

ESTABLISHING A MISSION EVALUATION SYSTEM:

A CASE FROM AFRICA

A.I.D. Evaluation Working Paper No. 48

by

Randal J. Thompson
Mission Evaluation Officer
USAID/Cameroon

U.S. Agency for International Development

February 1983

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Agency for International Development.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ESTABLISHING A MISSION EVALUATION SYSTEM:
A CASE FROM AFRICA

Since effective project implementation is currently in the limelight in AID, evaluation is receiving special attention (along with monitoring) as the mechanism to assure that project objectives are being achieved.

In an AID Mission, where a portfolio of projects is being managed in collaboration with the Borrower/Grantee, evaluation becomes key to measure the achievements not only of projects, but also of the Mission program and policies, as well as those of the host country. In order to handle the complex information involved in project, program, and policy implementation, in order to minimize the repetition of errors, and in order to effectively track progress, an evaluation system must be formalized involving the AID Mission, the Borrower/Grantee, the technical assistance teams, the beneficiary groups, and selected others. How to design such a system is the subject of this report. The strategy described is based on a survey of the relevant literature and on experience gathered at USAID/Cameroon where an evaluation system has recently been established and continues to evolve.

Evaluation is best explained with the imagery of systems. Any system organization, or set of organizations can be described by five categories: resources, components, measure of performance, environment, and management. Management is the category which "thinks" about the system plan and implements its thinking; it is the category which controls the system via monitoring and evaluation. Control, which implies the evaluation of plans and hence a change of plans, is often compared to the steersman function of a ship:¹

¹ Churchman, C.W., The Systems Approach, Basic Books, New York, 1981, pg. 120.

The captain of the ship has the responsibility of making sure that the ship goes to its destination within the prescribed time limit of its schedule... The captain of the ship, as the manager, generates the plans for the ship's operations and makes sure of the implementation of his plans. He institutes various kinds of information systems throughout the ship that inform him where a deviation from plan has occurred and his task is to determine why the deviation has occurred, to evaluate the performance of the ship, and then finally, if necessary, to change his plan if the information indicates the advisability of doing so.

In development assistance, each project, as a system, can be described by the five above-mentioned categories. But what is unique in this context, is the fact that the management category is composed of several organizations of differing and often conflicting orientations which must work in unison to assure that the projects which they are implementing achieve their stated objectives. To do so they must share monitoring information and collaborate in evaluations.

Orchestrating this complexity of inter-organizational relations becomes more difficult, but even more crucial, when one considers a portfolio of projects and the management unit composed of the AID Mission, the Borrower/Grantee, implementing agencies, and beneficiary groups as a whole. Within the individual structures of these organizations as well as via their inter-organizational relations must be structured an evaluation system which can provide accurate, relevant, and timely information in a usable form to enhance the management of projects and also to provide information with which to test programs and policies.

Building such an evaluation system demanding the participation of various institutions is a difficult undertaking for several reasons:

First of all, it requires finding a common administrative ground for institutions whose internal workings are most likely quite distinct.

Secondly, evaluation is a political activity in which different parties in the evaluation exercise--policy makers, planners, project sponsors, project managers, funding sources, evaluation sponsors, beneficiaries, project staff, and so on have diverse points of view and often distinct interests. It is extremely difficult to devise a framework for conducting evaluation within which all these sometimes incompatible interests can be reconciled.

Furthermore, there are the psychological obstacles to confront. "Evaluationitis," a throwback to hierarchical organizations in which planning, implementation, and appraisal functions were strictly separated, is still pervasive. Reprogramming people's thinking so that evaluation is recognized as crucial for proper management is a difficult task.

The challenge of establishing an evaluation system, given all the above-mentioned difficulties, involves three major steps:

- (1) Building a structure and procedures within which evaluation findings can be generated, transmitted, and utilized;
- (2) Generating an atmosphere in which honest assessment is encouraged without negative sanctions; and
- (3) Developing evaluation processes which encourage participation of implementors and policy makers.

1. Building an Evaluation Structure and Procedures

An evaluation system is defined as a complex of individuals unified by their implementation of a common project, program, or policy, an implementation plan, and the information needed to make decisions regarding whether the objectives of the project, program, or policy are being achieved. As an information system, an evaluation system also consists of data collection, analysis, and presentation, and procedures by which the individuals can act on evaluation recommendations.

An evaluation system can be designed by traversing the standard steps for designing a management information system (m.i.s.). It is the m.i.s. approach which is employed in this paper. In addition, however, it is emphasized here that the process of designing and renewing an evaluation system is in itself very important, and that it is the management of this process which largely determines the system's longevity and effectiveness. Consequently, processes are stressed as being almost as important as the structure of the system.

In addition, the inter-organizational linkages between various users are considered extremely important and must be designed carefully. At the implementation level, one must determine whether the division of responsibility is equitable among participating institutions, makes sense for effective implementation, and is working well in practice. At the monitoring level, one must determine whether the institutions share resources and information necessary to assure that the project is being implemented as planned. At the evaluation level, one must determine whether institutions have a coordinated plan for collecting, processing, and presenting more indepth information on project achievements and have the capability of acting in unision to change the project direction when information so dictates.

It is also the premise of this paper that an effective evaluation system evolves over time and is continually undergoing modifications based on the negotiations of participating organizations. These negotiations, instead of diminishing as the system develops, should infact become more dynamic as each organization gains more confidence in itself and its role in evaluation. Though no individual should dominate the evaluation process, it is most likely that the Mission evaluation officer will take the initial steps to develop the system.

