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**DPMC**

Development Project Management Center

An international cooperation and resource center that supports project design and management in developing countries.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of International Cooperation and Development  
Technical Assistance Division**

In cooperation with the

**U.S. Agency for International Development  
Bureau for Science and Technology  
Office of Multisectoral Development**

## **Development Project Management Center**

The center operates under an agreement between the Agency for International Development (AID) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with funding from AID project 096, Project Management Effectiveness. The center's full-time staff provides consultant services and technical materials to institutions in less developed countries. The center also maintains a skill bank of consultants with expertise in various areas of project planning and implementation who are available for short- and long-term assignments. Located in the Technical Assistance Division of USDA's Office of International Cooperation and Development, the center is able to draw upon a wide variety of agricultural specialists to complement its work. In addition, through the AID project, the center has a collaborative relationship with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and can draw upon a wide range of development administration specialists.

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PROMISING APPROACHES  
TO  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
IMPROVEMENT

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"PROMISING APPROACHES TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT"  
A STAFF REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Investments made in most developing countries in the last few decades have not yielded satisfactory results. Lenders and donors as well as the less developed countries are dissatisfied with the outcomes of their efforts. There is a strong consensus that improved planning and implementation is a key element to achieving improved development results.

In the immediate future, the less developed countries face higher prices for energy, large debts and debt servicing, increased population pressures and rising expectations. These conditions make the improvement of project planning and implementation all the more urgent.

The staff of the Development Project Management Center met in Washington, DC for a Workshop on January 15-16, 1981 with about thirty professionals experienced in project management in less developed countries. The participants of the Workshop were knowledgeable individuals from AID, USDA, universities and consulting firms. The Workshop objective was to point to promising directions for future efforts to improve project management.

Three successful efforts to improve project management were examined during the Workshop: the National Planning Project in Jamaica, the Training of Trainers Project in Tanzania and the Provincial Development Program of Indonesia. (Appendix A gives a short description of the case studies of these three projects.) Using the case studies and their own experiences, the participants of the Workshop examined what features contributed to the success of management development efforts and how these features worked separately and in relation to each other. A specific focus of the

Workshop was on approaches to management training which integrate training with the actual work on development projects.

The Workshop was stimulating. The findings on what works and why are of great interest to donors, lenders and host country officials who are in a position to influence the design and implementation of project improvement efforts and management development. The hope is that this presentation of the Workshop findings will initiate further dialogue and analysis that will lead to better project management in developing countries.

#### WHAT WORKED

In examining the case studies and relating them to their own experiences with project management improvement efforts, workshop participants found that the following in all cases contributed to the improvement of project management.

1. Host country personnel assumed responsibility for objectives and activities of the improvement effort.
2. Management practices were modified to meet the needs of decision-makers and were integrated into a project management system.
3. The country organization project management system became the hub of project management training.
4. Various levels of responsible organizations received training designed to meet the specific skill and knowledge requirements for their project tasks.
5. Participants in training carried out project tasks of their organizations in inter-disciplinary teams while being trained.

6. The improvement effort employed a variety of means, each means being used to reinforce the effectiveness of the others.

### WHY FEATURES WORKED

#### Country Responsibility

In each effort, the assumption of responsibility by country personnel at various levels made it possible to tap a wide range of ideas, enlist the support of executive and mid-level staff and obtain commitment to a decisive course of action. While some initial commitment at higher levels was necessary, the process followed by the outside consultants had the effect of building a broader based, focused commitment.

Each effort started out with what the country officials wanted to accomplish. Outside consultants served as facilitators, helping country officials to clarify and articulate their objectives. Team building was stimulated. Activities chosen by officials were in pursuance of their objectives and implementation of decisions was carried out mainly by country personnel. Where qualified host country personnel were not immediately available, priority was given to management development and the training of trainers. To the maximum extent possible, government officials shared responsibility with beneficiaries as well as with others whose cooperation was required.

#### Management Practices Redesigned

Those who planned and carried out the improvement effort identified generic elements which could be adapted and integrated into a system. For example, each project had objectives, assumptions, criteria, etc. Each project was seen as going through systematic phases requiring characteristic types of data. Decision-makers were

drawn into a dialogue on what procedures would facilitate effective decision-making in the various phases of the project. Initial suggestions and procedures were tried on project tasks, modified on the basis of practical experience and systematized. The responsible country officials were the final arbiters. The procedures involved among others: content, formats, criteria and decision points. The pragmatic and participative process followed in creating the procedures built commitment to the chosen management practices and, at the same time, contributed to a favorable atmosphere for future modifications on the basis of constructive appraisal of new experiences.

