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**Social Analysis
Assessment:
Results, Proposed
Guidelines, and
Constraints**

SPECIAL SUMMARY

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Development Alternatives, Inc. 624 Ninth Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001

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**Social Analysis Assessment:
Results, Proposed Guidelines, and Constraints**

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This report was prepared under contract to A.I.D. to be used for planning purposes in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. Although it does not represent official A.I.D. policy, my strong hope is that the principal recommendations proposed here will be adopted as official A.I.D. policy. At present, the opinions expressed and these recommendations are the sole responsibility of the

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INTRODUCTION

What is Social Analysis?

Social analysis is first and foremost a perspective and not a check list or a particular philosophy about development, although some practitioners would argue that certain key assumptions and values underlie its practice. The most basic contribution of social analysis to development is to challenge and clarify explicit and implicit assumptions -- made by those responsible for planning and implementing development policies -- about problems to be solved and the institutional linkages between proposed policy interventions and their impact on income, asset distribution, employment, the role of women, distribution of power, health, nutrition, the environment, and other areas of inquiry. These assumptions, often strongly held with little empirical support, derive from the donor's cultural background or the more specialized paradigms of academic and technical experts.

This perspective uses in-depth knowledge of a country's culture and socioeconomic institutions, as well as insights from the comparative study of similar institutions in other countries, to help clarify and anticipate the consequences of resource allocation decisions, the impact of introducing new technologies and information and how best to adapt these to the local context, the potential for their subsequent adoption, and the identification of new ways for people to organize themselves to meet their goals and to sustain these institutions over time.

Social analysis may be applied to issues in many sectors; to all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation; and over a wide range of development objectives. Above all, social analysis contributes to an understanding and clarification of relationships -- it helps those responsible for facilitating development to anticipate the way people of all types, conditions, roles, and

classes will respond to new initiatives, whether they are targeted projects, generalized assistance such as infrastructure, or broad changes in the policy or political environment.

The Objectives of the Present Study

Social Soundness Analysis (SSA) is one specific way that one agency, the United States Agency for International Development (A.I.D.), has tried to incorporate social analysis into project identification and design. Although the current practices and guidelines for SSA have their weaknesses, this study argues that the integration of social analysis into A.I.D. work of all types and at all stages is crucial to the design and implementation of projects that are socioculturally sound, cost-effective, and sustainable.

The principal objective of this study is to provide suggestions for revising the current SSA guidelines in ways that will, first, serve to improve their actual use and, second, further A.I.D.'s ability to design socioculturally sound and cost-effective development interventions. This assessment provides a review of the Agency's past experience with social analysis and makes recommendations for future action by:

- Examining the process and effect of incorporating SSA into rural sector design and implementation through a review of the relevant literature, interviews with key participants, presentation of selected case studies, and a quantitative analysis of official documents;
- Applying the lessons learned to the elaboration of new, but simplified, guidelines for social and institutional soundness analysis at both project and program levels and demonstrating the applicability of the guidelines to developmental activities of major concern to A.I.D.;
- Recommending the way these guidelines can be effectively integrated into A.I.D.'s planning and implementation activities; and
- Providing simple, cost-effective methodologies for gathering the information necessary to answer the questions raised by the guidelines.

This special summary will concentrate on the results of the research, the proposed guidelines, and the constraints to their implementation.

Results of the Literature Review

Numerous articles analyzing the role of social analysis in A.I.D.-funded and other development activities have been published by social science practitioners, as well as by development agency personnel. In addition major studies that have been undertaken for or by A.I.D. have examined the quality, relevance, and impact of SSA. There is persuasive testimony to the relevance of social analysis for effective development planning and implementation. A consistent theme in the literature is the necessary contribution of social expertise to the analysis of development problems, to the understanding of social organization, and to the examination of social and cultural factors influencing economic behavior. Based on a review of A.I.D. project impact evaluation reports, a 1985 study argues that many of these projects did not ask questions of social relevance during the design phase and had negative social impacts, both during implementation and after completion.

Based on a study of World Bank projects, another report concludes that the social organization of a project area, in both its formal and its informal aspects, constitutes a crucial variable in the development environment that may remain invisible if there is no social analyst to draw it out. The development potential of group action and traditional social organization is rarely harnessed effectively due to a lack of socioeconomic information during the project preparation process. The consequences may be culturally inappropriate designs and management units that lack the skills and information needed to achieve valid social objectives.

A particular issue emphasized in the literature is the need to relate the analysis closely to the context of the proposed intervention. Past social

soundness analysis has been too broad, often providing little more than general ethnographic information about beneficiaries and descriptive material about the social and institutional context of an intervention. Much of this analysis has not been effectively linked to specific recommendations for A.I.D. and its counterpart agencies in host countries. This is, in large part, a problem stemming not only from the nature of the existing guidelines for SSA, but also from the indifference or ignorance of many project designers regarding the social issues relevant to a particular project or program.

The force of advocacy in an A.I.D. mission for a project under design may create strong barriers to acceptance of information that is potentially damning to a project concept or implementation strategy. If a project has been initiated without benefit of effective information on social feasibility, the safest analysis at a later stage is a broad, descriptive discourse that does not challenge project assumptions or strategies. When this kind of demand for social analysis predominates, the supply is predictable. Unfortunately, such analysis serves little purpose except to legitimate ill-conceived projects.

Social soundness analysis is more likely to influence program or project design if early analysis relates back to the stated goal of a proposed intervention and provides recommendations for addressing identified problems, especially obstacles to implementation. In addition, effective analysis during actual design should specifically explore the feasibility of each goal and purpose-level assumption in the logical framework matrix. A major failing of current social analysis guidelines is the inadequacy of the linkage between the analysis called for and the specific issues of the project at hand.

What the Key Informants Said

Some 40 interviews were conducted with people familiar with the process of social analysis for development planning and implementation. The majority work for A.I.D.; others are with the World Bank; and a third group comprises

of consultants who have conducted SSAs. What they said is consistent with and complements findings from the literature review.

According to one senior A.I.D. officer: "If the Agency is concerned about sustainability, it must raise social and institutional issues. You can't neglect the behavioral aspects." Another said: "There is still, albeit latent, a human face to development in the Agency." A third noted pressure from Congress to show that development assistance has a beneficial impact on people: "How can the Agency meet these pressures, except through better evaluation and social soundness analysis?"

