe has evaluation experience. Blanks can be filled with Short-term Technical Assistance.

Ordered Evacuation was much less a problem than anticipated at the time of departure. Excellent management and guidance by the Acting COP, conscientious performance by the local staff and good communication with the exiles can be credited.

The current NAC approach may be reasonable from a western cultural standpoint but is not so from the Afghan point of view. The main thrust of the NACP is to convince Afghans that drug abuse is a terrible danger. So far, so good and that task is incredibly easy when Islamic injunctions, health considerations

and other convincing arguments are brought into play. Most Afghans are probably already convinced. The breakdown in logic occurs when we try to link drug abuse with opium production. Most Afghans firmly believe they do not have a drug abuse problem even though they are aware that their country is a major producer, and they are probably right. At any rate, any drug abuse problem which does exist is certainly toward the bottom of their long list of problems. And, as they say, "we need the money"; shortage of money being toward the top of their long list of problems. "We produce the stuff for the corrupt westerners; it's not our problem". Most of the Afghans I know see right through our subterfuge and we're not likely to reduce poppy production with the conventional approach we are now using, especially if we are not willing to provide economic incentives or tighten the screws somehow.

I expect to be pilloried for this sort of statement because so many important people are dedicated to it and it is a bastion of our worldwide approach to supply reduction.

RECOMMENDATION

Reassess the Awareness approach for NARP, and maybe other projects as well. Consider blatant propaganda, rumormongering. Play on other aspects of the Afghan culture such as the unfair differences in income between the fat poppy producers/dealers and the poor honest wheat farmers and refugees. Re-evaluate the effectiveness of expensive community awareness events which concentrate on the evils of drug abuse in contrast with posters, pamphlets, copybooks, tea cosys and comic books which will reach a much wider audience and can convey sneakier messages directed toward reduction in supply. Set up some honest evaluation procedures. Get some unbiased experts to work on the problem; try out new ideas.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

An unusual aspect of the first year of NACP was the lack of approval, which was accompanied by an optimistic attitude that it would soon be resolved; "we should know something in a couple of weeks ...". This went on for almost a year and resulted in the waste of considerable resources, not to mention the frustrations and ruffled feathers. Project management (contractor, Mission and AID) should track progress and problems of this nature and force a resolution as early as possible.

*Blame that
one on
C. Adilov*