AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20523

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INPUT SHEET

FOR AID USE ONLY
Batch 50

1. SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION
A. PRIMARY
TEMPORARY
B. SECONDARY

2. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
A study of some key USAID jobs: deputy director, program officer, executive officer division chief

3. AUTHOR(S)
(100) Spector,Paul
(101) American Inst.for Research

4. DOCUMENT DATE
1964

5. NUMBER OF PAGES
16p.

6. ARC NUMBER
ARC

7. REFERENCE ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS
AIR

8. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES (Sponsoring Organization, Publishers, Availability)
(Appen.A,154p.: PN-AAC-459; Appen.B,176p.: PN-AAC-460; Appen.C,150p.: PN-AAC-461; Appen.D,102p.: PN-AAC-462; Appen.E,35p.: PN-AAC-463; Appen.F,37p.: PN-AAC-464; Appen.G,14p.: PN-AAC-465)

9. ABSTRACT
(DEVELOPMENT--Development assistance R & D)

10. CONTROL NUMBER
PN-AAD-093

11. PRICE OF DOCUMENT

12. DESCRIPTORS

13. PROJECT NUMBER

14. CONTRACT NUMBER
Repas-10 Res.

15. TYPE OF DOCUMENT

AID 590-1 (4-74)

PN-AAD-093
TCIRA
SCIENCE INFORMATION STA
BOOKSHELF COPY
A.I.R.
Reports Res

A STUDY OF SOME KEY USAID JOBS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

PROGRAM OFFICER

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

DIVISION CHIEF

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH
Washington, D.C.

JUNE 1964

TCR/ORA
Official File Copy

A STUDY OF SOME KEY USAID JOBS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

PROGRAM OFFICER

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

DIVISION CHIEF

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH
Washington, D.C.

JUNE 1964

PREFACE

We wish to thank the many people in AID/Washington and in the USAID Missions who participated in this study for their cooperation and assistance. Many interviewees, especially, devoted considerable time and effort to the project. We hope that their candor and confidence will be beneficial to them, to the Agency, and to the peoples with whom they work.

PROJECT STAFF

Director, Paul Spector

Jane F. Bristol
Robert D. Dugan
Louis J. Faoro
James T. Fawcett
Suzanne N. Gordon
Robert L. Humphrey
Alfred J. Junz
Stanley Lichtenstein
Hope D. Miller
Troy C. Parris
Harley O. Preston
Ralph L. Rosnow
Nancy K. Sizer
Victor H. Small
Theodore L. Stoddard
Anne S. Weitz

Joseph Weitz

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		page
Purpose		1
Procedures		1
General Findings		5
Concluding Remarks		15
Appendix A	The Deputy Director	
Appendix B	The Program Officer	
Appendix C	The Executive Officer	
Appendix D	The Division Chief	
Appendix E	Training Suggestions	
Appendix F	Personal Attributes for Consideration in Recruitment, Selection and Evaluation	
Appendix G	Policy and Procedure Considerations	

A STUDY OF SOME KEY USAID JOBS

Purpose

The chief aim of this study has been to determine the detailed functions of four key positions in the overseas missions of the Agency for International Development, and to delineate the difficulties, problems and obstacles involved in carrying out these functions. This knowledge, together with information about requirements normally derivable from it, is basic to all personnel operations which must be accomplished in order to provide the right people in the right place at the right time. While it was recognized from the outset that the functions and problems in any particular position would tend to differ from mission to mission, it was believed that a basic core of functions could be identified, and that analysis of the situational characteristics producing differences among missions could be combined with the core findings to provide a realistic basis for refining the Agency's personnel operations.

A second purpose of the study was to test the feasibility of using questionnaires to obtain valid and reliable job information, by comparing questionnaire data with information derived from the more costly methods of interviews and observation. Because of changed circumstances the Agency requested that this phase of the study not be completed.