There were many suggestions about the way to do this effectively. A common theme is better integration of social analysis with other analyses. This means not only the relation of social issues to other themes, but also a more interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of decision making and the required behavioral changes at various institutional levels. Economic analysis of cost-benefit factors, for example, should be balanced with an understanding of household decision making, especially as regards consumption and saving.

An important contribution of social soundness analysis at any level of development intervention is the provision of knowledge and understanding about the specific country context. Especially important is the interplay of general processes of development with local history, the environment, and social patterns. However, within the specific country context, social analysis must address the new spectrum of A.I.D. priorities, including such factors as capital markets, trade and market-related institutions, common property issues, and social marketing. This requires a broader set and wider application of social science tools. Similarly, others argue that the analysis of incentives, for individuals and households, is needed, together with the recognition that a number of different actors -- not simply a "target group" -- may benefit or may suffer from a particular intervention.

Several respondents stressed that SSA is inadequate and ineffective in its current form and basically needs to address the following:

- What are the social, cultural, and institutional questions that need to be answered at any stage of analysis?
- Who has the capability to provide the answers?

Thus, whether framing a country strategy, designing a program sector loan, or writing a Project Identification Document (PID), the point is to define the relevant social and institutional issues and deal with them as part of a thoughtful analysis of development constraints, opportunities, and strategies.

This viewpoint was echoed by others, who noted that social analysis -- like knowledge about political, economic, and technical factors -- is at its most useful as background for understanding issues relevant to projects and programs. To the extent that mission personnel have social science background information available and choose to make use of it, social analysis can have an impact on the way projects are formulated and implemented.

There is a consensus within A.I.D. that traditional approaches to SSA are now of limited utility. SSA was developed as a field-level intervention designed to analyze the impact on identified beneficiary groups. With the new focus on central policy intervention, science and technology, and improved market functioning, both the questions and the answers of traditional SSA are seen by some as irrelevant and should be adapted to changing conditions.

The broad, unfocused descriptive analyses that characterized earlier SSAs did not provide relevant information for informed decision making. The present SSA guidelines are too exhaustive and too generalized to be applicable to many current types of project assistance, let alone nonproject assistance. One result is that SSA has tended to highlight a range of constraints, some more relevant

than others, but often failed to offer concrete, practical solutions and alternatives.

Despite these difficulties, interviewers noted that the introduction of the SSA guidelines had a positive impact on A.I.D.'s sensitivity to human, cultural, and institutional issues. It provided interested A.I.D. managers with legitimacy and project development funds to give more attention to social and cultural factors. Moreover, as social analysts became familiar with A.I.D. programming procedures and strategies, they were increasingly effective in bringing social science and area studies insights to bear on project, program, and policy work.

The prevailing opinion now is that virtually all A.I.D. activities call for attention to social, institutional, and cultural questions. The ability of social scientists and A.I.D. staff to raise these questions, let alone answer them, probably is running behind the rapid pace at which A.I.D. programming priorities and modalities have changed in recent years. As a result, there is ample opportunity to update and improve the contribution of SSA to A.I.D. programming, design, and implementation.

If social issues are important, analysis of them should not be confined to the design process. Social analysis needs to be integrated as broadly and deeply as possible -- from as far back as preparation of the Country Development Strategy Statement (CDSS) to as far forward as program evaluation. The argument for the link to implementation is based, in part, on past research by A.I.D.'s Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). Staff there report research showing that project results correlate less with preimplementation analysis than with realities experienced during implementation. Work is needed, for example, on indicators of adaptation, that is, the ways in which a project responds to its setting.

A focus on results and impact, moreover, calls for continuing various kinds of inquiry during implementation, by building relevant data collection and analysis

into the project information system. This process also improves the opportunity for thoughtful social analysis at the evaluation stage. Especially when issues of equity are involved, indicators for measuring social impact should be identified up front, then used and augmented as needed during implementation. This is part of the task of the social analyst.

A major thrust of the interviews is the need to incorporate guidance for institutional analysis formally into A.I.D.'s procedures for SSA. Three priorities for A.I.D. in the 1990s call for analysis of institutions: policy reform and structural adjustment, the push for democratic initiatives, and the search for natural resource sustainability. Development is in large part the interplay of institutions in the community, the state, and the market. Social analysis has contributed little about the workings of the last two -- the state and the market. Yet most projects require implementation through some institutional context. That context must be defined broadly to include entities such as the legal system, markets, and rules for the exchange of goods and services. These institutions and systems are shaped by rules and regulations and by customs and traditions that can best be examined by SSA. This knowledge is needed to inform organizational choices and strengthen strategies.

What the Case Studies Said

Although the five case studies cover a wide range of development activities -- agroforestry in Haiti, local resource management in Peru, resettlement in Mali, integrated rural development in Zaire, and decentralized planning in Indonesia -- certain common lessons emerged regarding the role of social analysis. Among the more interesting are the following:

- Social analysis is most effective when it offers practical solutions and alternatives to potential problems -- at both the design and the implementation phases.

- Crucial to informed social analysis is the recognition of the institutional context and constraints of A.I.D. itself and other participating donor agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and their potential impact on the project.
- Informed social analysis is not a crystal ball that can successfully predict every possible outcome, problem, or eventuality. It is a continuing process that informs the process of implementation. For this reason, social scientists often play the role of broker during implementation -- representing the interests of participants and beneficiaries.
- During implementation, the social scientist often plays the role of catalyst and facilitator with his or her technical colleagues, enabling them to see how the different components of the project fit together and ensuring that initial insights generated during the design are respected.
- During implementation, the social scientist may be called upon to play the role of gadfly, goading bureaucrats and technicians into taking risks and avoiding their natural predilection to adhere to established procedures and objectives.

What the Project Documentation Said

For this study, the working hypothesis was that the better the SSA, the greater the chances of project success. If this was the case, the study would have established a correlation -- not necessarily a causal relationship -- between the two, that is, a project with a good SSA is more likely to be successful than a project with a bad SSA or with none at all.

Two samples were drawn to incorporate the changes in social analysis guidelines introduced in 1982, the first covering the period 1975 to 1981 and the second 1982 to 1989. The universe of potential projects was restricted to those with both a Project Paper (PP) and an evaluation. The second sample also included a PID. The following types of projects -- from Africa, Asia and the Near East, and Latin America and the Caribbean -- were chosen for the study:

- **Health** -- including population and family planning;
- **Agriculture** -- including irrigation, integrated rural development, resettlement, marine fisheries, and natural resources and the environment; and
- **Private sector** -- including credit and microenterprise development.

