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COMPARATIVE USE OF  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC - DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the period June through December, 1975, assessments of three projects dealing with the impact of population growth on social and economic development were undertaken. These three projects, monitored by the AID Population Policy Division, comprise: 1) computer assisted instruction in population dynamics (PLATO - University of Illinois); 2) demographic-economic studies and instruction (GE-TEMPO); and 3) the use of long-range planning models (LRPM - Bureau of Census).

The purpose of this report is to synthesize the findings of the three individual assessments and to make some overall observations and recommendations for future strategy. In general, the contractors and Population Policy Division staff have proceeded with good intent and have acted in a professional and civil manner. Many of the shortcomings which have come to light are intrinsic in the nature of AID contractual relationships rather than arising from the specific projects themselves.

II. CONTRACTOR - AID RELATIONSHIPS

Inevitably there are misunderstandings between the contractors and AID due, in some part, to misperceptions about roles and responsibilities. Contractors seek as much independence as possible and understandably desire to build up the number and stature of their staff and to enlarge the scope of their work by conducting additional activities and studies. AID, on the other hand, has the responsibility of providing the guidance and direction to ensure that the aims and objectives of the project are fulfilled. This guidance has often lacked continuity because of changes in monitoring responsibilities between Divisions of AID and because of personnel changes. The process of project proposal, acceptance, and implementation is sufficiently time consuming that those who are given responsibility for monitoring a project may have had little or no responsibility for devising the original aims and objectives of the project.

The contractor is primarily occupied with carrying out a particular contract. AID staff, on the other hand, have responsibility for monitoring several other contracts and performing a host of other activities. This situation, coupled with a greater continuity factor and a more detailed knowledge of project activities by the contractor, tends to give the contractor an advantage in determining in what ways the scope of a project is being fulfilled. Similarly the contractor often feels that he is better qualified to assess the adequacy of his performance. Part of the answer to these problems is: 1) to provide more insightful and specific input

in defining the nature and scope of project activities initially; 2) to become more involved in providing on-going guidance and direction; and 3) to periodically and more frequently assess progress made and make appropriate revisions in the scope of work.

Contractors have a justifiable complaint in the vagueness of the language of many of the documents which specify the project purposes and scope of work to be performed. Some of this arises because of the lack of technical knowledge by AID personnel which raises questions as to the in-house capabilities of AID in being able to prepare and monitor technical contracts. In both the original design and later revisions of a project, it is important that the contractor can legitimately acknowledge the proper qualifications of AID staff. If the project monitor lacks technical competence, the contractor will in most instances be unwilling to take guidance and direction from such a person. The AID staff member, because he lacks appropriate training and experience, can offer little in the way of informed judgment. It can be fairly stated that much of the misdirection and inadequacy of the PLATO project stemmed from such factors.

### III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The lack of meaningful specificity in delineating projects has also caused some degree of overlapping of purposes and objectives. All three projects (PLATO, GE-TEMPO, LRPM) are involved with demonstrating the impact of population growth on economic and social development. All three have developed a series of projection models and submodels. There are, of course, variations in approach and differences in intended purposes, but it is clear that there is a considerable duplication of effort. The question then arises, does AID need these types of projects and, if so, what is the best way of accomplishing such objectives?

First of all, it is quite apparent that the services offered by the three cited projects have not been sufficiently used. In discussions with a large number of AID Population staff, including several population officers, it is obvious that few of them really understand the purposes of the three projects. In other cases, AID staff have acknowledged an almost total lack of knowledge about basic population and development relationships. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that greater utilization of services in the areas of socio-economic analysis has not been realized.

A clear, succinct explanation is needed of exactly what services can be provided in this area; why these services are important in the furtherance of population and family

planning policy; and how these resources can be incorporated into other ongoing population and development programs. The ability to effectively utilize these resources will depend largely on the understanding of its purposes, especially by AID field personnel. Where population activities are carried out by multi-purpose "development officers", time demands for other activities may pose an additional constraint. At some larger USAID Missions, or within some larger population programs, a broader range of population activities can be undertaken--much depends on the breadth of experience and qualifications of the appropriate AID personnel. (This same limitation frequently applies to counterpart personnel who may be working in population activities.)

#### IV. THE ROLE OF POPULATION POLICY

Part of the problem also seems to be in defining the proper role of population policy. Some people take "population policy" to be synonymous with "family planning policy." Family planning policy is, of course, part of population policy. But population policy, which covers all aspects relating to population size, growth, and distribution is much broader in concept. Population policy attempts to balance demographic variables to a number of social and economic indicators; such as economic growth, employment, educational opportunity, income distribution, political stability, provision of health and welfare services, etc. The three projects which have been assessed all deal with these kinds of consequences and can be considered as resources to be used in developing population policy.

The broader aspects of population policy are also frequently termed "beyond family planning". The kinds of findings deriving from the three socio-economic analysis projects fall basically into this category. This does not mean, however, that such findings are any less important in helping to deal with the problem of reducing rates of population growth. It is also quite erroneous to view population projects which deal with matters other than the direct provision of family planning services as either taking resources away from family planning activities or of producing results which are unrelated to dealing with population problems.

Given the distinction between population policies and family planning policies, it should be recognized that virtually all countries which have enunciated either a population or a family planning policy have attempted to implement these policies through family planning. This is at the crux of why support for relevant "beyond family planning" projects is so essential. The fact that living standards as measured in per capita income will rise more rapidly under conditions of slower population growth has been demonstrated for a large number of developing countries. The effect on employment, provision of health,

education and welfare services, food and energy needs, are all substantially assisted under conditions of reduced fertility. The adverse consequences and implications of too rapid population growth on economic and social development provides the strongest and most persuasive reasons for adopting measures to slow this rate of growth. AID would be severely remiss if adequate support were not given for projects to demonstrate this need.