Procedures

The four positions studied were chosen by Agency officials. The positions are: a) Deputy Director - chosen because of his central management position, b) Program Officer - representing the key program

position, c) Division Chief[1] - representing development and management of field projects, and d) Executive Officer - chosen because of his impact on efficiency and morale.

The basic data-collection procedure consisted of extensive interviews and observation in selected missions. Interview time for each job averaged approximately 60 hours per mission, including both interviews with the incumbent and his superiors, subordinates, colleagues and other associates. One full day was devoted to observation only, and other observations were made in the course of interviewing.

Original plans called for the use of questionnaires to validate the information derived from interview and observation data. This was to have included the systematic collection of information about frequency of specified functions and problems and the perceived importance of the several job functions. However, the revised scope of work prevented this.

The missions to be visited for interviews were selected by Agency officials. The original plan called for selecting between fifteen and twenty missions judged to be the most effective and approximately the same number judged to be the least effective. These evaluations of missions were not made known to any project personnel. It was intended to correlate such characteristics as mission organization, relative emphasis of the several job functions, modes of accomplishing duties, relationships among mission personnel and types of problems encountered in the mission in the key jobs, with mission effectiveness. Among other

---

[1]Originally the job specified was that of Chief Education Advisor; this was later expanded to include other specialties as well.

characteristics to be tested were size, program emphasis, type of leadership, history of mission, culture of the host country, and political factors. However, at the Agency's request, a total of twelve missions was visited, and analysis on the basis of mission effectiveness and mission type was necessarily abandoned.

Interviewers asked informants to describe their responsibilities, the manner in which they discharged these responsibilities in diverse circumstances, and the difficulties and problems they encountered in performing their tasks. Throughout, and particularly with regard to difficulties and problems, incumbents and their associates were asked to provide critical incidents: examples of effective and ineffective behavior associated with the difficult aspects of the tasks or with special problems that had to be solved in order to accomplish a basic goal or a personal intention. This constituted an important element in the interview procedure, since it provided the means for obtaining factual accounts of specific behaviors which promoted or hindered the attainment of individual or mission goals. It is a technique which minimizes personal bias, since it calls for descriptions of actual occurrences rather than general opinions.

In addition to the above topics, an extensive set of questions was asked about personal attributes, skills, talents, knowledges, attitudes, and habits which had been hypothesized beforehand to be important to success in the four key jobs. These hypotheses were derived from prior research on overseas work and from knowledge of AID organization, policies and procedures acquired in the early phase of the study. Incumbents were also asked for information about their past experience, education and training, and for their opinions concerning attributes desirable for their jobs. In short, data were obtained concerning responsibilities, factors which tended to make the jobs difficult, and background information concerning the qualities required to perform effectively.

Before interviewers visited the missions and while the data-collection instruments were still being constructed, informal interviews were held with a number of AID staff members in Washington, and a preliminary interview schedule was tested in one mission in Latin America. Interview teams were given intensive training in the basic concepts of the project, the use of the interview schedule, and in other interview and observation techniques. Interview teams of two (or three) persons as a rule consisted of a psychologist and either a political scientist or an anthropologist.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 49 incumbents and their associates in the twelve missions. It should be recognized that while the results of this study are based on analysis of extensive data concerning virtually every aspect of mission life and work, it was not possible (within the curtailed scope of work) to determine with any degree of confidence how frequently particular situations, problems, duties, or behaviors occur, or to measure their relative importance. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that USAID missions are so heterogeneous that the twelve in which interviews were conducted probably do not constitute a good sample of the mission population. Therefore, in order to avoid the spurious quantification of information which is not properly quantifiable, the data were subjected to qualitative analysis by experienced analysts who had worked on similar studies in the past. The analysts developed categories of situations, problems, functions, tasks, and behaviors which served as a basis for the report on each job. Regardless of observed frequency, tasks and problems judged to be of fundamental importance were included, as were any issues cited by more than a few people. Seemingly minor issues which were very rarely cited and which could be traced to purely local circumstances were excluded.