The social analysis in the documentation for these projects was assessed according to the social considerations briefly outlined in the guidelines. These are:

- **Sociocultural Context:** description of the sociocultural context of the project area, with particular attention to social, economic, and political factors that demonstrate a need for the project, or that will affect project activities;
- **Beneficiaries:** identification of the relevant socioeconomic characteristics of the group(s) the project will benefit -- both directly and indirectly -- as well as any group(s) that may be adversely affected;
- **Participation:** indication of the way the proposed project will promote participation of beneficiaries during project design, implementation; and evaluation.
- **Sociocultural Feasibility:** identification of feasibility issues to be addressed during project development; and
- **Impact:** contribution of proposed project to equitable, sustainable growth, with particular attention to differential impact on men, women, local groups, and various socioeconomic strata.

The social analyses were coded according to the presence or absence of sections on these subjects, not on the quality of the section per se. In other words, they were coded in terms of their compliance with the guidelines. The project evaluations were assessed according to the criteria established and the conclusions drawn by the evaluators -- specifically, the extent to which the project achieved its stated objectives.

The results from the quantitative analysis indicate the following:

- The feasibility component of the social analysis -- in theory the one that takes the closest look at potential implementation problems -- showed the closest correlation with project success. This was true for both samples.
- There was no discernible correlation between the completeness of the social analysis in the PID and that found in the PP. On the whole, the PID analyses were woefully incomplete. This was so primarily because few designers had followed the guidelines. In the two exceptions in which designers did follow the guidelines faithfully, both projects scored above average in terms of both PP and evaluation scores.
- In general terms, several observations are in order concerning both the PID and the PP guidelines: first, the guidelines are somewhat confusing; second, they are not always relevant to the issues at hand; third, there are too many categories; fourth, the categories sometimes overlap and the distinctions between them are fuzzy; and fifth, there are certain external factors in the project environment over which designers and implementers may have little control -- irrespective of the all-inclusiveness of any proposed guidelines. This would argue for a simplification of the guidelines and a specification of the circumstances under which they should be used.
- The Africa Bureau has always placed a high priority on social analysis and the quality -- based on the feasibility scores -- has remained high and is associated with an improvement in project results. In contrast, the Asia and Near East Bureau has downplayed the role of social analysis. This has resulted in lower overall scores on the social analysis, the feasibility component, and the project evaluation. The Latin America and Caribbean Bureau has followed a similar trend.

That the correlation between SSA and project success is not as strong as predicted can be partially explained by the nature of rural development. With the benefit of hindsight, a strong case can be made for the proposition that success or failure in rural development has little to do with the quality of the SSA in particular, or project papers in general, which are basically advocacy documents to obtain funding, not planning documents to facilitate implementation. Some critics argue that serious planning only begins once the PP is approved;

A.I.D. issues a Request for Proposal (RFP); and potential contractors respond with detailed, technical proposals for implementation.

TOWARD GUIDELINES FOR THE 1990s

Proposed Framework for the New Guidelines

The proposed framework weaves together several, sometimes complementary, sometimes disparate, approaches to the study of rural social change in the Third World. In brief, it consists of the following key elements:

- **A Broad Unit of Analysis:** If social analysis is to survive and make a meaningful contribution, the unit of analysis has to move beyond the community and the individual to encompass the region and, where necessary, the nation or state. Hence, the importance of studying the networks and linkages that tie the various societal levels together.
- **The Role of Decision Making:** Knowing the way resources are allocated at various levels and who are the key players, both individual and institutional, is key to understanding how the new resources provided by a project or program are likely to be allocated and utilized.
- **The Role of the Environment and the Natural Resource Base:** Third World countries have a resource endowment that tends to be more natural-resource intensive than do developed countries. Consequently, using these natural resources at a socially optimal rate is critical to sustainable development. Development interventions that address environmental problems can therefore contribute significantly to sustained economic development.
- **The Role of Politics:** Development is an intrinsically political process, whether dealing with the priorities and agendas of the donors, national governments, implementing institutions, or potential beneficiaries. Placing proposed development interventions within this broader political context is crucial for predicting possible outcomes.
- **The Role of Institutions:** In many ways, the focus of development has shifted from the local to the institutional level. Given that much development assistance is channeled through institutions -- at national, regional, and local levels -- their analysis, in terms of policy and sustainability, is primordial.

- **The Role of Sustainability:** This key concept is now applied so generally that it can refer to practically anything since so many "sustainabilities" are deemed desirable: environmental, political, institutional, technical, economic, financial, benefit, and so on. From a practical perspective, sustainability refers primarily to using the resource base in a way that it can support the local population over time.
- **The Role of Values -- Implicit or Explicit:** Certain moral values underlying this approach to social analysis try to move beyond the 1970s concentration on the rural poor to encompass Third World rural populations in general, while embracing the goals embodied in the proposed A.I.D. agenda for the 1990s: economic growth, the alleviation of poverty, sustaining the environment, and fostering the democratic process.

Proposed New Guidelines: Social Analysis for the Nineties

Based on this framework, a set of modified guidelines for social and institutional analysis at both project and program levels is proposed. These guidelines are not meant to be applied to all interventions, at all times, under all conditions. Rather they are meant to be used selectively, with the level of discrimination and specificity to be decided upon by planners and designers in response to their specific needs.

Not only do these guidelines reflect current interests and priorities in the development literature, but they also incorporate the findings discussed above, particularly the importance of sociocultural feasibility, the crucial role of institutions, the need for simple indicators to measure impact, and the value of questioning the key assumptions made in the design. They are summarized in Table 1 below.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS FOR THE NINETIES

Key Components

Participants and beneficiaries

Sociocultural feasibility, the environment -- both biological and man-made, and the natural resource base

Institutions and organizations

Politics; decision making; and national, regional, and local linkages

Indicators and impact

Sustainability

Key assumptions regarding the nature of the problem and the proposed solution(s)

This sequence of components and questions is not an outline to be followed in all cases. It is, instead, a way of looking at social and institutional subject matter from all angles -- so that the analyst progressively thinks his or her way through the relevant issues. Each of these key components will be briefly discussed below and the key questions to be asked by the social analyst listed.