For the first year, in any case, this will be a full-time undertaking. The evaluation officer will act largely like a group facilitator, will set-up and chair meetings called to discuss the issues elaborated herein, will follow through with any documentation, will keep communication channels open, and will keep working at developing the system until it "takes off" and sustains itself.

Eventually, the facilitator role will be transferred to the host country as the impetus for evaluation will hopefully come from there. However, participation of USAID should not eventually be phased out, since as will become clear, the process of participating in evaluations carries almost as many benefits as the evaluation findings.

Systematizing Project Implementation and Monitoring

As a prelude to formalizing the evaluation system, it is helpful to systematize the project implementation and monitoring systems. This systematization will identify key decision makers, their decisions, and their information requirements and methods of satisfying these requirements in a routine, or on-going fashion.

Often, people involved in project implementation take the project implementation system for granted and assume that everyone perceives and understands it in the same way. This is often not the case; indeed, project implementors may be lost in daily tasks and not even conceptualize the system at all. It is therefore a good idea for the Mission to systematize and schematize the implementation system, to discuss it with the Borrower/Grantee, and to discuss the system in a Mission staff meeting and/or a joint Mission-host country meeting. Again, the Mission evaluation officer should take the lead in the process, which should be completed in close collaboration with the Program Office, and ideally with one or more individuals within the host country.

The method to employ to systematize project implementation is to proceed project-by-project and visually map out each project's implementation arrangements, delineating who is responsible for implementation and what their specific responsibilities are. Handbook III offers guidance as to the basic implementation tasks and this list of tasks should be systematically perused and discussed for each project. As Handbook III and other literature on the implementation process points out, implementation activities fall into three categories:

- (1) Administrative Implementation (those activities which facilitate project implementation):
 - (a) procurement: when and how to procure commodities, technical assistance, training, etc.
 - (b) general administrative tasks: all those tasks which help the project implementors move paperwork through the AID system.
- (2) Surveillance Activities:
 - (a) whether GURC and contractors or PVO's are fulfilling their obligations.
 - (b) whether funds are being disbursed in accordance with laws and regulations which guide foreign assistance.
- (3) Project Implementation Activities:
 - (a) whether the implementation of the project is proceeding as planned.
 - (b) whether the target group is being affected as planned.
 - (c) whether the project environment is remaining supportive of the project implementation process.

As each project is reviewed, one begins to map out the key individuals and organizations involved in implementing the Mission portfolio and one starts to see interconnections and interrelations between projects and project implementors which were not previously apparent. It is not unusual to find two project officers who backstop projects involving the same institutions and the same beneficiaries who are unaware of the linkages between their projects and of the resources that they could or should share. Moreover, one begins to get a sense, during this exercise, of the effectiveness or not of project implementation arrangements, and one may be led to re-design these. The literature abounds with fascinating approaches to designing these arrangements; key approaches are described in Reference Nos. 10 and 11 in the attached bibliography. These should be used as a guide in this exercise.

A simple chart of the implementation system, like chart A can be sketched out and serve as the basis for discussion. Discussion can lead to brainstorming of ideas for improvement. This chart can then be made more comprehensive and dynamic using systems tools, to sketch out the interworkings of the system.

After the implementation system has been mapped out for the project portfolio, institutions and/or individuals responsible for the USAID program or host country policies which directly affect AID projects should be identified and their specific responsibilities noted. Here the interplay between host country and USAID development planning processes will be noted. Closely linked with this process of identifying individuals responsible for program implementation is the process of identifying those responsible for policy making, and what their functions are. The relationship between these program and policy makers to the projects must also be clarified so that the information flow from project to program and policy level can be understood. This will become

