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CREATING A STUDIES DIVISION IN AID

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APPENDICES A, B, C, and D: submitted separately

I. THE PROBLEM

Technical assistance involves complicated judgments about the likely effects of alternative projects. Technical and economic aspects of projects must be considered, and in addition there is increasing concern over the assessment of the social, institutional, and environmental effects of development projects. These are all dimensions of a project's success; they are also dimensions along which causal and conditioning factors must be judged.

Various sorts of policy decisions require informed judgments about these many variables. When a project is designed in the field or approved in the central office, when Congress is approached for additional funds, when regional bureaus allocate funds across countries or across program activities, when staffing decisions are made, and when new directions are considered: under all these conditions, it is important to know what sorts of activities lead to what sorts of results under what sorts of circumstances.

Social scientists, and policy analysts, should be able to help provide such information, which then can be used by policymakers to inform their choices. Critics of U.S. development programs contend that the Agency for International Development (AID) has not done a good job in marshalling the

wisdom of the Agency's own experience. AID is often accused, even by its own officials and its friends in Congress, of lacking an "institutional memory." Judith Tandler argues that the Agency's self-education should be placed among its most important objectives:

*critical intellect in a position
what have you learned*

The task of development assistance, then, involves not only "doing." An essential portion of it has to do with learning..... If, however, a good part of the task is learning and adapting, then a good part of the burden rests on the organization and not the individual: he will not be better at development, no matter what his training, unless the organization is set up in a way that requires learning as an output.¹

Some of AID's top policymakers have voiced a similar concern.

intellectual craftsmanship

In general, then, the problem is how to obtain and to use knowledge (concepts and facts) that is relevant to AID's many sorts of policy decisions. It is not a new problem, nor is it a narrow one. In fact, as shall be described in detail below, the Agency now has several mechanisms for acquiring information about ongoing activities and proposed policy areas, ranging from evaluations of existing projects to extra-mural research on the development process in general. Some of this existing work is quite good; some of it is not; but leading experts in the Agency in charge of evaluation or of research lament the lack of utilization of their products. Part of the problem is surely, as Tandler and others have argued, that insufficient incentives exist within the organization for

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individuals to use what is learned. But part of the problem may also be that there is currently lacking a highly placed office whose job would be to take the best of social science and policy analysis relevant to AID and give it to top policy-makers in usable form.

This idea was one of the motivating forces behind the plan to create a new "studies division" within the Bureau of Policy and Program Coordination (PPD). High-level officials approve of the new office as a means of learning from AID's experience--and the experience of other agencies and the findings of social scientists.

This report addresses several issues that face the new office. How should the office think about its multiple objectives? How should it gauge constraints and costs, so that its activities are appropriate and economical? What sources of information and expertise within AID might the office tap? What kinds of studies might be undertaken? How can the office ensure that the results of its studies make a difference within the Agency?

These are, of course, questions about which AID officials, especially those connected with the new office and with PPC, have thought a great deal. This report does not pretend to substitute for these people's considered judgments. Rather it

is hoped that an outside look at some of the broad issues facing the new office will be a useful stimulus to the involved personnel. The report stresses alternatives of a broad sort, rather than attempting to make particular, narrow recommendations, which are only possible given the detailed knowledge of the insider.

II. THINKING ABOUT OBJECTIVES

The office's studies can be thought of as having several objectives. Foremost among them is influencing AID's decisions, both in Washington and in the field, both on projects and on programs. It is presumed that increased knowledge and information at the right times and to the right people will improve the actions AID takes. Studies may affect the estimation of parameters in particular decisions (eg, the effect of an irrigation project on rural poverty, or the importance of domestic training programs in projects dealing with rural health delivery systems). Studies may also affect the choice of parameters to be evaluated (eg, a study may show that the most important variable affecting irrigation concerns the concentration of water on a few, high-yielding areas, rather than its spread over the largest possible number of farmers--a variable often overlooked; or a study may suggest that the most important design consideration in a malaria eradication effort is the rural health system, a variable that is sometimes thought less important). Studies may also have a sort of training function: those who work on studies, and those who read them, are influenced by the methods and the detail as well as by the actual findings. Decisions may not be affected in the short

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2) *W. H. Hays*

run by a study, but the study may nonetheless have served a long-run purpose well worth its cost. (A particular application of this point, the use of studies in AID's formal training programs, is elaborated below.)

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1 Studies have a second objective: affecting the decisions of others outside AID. In particular, Congress is playing an increasingly active role in setting Agency policy. Sometimes Congress's interests and concerns are beneficial; at other times, they seem to be incidental and not worth the cost of satisfying them. (For example, there are now more than 100 Congressional concerns on which AID must report and which all loans must heed.) Studies may perform two functions, in this context. First, they may satisfy Congress's particular demands for information. Second, they may educate Congress in such a way that less important informational requirements are eventually given less importance. Congress may learn more about the aid-giving process and the problems of development that lead it to give more funds to AID, or to stress different sorts of activities, or not to stress dimensions of the problem that turn out to be incidental.

2 Another potential beneficiary of studies might be officials in developing countries. Knowledge, after all, is a public good. Once produced, policy-relevant studies might be useful to present and future consumers outside the U.S.

government. It is said, for example, that the most important beneficiaries of AID's mammoth studies of farm credit have been officials in LDC's--more so than AID's own officers. The appropriate dissemination of studies becomes important, when this objective is taken seriously.

A third objective of studies goes beyond the development of information. Methods may also be created, tested, and refined. For example, there is increasing emphasis in AID on the incorporation of social assessment into the design and evaluation of development projects. Unfortunately, the techniques for doing such assessments are not well understood, and convincing examples of social assessment (including an appraisal of its costs and benefits under various circumstances) are rare. An office dedicated to producing issue-oriented studies could plausibly also have an important contribution to make in the area of methods--which ones to use and how to use them.

Finally, it is not inconceivable that studies would affect the decision-making process within AID. For example, a study may examine, directly or indirectly, how AID's own procedures and structure affect the outcomes of development projects. This knowledge may lead to recommended changes in those procedures. Another example might involve changes in the way the project approval system operates, given that new

Ed Riegelhaupt

knowledge on particular problems is available. Thus, the presence of new information during the decision-making process for projects might lead to the elimination of steps, the inclusion or exclusion of particular actors, the creation of incentives or constraints, or the alteration of the internal balance of power within the organization.

In summary, then, the objectives of the new office should be considered broadly: affecting decisions within AID (in Washington and in the field, at the project and the program level), providing relevant knowledge to Congress and to host countries, developing and exemplifying techniques of social impact analysis, and affecting the process by which decisions are made within AID.

III. THINKING ABOUT COSTS AND CONSTRAINTS

The new office as tentatively planned faces important constraints. The most important ones involve time and money. Others include information and techniques.

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A first consideration is time. The new office plans to reply on some staff members brought in for two or three year terms. These people will provide fresh insights and energy, but their relatively short tenures in AID puts a short time fuse on the office's studies. Furthermore, pressures for decentralization and decreasing the proportion of AID staff in the central office will lead to hard looks at the activities of Washington-based staff. Short-run activities may look better than those with a longer time horizon. Social science studies frequently involve a number of years to complete. There is likely, therefore, to be a tension between the short time-frame imposed by AID's needs and some of the staff's short tenure in the Agency, on the one hand, and the longer time-frame usually associated with social science research. In planning the office's activities, it will be of crucial importance to keep this possible tension in clear view.