Participants and Beneficiaries

The current guidelines -- at both PID and PP levels -- rightly stress the importance of an accurate description and analysis of potential beneficiaries -- direct and indirect -- as well as potential losers. It is also important to distinguish between beneficiaries and participants, since they are not always synonymous. The draft guidelines for social analysis in Non-Project Assistance

(NPA) give first priority to identifying the targeted population groups. The guidelines recommend that the following population characteristics should be considered, based on their relevancy to objectives and goals of the proposed program: location, approximate numbers, age and sex composition, socioeconomic composition, ethnicity, means of employment, and other data the analyst may determine as important.

The key word here is "relevance" -- the provision of information directly related to the proposed program or focused on a specific development issue. The key questions to be addressed -- and these will vary depending on the nature of the activity -- should include, but not be restricted to, the following:

- ***Who Are the Direct Beneficiaries?*** Their specific characteristics should be described and analyzed, as well as the way their particular needs and interests in the proposed activities were identified, with a focus on the motivational factors involved and the decision-making process at the household level. Particular attention should be paid to location, approximate numbers, age and sex composition, and ethnicity.
- ***Who Are the Indirect Beneficiaries?*** In development activities, various groups are linked with the direct beneficiaries in one way or another -- leaders, business people, government administrators, technical agency personnel, and perhaps expatriate technical assistance -- all of whom stand to benefit indirectly. The analysis should include a brief description and analysis of these groups and how they will benefit.
- ***Who Are the Participants?*** If the participants are not synonymous with the beneficiaries, both direct and indirect, their specific characteristics should be described and analyzed, together with their relationship to the beneficiaries.
- ***Who Stands to Lose?*** Certain groups may stand to lose economically or otherwise as a result of the planned interventions. In the case of a project to divert water for an irrigation scheme, for example, farmers in the area whose land will not be irrigated, together with their laborers, buyers, transporters, and consumers, may be jeopardized by the project. In other cases, certain segments of the population will be excluded by conditions introduced by the project. Where women play important production roles, for example, a project directed toward men -- explicitly or implicitly -- may place women, and perhaps their children, at risk.

Sociocultural Feasibility

The purpose of this component is to describe and analyze the feasibility of the planned interventions in relation to identified constraints and incentives. A well-done section on feasibility is closely associated with overall project success. For the draft NPA guidelines, the focus is on those constraints and incentives that affect the productivity and economic behavior of groups who will be involved: What evidence is there that the expected behavioral changes will be forthcoming, and from which groups of people? The focus should be broader than behavioral change, however, and should address some of the following issues:

- ***What Is the Relationship Between the Local Population and their Natural Resource Base?*** Here the analyst will look at the role the resource base -- the land, water, and trees -- has played historically in the development of the area in question and the way this has affected human well-being. Information can also be collected on people's stocks and assets, the basis for their adaptive strategies.
- ***What Key Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Are Available?*** This question summarizes available information on the current development landscape -- but only to the extent that it is relevant for better understanding the implications and possible impacts of the proposed interventions. Answers may include information on previous, ongoing, and proposed development activities; availability of social services; state of economic infrastructure; and most pressing needs in terms of desired services.
- ***How do People Adapt to Change, Risk, and Uncertainty?*** This question proceeds on the assumption that development is an evolutionary process, that it is dynamic, subject to change, and based on previous experience. By knowing and understanding the way people have adapted previously, predictions can be made about how they may adapt in the future. Of particular interest here are incentives, motivational factors, and decision making -- for individuals, households, and groups. This item is of particular relevance for policy changes that can have severe implications for the local population.
- ***What Problems Are Likely to Occur During Implementation?*** The most common are generally of two types: those that are internal to the planned program and are more tractable, and those that are external and less tractable. The potential problems should be identified and

alternative ways of addressing them outlined. The evidence indicates that policy makers and civil servants prefer to be offered several alternative plans of action, rather than a black and white/either-or scenario. Potential problem areas should be identified and closely monitored during the process of implementation -- a point discussed in more detail below.

- *What Mechanisms Are in Place to Ensure Equity of Access?* Should any subgroups of the population be specially targeted to meet distributional considerations? The draft NPA guidelines emphasize that the analyst should recommend means for ensuring equity of access to goods and services under the proposed program and, when relevant, means to prohibit undue or inequitable access by groups already favored in that society. How can planned participation in the program be strengthened to include the poor or any other sectors of the population who may be likely to be under-represented?

Institutions and Organizations

There is increasing interest and pressure to improve the level of institutional analysis. Various analytical approaches have been proposed, ranging from the more conventional audit of organizational capacity, which examines what the institution has, to the more dynamic assessment of the policy environment, which focuses on incentives, performance, and sustainability. There is also increasing evidence that local organizations of beneficiaries have a key role to play in achieving sustainable development.

A.I.D. has recently issued draft guidelines for institutional analysis at both the project and the NPA levels. The issues identified in the PID are assumed to be important if the focus of the project is institutional development, or if the project has a significant institutional development component. The guidelines include organizational choice and structure, incentives and disincentives, functional linkages, internal organizational constraints, and external constraints. Based on this assessment, the analyst is expected to recommend which institutions to be further considered for involvement in the proposed project or program, how these organizations could be effectively linked for participation in the activity, and issues that should be analyzed in more detail at the PP stage. The guidelines

proposed for the NPA are somewhat broader, more realistic, but considerably more ambitious. These include, for example, the political context, implementation issues, and sustainability.

Consolidating these various approaches and guidelines, the following key issues for analysis of institutions and organizations at project and nonproject levels emerge:

- *Is There a Hospitable Institutional Landscape?* Identify the principal institutions and organizations that will be involved in the program in terms of major decision making, allocation of resources, resource flows, and implementation. Specify their mandate, major activities, and functional linkages with one another. These linkages at all levels -- forward, backward, and horizontal -- are important for the provision of political support and access to resources and information.
- *What Are the Internal Dynamics of the Key Institutions?* What individuals, positions, and/or departments have full authority to make decisions and implement changes? What are the formal and informal processes of communication between or among positions, departments, offices, and/or other organizations? What are the organizational incentives/disincentives for undertaking program activities?
- *What Is the Level of Institutional Capability?* Assess the capability and willingness of the participating institutions to attract and manage resources; conduct research, analyze the results, and use them; formulate and analyze policy; plan and implement, particularly the timing and phasing, of proposed activities; administer programs; resolve conflict; monitor and evaluate; and negotiate. What are the principal constraints to the effective functioning of identified organizations in fulfilling their present mandates? The assessment should specifically focus on the activities with which each institution will be tasked under the planned intervention.