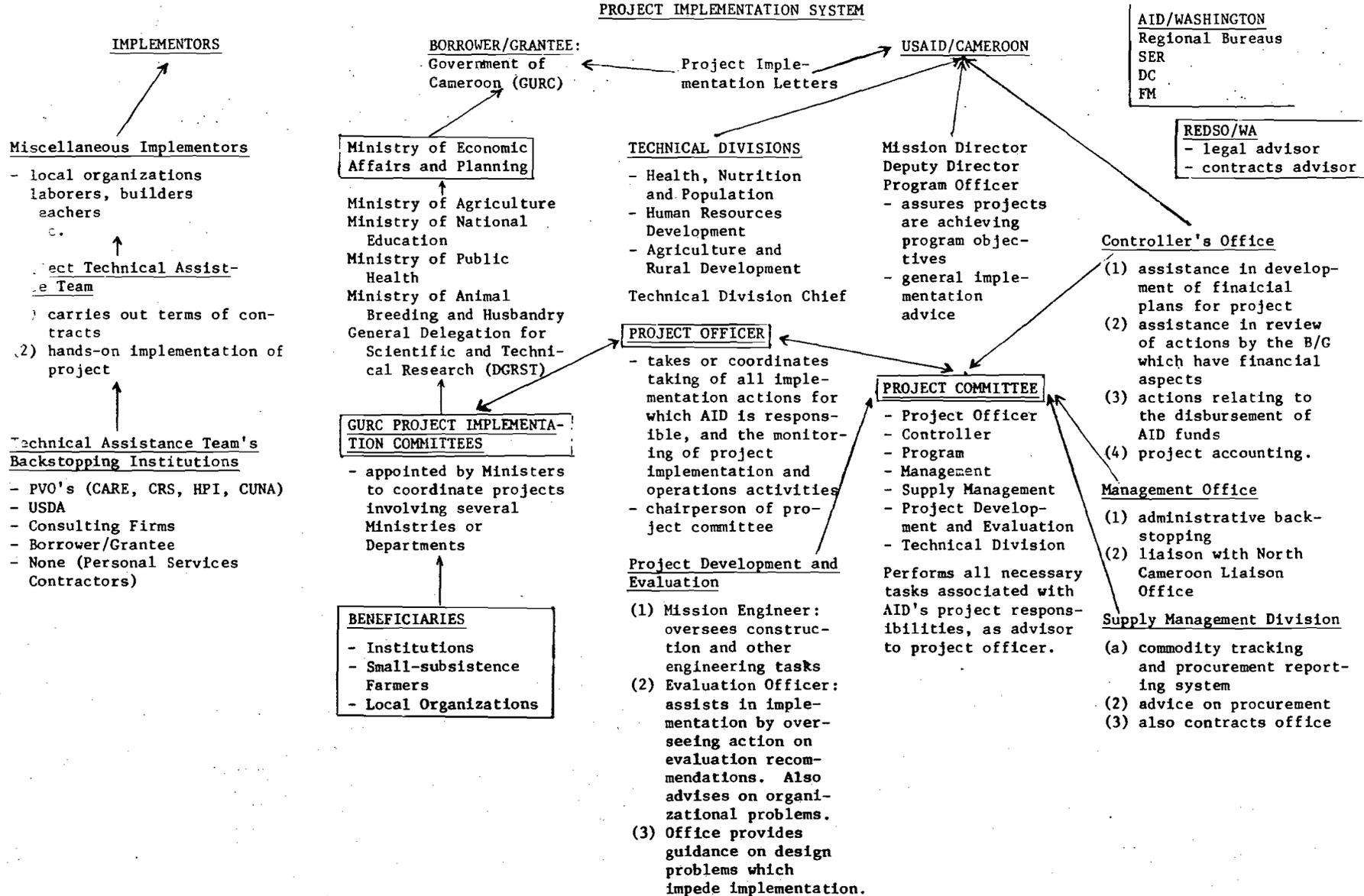
more important as one attempts to select key participants in evaluations.

Much of this process of schematizing project implementation may seem obvious or even trivial, but it is amazing how the process serves to inform and transform the implementation relationships within the Mission and between the Mission, the host country, the technical assistance team/institution and the beneficiaries. A whole new perspective on implementation results and implementors begin to see linkages, organizations, responsibilities, inefficiencies, and so on, in a new light and most of all people start communicating.

This review of implementation can lead to the creation of more effective implementation units. Three such units were recently developed in Cameroon: the Supply Management Division, USAID Project Committees, and the Government of Cameroon (GURC) Project Implementation Committees. The Supply Management Division was created to assist with project procurement, since the analysis of the implementation system identified procurement as a major weakness, requiring at least interim support. The Division is a temporary one, which will be phased out as local hire Cameroonian staff take over the functions. Project Committees were also designated for each project. Although certainly not a new concept in AID, these committees had never before been employed as implementation units in Cameroon. In addition, the GURC Project Implementation Committees became key implementation units. Evolving out of collaborative design efforts, these committees serve to coordinate various organizations responsible for project implementation and generally remain as permanent administrative units, assuring that the project is institutionalized.

For guidance in identifying the implementation structure of projects, who the key decision makers are and whether or not they have the authority to act, see Reference No. 6 in the attached bibliography.

CHART A
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM



Outputs of Implementation Review

The outputs of reviewing and systematizing the implementation of the USAID portfolio include:

1. A listing of all major users/decision makers at the project, program, and policy level.
2. A listing of their major responsibilities and the decisions which they must make.
3. A detailing of the major inter-organizational linkages between major users and how they relate to each other to accomplish their tasks.
4. A detailing of the information needed to perform tasks and make decisions.
5. A detailing of the inter-relationships between the implementation structures of different projects and the identification of decision makers who have the responsibility for more than one project in the portfolio.
6. A shared understanding among decision makers as to who the other main decision makers are and what the division of responsibility is.
7. Suggestions for streamlining or otherwise improving the implementation system.

Monitoring

Once the key decision makers are identified at the project, program, and policy level, their responsibilities and hence their key decisions listed, their information requirements should be determined and means of collecting the information designed. The first level of information gathering consists of monitoring information. Hence, prior to formalizing the evaluation system, one should formalize the monitoring system. One should assure that key decision makers are able to obtain and to share information which allows them to deter-

mine whether project implementation is proceeding as planned.

Again, as a group process, key individuals should proceed project-by-project to determine what monitoring tools and methods are currently being used, and to map out the general monitoring system. How the organizations share information should be carefully analyzed. The literature categorizes the sharing of information between organizations as weak, moderate, or strong. Ideally, strong linkages should exist in all projects and programs. The matrix structure is the archetype of the strong information sharing linkage. Here, the organizations actually share their reports and have joint decision-making sessions, an ideal in technical assistance. Obviously, however, such dual-reporting schemes are difficult to orchestrate, especially given the multi-cultural setting of foreign aid. References 10 and 11 offer some guidance on how to define and structure these resource and information sharing relationships and should be referred to to guide and refine this process.