(The implications of this and other costs and constraints on particular strategies open to the new office will be dis-

cussed below.)

A second constraint concerns the funds available to the new office. Tentatively, certain figures have already been proposed and may be considered as upper bounds on the resources the office will have at its disposal: five or six professionals and about \$1 million annually in funds for external research and travel. These are enough resources to accomplish much of great value. However, if one takes the perspective of the number and difficulty of AID policy problems that the office might tackle, clearly the funds and manpower look inadequate. It is obvious that important choices will need to be made concerning the comparative advantage of the new office. Evidently, too, no massive, all-encompassing project is likely to make sense. (For example, it would be easy to eat up five professionals and a million dollars a year on a detailed field study of one important development issue; but this course would not seem wise for a new office located within PPC.) Plans for the new office must also take account of the time lags inherent in hiring new staff of the desired quality. Probably it is not incorrect to assume that the office will not be fully staffed until the summer of 1978; and some period after that time must be allowed for staff members to acclimatize themselves. Here the constraints of time and resources merge.

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A third constraint involves information. As will be discussed in detail below, there are already numerous activities within the Agency that will be good sources of information for the new office. But, in many ways, the information will turn out to be a limitation. True, there is an evaluation system in place for AID's 1600 projects; but by the admission of the evaluation office, the quality of the data in the evaluations--as well as the quality of the actual use of the AID's theoretically sound system of evaluation--leaves much to be desired. In short, the new office cannot count on 1600 existing case studies to use as its data base. In many cases, existing evaluations will be useful, as will studies done by other donors and by academics. But the office may discover all too often that it needs to develop its own new information relevant to its problems. Because of the constraints on resources to develop new information, the choice of topics to study may be constrained in many cases to areas where information is already relatively plentiful.

Finally, there are limitations in the readily available techniques for evaluation, especially in the area of social assessment. Professor Mark Thompson provides a fascinating review of relevant evaluative methods in a companion piece to this report. Regarding social assessment, a detailed review falls outside the scope of this paper, but several remarks

may be advanced. Recent efforts to do social assessment and international comparisons have not proved promising. For example, we reviewed the recent OECD volume, Policies for Innovation in the Service Sector--Identification and Structure of Relevant Factors (Paris, 1977, 235 pages). Six years ago, OECD commissioned this massive research effort to locate "what was known about innovation in general, how the characteristics of the service sector influence innovation therein...[and] significant gaps in current knowledge about innovation in the service sector" (p. 8). The book admits its failure to come up with many guidelines for understanding the social and institutional factors that affect innovation:

The inability to carry out as full and thorough an examination of innovation as was originally intended will no doubt leave some readers with unfulfilled expectations. Another [problem with the research] is the dilution of focus through absorption in detail...[I]nnovation becomes so complex as to cause confusion and where socio-cultural differences make comparison of experience difficult if not impossible. (p. 10)

Despite 35 case studies and the contributions of eminent social scientists, the book concludes with a lengthy chapter of perfectly obvious (and unhelpful) maxims about change. (For example, "Innovation is dependent on flexibility;" "Uncertainty of consequences and assumption of

risk are important determinants of innovation;" "Many innovations appear to be incremental in nature;" "Innovation requires personal incentives;" and so forth.)

This is not an isolated failure of the assessment of the social and institutional components of successful projects. Several other examples may be adduced from recent literature:

It was recognized early in the design deliberations that finding the relationship between health and poverty, or more precisely, medical care delivery and social functioning was just not feasible within the current methodology.²

[The problems of social assessment include] setting objectives, developing measures of these objectives, designing methodological approaches to collecting needed data and providing evaluation within a secure place in the policy-making process. No easy and readily available answers were possible in any of these cases.³

Comparative policy analysis.. [has] a number of practical as well as theoretical problems which cast some doubt, not on the utility of comparative policy analysis but on its feasibility. [These problems include] too many variables, intranational diversity, measuring national government commitment--ratios of responsibility, value biases, [and] data reliability.⁴

In other words, there are methodological limitations to the study of the social and institutional dimensions and causes of "success" of projects. These limitations mean that the new office has the opportunity to provide a signal service if it can develop the tools to do such

social assessments and evaluations. But it also means that considerable care must be taken, since the task is not simply to apply well-known tools.

In summary, the new office must carefully consider the constrained situation in which it will be operating. Studies must be timely, perhaps even quick; they must also be relatively inexpensive. Existing information must be used whenever possible, which may not turn out to be as often as one would have hoped. Finally, the sorts of studies that an office of socio-economic impact assessment, or issue-oriented studies, might do are not easy, methodologically speaking. These costs and constraints are not prohibitive, but they deserve considerable emphasis in the planning of the office's activities.

IV. ISSUE-ORIENTED STUDIES IN AID

There are many kinds of studies that the new office will not be interested in undertaking. For example, the office will not wish to spend all its time evaluating individual projects, nor desire to monitor expenditures of various kinds across bureaus. Instead, the office hopes to do issue-oriented studies using the techniques of social science and policy analysis. To this author, "issues" are broader than projects but narrower than sector studies or studies of AID policy towards particular sectors. One can crudely conceptualize issue-oriented studies using the following matrix:

	Project	Country	Region	Functional or Tech Area	Sector
Inputs					
Outputs					
Purposes					
Goals					

←————→

Studies above the project level, but below the sector level, might attempt to derive generalizations that hold across projects, with regard to inputs, outputs, purposes, and/or goals and the linkages between them. For example, one might choose as a functional or technical area "irrigation systems," and one might examine the AID record over many projects,

countries, and regions to find out what combinations of inputs seem to work best to produce certain outputs. A study of this kind might plausibly look beyond AID's own experience to examine the record of other donors and to obtain guidance from academic literature on the subject.

Given this sort of rough definition of "issue-oriented studies," what efforts are various parts of AID already making in this area? What resources are available for the new office to draw upon? What are the lessons of experience in doing such studies, using different approaches, time frames, and amounts of resources? When are such studies most likely to make a difference to Agency policymaking?

Operations Appraisal Group

In the Adjutant General's office is OAS, a seven-person group of senior AID officials who carry out special studies at the behest of the Administrator, the Deputy Administrator, and other high officials. OAS conceives of itself as providing "oversight studies," which OAS chief Donald Finberg distinguishes from audits and from evaluations. The idea is to provide an independent look at programs, country programs, and occasionally individual projects. Six to eight studies are done per year; most are examinations of particular missions and their programs.

Others of these studies, however, look very much like

issue-oriented studies. We estimate about a sixth of OAS's activities to fall in this category. A recent example is a proposed study of the Housing Investment Guarantee Program, which will attempt to derive lessons from AID's world-wide experience and to suggest what should now be done. OAS is also considering a World Bank-style review of a cross section of AID projects, which would be done on an annual basis.

