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APPENDIX G
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A Study of Some Key USAID Jobs

POLICY AND PROCEDURE CONSIDERATIONS

American Institute for Research
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POLICY AND PROCEDURE CONSIDERATIONS

This appendix reports the responses of incumbents to questions which dealt with their attitudes and opinions about the general policies and procedures of the Agency for International Development. It was originally intended to correlate differences in incumbents' philosophies, opinions and attitudes with mission characteristics and overall mission effectiveness. The curtailed scope of the project prevented this; however, inasmuch as these materials indicate the attitudes of senior mission staff toward some major problems, it was judged that these materials might be of value to AID administrators and others in the qualitative form in which they are here presented.

The first topic covered below delineates the policy areas in which disagreement or difficulty are most often reported to occur within the mission or between the mission and Washington; the second area deals with conflicts in and confusion over policy among the incumbents interviewed. The problem of communication between Washington and the field is also treated here because of its pervasiveness and its influence on policy implementation. Within the curtailed scope of the study, there was no way to determine with confidence how widespread these various difficulties are among the missions. However, a considerable number of incumbents reported several such difficulties and this evidence, combined with the near-universality of communication barriers between Washington and the field, indicates that these are probably significant problem areas in the foreign assistance effort.

Philosophy of Foreign Aid: Reactions to general policy

The issues most often mentioned in this connection were:

- 1) political vs. economic justification for foreign aid; 2) human resources vs. capital development; 3) scope of AID efforts;
- 4) policies and procedures which affect relationships with the host

government and the "American image." In addition, there were numerous miscellaneous comments dealing with the general social and humanitarian goals of the United States in its foreign aid program. Executive Officers were less likely to discuss policy issues in detail than were other incumbents; Program Officers and Deputy Directors seemed most concerned about general AID policy.

The issue which drew most comment was the problem of reconciling political and economic aims. Most incumbents discussing this problem indicated that both considerations are and should be operative in program planning; the difficulty arose from the frequent necessity of justifying political aid on economic grounds. The general tenor of the comments indicated that incumbents felt that politically motivated aid should be justified candidly on political grounds. A Deputy Director summarized the conflict, adding his own solution: "There are two schools in AID: Soft -- use aid with a big shovel, use it for political purposes, don't try to accomplish much. Hard -- restrict aid, control its administration, try to get results. People tend to be consistently hard or soft. AID policy should be liberal in amount and purpose, but hard in action and administration."

Many incumbents had comments about the current program emphasis in their own missions. While some of these observations were meaningful only in the context of the particular country, others took the form of a broader conflict between human resources and capital development and, in a few cases, between industrial and agricultural development. There was no consensus on the latter issue. But, by and large, incumbents tended to favor emphasis on human resources and education against capital development. (However, most who discussed this issue were Education Division Chiefs, and thus this attitude may not be representative of the climate of opinion in the mission as a whole.) One Division Chief, after expressing his conviction that the mission was not giving sufficient

emphasis to education, particularly general education, said that "the probable reason is that education doesn't have a visible end product you can point to like a road or a dam." Another Division Chief pointed out, "There are no trained people here, so with industrial development, the people involved won't even be able to read the instructions on the machinery. Education is long and slow, but there is no other way to develop a country." Another incumbent said that "it is possible to have good economic development under communism. We need a balance of both economic and social development." Representing the other general opinion, however, was the supporter of capital development who said, "Get the viable economy and that will develop the human resources."

Another problem in program emphasis was pressure to consider projects which are presented by host officials, AID/W, and visiting dignitaries. A comment by a Program Officer typified the problem: "... each one believes his specialty to be the most fundamental. Education experts, community development experts, public health experts, all believe that their fields are indispensable."