As in the case of schematizing the implementation system, Handbook III's chapter on monitoring provides assistance by listing standard tools and processes used to provide monitoring information to decision makers. By systematically reviewing these tools and processes for each project, a group composed of representatives of key implementing institutions can become familiar with the variety of monitoring tools used within each institution and can decide whether to share these tools to enhance implementation. Standard monitoring tools such as site reports of host country counterparts and AID project officers are not always shared effectively. Collaborative meetings between AID, the host country, the technical assistance team, and beneficiary groups may not be scheduled often enough, financial reports may not be transmitted, and technical advisors' reports may not be transmitted to the host country or discussed in joint reviews. Loopholes such as these

become more obvious when one schedules group review sessions.

Again, graphics should be employed to map out the general monitoring system. Again, systems tools can be used to stimulate brainstorming and group discussion and can lead to new ideas for improving monitoring and for creating a shared understanding of the monitoring system. Again, stimulating communication is key. A simple chart like chart B can stimulate this process.

In Cameroon, a review of the monitoring process led to the creation of the commodity tracking system, more detailed monthly quarterly controller reports, and monthly reports from the North Cameroon Liaison Office, which was created to help facilitate project implementation in North Cameroon. This monthly report summarizes project activities and alerts USAID/Cameroon to potential bottlenecks or problems.

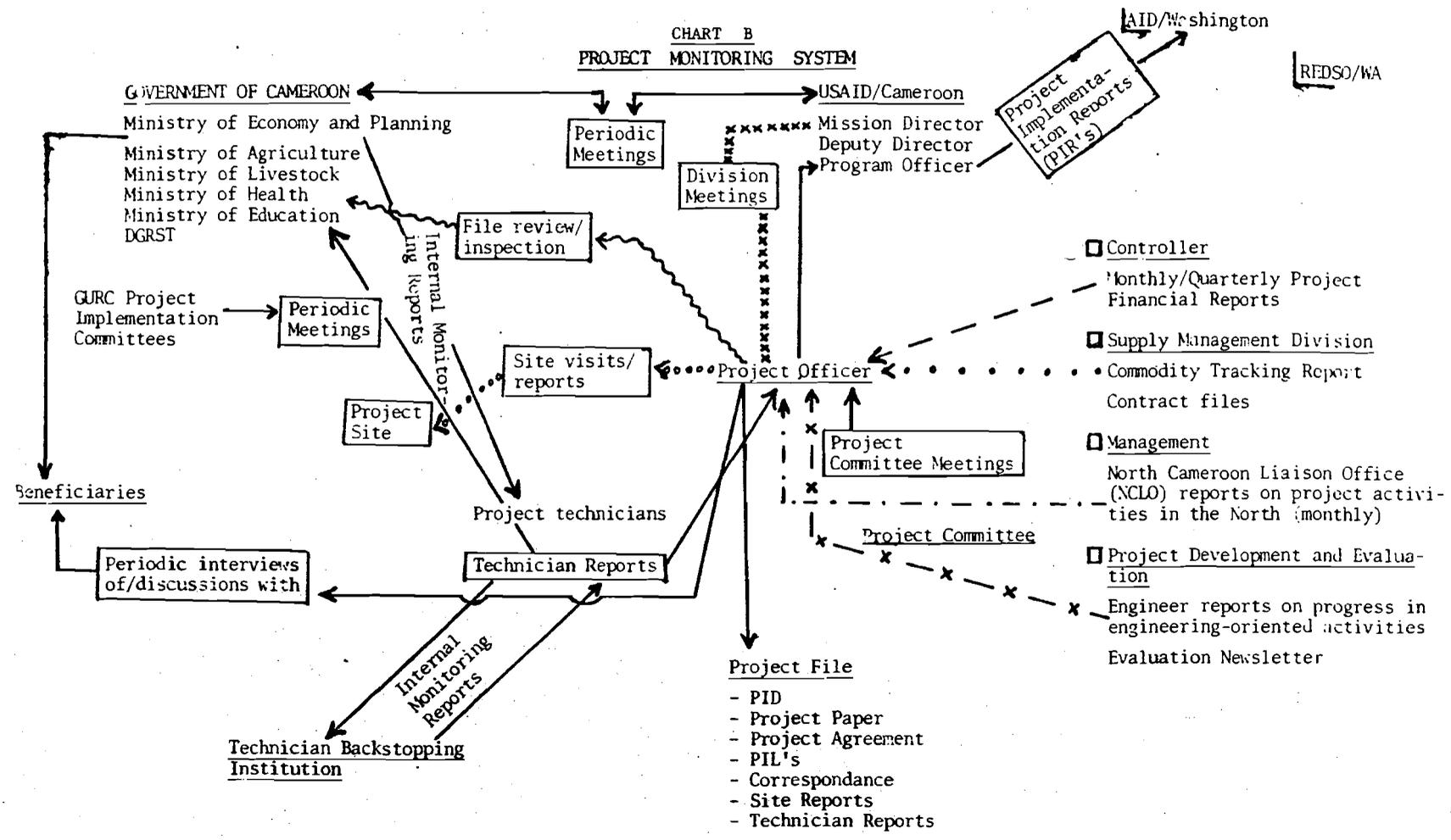
References 5, 6, 9, and 10 can be used to guide this process of schematizing the monitoring system.