#### Training Based on Country Or Organization System

Training was designed to enable participants to operate effectively within the country or organization project system. Training was used to orient large numbers of personnel to the new system. In addition, more intensive training was given to provide specific skills as needed, e.g., to plan and carry out projects within the system. Training could be made relatively short and more effective because of the exclusive focus on the skills and knowledge needed to perform assigned project tasks and responsibilities under the approved project management systems.

#### Training At Various Levels of Responsible Organization, Tailored To Project Project Tasks

The organization, not the individual alone, was seen as the strategic unit of change. Operating units at various levels of the organization received training to perform the tasks specified by their program. Training varied considerably depending on the level of organization and the prescribed functions of the participants.

Work with higher level officials concentrated on encouraging decision-makers to explore a wider set of alternatives and reach

a decision on alternatives to be chosen, at the same time building commitment to their chosen course of action. Training at lower levels was more technical but highly relevant to the functions to be performed.

### Training Fused With Project Work In An Organizational Context

A major focus of training was to enable participants to carry out assigned project tasks. Training was most effective when carried out for teams or task forces which were inter-disciplinary in nature and were drawn from all relevant work units contributing to the tasks or projects. This permitted the integration of training and consulting on actual project work. The training and the performance of the tasks were bound together, each impacting on the other. Participants were encouraged to consult their supervisors and other personnel on objectives, criteria, assumptions and other matters, assuring greater relevance for both the training and the work. Because of the close connection of training with their work and their organization, learning motivation was high. In addition, the trainers were put in a mutual learning situation where the relevance and practicality of approaches and materials were tested by immediate, realistic application in actual work context. The major challenge was to give competent technical personnel the management training, tools and systems to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

### Variety Of Means Employed

The efforts to improve project management used a mix of "instruments" rather than a single one. Effectiveness was much greater because, in addition to the effects of individual measures, there was a substantial additional improvement derived from mutual reinforcement by companion measures.

Using procedures in training and actual project work simultaneously facilitated system redesign. Officially approved pro-

cedures with a meaningful rationale simplified the training process. Training motivated participants to learn because it dealt with actual project work assignments of their own organizations. Actual project work was pushed ahead by country officials even while they were attending training. All means employed had the effect of both training personnel as well as moving projects to meet the objectives of the organizations. The visible payoff in the form of actual performance in the project, program, and/or activity had the effect of building confidence as well as competence and served to reinforce motivation.

### CONCLUSION

There was a strong consensus by workshop participants that measures such as team building, systems redesign, classroom training, orientation, training at various levels of the organization and on-the-job or action-training are effective means of improving project management. But the effectiveness of each measure applied by itself is very limited. These measures must be combined in the real organizational context so they reinforce each other and lead to improved management performance.

Those who initiate project management improvement must recognize that to design an effort that is appropriately multifaceted requires the involvement of other relevant organizations. Procedures redesign necessarily involves organizations that have to create, approve or use the procedures. Training and team building has to involve the training organizations and the organizations to which the participants belong. Performing actual project work necessarily involves the organizations responsible for projects and organizations in the environment which have significant influence. Working with organizations in a way which promotes consensus on and commitment to this type of improvement effort calls for multidisciplinary, interpersonal, intra-organizational and inter-organizational skills that are seldom in place. The building of

such skills while designing and implementing a project management effort is a process in which outside facilitators can be of great assistance.

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A P P E N D I X A

## ABSTRACT

### "A Multi-Faceted Action-Training Approach For Improving Project Management: The National Planning Project in Jamaica"

The USAID-Government of Jamaica National Planning Project (1976-1980) was designed to improve Jamaica's performance in the planning and management of development projects as one particular response to an urgent need to facilitate the flow of foreign exchange for the Jamaican economy. The goals of the project were to:

- (1) create a stream of successfully funded and implemented projects;
- (2) train a large number of Jamaicans in project planning and management; and
- (3) create a Jamaican capability to train and consult on planning, appraising and implementing projects.

To achieve these goals, the project was uniquely designed around "action-training", a strategy which combines training with "live" projects so that the learning situation is integrated with actual task (project) assignments in real organizational environments. Action-training is carried out by the Jamaican Project Development Resource Team (PDRT) which is an interdisciplinary, experienced and qualified team consisting of, for example, an accountant, economist, engineer, agriculturalist, educator, etc. This team was initiated through the project and now has assumed full responsibility to conduct an action-training program to move projects at all stages forward through planning, management and problem-solving on "live" projects. The team works in a training/consultation mode to train responsible persons while assisting with projects to simultaneously build management capability and produce positive development results.