On the matter of the scope of AID's development efforts, a few incumbents suggested that perhaps AID should be more selective in its programs, focussing on specific goals and concentrating, as the Clay Report recommends, in fewer areas. Another matter of concern to some incumbents was that of long-range vs. short-range planning. Majority opinion favored long-range planning. One incumbent suggested that more stability in direction and policy were needed, adding that while some changes are forced upon the Agency by Congress, many others are needlessly generated from within. Another incumbent suggested that Country Assistance Programs be put on a continuing basis instead of "the current year-to-year uncertainty." On the other hand, a few incumbents tended to

favor short-range programs. One Executive Officer noted that "you can set up long-range plans but have to realize that you can't implement them immediately and may not be able to for years. You have to be able to change with the situation." From a Program Officer: "The advantages of crash programs are difficult to communicate to Division Chiefs They can't build as large an empire with crash programs and they don't go on as long."

On the matter of policy as it affects relations with the host government, several problem areas were mentioned. Incumbents displayed concern over the effects foreign aid is having, and can have, on the host country and on the hosts' confidence in the United States.

The concept of "self-help" and active involvement by the host country in development was strongly favored as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the aid effort by all who mentioned it. One incumbent suggested that technical assistance be put on a loan rather than a grant basis: "Loans could be very soft, but such a basis would reduce a lot of waste and the host governments would take much stronger interest in them." Another suggested that there should be a "more flexible assistance category" between grants and development loans. "These would be grants, plus loans where the host government would repay percentages of the total amount depending on ability to pay." A Deputy Director said that he would like to set up a program so that "each man in the mission is part of a bilateral agreement, rather than being supported under a unilateral technical support budget. When the host signs an agreement saying that a man is needed for a particular kind of project, then you can be sure he really is needed."

A number of incumbents noted conditions within the host government which prevented programs from being fully effective. A few suggested that some degree of coercion (withdrawal of funds) or "internal interference" be employed to correct conditions such as graft or fiscal

disorder, in contrast to the present policy of noninterference. It was also pointed out that "big economic aid" (loans or grants) makes it easier for people within the host government to "get a cut," whereas technical assistance "(affects) the common people at the bottom of the list." It was felt by a few incumbents that AID's tendency to respond to the desires for "big aid" on the part of the host government had the effect of supporting "the established in-group," whereas "technical assistance helps the other 95% of the people in the country."

Several problems were mentioned in connection with the impressions which certain aspects of AID's activity made on the image of the United States in the host country. A few of these were apparently founded on what some incumbents perceived as a misplaced effort by AID to get credit for its development efforts by over-emphasizing the effect of its contributions both in terms of their influence upon the host economy and in terms of the dollar amount expended by the United States in relation to other countries involved in development. It was mentioned that United States foreign aid sometimes tends to be viewed by the hosts as being more important than it actually is, and some incumbents also believed that U.S. aid is a primary factor in the economies of some of the least advanced countries. One incumbent felt that "AID virtually controls the economy; so the country's future rests on the success of our mission." This means, of course, that AID gets credit for the various problems encountered by the host country in its efforts to advance, as well as for the progress it makes.

It was also pointed out that emphasis on AID's accomplishments in terms of the dollar amount expended is not necessarily a valid index of the influence being exerted by the United States relative to other contributors. A Program Officer pointed out that "the amount of aid being given by other countries cannot be compared with that of the United States in dollars. Another country may be able to train a participant

at half the cost of the United States, but AID/W tries to give credit to the mission for getting donations to this country on a dollar basis." Some incumbents felt that such overemphasis upon the significance of U.S. aid can damage the hosts' confidence in the United States.

The policy vacillations mentioned previously also have an adverse effect upon the impression made by the United States. These changes, which are often due to internal or Congressional pressures, may appear to the host government to be motivated instead by self-interest. An example of the influence of a policy change upon the host government's confidence is provided by the case where the preliminary negotiations for a loan or project agreement have been completed, and the document has gone to Washington for approval. After a long delay, it is sent back, with certain conditions changed or added. "The host government frequently feels that their expectations, developed in discussion with AID/local, are crushed....In many instances, AID/local felt that AID/W had given a go-ahead signal on one set of conditions and then changed its mind. This, of course, irritates the host government as well as AID/local."