Get some of these

OAS's strong suit analytically is the rich experience of its staff, most of whom are former mission directors. Two qualified economists serve on its staff. The office is able to use the tools of management science and the lessons of first-hand managerial experience to provide studies for the direct use of the Administrator and his office. It is not inconceivable that the new "studies division" within PPC might profitably do joint studies with OAS. For example, on OAS's study of the Housing Investment Guarantee Program, at the same time that OAS would study the administrative and managerial aspects of the program, the new office in PPC could examine the distributional effects, which would no doubt require the inputs of social scientists.

TA/RD

In the uncertain climate of the current AID reorganization, we write without the knowledge of whether TA/RD still exists as such. Nonetheless, it is assumed that its func-

and its personnel are to be found somewhere, more or less intact, inside the Agency as reorganized.

TA/RD does work that is very relevant to the new office.

X (The office contains an amalgam of social scientists trying to initiate, through external funding and some internal work, studies of rural development. Recent research proposals, often approaching a million dollars, include provisions for state-of-the-art papers on what social scientists know about particular issues, data collection and field research, conferences and "networking" efforts, and even ex post evaluation of AID's projects in the area under study.

TA/RD funds so much extramural research, and its staff is so predominately ex-academics, that it is not surprising that its approach to rural development problems, and its audience, has been seen by others in AID to be the academic community, rather than the Agency itself. This is not to say that much of the research done is not of high quality and of potential usefulness to AID decision-makers. Rather, as TAB in general seems recently to have emphasized, TA/RD neglected to build bridges to the field and to the regional bureau technicians--until very recently. There have been strong efforts to disseminate the findings of contracted research; this year, the R&D Committee in charge of TAB's research involved the regions extensively, resulting in about 90 percent of TAB's 114 PIDs being rejected or sent

back; and there used to be conferences involving AID technicians in sub-fields. Nonetheless, there is considerable consternation over TA/RD's apparent inability to link its research findings into the AID decision-making process.

Perhaps the new office in PPC can take advantage of TA/RD's research and attempt to make it more policy relevant. One might conceive of a "brokerage" function for the new PPC office: taking existing social science research like that done under TA/RD auspices and "translating" it and "brokering" it to high-level decisionmakers and to Congress. The supply and the demand have not yet been effectively equilibrated. One finds, simultaneously, evidence of fine social science research on important topics in rural development, along with evidence of unsatisfied demand at the Assistant Administrator level, and in Congress, for similar sorts of research results. The new office might be the interface, the conduit, or the broker--depending on which metaphor one prefers. (This alternative will be examined again, in somewhat more detail, later in the report.)

Appendix, by Kathryn Hyer, provides a summary of AID's external research and its relevance to the new office in PPC.

Regional Bureaus

The regional bureaus, especially the one for Latin America, have carried out a number of inter-country studies of the factors leading to success or failure of specific kinds of projects. Of 120 special evaluations that have been abstracted and were made available to us, we reviewed 35 that looked like what we have called "issue-oriented studies." (The others tended to be mid-course or end-of-project studies of particular projects, rather than issue-related research involving more than one project.) Finally, eight inter-country studies were reviewed to estimate their analytical quality, focus on decisions and policy-relevant questions, and eventual effects on policies and projects.

Most of the inter-country studies were ex post reviews of similar projects. These studies were carried out by reading files, interviewing officials from the Agency and from the host governments during a very brief field visit, and returning to Washington to write up a study. The techniques would not be too familiar to discriminating academicians; rather, they seem almost journalistic. The techniques are designed to glean the available facts in an expeditious manner.

These techniques entail certain results. Ex post

studies by and large have ended up describing what some people think happened during a project. There is very little analysis: no discussion of why something happened, unless the discussion is based on available lore or the author's personal opinion. This shortcoming is not due to a lack of intelligence or good will by the evaluators. Rather, the limitations of existing information--in particular, the lack of data and the weakness of most projects' logical frameworks (GPOI)--necessarily preclude analysis of the sort social scientists teach.

Moreover, the journalistic nature of the ex post exercises means that the evaluations are often tangential to current decisions or future possibilities for AID. They tend rather to be (quick and dirty) histories. Most studies do not begin with a set of questions based on policymakers' needs. There is no uniform format within a regional bureau to describe, even roughly, how ex post evaluations should be carried out: what the key issues are, what the main empirical questions are perceived to be, how to carry out research on definable types of questions, and so forth. As a result, each investigation proceeds on its own. To some extent, this is desirable; it gives flexibility; and after all each issue is different. But, empirically, the result has too often turned out to be somewhat idiosyncratic, non-analytical,

and journalistic. Studies have ended up being of little practical use: because they do not penetrate deeply enough, in part because of data limitations; and because they are not guided enough with policy questions and methodological suggestions.

These conclusions emerged also in a 1975 evaluation within the Latin American bureau (by R.W. House). House assessed the responses of Mission heads to a questionnaire asking about the usefulness of the bureau's first three issue-oriented studies ("program evaluation studies") and interviewed officials in AID/W and in other donor agencies about their use of the studies. House said it was hard to find anyone who had read the studies (p.9). He also pointed out that the studies had failed to live up to their promise or their objectives. They had failed by and large to provide policy-relevant conclusions, or even believable analyses. Instead, there were descriptions of what had happened. The descriptions were themselves problematic, since they were based on memories and impressions, rather than on tightly reasoned and well-documented project evaluations a la the GPOI system.

House's conclusions were hopeful and incremental. Most people he interviewed, and most Mission directors, believed that issue-oriented, inter-country studies were potentially

useful. Any such studies badly need summaries; translations of summaries, and occasionally of entire reports, are also advisable. There was disagreement about the dissemination of evaluative studies to host countries. Frequently, forthright evaluations might embarrass the United States or outrage the locals, it was argued.

A detailed assessment of one ex post, cross-country evaluations is found in Appendix B.

Development Information Service

The DIS was established a year and a half ago as a means of solving AID's problem of a lack of an institutional memory. DIS has an ambitious program of summarizing and storing different sources of information related to development issues. It draws on past AID projects, based on summary statements of project design and performance; it also is linked with data banks and bibliographical services outside the Agency. In principle, DIS's aim is to provide a fast and useful summary of past projects and current literature that may be relevant to a project being contemplated. It will, therefore, lead desiring AID officials, both in the field and in Washington, to documents relevant to issues under consideration.

DIS may try to do more. Rather than settling for the useful role of bibliographical advisor, DIS may attempt to

to enter substantively into the discussion of development topics. Of course, an intelligent bibliographer will enter substantively in any case, through his choice of recommended readings. DIS also screens AID projects before entering them into the computer bank -- only projects with what are considered to be good quality evaluations are entered. DIS provides its own summaries of some outside literature, which again requires substantive skills. However, these duties are one step removed from actually taking the materials (projects, journal articles, and so forth) and drawing substantive conclusions relevant to project design or other policy decisions.

DIS's summaries are good, fast, and inexpensive. We were impressed by the potential utility of this service to personnel in the field, technicians in the regional bureaus, and even top policymakers. As we shall describe in more detail below, we believe that the new office in PPC might dovetail well with DIS's informational function. DIS might provide the summaries and listings of relevant materials, and the new office, with its social scientists, might go the next step to make substantive recommendations to concerned policymakers. DIS now considers its most important consumers to be in the field -- technicians interested in project design. The new office in PPC might help broaden DIS's clientele.