Output of Monitoring Review

The outputs of the monitoring review include:

1. A listing of the major tools needed to assure adequate information for decision makers to accomplish daily tasks.
2. A listing of how the various decision makers share resources and information and suggestions for how to improve this sharing.
3. A shared understanding of the internal workings of the participating institutions and how their monitoring systems work.
4. A general assessment of how effectively the monitoring tools satisfy the daily information requirements of key decision makers, and suggestions for improving the dissemination of information to these decision makers.

CHART B
PROJECT MONITORING SYSTEM



Evaluation Structures and Procedures

Once the participating institutions have a shared understanding of the implementation and monitoring systems, they can move on to the actual design of evaluation structures and procedures. The implementation and monitoring review sessions should have afforded a clear idea of the management and implementation structure of projects in the USAID portfolio, the USAID program strategy, and policies that affect the program; a specification of key decision makers (or users of system); a listing of all the types of decisions to be made; and a listing of all the monitoring tools used to inform daily implementation actions. When focusing on evaluation structures and procedures, one must specify the content of the information system, the design of evaluation methods and studies, data analysis and presentation of results, the institutional aspects of an evaluation system, and how to staff the system.

The content of the information system is composed of the "indicators" and "variables" that will represent the "project/program reality" which one wants to measure. In general it is the logical framework which provides this content. The log frames for all the Mission portfolio should be reviewed and indicators compared and consolidated. This is the time also for the Mission and Borrower/Grantee to develop indicators for the Mission program and for the policies which have been selected as most important. This paper does not intend to delve into this issue, since it has been covered at length in a rich literature. The purpose here is simply to point out that this issue should be confronted at this point in the evaluation system design process, and should again be dealt with by a group process directed by the evaluation officer and including selected Mission, host country, technical assistance team, and beneficiary representatives. References which contain helpful guides for this process

include nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Once one has mapped out the decisions that the users of the evaluation system must make and specified exactly how the project and its actors will be represented by indicators and variables, then one must determine how to go about obtaining the information that one needs. How to obtain this information continuously via monitoring tools has already been discussed. At this point, however, evaluation designs and data collection methods must be reviewed, consolidated, and refined. Again, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss evaluation designs. Rather, it is the purpose of the discussion to point out that the evaluation designs for each project should be systematically reviewed by the group to determine where overlaps exist, whether appropriate designs have been selected, whether baseline data is being collected, and so on. A design to evaluate the Mission program should also emerge from this exercise and a framework established such that information gathered from specific evaluations can be stored and used to measure progress toward the achievement of program objectives. How specific evaluations can be used to evaluate policies should also be discussed. In addition, projects which have been noted as inter-related should be examined to determine whether data gathering efforts can be consolidated and also to determine if the appropriate decision makers are involved in the data gathering exercises. It is important at this point to involve governmental individuals who are responsible for evaluation and also evaluation consultants if necessary in order to assure that appropriate designs have been selected. References 5, 6, 9, 10 are helpful.

What this process amounts to in many countries, such as Cameroon, is almost a training course in evaluation methodology leading to a shared understanding by key decision makers of how its results are channeled into the decision making system. It is also the opportunity to attempt to integrate the

evaluation function more closely with the planning and implementation functions, by leading group discussions involving evaluators, implementors, and planners, and better developing communication linkages. Specific coordination mechanisms should be structured, such as regularly scheduled meetings, a sharing of key reports, a joint committee, and so on, in order to assure that these individuals keep talking.

The next step in the evaluation system design process is to assure that the data processing, analysis, and presentation function is effective. The time required for information and data processing and analysis is a critical constraint in an evaluation system. If data cannot be processed, analyzed, and presented to project management fast enough to make decisions, then it is useless. A detailed assessment of the capability of the collaborating institutions to process and analyze data within an established time frame should therefore be made. This should include a review of the data analysis capabilities for each project and for the system as a whole. This is also an opportunity for decision makers to become aware of untapped resources within the host country for data analysis, including computers, statisticians, and the like. Since such resources had never before been employed by USAID/Cameroon, the review of the data processing capability was quite informative. Less sophisticated information processing and analysis capabilities should be assessed including the flow of documentation throughout each organization. The group should decide how much and in what form each organization can process information and act on decisions. The best format for reports should be discussed and certain principles established. The management information system literature almost unanimously agrees that too much data is collected in too much detail by most projects. The data generally exceeds the capacity of the staff, duplicates information

already available, and imposes intolerable demands on those involved in project implementation. How much information and in which form each decision maker needs for his or her particular decisions should be decided upon, and a system of presentation should be designed. This could consist of reports of a certain type, verbal presentations, etc. References 5 and 6 provide helpful guidance for this process.

In general, the references list several criteria for presentation of findings:

- (1) Report must be capable of attracting the decision maker's attention.
- (2) Decision makers must have confidence in the accuracy of the data presented to them.
- (3) Findings and conclusions derived from data must clearly show the possible alternatives for future action.
- (4) Common body of findings do not have to be presented to all users; information can be separated by category of users, depending on user requirements.
- (5) Results should be presented with reference to logical framework.
- (6) Results should be reported promptly.

The institutional aspects of the evaluation system should next be designed. An evaluation system can only be successful if it attunes itself to the institution(s) within which it functions. This means that the system must fit within the organizational structure of the institutions involved, their organizational climate, the management style employed, and the distribution of power and authority within them. Moreover, an evaluation system will be successful only if there are action patterns worked out such that the participating institutions

can act to implement the evaluation recommendations. Moreover, utilization patterns and channels must be developed such that lessons learned are stored in an organizational memory and that future design and implementation efforts benefit from experience. References 9, 10, and 11 can be referred to when designing the evaluation system to fit within the institutional context.