Politics, Decision Making, and Linkages

Three elements -- politics, decision making, and linkages -- are closely interwoven. They are crucial to understanding the social feasibility of a planned intervention since, almost by definition, development is a political process dealing with the allocation of scarce resources in a social arena in

which, unless care is exercised and viable alternatives proposed, there will be winners and losers, some fire, and a lot of smoke. The draft guidelines contain several important suggestions regarding both politics and decision making. All of the approaches stress the importance of identifying, describing, and analyzing the relevant linkages among groups and institutions at national, regional, and local levels.

Under this section, the key issues to be addressed include the following:

- ***Who Are the Major Stakeholders in the Proposed Program?*** Identify and analyze the key actors, interest groups, political parties, and institutions likely to be involved and/or to benefit. This calls for identifying the differing agendas of these elements, specifying the way they complement or contradict one another, and predicting how they and their agendas may affect the outcome of the planned intervention. Is the proposed program politically rational from their perspective?
- ***Is There a Favorable Political Environment?*** Describe the relevant political context in which the program will operate. How does this context constrain or enhance institutional behavior and effectiveness, particularly in relation to the proposed program activities and goals? How does the center respond to demands for decentralization, participation, and local empowerment? To the extent that public responses to reform and other types of programs can be anticipated, a program can be designed to reduce the unfavorable effects that would otherwise foment unrest and lead to overall program failure. But the reasons why such programs can arouse such strong reactions are also important to know since they may throw some light on the more questionable assumptions underpinning the planned intervention.
- ***How Are Developmental Decisions Made?*** For the proposed program and its various component parts, what is the lead organization that has decision-making authority? How does a single decision make its way through the process, whether one or more entities are involved? Is there an informal decision-making process that parallels the formalized procedures? How are actions/decisions supposed to flow and be implemented/taken under the proposed program as envisaged by designers? How can existing political factionalism, communication barriers, and open conflict, both within and between participating institutions, be effectively dealt with for coordinating the implementation of the proposed program?

- *What Are the Key National/Regional/Local Linkages?* Such key linkages can include historical, environmental, political, economic, social, and institutional factors -- but information should be provided only on those that have affected previous development interventions and may throw light on those proposed under the program. Of particular interest are such issues as decentralization and local autonomy, political representation, marketing channels and networks, ethnic interests and rivalries, and the reciprocal roles of economic and political institutions.

Indicators and Impact

The analysis should propose ways to monitor the planned effects of the proposed interventions. This means moving beyond the numbers game of "outcomes" -- number of bridges built, number of people trained, and metric tons of corn harvested -- and predicting what impact they will have. The analysis should concisely and realistically discuss all probable short- and long-term, direct and indirect, impacts from each element of the proposed program on all possible population groups, including both "winners" and "losers." The reasoning behind these impact predictions should be discussed, and the analysis should recommend design alternatives that may mitigate negative economic and/or social consequences, especially for poor groups earlier determined to be vulnerable from the standpoint of access to adequate income, nutrition, and social services.

This section should also include several simple key indicators for measuring impact -- much easier said than done, as demonstrated by the dearth of good impact data. Much more creative thinking and imagination should be focused on the generation of simple impact indicators that can be easily used to measure change -- or lack thereof -- over time.

What is required during the design phase is not simply the identification of simple indicators for monitoring impact, but also ideas about the way this information can be collected. Although the design can sketch the broad outlines of such a monitoring system, those responsible for managing the proposed program should develop it for implementation. The logical framework in the PP

could include a column on expected impacts of planned interventions together with indicators for measuring them at regular intervals. These indicators would have to be simple, updated on a regular basis, and used as a planning tool, not only for monitoring progress, but also for assessing impact and performance -- on a regular basis.

Key questions to be addressed by the social analysis should include the following:

- *What Are the Potential Impacts -- Direct and Indirect -- of the Proposed Interventions?* The analysis should discuss all probable short- and long-term, direct and indirect, impacts from each element of the proposed program on all possible population groups -- including both "winners" and "losers."
- *How Can the Potential Negative Effects Be Mitigated?* The analysis should recommend design alternatives that may mitigate these adverse effects and specify the potential costs involved.
- *What Indicators Should be Used to Monitor Impact?* The analysis should specify simple indicators for measuring impact on which information can be collected easily on a regular, timely basis.
- *How Should this Information be Collected?* The analysis should provide suggestions, rather than a blueprint, about the way this information should be collected. Providing a blueprint for implementers to accept or reject will not solve this problem since they must have an information system that also responds to their planning and monitoring needs.

Sustainability

Sustainability is like happiness -- everyone believes in it and everyone has a different definition. Sustainability covers many dimensions -- including financial, institutional, economic, environmental, technical, and political. In the interests of relevance and precision, the social analysis should carefully define what is to be sustained -- the proposed program, the results and impacts of the program, or some combination of the two. The principal objective should be to generate self-sustaining improvements in human capability and well-being, the

basis of which is sustainable livelihood security. This definition moves beyond institutional sustainability, and all that that implies.

As the NPA guidelines correctly emphasize, the analysis should assess the probability that host country implementers can sustain the program. The guidelines draw attention to such issues as institutional capacity, ability to meet recurrent costs, political will of the public sector, and public support for the program. By the same token, however, the analysis should also focus on sustainability at the beneficiary level -- not so much in terms of sustaining benefit flows, but in terms of providing the necessary economic and political security to pursue sustainability on their terms, where sustainability refers to the maintenance or enhancement of resource productivity on a long-term basis. This calls for identifying specific measures undertaken by the program to achieve this end. These may range from improving land tenure arrangements to encouraging the formation of local interest groups.

The social analysis should address the following key questions:

- *What Is to Be Sustained?* The analysis should specify exactly what is to be sustained once the external assistance ends. This may include the whole program, certain aspects of it, benefit flows, livelihood security, and specific institutions.
- *How Is Sustainability to Be Achieved?* The analysis should answer this question briefly and include information on specific measures undertaken by the program to provide the necessary economic and political security for both individuals and institutions to pursue sustainability on their terms.
- *What Are the Major Constraints to Achieving Sustainability?* The analysis should briefly identify the key constraints -- financial, institutional, economic, environmental, technical, political -- to achieving sustainability.

Key Assumptions

Two interesting pieces of design documentation are the *logical framework* (logframe) and the issues section, found in both the PID and the PP. The

purpose of the logframe is to summarize in one table what the proposed development intervention is expected to achieve. In theory, it should serve as the basic document in the design process -- to be modified accordingly as conditions change.