A description of DIS and several other information banks within AID is provided in Appendix C, by Timothy McNeill.

Table 1 summarizes some pertinent facts about these four institutional sources of issue-oriented studies in AID.

There are or have been other attempts to do issue-oriented research within AID. One of the largest efforts was the Administrator's Spring Review. These annual studies were terminated in the mid-1970's, because they were apparently felt to be too large and too expensive. (Last year a sort of successor to the Spring Review was undertaken, with considerably more modest resources.)

The largest of the Spring Review concerned agricultural credit. It spanned many volumes, including field studies and theoretical discussions; its authors included some of the world's leading experts on the subject. It is highly regarded among academics (Peter Timmer of Harvard believes the study had a significant impact in academic communities in the United States and abroad). However, its impact on AID policy is controversial. Interviews inside the Agency revealed quite different opinions about the effect the study had on AID projects, ranging from "none" to "significant." Dr. Donn Block of PPC has agreed to examine this question in a study simultaneous to this one. Dr. Block will examine a series of agricultural credit

Table 1
EXISTING SOURCES FOR
ISSUE-ORIENTED STUDIES IN AID

Name	Focus	Methodology	Consumer
OAS	"Oversight" studies	Management science	Administrator
TA/RD	Academic research problems, rural development	Social science	Academic community; trying to get Reg. Burs.
Regional Bureaus	Ex post reviews of projects	Field visits, existing evaluations	Regional field offices
DIS	Info for project design	Computerized compilation of abstracts	Field offices

projects before and after the Spring Review, to attempt to find evidence that the Review affected project design.

In summary, we find within AID a surprising amount of activity in the general area of international studies of specific AID issues. There is a considerable, if diverse, body of information on which such studies may draw. (We have not discussed the appropriateness of existing project evaluations as the baseline for cross-cutting studies, as it exceeded the scope of our investigation.) There are also important institutional colleagues with whom the new studies division in PPC should take care to interact productively. Each of these important actors--OAS, TA/RD or its successor, the regional bureaus, and DIS--have important strengths that should be taken advantage of. To some extent, their strengths are complementary. At the risk of some exaggeration, these offices have different analytical foci, different methodologies, and different "consumers" of the work they do. On particular issues, the new office in PPC will want to draw on each's comparative advantage. Collaborative work, rather than work in isolation, should be one of the watchwords of the new studies division. This is true for bureaucratic as well as analytical reasons.

V. DEFINING "ISSUES" FOR THE NEW OFFICE

How should the studies division go about deciding which issues to tackle? This study does not pretend to judge the specific studies that the new office should undertake, although it will make some suggestions about possible investigations. The key actors behind the initiation of the new office have already given these matters much thought. Nonetheless, it may be useful to consider some general points regarding mechanisms and pitfalls in choosing what to study.

First, it is advisable to define a distinctive role for the new office, one that communicates quickly how the office fits with TA/RD, or the evaluation office within PPC, or OAS, OR DIS.

Second, it should try to utilize existing information and expertise to the greatest extent possible. This will involve working closely with the other offices interested in "issue-oriented", international research.

Third, the studies division should pay great attention to the expressed needs and the relevant decisions of top officials inside PPC. Needs are relatively easy to assess: one goes to top policymakers and asks them which topics they believe require social science research the most. However, this question is only half of the equation. It is equally important simultaneously to identify which decisions when might be affected by a piece of research. Studies of the

utilization of research in other agencies of the U.S. government have confirmed a widespread feeling within AID: at the same time as policymakers lament the fact that high quality information and cogent analysis are not available, there is an overload of irrelevant information. It has been found again and again that policymakers are receptive to social scientists and social science knowledge, but only if it is available at the right place, at the right time, in the right form.⁵ But it has also been found--inside and outside of AID--that most studies arrive at the wrong time, in the wrong form, with poor or irrelevant analysis.

The new office should undertake each new study only after identifying a need and a decision (or a decision process) that the study will serve. Personalizing the final package for the decisionmakers who will actually use the results is also advisable. (This may include periodic progress reports or elaborate briefings or detailed papers.)

Professor Mark Thompson has dwelt on the importance of decision-driven investigations in his companion piece to this report.

Fourth, the new office might utilize the paper flows within the Agency to discover "issues" that might not have jumped to everyone's attention. For example, annual budget submissions (ABS) from the field contain interesting infor-

mation, not only about the budget figures for particular categories of projects, but also about trends in funding over time. If more and more funds are going to rural public works, for example, the studies division might take that as a cue of an important issue for investigation. But not only that: by looking at the pattern of increases and decreases in certain funding categories across time and regions, the new office may gain an idea of what aspect of the issue to study. Why is interest in rural roads going up? Why now and why in those particular places? Again, Professor Thompson has written of the possible use of ABS in identifying issues and decisions, in his companion paper.

Fifth, Congress is and will continue to be an important and somewhat neglected consumer of issue-oriented studies. Congress has taken a more aggressive policymaking role with regard to foreign assistance in recent years. Interviews with Congressional staff indicate that this trend is not ephemeral. Nonetheless, AID has responded in ways parallel to Congress's questions: piecemeal, ad hoc, and sudden questions end up receiving similar sorts of answers. Although it is true that Congress's incessant and often annoying requests for information have been met (necessarily) by AID responses, there is a widespread feeling that better answers might induce better questions. That is, if AID officials

can anticipate the deeper concerns of Congress and perform interesting, relevant, and high quality studies on them, Congress may react by asking fewer trivial questions. Furthermore, AID and Congress may discover through such studies a common factual basis for improved policymaking, perhaps for increased funding. In a word, a new office in PPC charged with issue-oriented studies should pay a great deal of attention to what Congress wants now, and might value two years from now.

Finally, our interviews with officials in AID and in Congress, as well as with some experts in the development field, have led to certain specific suggestions for possible studies. These are provided in Appendix E.

VI. KINDS OF ISSUE-ORIENTED STUDIES

In this section, we try to put together the considerations of the previous ones. Here we look at four different kinds of issue-oriented studies that the new studies division might undertake. They are not mutually exclusive possibilities. The new office may wish to adopt primarily one kind of study as its preferred mode. On the other hand, it may wish to have a sort of portfolio of studies. This report makes no strong recommendations about which type of study should be emphasized, although the reader may detect the author's own judgment in certain places. Rather, the report considers the pros and cons of each kind of study, from the point of view of the new office in PPC.

Ex Post Studies of AID Projects

The new office might choose to undertake post-project reviews of a number of similar projects, in an effort to draw some conclusions about the factors responsible for success. Statistically minded readers may imagine a canonical correlation, with a series of dependent variables representing various dimensions of "success" and a series of independent variables representing aspects of the project's design and implementation, as well as social, cultural, political,

institutional, and other "factors":

$$\alpha_1 Y_1 + \alpha_2 Y_2 + \dots + \alpha_n Y_n = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_m X_m$$

where Y_i = aspects of success, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$

X_j = factors leading to success, $j = 1, 2, \dots, m$

α_i = "weights" for each dependent variable

β_j = "weights" reflecting the importance of each independent variable.