An even stronger case also can be made for utilizing resources aimed at "beyond family planning" for those countries which already have ongoing family planning programs. As programs mature, there is increased recognition that family planning must be a continuing effort. Even in countries which are making substantial economic and social progress, there comes the realization that development does not necessarily bring about a transition to lower rates of fertility and population growth. The need for the provision of family planning services is a continuing and growing one. So far, few countries even approach a 10% rate of targeted acceptors. Studies for a number of developing countries on stabilizing population growth by the year 2000, indicate that the number of family planning acceptors needed to meet targeted goals at the end of the period may be 10 to 20 times greater than the number involved in the initial period.

It is these types of findings which, in a number of countries, should provide the sense of urgency needed to initiate or markedly augment family planning efforts. Once family planning services are made available to all those presently wishing to avail themselves of the service, the task of recruiting additional acceptors becomes progressively more difficult. Legitimacy will increasingly depend on peer group support and on adoption of explicit overall national population policy. The best instruments that AID has to develop the rationale for this legitimacy is in more fully utilizing the resources provided in projects specifically aimed at exploring demographic-development relationships; such as PLATO, GE-TEMPO, and Bureau of Census LRPM.

#### V. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION FOR EACH OF THE THREE PROJECTS

##### A. PLATO

The strength of PLATO lies in its ability to interact virtually instantly with the user to use country-specific data and to display the results on a plasma screen. As a communications device, PLATO is very good at gaining and holding attention and producing interaction with the viewer. PLATO also has been more willing than the other contractors to provide country data and projections on request. This is an important function because innumerable requests are received within AID from Missions, program officers, and

other private and public organizations.

There is also a need for AID to have available accurate and complete data on demographic, economic, and social indicators for DAPs and other programming purposes. PLATO, which can also provide hardcopy capability, could be utilized for such purposes. It would be necessary, however, for the PLATO group to make major revisions in the construct of its models and submodels. These revisions have been detailed at length in the separate PLATO assessment report and there is no technical reason why the present deficiencies cannot be overcome.

The PLATO models are relatively simplistic and should not be used for the more complicated planning purposes. They can supply, however, adequate rough estimates of various indicators and trends providing the methodological shortcomings are corrected. If the contractor is either unable or unwilling to correct these shortcomings, the use of PLATO should be discontinued.

#### B. GE-TEMPO

The GE-TEMPO group possesses the best analytic ability of the three contractors. Its staff has strong academic qualifications and has considerable experience in socio-economic demographic studies.

Their weakness is not directing their studies more explicitly towards AID aims and objectives; of being overly-academic; and of being less flexible and able to produce requested projections or specific country data quickly. A requirement for prior AID Population Policy Division approval for all new studies and marked emphasis on country applications should improve the operational usefulness of this contract.

GE-TEMPO employs methodologically sound constructs of models and submodels. Results are of sufficient precision to be used for planning and policy purposes. The use of the TEMPO II model is a good balance of sophistication and simplicity and can be an excellent teaching mechanism. Modification can and has been made for specific country applications. Less use, however, is being made of the macro-modeling approach, partly because further refinements are very time consuming and relatively few insights are being found using this approach.

Future emphasis, and this is also very much the view of the SEA staff of the Bureau of Census, is to limit any further development of models and modeling and concentrate on using the presently developed model systems on specific country applications.

### C. LRPM - BUREAU OF CENSUS (SEA STAFF)

The Socio-Economic Analysis (SEA) staff of the Bureau of Census is relatively new and small in number. The director of the group is technically well qualified in modeling and simulation techniques. The series of models, LRPM2, LRPM3, and LRPM4/PDM represent the best state of the arts for each level of model sophistication. Flexibility of model application can be made according to the level and availability of statistical information in a given country. LRPM can be used on a wide range of computers and has considerable flexibility in the kinds of input data needed. LRPM is also better able to work within complete data and gives better demographic and economic projections for any level of available statistics than other similar model systems.

An encouraging note has been the collaboration of GE-TEMPO personnel with SEA staff. This leads to the logical suggestion of finding a mechanism that can enable these two groups to work closely together. The Bureau of Census SEA staff has the best set of socio-economic projection models; GE-TEMPO has the superior analytic ability.

Coordination can probably best be effected at present on a voluntary basis. It will make possible the collaboration of both groups within the same country, if desired. Direction and coordination of the two groups should be made by the Population Policy Division. Agreement should be secured on both country and content priorities and all studies and applications should be in furtherance of AID aims and objectives.

## VI. OVERALL SUMMARIZATION OF PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

The three contracts discussed have certain strengths and weaknesses. These have been identified in the hope that the best features of each will be utilized.

There is need for dissemination of information and dialogue between and among contractors and AID. There is at present a lack of effective communication between divisions of AID having responsibilities for similar or complementary projects. There is still a great need for upgrading the knowledge of AID and other personnel charged with population responsibilities in the areas of socio-economic analysis. Knowledge of field operations by AID/Washington is deficient and the usefulness of projects could be much improved if studies were directed at solving problems identified by the countries themselves.

The types of population activities with which these three contracts are concerned have broad development implications. They are relevant to, and can be supported by, many other areas of interest both within the Agency and outside. The interests of AID can be clearly met by continued support of these project activities.