The PDRT carries out its training and consultation activities with project planning, implementation and support teams in operational ministries such as Agriculture, Health, Education, Works, etc. Over the life of the project, over 40 planning teams and 30 implementation teams participated in PDRT workshops and over 75 other project teams received PDRT training and consultation assistance. In addition to furthering the work of the projects in question, the individuals of these teams became competent to perform similar assignments on later projects. Because the project teams have "live" project responsibilities, they are highly motivated to learn and to apply the learning to the projects.

Through the project, USAID provided funding for long-term and short-term technical assistance as well as basic library instructional materials (\$375,000) and the Government of Jamaica provided four professionals to form the PDRT as well as office and logistic support (\$175,000).

The initial project design called for the training of project teams on live projects at the initiation of the planning and implementation phases. It was quickly realized, however, that action-training must be accompanied by the parallel improvement of project management systems and the development of effective support throughout the relevant organization. With participation at various levels of the relevant ministries, the existing needs and deficiencies are identified, and project management and support systems are revised. The PDRT has helped with

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the development of project documentation formats, review and authorization procedures, analytic techniques, implementation procedures, monitoring/auditing procedures, and coordination linkages between departments and ministries. These elements of project management and support systems become the basis for realistic PDRT consultation and training, and are further modified during application to live projects to ensure that they are useful and productive.

The strength of the PDRT approach is obvious in the adaptability of both the processes and content of the action-training program to the actual situational context, organizational environments, and project assignments on which the project teams operate to solve project design, analysis and implementation problems. The range of training/consultation interventions used by the PDRT to move projects, to assist project teams, and to strengthen organizational understanding and support include presentations, workshops, seminars, and workshops at various levels of the organization and related ministries, as needs are identified.

The impacts of the project through the PDRT are facilitated by the inherent characteristics of "action-training" which fuses training to subsequent project performance by the responsible project organization and assures capacity for project performance in future projects. As PDRT carries out systems development and action-training simultaneously, they must operate in a manner which testifies to the knowledge and experience of project working team members who contribute significantly to the content, process and climate of the learning-by-doing situation. Thus, the composition, as well as the mode of operation, of the PDRT is critical to the acceptability and success of the action-training program.

The use of systems development and action-training involves a great deal of flexibility so that project strategies are molded to specific organizations, environments and needs but results in visible improvements of project performance. Flexibility of project design and control in the National Planning Project facilitated the institutionalization of a project planning system and other project management/monitoring systems, development of standardized, practical documentation formats such as the Project Profile, diversification of training for different roles and functions, diversification of action-training interventions, and a broadened concept of the PDRT role. The adoption of the action-training approach proved effective in a wide range of settings and was flexible to respond to specific situational differences. It has been critical, however, to maintain certain basic conditions, including the support of key political and bureaucratic persons, introduction of organization development interventions, recruitment of experienced and respected PDRT members, creation of a facilitating mode of operation, encouraging increased decentralized capabilities throughout government, and development of project management systems to support sound project management and problem-solving within the live organizational project context.

The PDRT is presently an institutionalized unit within the Project Analysis and Monitoring Company (PAMCO), an agency of the Ministry of Finance and Planning which plays a central coordinating role in project development for the Government of Jamaica. The actual program of the PDRT will vary with shifting needs and as different problems arise. For example, now as the bottlenecks in planning projects are being overcome, implementation problems emerge which are indicated by the large number of funded projects in the pipeline. Therefore, the PDRT is shifting from a focus on building of a planning capacity in its client Ministries to the complementary nurturing of implementation and monitoring capacities. The flexibility of the action-training approach when integrated with organization development has been proven to be very effective in achieving the goals established for the PDRT. The PDRT now carries on an active program which has already resulted in support to a stream of successful projects, the development of Jamaican project training/consultation materials, a core of trained persons with specific capabilities for planning and managing its own development projects.