We need not take this model too seriously (variables will not likely be independent, for example); but it does convey the flavor of comparative studies of a large number of AID projects. Such ex post studies might be rather narrow, as have the Latin American bureau's (for example, studies of land sale guaranty programs across countries). But they might also be broad and adventuresome. For example, imagine a study that compared agricultural projects of widely different technical features, but which attempted to find common ingredients of project success.

Indeed, this latter model has been widely used in social science research outside of AID. For example, recent studies of "implementation problems" in public programs⁶, or of public management⁷, attempt to draw useful lessons that apply over a wide range of different public sector issues. Business schools have similarly examined organizational and budget prob-

lems across different kinds of business environments.

The choice of a narrow focus versus a broad focus will of course depend on the issues one wishes to study. Other things equal, one would prefer the broad-gauged approach when so many independent (and dependent) variables are present that sample size must be large before any analytical power can be obtained. One would prefer the more specialized study if, by specializing, a great number of variables were "held constant", or if one suspects that this particular brand of project is somehow "different." Custom in AID favors narrow-gauged comparative studies. This tradition may be correct, but it is not obviously so for the new office in PPC--at least, not for all issues of interest.

The advantages. There are several attractive features of the new office's sticking with ex post studies of AID projects. First, such studies resemble evaluation, and this identification may help to legitimate the new office within the Agency. The new office will probably be closely lined up with DPRE, which has recently carried out such an ex post study of health projects in six countries on three continents. Second, such studies could build on the previous work of OAS, TA/RD, and DIS, if the topics were cleverly selected. Third, such studies could

be attractive to the new staff of the studies division, since travel and field work would be involved. This choice therefore might make the recruitment of top-flight staff somewhat easier.

The disadvantages. Ex post studies have severe methodological limitations. As discussed earlier in the report, ex post studies tend to become journalistic and descriptive, and therefore can easily end up irrelevant to current decisions and useless for drawing general conclusions that might apply to future decisions. In part, the problem is inherent in any study that begins after projects are completed: no base-line data, no access to the process of implementation, reliance on memories and, at times, wishful thinking. Given the imperfections in the actual filling out of AID's methodologically excellent system for project evaluation, ex post studies are precluded from the sort of tight, analytical reasoning of which some social scientists are fond. Past ex post studies within AID have, in our opinion, been disappointing.

Two other disadvantages may also be noted. One is analytical. If the new office limits itself to studying what has already been tried, it precludes its analyzing brave, new directions for Agency policies. The second is bureaucratic. The regional bureaus, especially Latin America, may consider that ex post studies should properly be

done by the regional bureaus. (There are precedents for such work in PPC, so long as the focus is inter-regional.) Selling the new office's undertaking of ex post studies to the regional bureaus should emphasize the complementarity of expertise and perspective, as well as the prospect that the final product would be useful to bureau personnel.

Policy Studies: Looking at New Ideas

Issue-oriented studies might take a more adventurous orientation. Instead of confining their attention to comparisons of past efforts, issue-oriented studies might focus on new ways to do things in the future. For example, the new office might consider the long-term effects of weather modification, or possible experiments in Japanese-style management techniques, or a serious emphasis on trees in development, or the implications of research in psychopharmacology for education in developing countries; the reader may substitute his or her own preferred choice of future-oriented topic (and may make that choice a bit less far-fetched). The point here is to emphasize novelty, rather than to confine oneself to evaluating the past.

The advantages. Such studies might involve a good deal of intellectual excitement, a quality not frequently noted in AID. If a new office were set up with such studies as the centerpiece, one might imagine a beneficial

injection of "life" into the organization. (One is reminded of the RAND Corporation's heyday, coextensive with the presence of futurologists like Herman Kahn in small but perceptible doses.) Furthermore, such studies, if successful, could carry the benefit of a breakthrough. It may well be, for example, that the "answer" to the educational problems of developing countries will not come via vocational education, life-long learning, non-formal education, better curricula, and so forth, but rather through the pharmacological revolution, which promises to affect attention spans, hyperactivity and passivity, and perhaps even memory. A similar statement may be appropriate for agriculture: improved farm management, irrigation systems, and fertilizer blends may be swamped in importance by possible advances in the prediction and modification of weather.

Furthermore, few people if anyone in AID is working on the broad area of policy studies for future directions. Even if the focus were less grandiose than indicated above--for example, contemplating Congress's needs and AID's two years hence, and doing studies accordingly--the orientation toward the future would set the new office off as something different and special. Such product differentiation has bureaucratic benefits.

The disadvantages. Such speculative and future-oriented

studies are risky. They may well produce nothing, or produce journalism, or, if producing something valuable, produce it at such a late date that the office's legitimacy would have long been gone. The new office has serious time constraints, as discussed earlier; big think, or future think, while no doubt important, may not fit realistically into the new office's plans.

Such studies do not look like evaluation or assessment. This is an advantage in some respects, but it may also be a disadvantage, particularly for an office whose title was once tentatively "office of socio-economic impact assessment." Such studies are difficult. No ready methodologies exist for carrying them out. Finally, there are no decisions in the near term around which such future-oriented studies can be built. Studies without attendant decisions have risks, both analytically and bureaucratically.

Intellectual Translator and Broker

A third type of role for the new office would be as a sort of intellectual broker, an interface between the top policymakers of PPC, on the one hand, and the evaluators and academicians, on the other. Research can make a difference to policy if it is timely, relevant, well-packaged, and of good quality. Unfortunately, nobody in AID has consistently played the intermediary role that may ensure that existing

needs and decisions are coordinated with existing information and knowledge. The new office might consider its mission as filling that breach.

A severe form of this role would have the new office carry out no new research. Instead, it would bring qualified and seasoned social scientists into contact with two bodies: a body of existing information (such as that chronicled in the DIS) and a body of current needs (such as those possessed by top policymakers in AID). It would ask these social scientists to write policy papers and program documents to link the knowledge to the problems. As such, the new office would go beyond DIS, in that policymakers would not simply be presented with summaries of articles but would be advised how those articles (and AID's previous experience) should affect current policy choices.

The advantages. Such an office could relatively easily be linked to issues identified by PPC officials and by examinations of ABS (for example). It could rather easily draw upon DIS, without threatening DIS; similarly, cooperation with TA/RD (or its successor) would be mutually advantageous.

The role of intellectual broker looks feasible: a major advantage over some of the other options. It appears to be the sort of thing academics coming to AID (or working for AID) could do well. The record of "Research Applied to National Needs," an office of the National Science Foundation,

is worth examining in this regard.

Several other advantages may be mentioned briefly, but not because they are not important. First, such studies could be done quickly, if the topics were chosen with some care. Speed may be of the essence, as far as the new office is concerned in its first year of operation. Second, Dr. Hoben believes that social scientists possess in their heads and in their books a great deal of policy-relevant knowledge, which only needs to be conveyed to policymakers in a suitable form. Third, the effort to pull social science into the policy process would, through such an office, receive a stimulating and severe test. In my mind, betting is still open about whether the sociologists, anthropologists, and historians have anything really relevant to tell policymakers that will affect specific policy choices. (This is, of course, not their only use, but it is an important and debatable one.) The new office would test the social scientists severely, by making them combine (imperfect) available information with (sometimes unreasonable) demands for quick knowledge. The test might well lead to new insights into the relationship between social science and policymaking.