Reports on functions and problems appear in Appendices A through D. Also appended are suggestions for training and orientation (Appendix E); tentative indications of personal attributes which should be considered in recruitment, selection, and evaluation (Appendix F); and a discussion of general Agency policies and procedures affecting the key jobs (Appendix G).

General Findings

The results contained in the appended reports must be viewed as tentative until the basic information can be validated. It is our belief, however, that the interviews, which were both lengthy and candid, provided sufficiently comprehensive and detailed information to merit serious consideration.

Similarities and Differences in Job Characteristics

Although each of the four jobs varies considerably from mission to mission, there are major components which are similar in each job. Moreover, there are common elements of significant magnitude among the four different jobs.

In all four jobs, incumbents are heavily engaged in the management of other personnel. They are all involved in documentation tasks such as writing, reviewing,editing, rewriting, and clarifying. In all four jobs, incumbents are engaged in becoming familiar with old and new regulations, interpreting unclear regulations and attempting to reconcile regulations with the practical field situation. All four incumbents are potentially or actually involved in dealing with host nationals in such situations as negotiating, advising, training, persuading or otherwise motivating, and participating in social and ceremonial activities. They are all concerned with financial matters, including budget planning, assignment of priorities and calculation of costs. They are also faced

with the usual environmental factors of overseas life, including the difficulties of living and working in highly circumscribed communities, and the various difficulties inherent in an underdeveloped country such as delays and breakdowns in communications and transportation, equipment problems, and the lack of services of various kinds.

People in all four jobs are more or less deeply involved in shaping or modifying the program and in planning or carrying out projects. All are thus concerned with essentially complex intellectual tasks which require detailed appreciation of a wide variety of phenomena and the interactions among them. These tasks include:

(1) Understanding of the concrete implications of abstract language used in project proposals, plans, agreements, reports, or memoranda. Planners must be able to foresee from the language of such documents the necessary actions by the U. S., the host government and other agencies which may be involved in a proposed project.

(2) Prediction of the probable role of the host government, including a) the support, opposition, or indifference of functionally powerful individuals, based upon the probable gains or losses for these individuals that are implied by support or opposition to a project or its several segments; b) the probable understanding and interpretation of agreements by host officials and others who will be involved in projects; and c) the probable actions by the hosts which affect the availability of competent personnel, necessary funds, required materials and the procedures needed for obtaining them.

(3) Accurate conception of the mission's basic ability to accomplish a project in view of its administrative, personnel, and program resources.

(4) Understanding of political dynamics and the ability to predict probable local, U. S. and international political events which may affect the course of the project.

(5) Knowledge of probable popular response to projects, where relevant, including differences among the various ethnic subgroups and social classes, etc.

(6) Knowledge of specific geographic, economic and social characteristics of the host country which bear directly on project success. This includes specific knowledge of the kinds of problems which can beset particular projects as consequences of: a) the lack of institutions, methods, and procedures which are ordinarily taken for granted in operations in the United States; b) the inadequacy of equipment, the lack of supplies and repair facilities; c) the difficulties in communication and transportation; d) personnel inadequacies; e) information lacks including basic statistical information and information concerning requirements for adapting existing Western methods to underdeveloped conditions.

(7) Knowledge of operative U. S. legislation, policy, rulings, regulations, and procedural directives, and the personal preferences of various U. S. individuals which will probably affect particular projects.

(8) Specific technical and financial methods for carrying out projects; for example, the best ways to construct houses in given localities, the best procedure for funding a school construction program, the best accounting methods for particular enterprises, the best organizational structures for cooperatives.

All of these factors and perhaps others must be considered in program and project decisions; they must be differently weighted; conflicts among them must be resolved; the impact of each on the others and the impact of projects on these factors must be calculated, often in the absence of vital pieces of information.

The four positions also differ sharply. Unique characteristics of each job will be discussed below.