Output of Evaluation Structure/Procedures Review

The result of this review should include:

1. A listing of key indicators for each project, program, and policy, and an understanding of the indicators common to more than one project.
2. A clarification of the appropriate evaluation designs for each project, the Mission program, and key policies. Development of multi-project evaluations as much as possible.
3. Data collection, processing, analysis and presentation plans for each project, the Mission program, and key policies.
4. Format and methods of presenting evaluation results to key decision makers.
5. Patterns of inter-organizational action to implement evaluation recommendations.
6. Methods for storing and utilizing evaluation results and for tying them into the design and implementation process.

2. Generating an Atmosphere Conducive to Positive Assessment

For evaluation to serve as a positive management tool, it must be conducted in an atmosphere in which error is condoned and assessment is not threatening. According to David Korten, organizations can in fact be categorized as healthy or unhealthy by their response to error. Organi-

zations can respond to error by denying it, by externalizing it, or by embracing it. Korten's healthy organization, the "learning organization," embraces error:²

Aware of the limitations of their knowledge, members of this type of organization look at error as a vital source of data for making adjustments to achieve a better fit with beneficiary needs. An organization in which such learning is valued is characterized by the candor and practical sophistication with which its members discuss their own errors, what they have learned from them, and the corrective actions they are attempting. Intellectual integrity combined with a sense of vitality and purpose. Such a climate in an organization is almost a certain indication of effective leadership.

Although evaluation certainly does not dwell on error, people tend to equate it with assessment of error. Hence an organization's attitude toward error bespeaks of its attitude toward evaluation. An organization's attitude toward error also determines whether a participatory approach to evaluation will be successful. As Herbert Turner points out in "Program Evaluation in AID: Some Lessons Learned,"³

Operational experience shows that project managers can evaluate progress and the continuing relevancy of their own project candidly and objectively if there is a climate of constructive inquiry rather than a climate of recrimination.

Moreover, it goes without saying that an evaluation system can only be successful when decision makers have a genuine interest in knowing how well their projects are functioning and what results are being obtained:⁴

If decision makers cynically establish programmes without concern for whether they are effective, there is no place for monitoring and evaluation.

²Korten, David, "Organizing for Rural Development: A Learning Process," Development Digest, Vol. XX, No. 2, April, 1982, pg 26.

³Turner, Herbert, "Program Evaluation in AID: Some Lessons Learned," Development Digest, Vol. XVII, No. 3, July, 1979, pg 79.

⁴United Nations, Systematic Monitoring and Evaluation of Integrated Development Programs, pg. 41.

This cynicism is often generated in organizations with more negative sanctions than positive rewards, or without a sense of common purpose. These attributes are often a function of leadership style. Hence, the first step in trying to activate an evaluation system is to convince the leadership of the value of evaluation, so that this leadership can attempt to create a positive atmosphere within which participatory evaluation can take place.

As the United Nations Evaluation Source Book points out, decision makers often fail to make a commitment to evaluation because they do not see its necessity, do not appreciate the nature of the data:⁵

Political leaders, particularly, appear to prefer "seeing things with their own eyes" to basing judgments on data produced by someone else. Common sense would appear to confirm that an on-the-spot visit to a programme is a better way to appraise progress than reading reports filled with "abstract" data. This is often accompanied by a lack of realization that what is seen is not necessarily a representative sample, nor are the observations systematic.

The United Nations recommends devoting considerable time to explaining to decision makers how information produced by the system can help supplement information obtained from other sources, including "seeing things with your own eyes."⁶

Decision makers may also fear results of the evaluation, and in order to quell threatening results, discredit evaluation research design and hence findings in the spirit of "avoiding bad news by killing the messengers who bring it."

Various references relate that this attitude can be dealt with either by assuring decision makers of the technical feasibility of the evaluation methodology or by assuring them of the confidentiality of the findings. The latter approach justifies itself by the assertion that evaluation

⁵ IBID

⁶ IBID, pg. 4.

research, as applied research does not have to have uncensored dissemination, as pure research does. Since its purpose is to improve program performance, its dissemination can be restricted. Others assert that the best way to ensure that findings will be taken into account is to present them in a balanced way. It is as bad to over-emphasize negative findings as to minimize them.

A participatory approach to evaluation is probably the best method to assure that evaluation is taken seriously as well as its findings accepted as valid, since individuals have a stake in the process and cannot easily deny its worth by criticizing the qualifications of the evaluators. Moreover, a participatory approach helps to mitigate against the often noted fact that project managers and staff on the one hand, donors and national governments, on the other hand, often have quite different views of "whose system" the evaluation system is.

In order to elicit a positive environment for evaluation, the Mission evaluation officer should hold meetings with key leaders within the USAID Mission, the host country, the beneficiary groups, and the technical assistance teams and/or institutions. It will then be the responsibility of these leaders to set the tenor of evaluation within their respective institutions, and to direct the interplay of institutions in the evaluation process. A matter-of-fact approach is probably the most successful, involving explaining evaluation, its general usefulness, and the various ways of conducting it.