The disadvantages. This role for the new office is heavily dependent on leadership, both within PPC and within the office itself. A dynamic and entrepreneurial social scientist is required. Without one, the office will almost

revert to a quasi-academic, study-producing appendage, of inconsistent value.

The right kind of people to staff such an office may be difficult to find. Not only must social scientists for this role have considerable experience and vast knowledge, they must also possess a rare attitude, or commitment. The policy problem, rather than a conceptual issue, must dominate their attention. The gap between the scholar and the policy-maker (which has been noted by Max Weber, Henry Kissinger, and Kenneth Boulding, among others) must be overcome -- not an easy assignment to give new employees, although an exciting one. To some potential hires, the task will not be attractive; to others, fewer in number, it will be an opportunity not to be passed by.

Finally, the role of intellectual broker may seem too indirect to some social scientists. By nature and by training, social scientists like to do their own research. If they are asked to do too much "translating" and brokering of the work of others, they may resist. They may see themselves as mere popularizers, instead of recognizing the dynamic and creative task of turning social science into policy analysis. The (perhaps mistaken) perception of the

intellectual passivity or indirectness of the role of a broker may make the new office unattractive to some potential hires.

Methodological Contributions

A fourth possible type of research for the new office would concentrate on technique and method, rather than concrete results. As AID (and other donor agencies) increasingly emphasize "social soundness analysis," there is a great demand for tools appropriate to the task. As I understand it, no one quite knows how to do social soundness analysis. True, there are a few excellent post hoc studies of projects where a lack of appreciation of "social factors" led to disastrous outcomes. However, analyzing ex post is easier than predicting ex ante, as sportswriters and historians well know.

There is a great need, then, for (1) methodological contributions to the assessment of social effects of public activities, (2) concrete and understandable examples of the use of social science in project design (and not just in recriminations over the failure of projects past), and (3) technical assistance to staff in AID/W as well as the field, in the area of social analysis. The new office might profitably address itself to this set of tasks. It would become, in a word, truly an office of socio-economic impact assessment.

The advantages. The new office, if it adopted this role, would tackle an issue of central importance to the Agency and to Congress. The issue is also of moment for social scientists of an applied bent. It is still an open question, I believe, whether and how social science can measure "socio-economic impact." There is no need for further expansion in the growth industry of calls for such analysis; it is now time to get on with the task. An office with a methodological focus would accept the challenge straight-away.

Other advantages include the probable appeal of such an office to potential hires, the wide applicability of methodological studies across types of projects, the prospect of service to the field offices, and possible links to training in DSP and IDI.

The disadvantages. My fundamental misgiving with this type of research is that I fear it will be fruitless, both analytically and bureaucratically. From the existing evidence, my bet is that there is no generally applicable methodology to assess social impact. Nor do I believe it is likely that one will be developed in such an office.

On a more practical basis, the new office needs to produce practical results for PPC policymakers in a relatively short time. The words "practical, PPC, and short" all cut against the idea of doing primarily methodological studies.

Such research would perhaps better be pursued outside the Agency, for example at Universities. Leave methodology to the professional methodologists, the argument would run, and bring into PPC people who can merge social science and policy decisions.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Issues to Study, Issues to Avoid

1. Focus on decisions at the top. Periodically, issue-oriented studies within AID are carried out with the field offices as the primary potential consumer. The results of reports, it is hoped, will influence field personnel as they design and implement projects. The influence will be indirect--via an educational function that takes place before projects are designed--or direct--as when the central office approves or changes projects being submitted from the field. According to this orientation for issue-oriented studies, the project is the decision being focussed upon and the field the decision-making locus.

For several reasons, the new studies division should not adopt this orientation.

First, there is little evidence of past studies affecting decisions in the field. It is a fair judgement that this lack of utilization reflects both a lack of demand in the field (because of weak incentives) and a lack of quality in the studies (because of their concentration on ex post evaluations or their use of the incomplete project evaluations produced by the GPOI system). A more controversial judgement, but one this report is willing to argue, is that neither the new studies division nor PPC itself can expect to influence either the incentives or the quality of ex post studies, in the short- to medium-run.

Second, other offices within AID already concentrate on this sort of issue orientation. TA/RD (as reorganized), DIS, and the evaluation people within PPC all take this approach in much of what they do. The Latin American Bureau may also be cited. Thus, there is little reason for the new studies division to enter an already well-populated market.

Third, many of the key "issues" facing AID today concern a different set of consumers and a different level of decision. For example, when the State Department asks for justifications of country-by-country allocations; when the President asks for arguments for a doubling of aid commitments; when Congress requests information and analysis of the impact of AID programs on different groups; and when the Administrator wishes to examine the relationship of AID's programs to those of other donors: these are questions that are simultaneously

- relatively unstudied
- arguably the province of PPC
- extremely important
- susceptible to careful analysis by
social scientists and policy analysts.

The combination of these factors of the productivity of different orientations, the existence of other suppliers of analysis, and need, strongly indicate that the new studies division should focus not on decisions in the field but deci-

sions at the top.

2. Choose issues for which other offices can provide information and expertise. Given the new division's relatively small size as well as its newness, both analytical and bureaucratic prudence urge that as much as possible be done with existing information and competence. In particular, it would be unwise for the new division to spend a majority of its time carrying out original research in the field.

3. Issues may be selected through meetings of top officials, and study plans may be formulated via intensive seminars with AID policymakers and outside experts. Both this report and Professor Thompson's have stressed the importance of linking the issues to be studied with policy decisions, not just intellectual needs or academically interesting questions. The brisk pace of AID's reorganization has made it impossible to track down the decision-making processes that bear on key policy questions; and despite the topics listed in Appendix D, the specific items of most concern to AID are themselves in flux.

One way to identify key issues would be through intensive, half-day meetings of top officials in PPC and perhaps elsewhere in AID. Once six to eight topics had thereby been specified, along with the timing and location of policy decisions relevant to them, it would be advisable for the new division to call in outside experts for additional intensive sessions. These latter meetings would not follow the format of the usual assemblage of

scholars discussing what is unknown and how new and expensive research might be designed to remedy that situation. Rather, experts inside and outside AID would try to merge (1) the facts and analyses most crucial to the pending decisions or arguments with (2) what is already known, with varying degrees of certainty, about those questions.

The outcome of this second intensive session would then become a work agenda for the new studies division's staff: the task of pulling together, synthesizing, and making relevant the key findings of social scientists and AID officials.

Given the problems of timing noted earlier in the report, one of the new division's first activities should probably be the convening of numerous such working parties--first internally to specify key issues and the decisions related to them, then with outside help to structure what is known and what is unknown into a fruitful study plan for the studies division.

How to Carry Out the Proposed Studies

Our review of the information currently available through the evaluation system and through ex post studies leads us to be pessimistic about the prospects of "learning from AID's own experience" in these orthodox ways. As discussed in Section VI, there are telling disadvantages to proceeding inductively in culling generalizations from AID's experience. Indeed, the primary task is not empirical, in the sense of providing parameter values in a well-specified model that is clearly relevant

to well-specified policy decisions. The primary intellectual enterprise of the new studies division should arguably be to make models and policy options clearer.