In the case of the PID, as with the PP, the logframe has four columns with succinct information on program goal, project purpose, outputs, and inputs. The information provided is of four types: a narrative summary, indicators, ways of measuring the indicators, and important assumptions. The indicator column is the most detailed since it contains quantifiable information on what the interventions are supposed to achieve. As a result, the other columns receive short shrift. The first and the last -- the summary and the assumptions -- are potentially the most useful, either for planning or for summarizing what has been planned since they provide a succinct description of the project, together with some rationale for the choices made and the decisions taken.

Although the social analysis should not be expected to question all the assumptions, it should question those dealing with changes in behavior. Specifically, the social analysis should address the following:

- ***Are the Assumptions Concerning Individual Change Justified?*** In many programs, assumptions are made about the ways in which people -- as groups or as individuals -- are expected to change their behavior. These assumptions should be spelled out and discussed.
- ***Are the Assumptions Concerning Institutional Change Justified?*** Similarly, assumptions are made about the ways in which institutions are expected to change. These assumptions should be spelled out and discussed.
- ***Which Assumptions Are Amenable to Modification?*** Assumptions are usually of two sorts -- those over which A.I.D. has no control and those amenable to some modification. The two should be carefully distinguished as they help establish the limits of what the proposed program can expect to achieve.

WHY BOTHER WITH SOCIAL ANALYSIS?

As a Means to an End

It is of crucial importance that A.I.D. continue to carry out social analysis for both specific and general ends. Specifically, social analysis can enhance the chances for success of development interventions at both project and program levels. The sample of projects reviewed earlier -- 77 projects proportionately distributed across geographic regions and functional sectors -- indicated that a well-done analysis of the sociocultural feasibility of the project was directly associated with its success.

The review of earlier studies and the literature pinpointed the necessary contribution of social expertise to the analysis of development problems, to the understanding of social organization, and to the examination of social and cultural factors influencing economic behavior. Many specific recommendations included in the new guidelines are taken from the latest review of the current guidelines. The interviews with key informants indicated a certain level of satisfaction with social analysis, particularly the contributions made in increasing the understanding of the specific country context and the general processes of development with local history, the environment, and social patterns and organization.

The guidelines proposed have, then, built upon this experience and, responding to numerous complaints and recommendations, been broadened and deepened to address the development issues of concern and interest to A.I.D., on the assumption that they will have a positive impact on development performance -- at both project and program levels. This is the specific end of the proposed guidelines for the 1990s.

But there is also a broader, more general agenda -- clearly stated at the beginning of this report. Social analysis challenges and clarifies explicit and implicit assumptions, made by those responsible for planning and implementing development policies, about problems to be solved and the institutional linkages between proposed policy interventions and their impacts. Above all, social analysis contributes to an understanding and clarification of relationships -- it helps those responsible for facilitating development to anticipate the way people of all types, conditions, roles, and classes will respond to new initiatives. The proposed guidelines should strengthen the capacity of social analysis to address these issues and speak to the development agenda of the 1990s.

Although the current guidelines have enjoyed a mixed success, they have provided an entree and a legitimization of social science within the Agency. Without them and the enabling legislation provided by the New Directions mandate, it is highly unlikely that there would now be much social science presence or awareness within A.I.D. That many of those who entered A.I.D. in the 1970s to do social analysis no longer practice it on a daily basis is beside the point: Their permanent presence in various roles and responsibilities -- both in Washington and in the field -- has helped to institutionalize this broader perspective within the Agency. The 1975 social soundness guidelines made this possible and gave social scientists an opportunity to prove to their technical colleagues that they had something worthwhile to contribute to the understanding of development.

The new guidelines must serve to reinforce this process. The quality and utility of social analysis in A.I.D ultimately depend on the level of effective advocacy for it inside the Agency. If there is a demand for high quality social and institutional analysis by decision makers who believe it will make a difference to the success of their programs, appropriate analysis is more likely to be performed and to be used. Without that demand, however, no amount of guidelines will, of themselves, insure adequate attention to social and institutional questions. Equally important, of course, is the supply of social

scientists who can provide good social analysis -- at both design and implementation stages, a point made abundantly clear in the case studies referred to earlier.

The value of advocacy, of course, depends in part on where it is located. In an era of decentralization, the commitment of an A.I.D. mission director to social and institutional learning is especially important. A.I.D. direct-hire staff responsible for specific programs or projects also are in a key position, although the bureaucratic demands on them may limit their freedom to act on their commitments. Perhaps the most important role a project manager can play is to insure a process whereby various analyses are related in the final design, as distinct from being detached and usually ignored -- as annexes of the design document.

This inclusive grasp of the relevant issues is, indeed, a process at the heart of effective management, as distinct from simple implementation. An effective manager needs to be well grounded in knowledge about all aspects of the program environment to fulfill his or her managerial responsibility to transform resources into outcomes with the intended impact on people or institutions.

As social scientists have been hired to fill positions of responsibility within A.I.D., their role is institutionalized alongside other kinds of administrative, economic, and technical expertise. As these social scientists become familiar with A.I.D. programming procedures, they become more effective in bringing social science and area studies insights to bear on project, program, and policy development. Even if outside the direct line of responsibility for an activity, career social scientists can and do play an important brokering role, interpreting social analyses for their A.I.D. colleagues and helping contracted social scientists to understand better the institutional context into which their analysis penetrates. In this way, other technical cadres within the Agency can understand and appreciate the contribution made by social analysis.

Commitment and the "New Professionalism"

Against this must be balanced a perception within the Agency that its top-level leaders have lost sight of what happens to people in the development process, even though A.I.D. management is being pressured to show more concern with the impact of its programs on the people, especially the weak, the poor, and the hungry. The new guidelines provide a vehicle for A.I.D. to demonstrate the reality of this commitment.

The concept of commitment is not widely discussed within the development community. This is so for two reasons. First, analyzing commitment is conceptually difficult and necessarily subjective. There is no accepted means of measuring or building it, and testing its intensity requires a certain level of political sophistication and understanding. It is well known that the principal actors in rural development programs, whether institutional or individual, try to achieve different and sometimes contradictory ends. When these agendas differ, success and sustainability rarely receive priority attention. Nevertheless, commitment to the goals of sustainable development should be a common element on these differing agendas.