1. Deputy Director

Theoretically, the Deputy Director is the incumbent who is most heavily involved in direct general management of the mission and mission personnel. He tends to be more deeply engaged in mission policy, mission organization, interagency relations, and AID representation, and he has relatively more contact with high-level host officials than the other incumbents. However, there are many variations in the actual role of the Deputy Director. In some missions, the Deputy is closely allied to the Director and acts as his "alter ego", cooperating with or substituting for the Director in dealing with host nationals on major policy issues, formulating mission policy, recruiting, directing, and supervising key mission personnel, shaping the substantive program of the mission, and dealing with major difficulties throughout the mission operation. In other missions, certain of these activities may not be delegated to the Deputy; for example, in at least one mission, the Director reserved to himself most of the contacts with host officials, and made the Deputy responsible for general operation of the mission. In another case, the Deputy and Director were not in sympathy with one another, and the Deputy was largely preoccupied with "pet projects" of his own having little relationship to the basic program. In other instances, Deputies, in addition to having general operational responsibilities, were put in charge of a technical division because of the absence or inability of the Division Chief. In some cases, Deputies were largely occupied by relatively minor organizational, financial, and regulatory matters, taking little part in formulating overall policy, in shaping the program, or in supervising the mission staff. It must be concluded that in most of the missions in the sample, the Deputy Director's job is defined either poorly or not at all, and that in a significant number of cases, the Director and Deputy have not been able to work out a role for the Deputy which is satisfactory to both.

2. Program Officer

The Program Officer's job also varied from mission to mission, but to a lesser extent than that of the Deputy Director. There was generally nominal recognition of a standard group of tasks for this position, whereas no such consensus was found for the Deputy. Theoretically, the Program Officer is involved in analysis of economic and social conditions in the host country, determination of development needs, planning of the substantive program or of changes in an existing program, and integration of the program into host efforts and institutions. The Program Officer, again theoretically, works closely with the Mission Director in shaping the program or modifying it, and with the Division Chiefs and their staffs in planning and setting priorities. He also generally supervises the operation of the program to ensure conformance with goals and budgets. All Program Officers in practice as well as in theory are centrally involved in the preparation of the various basic documents pertaining to program development and implementation. In practice the Program Officers have relatively fewer contacts with host officials than Deputies or Division Chiefs.

The mission variations in this job are chiefly a matter of the degree to which the incumbent is involved in the several functions, rather than in the nature of the functions undertaken. In some missions the Program Officer is almost solely responsible for program planning. More commonly, the Director gives major program guidance and the Program Officer develops the specific plans, usually with the assistance of subordinates who are responsible for the details of plans. In another variant of the job, the Mission Director, the Deputy or others carry out most of the programming functions, leaving only relatively insignificant details to the Program Officer.

3. Division Chief

The Division Chief, in theory, performs roles similar to those of the Mission Director, but within more limited spheres of operation. He or his subordinates plan or modify the program in his technical area, he supervises technicians, he monitors the progress of projects, he deals with host nationals in the development of program ideas and in the implementation of projects, he troubleshoots projects, and participates more or less heavily in overall mission operations and planning. Like the Deputy Director, he has representational and managerial functions; like the Program Officer, he has planning and implementation functions; like the Executive Officer, he has administrative and support functions. In practice, however, few Division Chiefs do all of these things, and most do only a few of them. In the twelve missions visited, the activities of the Division Chiefs ranged from almost total isolation from the mainstream of mission operations to almost full involvement in these functions. Commonly, the Division Chiefs participated more or less extensively in project planning and moderately in supervision of project personnel and progress. Reportedly few interacted to an appreciable extent with host nationals. Very few served as even occasional advisors to host national officials.