One way to speak of this difference is to compare evaluation with policy analysis. Evaluation refers to the discovery of an empirical result about the effectiveness of a particular program; evaluative research is primarily empirical. Policy analysis, on the other hand, considers the specification of policy options, decision points, and strategy as part of the problem. An evaluative study of the effects of rural roads, for example, might focus on the economic and social impact of past efforts. A policy analysis would look more broadly: what decisions will be affected by a more complete understanding of the effects of rural roads? what is known about related activities that would enable one to build an appropriate analytical framework for considering the costs and benefits of rural roads? how do rural roads fit in more broadly with AID's strategy, with Congressional interests, with major upcoming decisions? can what is known and the key aspects of what is unknown be compressed into a crisp and useful form for top decisionmakers?

In particular, the focus of policy analysis defines an effective study not in terms of academic precision but in terms of the utility of both a framework and empirical results to program and policy decisions. Bluntly put, it is often premature to look for "parameter values." What is frequently more

important--and intellectually challenging!--is to make clear the dimensions of the issue at hand and to provide a framework for careful thought.

This notion is surely behind the studies division's plan to involve social scientists as staff members. Insofar as social scientists are useful to policymakers, it is often as framers of interesting issues, organizers of the problem according to models and theories that have received careful thought and, one hopes, testing in the disciplines, and providers of a broad and systematic perspective. It is true that experienced social scientists will also be able to supplement their analytical contributions with estimates of "parameter values," drawn from their knowledge of previous empirical work, much or most of which was not obtained in the context of development projects. Social scientists do have valuable knowledge relevant to evaluative questions, as defined above; but their comparative advantage in AID most likely lies in their ability to analyze, structure, and illuminate messy policy issues.

These remarks have important implications for the new division's staffing decisions. The emphasis should probably not be on methodologists of evaluation, statisticians, or experts on foreign aid per se. Indeed, some care should be taken that the social scientists selected are not of that robust and prevalent breed for whom tools drive the problem, rather than vice versa.

Instead, prospective staff members should ideally have a dominating commitment to policy. Their previous research should indicate a propensity to apply the frameworks of their disciplines, not to idealized issues, but to difficult, messy, real problems. It would be helpful if, in addition to their academic or analytical talents, staff members had experience with and respect for the needs and potential of public organizations like AID. The predominant tasks are not careful and well-defined empirical evaluations of a narrow question, nor high-faluting analytical frameworks done for their own sake: rather, the enterprise is to take needs, link them to decisions and to processes within AID, structure what is known and unknown in accordance with what is needed to be known, and provide a concise and understandable piece of analysis.

Where are such analysts to be found? The issue may not be as much to find them as to create them. In recruiting and socializing new staff members, the nature of their role should be made clear. It is indeed an exciting role, but it is also an unorthodox one for many academics. Office heads and others in PPC should encourage and reward the studies division for social science analysis relevant to their needs, and not for the more orthodox activities of sporadic evaluators or academicians performing basic research.

The studies division has already specified an exciting and fully appropriate mix of disciplines that its prospective staff

should possess. The only amendment might be to add a person, perhaps within AID, with proven interest and competence in the Agency's decision-making process. More important than the particular disciplines represented, however, is to ensure that the division's personnel conceive of their task as policy analysis rather than evaluative research.

Making Analysis "Stick"

This report has emphasized throughout that, in the context of the new division, analysis is only important if it "sticks"--if it makes a difference to PPC and to AID's policy decisions. As indicated in Section II, studies can make a difference in several ways: affecting decisions within AID, providing analysis to Congress and to host countries, developing and exemplifying techniques of social impact analysis, and changing the decision process itself.

Before the studies division can make a difference, it must become established, and this will occur in a constrained environment. Various factors--discussed in Section III--together imply that the new division must provide results quickly, must coordinate carefully with existing offices and bureaus, and must avoid certain approaches that appear to be dead-ends (or time-consuming or expensive). Importantly, it is recommended that the division focus its attention on high-level policy decisions, rather than on project-oriented decisions in the field.

In this context, the key ingredient to making studies stick

will be a close connection with PPC's key decisionmakers. They must be involved as much as possible in defining not only the "intellectual issue" (for example, the effects of rural electrification projects, or the pros and cons of various range management strategies) but also the timing and type of policy decisions related to those issues. These decisionmakers should be involved in the first attempts to define the analytical framework for attacking the issue, and the final product of the division's labors should be written and packaged with these decisionmakers explicitly in mind.

In two important senses, then, the question of making studies stick will be personal and bureaucratic, and not just academic in the sense of producing a competent piece of analysis. First, the new office must link productively with other offices in AID that are presently undertaking international studies of AID issues. Conflicts and overlaps must be minimized, and existing resources must be utilized to the fullest. Second, every step of the study process must have the intended audience (and its decisions) clearly in mind. For these reasons, among the most challenging and rewarding tasks facing the new division are in the area of social relations rather than social science.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Judith Tendler, Inside Foreign Aid, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1975, p. 9.
- ²Gerald Sparer, "Social and Health Service Evaluation," in J.G. Abert and Murray Kamrass, eds., Social Experiments and Social Program Evaluation, Cambridge, Ballinger, 1974, p. 105.
- ³Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Policies for Innovation in the Service Sector: Identification and Structure of Relevant Factors, Paris, OECD, 1977, p. 214.
- ⁴Howard Leichter, "Comparative Public Policy: Problems and Prospects," in Stuart S. Nagel, ed., Policy Studies Review Annual, 1977, Vol. I, Beverly Hills, Calif., Sage, 1977, pp. 143-7.
- ⁵For example, Nathan Caplan, "Social Research and National Policy: What Gets Used, By Whom, For What Purpose, and With What Effects?", in Nagel, op.cit., pp. 68-75; Robert F. Rich, "Systems of Analysis, Technology Assessment, and Bureaucratic Power," paper prepared for the 1977 meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1-4, 1977; and M.R. Berg, "The Politics of Technology Assessment," Journal of the International Society for

Technology Assessment, Vol. I, No. 4, 1976.

⁶See, for example, the forthcoming issue of Public Policy that focuses on implementation; and Douglas T. Yates and Richard R. Nelson, eds., Innovation and Implementation in Public Organizations, Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath, 1977.

⁷See, for example, Grover Starling, Managing the Public Sector, Homewood, Ill., Dorsey, 1977.

Appendix A:

Centrally Funded Research Within AID

Kathryn Hyer

From 1974 to 1978, Congress more than doubled funds for research and field assistance within AID to over \$100 million. Over 95 percent of that budget for research and technical assistance is controlled by (TAB) with PPC and PHA sharing the other 5 percent. Six kinds of research are funded:

- o research: basic research, mostly done in areas of agriculture (crop experimentation) and health
- o adaptation and application: programs developed to apply discoveries
- o field services: technical assistance to missions
- o program development: assistance to regions and missions
- o institutions working with ldc's: international research centers, mostly in agriculture, receive about 1/3 of budget (1978)
- o 211d grants: grants to U.S. institutions to build programs in specific subject areas

The first two categories, research and adaptation and application, received half of the Congressional appropriations. TAB awards virtually all of the money to unsolicited research proposals submitted by U.S. universities, foundations, and consulting firms. TAB indicates AID's research areas of interest by publishing a pamphlet describing the contract process and listing the areas that Congress and the bureaus feel need further investigation.