## CASE STUDY ABSTRACT

### IMPROVING PERFORMANCE OF THE TANZANIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT BANK: TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN MANAGEMENT

In the current Five-Year National Plan for Tanzania, expansion of production in agriculture and other rural economic activities is accorded the highest priority as a means to national economic and political self-sufficiency. Within this policy context, the rapid expansion of the scale and effectiveness of the credit operations of the Tanzania Rural Development Bank (TRDB) is assigned a key role. TRDB's expanded role in rural development in turn is seen as being directly dependent on an extensive organizational development effort within the Bank. The introduction of a management improvement effort through the Training of Trainers in Management (TTM) program by Practical Concepts Incorporated (PCI) is seen as a means to expand the TRDB's capacity to receive and effectively administer large amounts of loan capital in support of rural development. Accordingly, two six-week Training of Trainers seminars were offered to senior-level and mid-level managers respectively from February thru May, 1980 in Arusha. An Executive Management Seminar (EMS) was offered to executive-level management, including the Chairman of the Bank, during the one-week interval between the two seminars. In total, approximately 70 employees of the Bank (of a total professional staff of 180) participated.

The intermediate objective intended to result from the seminars was agreed by the management training team and the executive officers of the Bank to be:

An increased cadre of indigenous managers/trainers applying appropriate management concepts and techniques to development-related activities.

One aim of the training was to prepare a curriculum for a set of one-week training seminars to be offered over the following year to the remaining TRDB staff. Thus, the groundwork was laid for institutional improvement with respect to both internal operations and the management of credit-financed external projects. Not only would the whole staff be "talking the same language," but the effort had executive-level support and commitment. By the account of both trainers and trainees, the TTM program was effective in attaining short-term results and seems to have helped motivate the Bank staff toward more effective management of its rural credit activities.

The technology employed during the TTM and EMS seminars has two interrelated components: substantive management curriculum and a methodology for the design and conduct of seminars. The substantive management curriculum for the TTM program is referred to as the Project Management System (PMS). The PMS includes an integrated set of management-related principles, concepts and techniques useful in designing, implementing and evaluating programs and projects. The content gives high priority both to conceptual/analytical approaches and human/interpersonal issues within the context of

results-oriented processes. The methodology used in designing and conducting management improvement interventions is characterized by a broad and collaborative reconnaissance of the client organization/environment, by successive iteration of shared objectives and intervention approaches, by a learning-by-doing training mode, and by a commitment to the premise that the most important training results are demonstrated back-home performance improvements.

Implications of this case may be recorded for reflection now and critically assessed when more results are in. They include:

- The PCI management technology, which emphasizes the integration of substantive management content and training intervention methodology, is inherently an effective general purpose approach for application in most management improvement settings, and is a particularly critical element in the conduct of large organizational capacity-building programs.
- The approach of trying to saturate-upgrade the top and middle management strata of a medium-sized organization is feasible. However, the training curriculum must be acceptable to the participants, based on its immediate relevance to everyday work requirements.
- To optimize the impact and probability for long-term success, training interventions should institutionalize a continuing presence of the trainer/experts through the critical follow-on stages.
- It is useful to ponder the possibilities of replicating the results on one organization's improvement program throughout an expanded system of development oriented organizations in a country.
- The technology used in this case emphasized team-building and the importance of cohesive project teams working within public sector organizations to improve performance. We are encouraged that "matrix management," the theory behind the organization of project action-teams, when coupled with the PMS technology, represents one of the most promising lines of future growth of management science.

ABSTRACT  
"Building An Institutional Capacity To Plan  
And Execute Development Projects: A  
Decentralization Project In Indonesia"

Development policies are placing increasing demands on the capacities of institutions -- particularly at local levels -- to successfully implement. The problem is particularly evident among institutions responsible for planning and executing rural development projects. This case describes a pilot effort carried out in Central Java, Indonesia over a six-week period in 1979 to support the institution-building objectives of the Provincial Area Development Program (PDP).

The six-week consultation and training assistance resulted in the training of 15 operational staff from a provincial planning unit and six provincial-level offices of central development ministries to prepare them to, in turn, provide training and consultation to 150-200 district and subdistrict level planners in order to support the Government of Indonesia's long-term goal of increasing decentralization of regional planning. The training at the district and subdistrict levels has been implemented over a three-month period in order to integrate training with work on actual projects.

Given the expectations in the training program and the process of fundamental change taking place within the institutional environment of PDP, the four-person consultant team emphasized process consultation methods as a means for identifying training needs, involving the client institution and participants

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in setting priorities, and the order to build institutional commitment in order to provide the essential post-training support.

Institution-building efforts are complex, particularly when carried out in the context of policy objectives that require new patterns of institutional relationships and behavior as well as a substantial increase in institutional resources at the local level. The growing disparity between nationally defined development policy objectives and the implementation performance of institutions, however, is one of the most critical problems that need to be more systematically addressed by LDC governments as well as donor agencies.