Confusion over policy and its implementation

The problem caused by policy vacillations in maintaining host government confidence has already been mentioned. Another difficulty is that the mission personnel themselves are often not clear on policy matters. Several Deputy Directors and Program Officers noted that there was some confusion in their own minds over such things as "why certain objectives were initially established here"; "Do they want any planning at all?" "What are AID/W goals and what will they be tomorrow?" A State Department employee commented to an interviewer, "Everyone in AID is in doubt about major policy. Each asks, 'Why are we doing this?' or 'Why don't we spend more on that?'" One Deputy Director noted that instability of policy was "creating difficulties" in field operations, and that he had not been sufficiently informed of the ambiguities before he left Washington for the mission.

Such confusion stems from several sources: Changes in orientation with changes in top administration within AID/W, "leading to conservative programming until people know what new policies will be"; poorly written or ambiguous policy documents; contradictory inputs from AID/W on policy matters ("Washington should make up its mind as to who knows best what should be done"); general changes in policy without specification of the procedures to be followed in implementing the change; and contradictions among well-established existing policies.

Examples of conflict in established policies were provided by several incumbents. One said, regarding the self-help policy vs. the unwritten rule that a "good" program must show concrete results: "We want countries to do things for themselves, but you have to take things out of their hands to get them done. The host government is inefficient, it takes time to get things done, you have to teach, but it takes so long this way, and since we want to see results, we do it ourselves." Another was of the opinion that the Latin American policy in regard to capital development vs. human resources development was frequently in conflict with the policy established by the Organization of American States at the Bogota Conference, to which the United States was a party. One man noted that AID preferred to put resources where there was the greatest potential for growth; however, the greatest need for development was frequently not in the place with the greatest potential, causing conflict between practical development goals and the humanitarian aspect of foreign aid which several incumbents felt to be of great importance.

The problem of changes in general policy without designation of the procedures to be followed in implementation seemed to be particularly acute in connection with contracting, development loans, and letters of credit, perhaps because these are recent additions which have not yet crystallized into standard procedures. The following paraphrased narrative by a Deputy Director sums up the difficulty: "Perhaps part of the

problem is that there is too much pressure for speed. There are periodic crises in AID/W caused by Congressional interests, reorganization of a particular division, the host government, or the Regional Director. When a policy change results from this, often there are no procedures, or only draft procedures (an instrument that you can't rely on, nor argue against if anyone raises a question). At the same time, the mission must initiate and proceed with a program and show that it is doing something. The way you find out what you can do is to proceed and take the chance on correction. One must be willing to take risks, and the job is at stake; there is no recourse against dismissal. The situation could make one decided not to start anything."

On the matter of the overall policy which determines the program, one Program Officer pointed out that Washington perhaps did not take enough care to clarify issues which were not tied to concrete legislation. "AID/W should let us know the basic assumptions which create our program and keep it in the form that it is." It was also pointed out that explaining why policies are in effect (for example, "Buy American") is a good way to reassert the policy when it is violated. This is clearly impossible when the reasons for a policy are not communicated to the field.

Finally, in missions where general policy guidelines are almost lacking, it is felt as a severe handicap; when one Program Officer was asked what was the worst problem he faced, he said it was the lack of definition of United States aims in the host country. "While they are stated in general terms, there are still conflicts, vacillating between 'It's about time to phase out operations' and 'The health of this country is vital to U.S. interests.' The host nationals also hold conflicting views -- that we are not doing enough, or that what we are doing is too diffuse, or that all aid should be withdrawn."

Communication between Washington and the mission

A large number of the problems encountered by incumbents in all four positions converge under the rubric of communication. The difficulties encountered in this area are very similar for incumbents in all positions, though Division Chiefs, since they have less direct communication with Washington, are somewhat less affected than the other incumbents. The difficulties are of four general types: delay, lack of clarity in written communications, lack of personal contact, and divergent frames of reference.