At USAID/Cameroon, the evaluation officer began publishing a monthly newsletter which kept the Mission abreast of evaluation activities and then discussed basic evaluation methodologies and issues. The purpose of the newsletter was to encourage everyone in the Mission to participate in the eval-

uation process and to lessen the mystique of evaluation which seemed to permeate. Initial response to the newsletter consisted of wisecracks and jeering laughter, as its enthusiasm threatened bureaucratic inertia. However, over time, as the project officers, project committees, and Mission evaluation committee became more-and-more involved in evaluation, Mission personnel took the evaluation newsletter in stride and (consciously or not) began talking the language of evaluation.

The newsletter was translated and sent to various ministries within Cameroon to begin communication networks. The evaluation officer sought out key individuals within the ministries who had responsibility for or an interest in evaluation. In Cameroon, in spite of the fact that implementation responsibilities lean heavily toward USAID, interest in and desire to participate in evaluation is very high. Hence, the task of obtaining high level interest in evaluation was relatively painless. However, evaluation is not conceived of as a management tool to assist in the implementation of projects, but rather as an ex-post facto assessment function. Hence, within the ministries, as had been the case previously within USAID/Cameroon, the evaluation function is separate from the planning and implementation functions and is generally not seen as a mechanism to improve management or planning capabilities. Through meetings and through the implementation of AID projects and through participatory evaluations, the evaluation function can be better integrated into its sister function.

In addition, meetings with technical assistance teams and their backstopping organizations as well as key target beneficiary groups can be held with key USAID and host country officials to attempt to assure that the

various organizations share the same concept of evaluation and that they can work-out interorganizational methods of carrying out evaluations and sharing evaluation findings.

The Mission evaluation officer or whoever has been selected to facilitate the development of the evaluation system should devise his or her own strategy as to how to assure that the proper atmosphere exists within which evaluation can be conducted and utilized.

References which are helpful for this task include nos. 2, 4, and 5.

3. Evaluation Processes

As noted in this paper, in order to tie evaluation into the management system, responsibility for evaluation should be placed functionally and organizationally as close as possible to the user who will base his decisions on the evaluation findings. This means that individuals involved with implementation should play the leading roles in evaluations. This does not mean that outside evaluators cannot be used, but rather than if they are used that they should not conduct their evaluations in isolation, but rather within the implementation system.

The reason that implementors should participate in evaluation is twofold. First, as major users of the evaluation findings, they are in a better position to assure that they obtain the information they need to improve implementation. Second, the process of participating in an evaluation is often as important as the evaluation findings and recommendations for improving project implementation. This is so because it is often lack of clarity of roles, division of authority, and responsibility, misperceptions, and conflicting perceptions of project objectives, and other misunderstandings which impede project progress. Hence, participation of key implementors in the evaluation

process is essential so that these problems can be confronted and worked out.

In addition, the process of evaluation can serve to transfer management techniques to the host country and also to encourage the host country to take over the direction of their projects. This is especially true of a country such as Cameroon in which the division of responsibility for implementation between USAID and the host country still leans toward USAID. By participating in a group evaluation, the host country can exert its position of authority in the project and gain experience in taking the lead role.

An experiential approach to evaluation is also important in order to measure the attitudinal changes caused by the act of participating in projects. These attitudinal changes are often unintended effects, but may have a far reaching impact on project objectives and may help to transform the development process within a country. Such attitudinal changes are rarely measured in standard evaluations.

Against criticism that implementors are biased against seeking the truth about their projects, this paper asserts the position that the group process tends to keep people honest, if it is conducted correctly. Moreover, implementors are free to and in fact, encouraged to use outside experts to provide them technical information which they feel unqualified to gather, but are encouraged to use these experts as advisors to the evaluation process only.

To emphasize the process aspect of evaluation, group process techniques become key ingredients. All of the project responsables should plan and conduct the evaluation jointly as a group. The group should traverse the standard steps of an evaluation as an ensemble, using whatever evaluation methodology happens to be applicable to the particular project.

Data collection can be performed by the group or by selected enumerators, and the group may wish to split off for specific tasks and then reconvene, or for writing and presenting particular parts of the evaluation results. Through such an experiential approach to evaluation, the implementors actually experience a situation in which they must reorganize and/or reaffirm inter-organizational linkages, project structure design, etc. Such experiencing transforms the relationship much more effectively than reading about it. In addition, the group is likely to be inter-disciplinary and will therefore bring a good mix of perspectives to the situation.

To orchestrate a participatory group evaluation process, a group facilitator is necessary. Initially, the most likely candidate for this task, especially in countries unaccustomed to taking the lead role, is the USAID/Mission Evaluation Officer. Later, as the system develops, this job should be handled by the Borrower/Grantee project manager or evaluation expert. The group facilitator should be trained in group process and group dynamics and should be able to guide the group to solve the interpersonal, inter-organizational, and management problems as well as to solve technical, design, or other problems in the project.

The experiential approach to evaluation is crucial in formative evaluations, but is also important in evaluations of projects with clear designs or in impact evaluations. Here the group process helps to encourage future planning in unison. Group processes for impact evaluations should include decision makers at the program and policy levels.

How many individuals, in which positions, to involve in the evaluation depends upon the purpose of the evaluation and the evaluation methodology selected. Evaluations early-on in a project, which are conducted

largely to clarify roles, organizational relations, objectives, and strategies generally involve more individuals than evaluations meant to measure impact. In these latter, a larger group of individuals can be involved in introductory, interim, and concluding meetings, but data collection and site visits are generally handled best by small groups. Also, early-on formative evaluations usually involve direct project implementors, rather than individuals at the program or policy level. These latter individuals should be consulted if decision makers below them in the hierarchy cannot act on evaluation recommendations.