4. Executive Officer

The Executive Officer's job varied the least among the twelve missions which were visited. Nearly all Executive Officers were responsible for approximately the same kinds of housekeeping and administrative functions including purchasing, transportation, housing, and supervision of clerical and service personnel. The extent of the incumbent's activity varied with the size of the mission. In small missions the Executive Officers tended to be more directly engaged in each of the various functions, whereas in larger missions subordinates accomplished

the actual work under the incumbent's supervision. The particular areas which Executive Officers reserved for themselves or delegated to others varied considerably, depending on the Executive Officer's preferences, availability and competence of local or American subordinate personnel, and to some extent program emphasis. In general, the Executive Officers' modes of operation were found to range between the following two extremes: a) the Executive Officer was service-oriented, i.e., he attempted to provide the mission staff with the services, equipment or other support that they required to the maximum extent possible, interpreting regulations and constraints to meet the needs of the individuals in the mission, or b) he tended to deny services and support to individuals, making relatively little attempt to obtain or provide them or to overcome obstacles which prevented satisfactory service, and was apt to cite or interpret regulations which served to justify his orientation.

Difficulties and Problems

In all four jobs,incumbents were perturbed by a lack of definition of their actual responsibilities. This problem was most severe for the Deputy Director and least troublesome for the Executive Officer. In all four jobs,the incumbents were troubled by absence or ambiguity of policy information. There were cases in which the Director, the Deputy Director or the Program Officer disagreed about the interpretation of policy concerning major program emphasis. Differences in interpretation of major policy between the Program Officer and one or more Division Chiefs appear to be common. Again, the Executive Officer is apparently least troubled by this problem. In all four jobs,incumbents found it difficult to keep up with regulations. Incumbents were troubled by the poor performance of other Americans, and almost without exception,by difficulties of some sort with host nationals. All incumbents were faced with the

fundamental problem of a lack of objective criteria for determining programs and projects which would be most beneficial in particular circumstances. They found it difficult to assign priorities objectively among various projects. Furthermore, they found it difficult to determine the procedures or methods which would achieve accepted project goals most effectively and efficiently in specific circumstances. Finally, they found it difficult to evaluate project performance in specific circumstances.

Since USAID programs typically cover a wide variety of technical areas, and appropriate technically qualified personnel are frequently not available, all four incumbents necessarily make decisions in technical matters outside their own professional specialties. This gives rise to two further problems. Altercations arise with technical specialists whose judgments are questioned, and obviously, where technical decisions are made in the absence of technical expertise, the likelihood of error increases. The ensuing problems further complicate these jobs.

There is also a general problem in dealing with high officials of host governments. Speaking very broadly, AID personnel, particularly Division Chiefs and Program Officers, are technical functionaries whose competence tends to be limited to particular bodies of technical knowledge. Quite to the contrary, most host officials, particularly those at the upper levels, are basically politicians - men whose expertise lies in the control of individuals and groups, and in a knowledge of the mechanics and dynamics of power and position. The outlooks and intellectual habits of two such disparate groups may differ sharply, and this may explain some of the difficulty which USAID employees report in dealing with host officials. The problem is perhaps further compounded by the possibility that host officials may in fact be more perceptive, quicker to learn and quicker to see implications than some

Americans who are working overseas. Furthermore, Americans, coming from a tradition where objectivity is highly valued, may tend to take a more impersonal view of any particular event or situation than host nationals, many of whom traditionally place high value on personal influence and relationships. In the final analysis, the average incumbent may be ill-matched with the elite of host societies in the political arts which govern aid efforts. The profound effects of such differences on relations between Americans and their hosts and on the success of American efforts overseas cannot be lightly discounted.

A pivotal administrative problem affecting all jobs is the existence of two personnel evaluation systems: the formal and the informal. The informal system, which is apparently preferred by most incumbents, is both a result of the shortcomings of the formal system, and an obstacle to its improvement. For example, almost no one is given an efficiency rating below "4", largely due to the resentment often felt by subordinates who have been given low ratings, and the consequent difficulty in working with them. This means that the formal rating has little effect in eliminating inadequate personnel from the field of candidates available to fill an open position. Thus hiring decisions have come to depend upon the informal system of evaluations by former co-workers. An incumbent therefore must rely heavily on the recommendations of his co-workers in obtaining reassignments. This makes a rater reluctant to rate a subordinate low, because the subordinate's opinion of him may influence the next assignment of the rater. If the rater develops a wide reputation for giving low ratings, he may find it difficult to obtain a desirable reassignment.