A second reason is that commitment is not often associated with national ministries, donor agencies, academic institutions, consulting companies, and other entities involved in development. Strong commitment to goals, particularly to their ethical content, is more often associated with NGOs and is often cited as one of their comparative advantages. Research indicates that some humanitarian and church-affiliated NGOs have invested considerable effort in instilling in affiliates in the Third World a commitment to development goals. There is increasing evidence that such institutional commitment is unlikely to materialize unless there is strong individual leadership at the program or project level.

Closely related to this key concept of commitment, both institutional and individual, is what Robert Chambers has called the "new professionalism." The development professions are concerned with people and, if their rhetoric is to be believed, often with poorer people, particularly the rural poor. From his perspective, "normal professionals" are usually concerned with those who are richer, more powerful, of higher status, and male, rather than those who are poorer, weaker, of lower status, and female. In sharp contrast are what he terms the "new professionals," who have reversed these values and put those who are last first. They see poor people as active and knowledgeable, colleagues as much as clients, individuals from whom to learn and whom to serve in the role of consultant. These contrasting perspectives are summarized in Table 2 on the next page.

Without this advocacy and professional commitment, it is unlikely that the broader agenda of social analysis within the Agency will be realized. Although the new professionalism advocated by Chambers may read like a manifesto for the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) community, the potential of social analysis should continue to straddle both normal and new -- whether in dealing with policy reform and the social implications of structural adjustment, or with natural resource management by people on lands at risk.

TABLE 2

**NORMAL AND NEW PROFESSIONALS:
PREFERRED CONTACTS, PERCEPTIONS, AND ROLES**

Category	Normal Professionals	New Professionals
Contacts preferred with people who are:	'first'	'last'
	powerful	weak
	high status	low status
	educated	illiterate
	male	female
	adult	child
	light-skinned	dark-skinned
'Last' clients seen professionals as:	by obstinately conservative	rationally risk-aversive
	passive	active
	ignorant	knowledgeable
	to blame	victims
	beneficiaries	collaborators
	inferiors	colleagues
	dependent adopters	autonomous innovators
Roles of professional	teacher	learner
	expert	consultant

THE MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL ANALYSIS

The Design Process

Reference was made earlier to the conclusion that success or failure in rural development has little to do with the quality of the social analysis in particular, or project papers in general, since they are basically advocacy documents prepared to obtain funding, not planning documents to facilitate implementation. The design process is long and complicated; it is distinguished by three factors that support this contention and diminish the potential contribution of social analysis.

First, missions are under pressure from A.I.D./Washington to select and package their programs in accordance with the spirit of current policy guidelines. Failure to do so makes projects more vulnerable to all types of technical and analytical criticism. Current development policy is often a mixture of foreign policy and domestic policy priorities. This is demonstrated by the heavy emphasis on strategic concerns reflected in the significant portion of aid designated as Economic Support Funds (ESF), and by the high priority attached to policy reform and private sector initiatives throughout the 1980s.

Second, missions have to design their projects in accordance with complex and standardized requirements to ensure that project designs are in compliance with all the statutory regulations. For example, a completed PP usually contains a detailed project description; a logical framework relating inputs to outputs, to a specified purpose, and to a broad developmental goal; a detailed budget; an implementation plan; a procurement plan; an economic analysis; a financial analysis; a technical analysis; a social soundness analysis; and perhaps an environmental assessment, depending on the nature of the project. But they also tend to "overdesign" by including confident statements about the distribution of benefits, economic return, institutional capability, replication, and sustainability.

Preparation of such a document is costly and time consuming, and calls for a considerable amount of expertise, both technical and managerial. For example, preparation of a PP in Haiti in 1989, for the second phase of the agroforestry project included as one case study for this report, involved a team of 12 consultants. The effort cost an estimated \$200,000 -- exclusive of A.I.D. time -- and resulted in a mammoth, 450-page document in three volumes, which will never be read in its entirety, except perhaps by the consultants on some future evaluation team. Some of the analyses produced were excellent and, it is hoped, will be used during implementation, since the document has already served its purpose -- a justification, in this case fully merited, for A.I.D. to spend an additional \$30 million supporting agroforestry activities.

Third, the use of a project model that has been used before -- often irrespective of the results achieved -- simplifies the process and helps the designers deal with the complexity of A.I.D.'s design and review requirements, the uncertainties of development work, and the diversity of local conditions. As a result, fundamental decisions concerning project design are made at a very early stage and alternatives tend to be ruled out without ever being given serious attention. By beginning with a model solution, many alternatives are precluded from the outset. This makes it all the more difficult and demanding for the social analysis, particularly one at all critical, while proposing viable alternatives, to be taken seriously.

The Implementation Game

Few of the projects sampled in the study were deemed successful -- in the sense of having achieved their stated goals, primarily because of implementation problems over which designers had little control. Many of these problems would have occurred irrespective of the quality of the respective analyses -- economic, social, technical, whatever -- contained in the PP. The common implementation problems are well-known and -documented. But given

their widespread, continuing, pervasive occurrence, they appear to be accepted as a given, with little effort to remedy the situation.

This syndrome is exacerbated by A.I.D.'s increased dependence on contractors for project design and implementation. In contrast with the private sector, federal agencies such as A.I.D. are severely restricted in their ability to use knowledge that is generally available concerning the character and past performance of potential contractors. Although A.I.D. might like to hire contractors with in-depth country knowledge and a flexible, rather than a blueprint, approach to development, it is difficult to establish objective, quantifiable criteria for assessing these qualities. As a result, many key issues identified by social analysis, particularly cultural, social, and institutional issues, are "filtered out" as project papers are transformed into contracts.

For similar reasons, even when implementation is going badly, it is difficult for A.I.D. to change course and, if necessary, change contractors. Terminating a contractor for nonperformance is costly and time consuming, and, thanks to procurement regulations, may take up to a year to obtain a replacement. Midterm evaluations can mitigate this problem and provide a justification and rationale for redesigning a project in mid-stream. This happened with several of the more successful projects included in the sample.

These problems are not one-sided. Host country governments and their implementing institutions often have to struggle with similar bureaucratic red tape. These problems may be exacerbated by certain institutional constraints that severely limit the capacity to implement programs. Among the more common are shortage of qualified personnel, lack of funds for recurrent costs and capital investments, low salaries and low morale, bureaucratic infighting over the allocation of scarce developmental resources, and the prevalence of political over developmental agendas.