An evaluation of the Agricultural Management and Planning Project (631-0008) in Cameroon was conducted primarily during six meetings lasting three hours each, involving the USAID project and evaluation officers, the technical assistance team and the key Cameroonian counterparts. As facilitator, the USAID evaluation officer first became familiar with the project documentation and then conducted individual interviews to find out what the various perspectives on the project were, what each individual considered to be the main issues, and what each individual wanted from the evaluation. The evaluation officer categorized the issues and concluded that the major problems in the project consisted of lack of clarity (and hence frustration) of the roles of the technicians within the Ministry of Agriculture, and a lack of clarity and even resistance to project objectives. Moreover, there was rivalry between the two ministerial services involved in the project. The project had not progressed sufficiently to warrant a technical expert to evaluate the statistics or agricultural economics activities of the project. Hence, eight key project implementors were brought together in the above-mentioned meetings and

they evaluated the project following the steps outlined in the AID evaluation literature. Meetings were conducted by the Mission evaluation officer using guidelines established in Sage publications on formative evaluation and principles of group dynamics. Communication linkages were created, roles and project design clarified, work plans written and recommendations for improving implementation. Recommendations which required the specific action of individuals higher in the Ministry of Agriculture hierarchy were discussed in meetings involving the key Cameroonian decision makers, the USAID evaluation officer, and the Chief of the USAID Agriculture and Rural Development Division. Successive meetings were held with higher and higher officials until specific orders were given to implement the evaluation recommendations.

Another evaluation, that of the Practical Training in Health Education Project (631-0009) was conducted by the government itself with the guidance of the University of North Carolina technicians. Here, the purpose of the evaluation was to measure the impact of the project and to determine whether the project strategy could be generalized and applied in other parts of Cameroon. Hence, it was important that individuals involved in program and policy making participate in the evaluation. Individuals from several departments of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy and Plan, the Presidency, UNESCO, UNDP, and the University of North Carolina and key implementors met in a series of meetings to direct the evaluation. Since a rigorous evaluation design was selected using a structured questionnaire, work groups were selected to design questionnaires, sampling plan, etc., and enumerators were trained to implement the questionnaires. After each work session, the work groups reported

back to and obtained the feedback of the core group and involved that group in the evaluation. The evaluation progressed slowly over several months, but what emerged from the process was a modified health training strategy and a plan for its future implementation. Hence, the process assured that the project activities were integrated into the existing organizational structure and that results were channeled into program plans and health policies.

After the experience of these project evaluations, one could begin to see what happens during the evaluation experience and how this experience alters the relationship between individuals and organizations. One could see the difference between these evaluations and evaluations conducted by a sole outside evaluator. Here, the evaluation often contributed to misunderstandings, since the evaluator would sometimes carry bad feelings from one interviewee to another, instead of encouraging improved communication.

Over time, one acquires adequate experience to know how many and which individuals to involve and exactly how to best facilitate the process. Through participating in the evaluations, the host country gets a sense of how evaluations can serve them, and improves its confidence in conducting them. In Cameroon, evaluation before was never seen as a vehicle by which to improve project implementation, but rather as a purely ex-post facto exercise. After a year of participating, the host country counterparts started changing their attitudes. Once their attitudes change, then more specific strategies can be developed to enhance their evaluation capabilities. USAID/Cameroon now includes the development of a self-sustaining evaluation capability as part of its project designs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Smith, Kenneth, Training Guide for USAID Project Operating Support Systems, USAID, Washington, December, 1977.
2. Deboeck, Guido and Bill Kinsey, Managing Information for Rural Development: Lessons from Eastern Africa, World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 379, March, 1980.
3. Deboeck, Guido, and Ronald Ng, Monitoring Rural Development in East Asia, World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 439, October, 1980.
4. Cernea, Michael M, Measuring Project Impact: Monitoring and Evaluation in the PIDER Rural Development Project - Mexico; World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 332, 1979.
5. United Nations, Systematic Monitoring and Evaluation of Integrated Development Programmes: A Source Book, New York, 1978.
6. Imboden, Nicolas, Managing Information for Rural Development Projects, Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, 1980.
7. Churchman, C. West, The Systems Approach, Basic Books, New York, 1981
8. Turner, Herbert D., AID Handbook on Evaluation (Working Draft, as of December 1, 1979, AID Washington, PPC/E/PES.
9. Freeman, Howard E., Peter H. Rossi, and Sonia R. Wright, Evaluating Social Projects in Developing Countries, Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 1979.
10. Smith, William E., The Design of Organizations for Rural Development Projects - a Progress Report, World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 375, Washington, D.C., March, 1980.
11. Klauss, Rudi, "Interorganizational Relationships for Project Implementation," in George Honadle, et al, Development Administration.
12. Korten, David C., "Toward a Technology for Managing Social Development," Development Digest, Volume XIX, No. 1, January, 1981.
13. Miller, Eric J., "A 'Negotiating Model' in Integrated Rural Development Projects," Development Digest, Volume XIX, No. 1, January, 1981.
14. Turner, Herbert D., "Program Evaluation in AID: Some Lessons Learned," Development Digest, Volume XVII, No. 3, July, 1979.