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WHAT WE ARE LEARNING FROM  
THE DETRI EXIT-INTERVIEW PROGRAM

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For those of you who may not be familiar with the acronym DETRI, it is the shorthand label for the Development Education and Training Research Institute of The American University. And, while most of you are familiar with the term "exit-interview," let me remind you that this is an interview conducted with a participant after he has completed his training program here in the United States, just prior to his departure for his home country.

The Office of International Training at AID sponsors a continuing program of exit-interviews at DETRI. All departing participants (except those who leave via West Coast and Caribbean ports) on their return home are scheduled to spend one-half day at the DETRI exit-interview facility in Washington, D.C. DETRI interviews a little more than 60% of all participants sponsored by AID; plans are currently being considered to extend the program coverage to the West Coast and Caribbean port departees.

Today, we would like to present highlights of the results being obtained through the exit-interview and to share with you some of the key lessons which we feel can be learned from these results. Before presenting these data to you, however, I would like to very briefly review the what, how and why of the DETRI exit-interview to give you a frame of reference which will help in understanding and interpreting the meaning of the results.

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The purpose of the exit-interview is two-fold. First, to collect reliable and valid data and information about relevant events and experiences in the participant's training sojourn, and to obtain his evaluative reactions to, and judgments about, these events and experiences. In short, to get the participant's assessment of his training experience. Second, to aggregate and analyze the information and data collected, and then package these results, so that they can be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future training programs.

The exit-interview covers all aspects of the participant's training experience--from his selection in his home country to his expectations about utilization of his training--as well as administrative arrangements of various kinds. The interview does not assess or evaluate the substantive content of the participant's training; this is covered by the AID Program Development Officer or the participating agency Program Specialist, in their final meeting with the participant.

The interviews are conducted under standardized conditions to produce comparable data. The interview technique and instruments we use depend upon the type of training the participant has received. Participants in Academic and On-the-Job training programs complete a written questionnaire. (English language capability is a selection requirement for these participants.) This questionnaire is identical for participants in these two types of programs with the exception of one section which deals with the actual training techniques used. It takes participants an average of 90 minutes to complete this questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaire, these participants also have a private oral interview of 30 minutes to one hour. Participants in Observation

Training Programs, on the other hand, usually receive their training as members of a group, often with an interpreter. Consequently, the exit-interview is conducted on a group basis and is done orally. (Almost 70% of the participants in teams do not have an English language capability.)

Our feedback to AID takes several forms. First, after we have key-punched the information from a participant's questionnaire, it is forwarded to AID where the Program Development Officer, and/or the Program Specialist in a participating agency can review the participant's responses, and write in information which they think is important to supplement these responses. This questionnaire then is forwarded to the USAID involved where it becomes a part of the participant's follow-up file.

In like manner, the report prepared by the interviewer of each Observation Training Team providing their description and evaluation of their experiences is forwarded to AID for the use of all concerned.

Beyond this continual feedback on each interview conducted at DETRI, once a year the data are aggregated and analyzed, and an annual report containing conclusions and recommendations is submitted to AID. The results and recommendations, which we will be presenting to you today, are taken from our first annual report.

As data accumulates, DETRI prepares special reports on specific focused questions. For example, recently a special detailed analysis was made of housing difficulties experienced by participants.

Finally, DETRI and the Office of International Training have what might be termed a "hot-line." Frequently an

exit-interview will yield information about a critical situation, or incident, which--if true--represents something that needs immediate attention by AID. Brief prose reports of these "two-headed cows" are made to the Office of International Training within 48 hours of this interview.

The exit-interview, as an evaluation tool, has been around for a long time--indeed, since Marshall Plan days. There are two important points to remember about the exit-interview. First, although the ultimate yardstick of training program effectiveness is probably some measure of utilization of the training in the home country, the exit-interview provides an intermediate and timely measure of program effectiveness. The exit-interview uses the participant's satisfactions as the principle yardsticks in lieu of ultimate utilization. There is evidence to suggest that this is a valid practice. An overseas follow-up study conducted by AID on a world-wide basis a few years ago, determined that subsequent utilization of training was related to the participant's satisfaction with his training program.

Second, it should be recognized that the participant assessment provided by the exit-interview does not by itself constitute a complete and total program evaluation. Evaluation must include assessments by Program Development Officers at AID, Program Specialists of participating agencies, personnel in training institutions, technical and training personnel in USAID Missions, and host country personnel. However, participant assessment is a necessary, perhaps the most necessary, input into the evaluation process.

Let's turn now to the results. As I indicated to you, participant satisfactions are used as yardsticks. Actually, as we will see, there are several areas of satisfaction. Initially, we'll show you how the participants rated their training experiences on one of the most global, or comprehensive, of our satisfaction scales.