The complicated informal system of "connections" and "guardian angels" is viewed by incumbents both favorably and unfavorably. On the one hand, it often provides personnel information not otherwise available

and to some extent it protects people against arbitrary judgments. On the other hand, it makes it possible for inadequate but influential people to continue in their jobs, it diminishes the authority of mission administrators, it leaves people without influence unprotected, and it promotes the tendency to let personal considerations compete with or override substantive requirements.

Both the shortcomings of the formal system and the existence of the informal system stem in part from several other more fundamental difficulties. First is the fact that objective criteria of successful performance in the various jobs have generally not been identified, making it necessary to base evaluations in large part on well- or ill-founded subjective personal opinion, often highly clouded by irrelevant considerations, often lacking in many essential elements. Second is the fact that the upper echelons of any large organization, particularly of an organization which is decentralized, must conduct their personnel evaluations remotely and must rely on the quality of their designated judges. The administrators, managers and all others who are concerned with evaluation of performance at a distance must deal with filtered information, and few checks exist for minimizing subjectivity.

Third, the Agency's historic instability and its inherent need for changes in program emphasis, shifts in fund allocation and geographic concentration, and revisions in implementation methods, all combine to produce a significant degree of job insecurity and a need for administrative freedom of action. Both of these factors tend to strengthen the development of informal channels of influence, since the job incumbent needs protection and the administrator needs latitude in personnel decisions. Fourth, many people overseas feel they are at a serious disadvantage in the job market since they are out of touch with their

normal American job community. If they leave AID voluntarily, or are dismissed, they face the prospect of having to look for a job, possibly in the absence of a current income, in a market where they are often thought to have lost touch with current developments in their professions. For these people, job security and concerns over impending assignments are of particular importance.

Improvement in the evaluation system will depend ultimately on: a) careful identification of the critical elements of performance, b) delineation of the realistic circumstances which may prevent successful performance in each job, c) the establishment of a procedure which forces evaluators to attend to each of these critical elements and mitigating circumstances, and d) the use of procedures whereby the persons who are being evaluated are given the protection of two or more thoroughly independent judgments (rather than the group opinion of an establishment). Perhaps the Agency should explore the possibility of employing those elements of the informal system which can contribute to a more effective evaluation procedure.

Concluding Remarks

In this brief covering report, we have attempted to highlight some of the essential similarities and differences among the jobs studied, and to indicate some salient problems and difficulties which are encountered in all or most of the jobs. A detailed description of activities, problems and obstacles is contained in the individual job reports (Appendices A-D). Although no single individual is beset by all the difficulties cited, most incumbents are confronted with pervasive and fundamental obstacles to job performance. The Executive Officer's job, although sometimes exceedingly difficult, can be accomplished more or less successfully. However, under existing conditions, it must be seriously questioned whether the other three jobs, as conceived by incumbents, can generally be accomplished effectively.

In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that extensive changes are required if performance is to be improved. The structure of the missions and of some of the jobs should be changed. Some of the legislative and policy constraints within which missions must operate should be liberalized. Management in general, and personnel operations in particular, should strive to form and maintain in each mission a team of highly talented and functionally cooperative individuals. The variety, amount, and caliber of supporting talent which each senior officer can command should be increased. Policy coordination between Washington and the field, and Washington's support of the missions at the operating levels, must be improved. The effects of these changes, no matter how extensive, will of course be limited unless the physical, economic, and political conditions of host countries, and the inclinations of host politicians, bureaucrats, and populations are favorable to the efforts of the United States.

In brief, what is needed is an extraordinarily high level of individual talent, operating in an extremely intricate team enterprise, under the best situational circumstances; these teams must be given the highest order of political, financial, material and personnel support, if their talents are not to be wasted.