Delays

An enumeration of the frustrations caused by delayed response to urgent communications from the field is impossible because of the number of such instances encountered. The Executive Officer, who deals more directly with the Manual Orders which he has at his finger tips, appears to feel the problem less acutely than Deputy Directors and Program Officers, who are more often forced to grapple with unclear policies and procedures. A primary area of complaint is lack of feedback on the CAP after it has been submitted, making the obligation of funds impossible. The role played by Congress in approving foreign aid in this connection was noted, some incumbents suggesting that Congress be persuaded to appropriate assistance money on a multi-year basis.

Other time lags are encountered which are attributable to internal processes -- responses to requests for clarification of messages, to reports requiring further action, to requests for authorization of counterpart funds, to requests for approval of project agreements or loans and to many other types of communications are frequently delayed. Often two or three follow-up messages are required before a response is received. There is some evidence to indicate that adapting to this situation is one of the major adjustments a new man has to make in accommodating to his position in AID. One Program Officer said the problem was that "Washington feels absolutely no sense of urgency."

Whereas this situation is world-wide in scope, many incumbents who mentioned delays as a problem did not appear to be particularly upset about them. For example, one old "field hand" said he was so used to delays that organizational policies and procedures which bothered others did not bother him in the least; he had learned not to be irritated at long lags in reply from Washington, but simply to expect and accept them. In the words of one Program Officer, AID/W is not thought of as a real problem because the mission personnel have developed such a low expectation regarding performance by AID/W that "long delays, errors and unrealistic demands are regarded as routine." It is not difficult to understand how such low expectations could develop, in light of the frequency of protracted delays, but this tendency to adapt to the situation may be an impediment to the program if unreasonable time lags become a major factor in the planning and scheduling of operations. Another related area, which often has a strong influence on the incumbent's morale, is the lack of response to suggestions, ideas, and proposals sent to Washington for consideration. Not only are reactions to the suggestion not forthcoming, but sometimes its receipt is not even acknowledged.

Lack of clarity in written communications

This problem appears to be felt most keenly by Program Officers and Division Chiefs, since they are most likely to receive both policy statements and decisions, and the frequent requests for special information, justification, or additional details. Cables are particularly likely to cause difficulty "because they must be brief, because questions can only be raised at a later time, because they can be easily misunderstood and can be garbled....Difficulties occur daily." No suggestions were offered for solving this problem, which appears to be a combination of inadequate or incomplete formulation of messages plus "noise" introduced by the transmission system.

Lack of personal contact

In some missions, periodic direct contact with AID/W has been arranged using telephone or ham radio. In other missions, such contact is impractical or impossible, and even in those missions where it has been instituted, it is not always entirely satisfactory. Thus the problem of establishing personal, day-to-day contact with Washington is felt to some extent by all missions, the degree being dependent upon how satisfactorily these devices are employed. "In U.S. bureaucracy, when blocks or delays are encountered, it is possible to phone someone you know in another department and find out the reasons. Overseas, there is no access to such information," one Deputy told the interviewer. A Program Officer said: "It is frustrating to get no answer from Washington, because you feel as if you could get them to change a decision if you were there and knew the person who made it and could argue with him." This Program Officer said that this was the greatest single frustration in his job.

The importance of personal contact is attested to by numerous incidents in which a visit to AID/W by a member of the mission staff served to clear up a great deal of unfinished business, including such things as project approval, contracting, recruiting new staff members, and extension of contract deadlines. In one case, the interviewer observed that the Deputy Director had his briefcase full of items -- thirty or forty -- to take care of in Washington on a pending trip. Sometimes a staff member leaving for the U.S. will routinely call every officer and chief in the mission to find out what they want him to expedite for them. Another indication of the importance of personal contact is the number of incidents in which "guardian angels" (personal friends in AID/W) are contacted outside of the regular channels to push urgent business.