Our satisfaction scales have positions labeled 1 to 7 (on a vertical scale) with only the "1" and "7" ratings being defined. The number 1 rating is defined as "Extremely Satisfied--things could not have been better;" number 7 as "Not at all Satisfied--things could not have been worse."

The results presented in the three charts I'll show you next, are the participants responses on this scale to the question (paraphrased): "Taking everything into consideration, how satisfied are you with your training program as a whole?" The results are grouped in three different ways which we think will be meaningful to you. First, by the type of training program the participant was in; second, by the region of the world in which he lives; and third, by the field of training of his program.

All the results which we will present today are based on analysis of the data collected from about 2400 participants between July of 1967 and August 1968.

As you can see, over 60% of the participants marked their satisfactions in either the 1 or 2 rating positions. We think it's fairly safe to conclude on the basis of these results, and others that you will see, that AID participants are reacting quite favorably on an overall basis to their experiences in the United States. We compared these results with findings from four other

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TABLE 1

THE OVERALL SATISFACTION OF PARTICIPANTS  
IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

SATISFACTION RATING	PERCENTAGE (%) IN TYPE OF PROGRAM		
	Acad	Spec	Team
1	21	29	16
2	45	41	43
3	23	19	26
4	7	7	10
5-7	4	4	5
TOTAL N	(795)	(1015)	(608)

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studies of foreign students in the United States. Twenty-one comparisons of feelings and experiences were possible between our AID-sponsored trainees and the predominantly non-sponsored students studied by these other investigators. In none of the 21 comparisons were the AID trainees' responses more negative, or more unfavorable, than those of the non-sponsored foreign students in the other studies.

Getting back to the Table, you can see that over 40% of the participants interviewed at DETRI were in Special Training Programs such as on-the-job training, about 25% were in Observation Training, and the remaining 35% were in Academic training programs. Special program participants gave more number 1 and 2 ratings, while Observation Training participants less often gave these ratings. We feel this may be due in part to the fact that we're better able to handle ingratiation effects in the Observation Training Team interviews.

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TABLE 2

Looking at these same satisfactions again, this time by the region of the world from which the participant came, it can be seen that participants from NESAs slightly less often gave high (that is, 1 or 2 ratings), and slightly more often gave low ratings than did participants from other regions. The ratings of participants from other regions are fairly comparable. It should be noted, by the way, that there are more participants from the Near East South Asia and African regions than there are from the Latin American or the Far East regions in our sample.

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TABLE 3

Finally, participant satisfactions were distributed according to the field of training in which the participant was studying. As can be seen, about 20% of the participants were in each of the fields of Public Administration,

THE OVERALL SATISFACTION OF PARTICIPANTS  
FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS

SATISFACTION RATING	PERCENTAGE (%) FROM REGION			
	NESA	FE	LA	AFR
1	23	23	21	27
2	38	45	46	41
3	24	21	22	20
4	9	7	8	8
5-7	7	3	3	5
TOTAL N	(649)	(481)	(593)	(647)

Agriculture, and Education.. Less than 10% were in the fields of Industry and Mining, Transportation, Health and Sanitation, and Labor. Almost 3 out of 4 participants in the field of Health and Sanitation gave high satisfaction ratings--that is, either 1 or 2 on the scale; this was a higher percentage than of participants in other fields. The participants in Public Administration, on the other hand, least often gave 1 or 2 ratings and gave slightly more ratings below the middle of the scale than did participants in other fields.

These three Tables give an overview of the general level of satisfaction of participants as they are leaving this country after their training program. As I indicated, it appears that most participants are returning home with quite favorable reactions. However, in each of these Tables you saw that there was a spread of participant satisfaction, thus allowing for improvement. The problem is to determine what factors are related to these variations in participant satisfactions and to identify what goes with high and low satisfaction. To do this, we looked at our data for evaluative measures that we could use as yardsticks to assess the satisfaction of the participant. We also looked for experiences and difficulties the participant had that related to his satisfaction.

In developing the yardsticks, we used 13 different items. These were grouped by a statistical technique called "factor analysis" to form two outcome criteria. These two criteria came from the data provided by the 1810 participants in Academic and Special training programs that we interviewed. The first criterion included the three items presented below.

THE OVERALL SATISFACTION OF PARTICIPANTS  
IN DIFFERENT FIELDS OF TRAINING

SATISFACTION RATING	PERCENTAGE (%) IN FIELD OF TRAINING						
	Agric	I&M	Tr	HAS	Ed	PA	Lab
1	21	29	28	27	21	22	21
2	44	36	42	47	44	40	43
3	23	22	21	16	24	23	21
4	8	6	7	7	7	11	8
5-7	4	6	2	2	4	5	7
TOTAL N	(478)	(159)	(196)	(213)	(476)	(513)	(239)

The first item is the participant's overall satisfaction with his training program. It is a 7-point scale rating from the questionnaire. The second is an item asking the participant to rate his satisfaction with the planning of the program. The third, is the participant's rating of the utility of the training program relative to his training objectives. As you see, the participants' ratings of satisfaction are generally quite high, although the planning satisfaction ratings are somewhat lower than those of either overall satisfaction or the utility of the training.