Quality Control and Accountability

When an A.I.D. design officer reads the technical, financial, or economic analysis in a PP, the officer can judge whether it is an acceptable document, irrespective of his or her disciplinary background, since these analyses are expected to meet certain standards. Such is not the case for social analysis. In the 50 projects sampled for the period 1975-1981 -- using compliance with the Agency's handbook guidelines as a measure -- only two (4 percent) were judged to be of high quality; 11 (22 percent) were found to be acceptable; while the majority, 37 (74 percent), were assessed as barely adequate. The same pattern held for the second sample for the period 1982-1989.

Various reasons have been given for these mixed results: inexperience on the part of A.I.D., confusing guidelines, analysis undertaken by inexperienced personnel, and perception in the mission that this was just another Washington hoop to jump through in the lengthy process of project approval. One author of this report prepared one of the first social analyses done for A.I.D. back in 1975, and he remembers setting off for the countryside with his scope of work in one hand, a copy of the guidelines in the other, and the best wishes of mission personnel for an undertaking none of them fully understood!

Although all these reasons may be more or less true, sadly lacking has been any quality control over the social analyses prepared and any accountability for the analysis presented, the alternatives proposed, and the results achieved. Lack of quality control is partly the fault of the social scientists who drafted the guidelines in the first place and partly the fault of A.I.D. for letting them remain in the handbook for so long. But design team leaders, consultants, and in-house A.I.D. staff also bear a certain responsibility.

Thanks to earlier studies and the efforts of social scientists within A.I.D., the summary guidelines of 1982 are a vast improvement. These guidelines make

quality control that much easier, as do the new guidelines proposed here, since they let the designer know the types of issues that should be addressed.

Accountability operates at two levels – that of the professional who wrote the social analysis and that of the professional responsible for managing the project for A.I.D. What responsibility does the analyst have for the practical effects of his recommendations? Two assumptions are in order here. The first is that the analyst knows what he or she is doing and is well qualified for the task. The second is that the recommendations will be presented as alternatives to both A.I.D. and the potential beneficiaries of the program, that both will have the opportunity to choose.

At the level of project management and implementation, accountability for project results is limited. This is so for several reasons. Until recently, more importance was attached to designing projects and obtaining the necessary funding than to actually managing the projects once implementation started. Those who design projects rarely manage them and, if they do, are not there long enough for meaningful results to be observed. There is little concept of ownership in A.I.D. projects, except on the part of those stakeholders who benefit materially. In the case of Project North Shaba, one case study for this report, once the original designers/manager had departed, there was little incentive for the remaining A.I.D. staff to prolong their involvement. According to one A.I.D. official, the project – although deemed a relative success – was no longer deemed "sexy." Mission directors report that project success or failure has comparatively little effect on the careers of A.I.D. personnel once they have left the host country for a new assignment.

Lessons that Should Be Learned

A rich, well-documented literature is now available on the problems and pitfalls concerning the design and implementation of rural development programs in the Third World. A.I.D. itself, particularly through its Center for Development

Information and Evaluation (CDIE), has played an important role in disseminating information from A.I.D. impact evaluations of projects, programs, and broader issues. CDIE also responds to several thousands of requests for specific information every year.

But the situation has not changed significantly over the years: There are systematic barriers to learning from experience on the part of both A.I.D. and contractors. According to one A.I.D. interview:

There is also the need to disseminate the results of good social analysis and ensure that they are used. CDIE did a study of irrigation projects in AID to see how well the lessons we have learned about water user associations were incorporated in project design . . . or even thought about. This was a computer/desk study. The results were not encouraging. CDIE found that most design work was done by contractors, but they are not getting the information of this type from CDIE or other sources. Sometimes even the contractors who have done the earlier studies do not show awareness of lessons learned.

One exciting aspect of recent work in Third World development has been the increasing acceptance that development is a process of change, often unpredictable, and that programs are designed and implemented on the basis of limited information -- on the understanding that, as new information is provided, strategy and goals will be changed accordingly. This calls for an admission on the part of the so-called experts, both national and expatriate, that they do not know everything and, furthermore, that they are prepared to learn not only from what works well but also from their mistakes. In other words, development involves the process of personal transformations that can benefit the providers of expertise as well as the people whose livelihoods are improved through projects and programs.

The intellectual underpinnings for this pragmatic approach owe much to the ideas of John Dewey, whose writings have influenced heavily the social learning and process approaches to development. For Dewey, all valid knowledge comes from experience, by which he meant the interaction between human subjects and

their physical environment. Through experience, people come not only to understand the world but also to transform it.

Appealing as this approach is for improving the process of designing and implementing rural development programs, it has some major flaws: its dependence on rationality and the difficulty of discovering error. In addition, the learning approach has to confront A.I.D.'s preference for dealing with simplified models.

How much error are individuals prepared to acknowledge? People, and the institutions they may work for, are not, as a rule, eager to acknowledge error since there may be too much at stake: reputation, prestige, resources, credibility, and authority. But, more important, admission of errors may imply that the values and commitment that led to them were misplaced. How much uncertainty are people prepared to live with? All of us -- Third World professionals and rural people, donor agency professionals, development consultants, and project implementers -- are emotionally and intellectually compelled toward certainty, control, and anticipation.

The second flaw arises from the fact that it is not always clear when an error has been committed or the nature of the error itself. Who identifies the error and who decides the way it will be resolved?

The use of simplifying models by A.I.D. rests on the assumption that the problem being addressed is similar to one addressed previously and that the earlier project was successful in meeting its objectives. Irrespective of their basis in reality, these models provide the personnel of donor agencies with a common approach and rationale for what they are doing. Like religious dogma, development models are not challenged easily by factual evidence of failure because they provide a rationale for explaining away their apparent lack of success and for shifting the blame to others.

Nonetheless, these constraints can be mitigated to a certain extent. The key to increasing A.I.D.'s ability and willingness to make better use of social analysis and social analysts is to persuade Agency management that bringing qualified experts into planning, design, implementation, and evaluation processes is to be strongly encouraged. Their involvement will blunt criticism, avoid wasting time and money, and increase the effectiveness of the program.

If social analysis is to fulfill its potential, it must focus on A.I.D.'s perception of development problems and propose alternative solutions. If the analyst begins by examining the genesis of the problem in its social, cultural, and historical context and investigates the way differing interested groups perceive the problem -- if at all -- the findings will be of direct relevance to A.I.D. The analyst will still have scope for following promising leads. Descriptive questions, in contrast, are as unbounded as they are open-ended.