Divergent frames of reference

The differences in the working situations of field vs. Washington personnel, different objectives, and in many cases different perceptions of what the relationship between Washington and the field should be, all serve to complicate the communication problem. Deputy Directors and some Program Officers tended to mention the problem arising out of AID/W's failure to delegate sufficient decision-making authority to the field, while other Program Officers and Division Chiefs tended to mention AID/W's lack of understanding of certain aspects of the hosts' political or economic systems.

Several incumbents commented that more delegation of authority to the field, particularly in the area of minor decisions, would make the job easier. One Executive Officer said, "No one knows how much autonomy a mission has. The mission should have weight and responsibility, but instead we have to turn to AID/W for even tiny, unimportant bits of information." One Deputy noted that "an over-the-shoulder feeling in all decision-making" was a source of irritation. This leads to the general problem of the justification of decisions to Washington. One Program Officer noted that this was his most difficult type of communication. "Trying to justify what cannot be evaluated in quantifiable terms -- or in any terms for 50 years -- is impossible," he said. Several incumbents mentioned that Washington requires too much detailed information from the mission before making a decision. This is perhaps related to another problem perceived by several incumbents -- that of lack of immediate, "one-the-scene" knowledge on the part of people in Washington. "They can't know all the things we know here -- it has to be absorbed through the pores." Several Program Officers were aware of this difficulty, and commented upon problems they had encountered in trying to communicate special conditions affecting the host country to the AID/W staff. This

problem is felt particularly keenly when a project to which the mission personnel have given high priority is disapproved in Washington, perhaps due to a general policy: "AID/W thinks this is a community development project, which it is not, and they are against community development projects"; or perhaps attributed to "second-guessing the field," which is a major irritant for many incumbents.

The role of Desk Officer in this connection was mentioned by several incumbents. A Program Officer said, "The AID/W Desk should be a lateral service agency for the mission, with both the mission and the Desk being in the service of the regional office. However....Desk officers see themselves in a superior position and tend to make decisions that can be better made in the field." A Deputy Director noted that the Desk Officer's role "should be to amalgamate mission and AID/W's views to form a common, united front on issues and problems" rather than to dictate AID/W decisions to the field. One Program Officer, who had a project designed to improve the host's confidence in the United States turned down, pointed out that the Desk Officer "should be sensitive to country priorities as well as regional ones."

This problem of the disparity in the point of view taken by Washington and that arising from the on-the-scene knowledge of the overseas mission personnel might be resolved to some extent, one incumbent suggested, by transferring the Program Officer to the Desk of the country in which he had just completed a tour of duty. "However," he added, "this is seldom actually the case." Another incumbent made an effort to overcome this problem by getting AID/W personnel to come to the mission on TDY. (It was noted by one Program Officer that this was easier to accomplish in a mission with a resort area or other tourist attractions nearby, and that "official isolation" can be a serious problem in the less attractive posts.) Two Program Officers pointed out the value of duty tours in Washington plus in-between trips for program presentation in improving communication.

The communication problem appears to be somewhat different for the Division Chiefs. They tended to object to the amount of documentation required by AID/W rather than to their own lack of authority or to disparate points of view, perhaps because in their position, much of the contact with Washington is mediated by the Program Officer, the Deputy Director, and the Director. There was some manifestation of concern, however, that Washington was not receiving enough information about day-to-day project activities to keep abreast of "current opinions". Another problem for a minority of Division Chiefs was that of communicating disagreement with the general mission policy (as set by the Director, Deputy Director, and Program Officer) to their backstop officers in Washington. One Division Chief reported that if he wrote a letter of complaint to AID/W he wouldn't know whether or not it would be sent right back to AID/local for use against him; he knew of no one he could turn to in AID/W when things in the field deserved comment. Since communications often have to be cleared through the Director's Office, even getting such a complaint to Washington can be a problem. This did not seem to occur frequently, however.

The relative infrequency of communication between Division Chiefs and Washington was mentioned as a negative factor in division morale. In addition, it may be a contributing factor in the divergence of points of view between Washington and the field, since the individuals most concerned with operational considerations are unlikely to communicate these considerations directly to those in policy-making positions.