These three items were combined to make up one yardstick for each participant. A second criterion also came out of the factor analyses. It included the two items in Table 5.

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The first item, which came from the questionnaire, was a rating of how comfortable and welcome the participant felt while in the United States. The second item was the individual interviewer's assessment of the participant's general feelings about the United States. This assessment was made by the interviewers who talked with the participants for 30-60 minutes following the completion of the questionnaire in an off-the-record, private oral interview. These two items make up the second criterion or yardstick which we refer to as the "personal-social criterion."

In comparing our results with those of four other studies of foreign students in the United States, nine items fell into the technical program area. On four of these nine measures, we found the AID participants we interviewed to rate their satisfaction higher than the

TECHNICAL CRITERION OUTCOMESOVERALL SATISFACTION

<u>Rating</u>	<u>%</u>
1	25
2	42
3	21
4	7
5	3
6-7	1

SATISFACTION W/ PLANNING

<u>Rating</u>	<u>%</u>
1	20
2	34
3	23
4	12
5	6
6-7	6

UTILITY OF TRAINING

<u>Rating</u>	<u>%</u>
1	33
2	37
3	19
4	8
5	2
6-7	1

other foreign students, while on the remaining five the ratings were similar. Within the personal-social area, there were 12 items that we could compare between the studies. On five of these the AID participants either had more of the experience or were more satisfied with them, while on the remaining seven the experiences and ratings were very similar between the AID participants and the other foreign students. So, again, the data show the AID participants are well satisfied with their technical and personal-social experiences.

In addition to distributing the participants in terms of region, type of program, or field of training, we looked at categories such as age, education, sex, marital status, and length of sojourn in the United States. These we refer to as demographic characteristics.

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TABLE 6

Most of these data are similar to the findings of the AID world-wide study which was done in 1961 and 1962. The two changes that have occurred are those that you probably are aware of. The participants are somewhat younger now and have somewhat less education in terms of years of study. These changes primarily account for the increase in participants from African nations since the world-wide study was completed.

We took these five demographic measures, related them to the two yardsticks--the technical and the personal-social criteria. The purpose of this analysis was to see if participant satisfaction could be accounted for on the basis of the participant's background.

The relationships between the background factors and the two yardsticks were quite low. The two background factors that did make some differences in both technical

PERSONAL-SOCIAL CRITERION OUTCOMESPERSONAL ADJUSTMENT WHILE IN U.S.

<u>Rating</u>	<u>%</u>
1	35
2	32
3	16
4	10
5	4
6-7	2

-INTERVIEWER ASSESSMENT OF  
PARTICIPANT'S FEELINGS ABOUT U.S.

<u>Assessment</u>	<u>%</u>
P became more positive	62
P stayed same	25
P became more negative	13

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and personal-social ratings were age and marital status. The older married person tended to be more satisfied both technically and personally-socially than were the younger, single participants. However, these were not strong relationships, and we did not feel that enough of the participants' satisfactions were accounted for by demographic characteristics.

Hence, we examined the participants' experiences as an AID trainee, from his selection through his expected utilization. Here we had over 120 different pieces of information from the questionnaire including planning in the home country; orientation, both in the home country and in the United States; living arrangements; money allowances; travel; social-personal activities; certain aspects of the training program itself; language training, and so forth. We analyzed these data to isolate those trainee experiences which related to his satisfaction and which are within AID control. Again, using the factor analytic technique, we were able to reduce the 123 items to 13 separate factors for the Academic participants and 11 separate factors for the Special Program participants to relate to the technical criterion.

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TABLE 7

For both the Academic and the Special Program participants we found three factors that related significantly, in the statistical sense, to their satisfaction with their technical programs. The first was relevance of the participant's sense of his and his supervisor's involvement in the planning of the training program.

You will notice that attending a pre-university workshop and not having English language difficulties, related to satisfaction with the technical program for

DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION ON  
PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED BY DETRI

◊ Age

--Range: 21 to 67 years

--Median: 33 years

◊ Years of Prior Education

--Range: 4-or-less years to 23-or-more years

--Median: 16 years

◊ Marital Status

--62% married

--37% single

-- 1% other

◊ Sex

--87% male

--13% female

◊ Length of Stay in U.S.

--Range: 1 month to 7 years

--Median: 12 months

Academic participants only. Of course, the Special participants don't have any pre-university workshops. English language competence is more important for the Academic participants in a University environment than it is for Special Program participants in our sample. Finally, we found that when we looked at the data from the first half of our participants, satisfactions and difficulties with money allowances did not relate to technical program satisfaction. However, when we looked at the last half of these participants, we found that such difficulties did make a difference. This change in the relationship is probably related to the general factor of inflation in the United States. This finding gives us confidence in the validity of this information about AID money allowances which, of course, are constant throughout the time period.

We did the same kind of analysis that we have done for the Academic and Special relative to technical criterion using the personal-social criterion. The only difference is that we did not break the participants by different types of training programs. We felt that personal-social experiences would not be effected by the type of training program the participant had.

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TABLE 8

We found that the majority of the relationship between the personal-social experiences and participant satisfaction with these experiences was accounted for by two sets of items. The first was discrimination--whether or not the participants experienced discrimination. The second was whether or not the participants had difficulties with their housing arrangements. In addition, we found some factors that were not quite so strongly related,

FACTORS RELATED TO TECHNICAL CRITERION OUTCOMES

- For Participants in Academic Programs (R=+.47)
  - Relevance of Training to Objectives
  - Accommodation to U.S. Life
  - Sense of Involvement in Planning of Training
  - Difficulties with English Language in U.S.
  - Pre-University Workshop Attendance
  
- For Participants in Special Programs (R=+.44)
  - Relevance of Training to Objectives
  - Accommodation to U.S. Life
  - Sense of Involvement in Planning of Training
  
- For Participants in Both Academic and Special Programs  
(Participants Interviewed Last in 1968)
  - Difficulties with Money Allowances

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but that were close to statistical significance. These include living only with fellow nationals, receiving home hospitality, accommodating to U.S. life.

From the results of these analyses, we made eight major recommendations to AID which are included in our first annual report. These recommendations are straightforward and come directly from the factors found to relate to participant satisfaction. For example, we recommend that participants in Academic training programs, who are not thoroughly familiar with university life, be scheduled to take part in pre-university workshops. Rather than go through these general recommendations, we want to mention a few specific suggestions that we think will be of interest to this audience.

First, to increase participant satisfaction with the technical aspects of their training programs, increased efforts to relate each participant's specific training program content and location to the objectives of his program, as he understands them, should be made at his training site. Extensive discussions with the participant while he is at the training site should increase his understanding of the relevance of specific courses, curricula, or on-the-job training should give him a greater sense of their relevance and of participation in the development of the training program. Such discussions will also enable training site personnel to become more familiar with the individual participant's interests, expectations, and background. Immediate and open communication can correct misperceptions and solve problems, and thus improve the feelings of relevance and involvement that trainees have regarding their technical training program.

FACTORS RELATED TO PERSONAL-SOCIAL CRITERION OUTCOMES

- For All Participants (R<sup>2</sup>+.60).
  - Experiencing Discrimination
  - Having Difficulties with Housing
- Suggestive Factors
  - Enclave Living
  - Home Hospitality
  - Accommodation to U.S. Life

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Second, we find that participants generally will take advantage of opportunities provided for social and personal activities in the United States. When such activities involve Americans, such as home hospitality programs, both the participants and the Americans typically benefit from the opportunity to get to know each other. Usually, participants, who are unsure of themselves in our culture, benefit from living with Americans in dormitories or other institutional settings. Unfortunately, the anxieties of such participants often lead them to avoid Americans, and to live and socialize with fellow-countrymen. Personnel at training sites should discourage the tendency of participants to live and associate primarily with people from their own country to the exclusion of taking part in activities with Americans. More social, cultural, and recreational activities should be formally provided for the average trainee who otherwise is less likely to get involved in American life.

Finally, participants should be provided more help and information in making their housing arrangements. We suggest that personnel at training sites provide participants with lists of suitable, available private and institutional housing. These lists should include specific information on housing location, facilities, neighborhood, transportation, other residents, and possible discrimination. During orientations given at the training sites, the advantages and disadvantages of living in different types of accommodations should be specifically discussed. In addition, whenever feasible, reservations should be made in advance for participants at sites where housing is likely to be scarce, e.g., in large cities for participants on short training visits, and at universities where participants will arrive

shortly before classes begin. Whenever reservations are made in advance, participants should be told the basis on which they have been made and be given other alternatives if such are available.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the effectiveness of these and our more general recommendations in influencing participant satisfaction is dependent upon maintaining or improving the high standards of performance at all locations and in all program aspects. If these standards are not maintained, the relationships we have found are also likely to change, and thus the recommendations will not be as effective in promoting greater satisfaction as they otherwise would be. In short, to maintain the generally high satisfaction of AID trainees, it is important to continue the good work now being done, and to try to implement the DETRI recommendations at each training location to the maximum extent possible.