A number of categories listed in this document such as "economic development and distribution problems" or "institutional and social aspects of development" are closely related to the interests of the new office in PPC.

Internally TAB establishes research priorities through meetings with representatives of each region and bureau. Apparently this group reaches some kind of consensus about what projects or issues should receive funding. The consensus is generic rather than specific, and the regions are supposed to present the needs of the field. Dr. Hoben should try to have an input at this level, either through the right to attend, or by establishing such good links with the group members that they feel obligated to present his views.

Another group Dr. Hoben should understand is the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), an external committee composed of leading scholars who evaluate research proposals. Although the committee initially evaluated basic research in science, it has considered more applied projects in recent years. About 40 percent of the projects before the group are "soft" social science and even those that are "hard" science are required to assess the social and environmental impact of the project. The committee seems sensitive to issues confronting AID, and they may be another source of support for the new office in PPC. Their help is limited, though, because they meet only four times a year for two-day meetings. As long as the project has a reasonable methodological component, the committee will consider it. Referring a project to the committee delays action on it since they meet quarterly. A thorough review would also open the project to major revisions which would have to be implemented before the project was enacted.

There is said to be a continual struggle with TAB between forces wanting centralization and those wanting decentralization. Bureaucratically any new office in PPC might anticipate some concern from missions and bureaus

which may view it as a possible threat and nuisance. With missions the new office may face two resentments: 1) more paperwork; 2) bias against social scientists in a bureaucracy founded on technocratic skills.

TAB may perceive the new office in PPC as getting some of the resources which properly belong to them. The new office can work with TAB by using their information and getting research done in complementary areas. Since TAB has an information utilization office, the new PPC office should be on their mailing list to keep abreast of new breakthroughs. I found the staff of the information utilization office to be helpful and anxious to cooperate with any group that can make research results better known.

Use of research results is not systematic. Although a bulletin with new discoveries has been initiated this year, unless an effort is made to implement discoveries by some interest group, the results are simply left in the lab. The reasons are complex but basically fall into two categories: 1) results are too complicated to implement because of extra resources needed or, 2) effect of program is seen as helping the middle or upper classes (as in the case of research on vampire bats).

The new office in PPC should utilize existing research results as much as possible. The office should keep informed and ask for copies of reports it finds relevant. Eventually, the new office might incorporate its own research results into the newsletter that TAB issues.

As Table A-1 illustrates, the concern of AID centers on agriculture and nutrition. The new PPC office might want to explore what food aid programs work and why. This could be an interesting interregional topic.

WORLD-WIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESEARCH
(In thousands of dollars)

PROBLEM AREAS	1974		1975		1976		1977		1978
	Amt.	%	Amt	%	Amt	%	Amt	%	Amt
FOOD AND NUTRITION	24,605	62	32,900	68	40,717	67	68,415	71	71,082
POPULATION PLANNING AND HEALTH	5,295	13	5,900	12	6,220	10	6,326	7	Pop 800 Plan- ning 8,472
EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES	3,254	8	2,300	5	5,173	9	5,339	6	6,470
SELECTED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	6,494	16	7,200	15	8,332	14	16,310	17	19,624
TOTAL	<u>39,648</u>	100	<u>48,300</u>	100	<u>60,442</u>	100	<u>96,890</u>	100	<u>106,450</u>

SOURCE: INTERREGIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESEARCH, SUMMARY OF PROGRAM BY APPROPRIATION TABLE 1 and 1a, p.12 and
in Interregional Research Budget Presentation to Congress Fiscal Year 1976 and Fiscal Year 1978

Appendix B:
Computerized Information in AID
Timothy McNeill

The Development Information Service (DIS) was established within PPC a year and a half ago as a means to solve the problem of AID's "lack of institutional memory." The function of the DIS is to assess, distill, and deliver to operating personnel two sorts of material: (1) lessons learned from AID's experiences with particular types of projects, and (2) technical information on the state-of-the-art of whatever task be at hand. This includes AID-generated materials, information on similar projects, past studies, technical materials, feasibility studies, end-of-tour reports by AID personnel, information on relevant research and literature, and lists of accessible persons and institutions with expertise in the particular field. The primary consideration for inclusion into the DIS databank is described as "relevance and accessibility."

The DIS is storing information abstracted from the Project Papers of two thousand AID projects from 1974 through the present. (In January a decision will be made whether to retrieve projects prior to 1974.) The DIS is proceeding sector by sector through nutrition, rural development, health, and is now working on education. For each project it formulates a 750-word summary of the problem which the project addresses, the strategy used, a description of the specific project, and the project's logical framework elements. Each project is keyed to twenty words (e.g. "women," "plants," "horticulture," "environmental impact") and the project number.

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In addition, each level of the GPOI logical framework has an identifying number. The input, output, purpose and goal of each project have a code number, so that it is possible to call up projects which have "rice" as a purpose, rather than say, as an output.

Follow-up information and evaluations are also included; however, the experience of the DIS has been that Project Appraisal Reports (PAR) are so general and of such poor quality that their informational value is negligible. Therefore, although many evaluations exist, very few have been abstracted and stored in the computer. The DIS staff is concerned about the relevance and utility of the material they provide to their clients.

Other material in the data-bank includes the 150 ad hoc reviews done by AID and the Administrator's Spring Reviews. In addition, the DIS is linked with the Orbit and Dialog computer systems. These are computer banks containing abstracts of materials from more than 30 technical areas. The DIS conducts literature searches using these two systems in addition to their own Reference Center (ARC) and Technical Assistance Bureau (TAB) libraries.

Dissemination

Dissemination of materials is stimulated in three ways, referred to as "ad hoc," "semi-automatic" and "automatic." Ad hoc, as the name implies, enables one to seek the services of the DIS whenever a need arises. The semi-automatic refers to the fact that when a Project Identification Document (PID) is received in Washington, the DIS sends out a computer readout sheet with an illustrative sample of available relevant materials which the

line personnel might find useful. Upon receipt of a request from the field, the DIS puts together a response package of similar projects and other useful material.

The third type of response, the automatic, closely resembles what we have termed the "decision-structured" identification of issues. If the DIS receives several PIDs of similar projects or identifies a salient functional area of concern from a review of the Annual Budgetary Submissions (ABS), it determines whether the demand is great enough to warrant preparation of a special package of materials addressing what they have identified as the implicit "issue." Included in the package are abstractions of documents from similar projects, relevant publications, and lists of institutions and individuals with pertinent expertise. In other words, all the accessible information which might be brought to bear on the "issue" is assembled, including an analytical paper on the current state of knowledge about the particular "issue" drawn up by the staff of the DIS. So far, two of these packages have been produced. One is on appropriate rural technology and the other on rural development. These packages are automatically sent to all missions and appropriate bureaus.

Although the DIS has not completed its task of reviewing and abstracting all AID projects in the several sectors, it has been operational and responding to requests for about six months. To date, almost a hundred initial responses to PIDs (of which there are approximately 250 a year) have been sent out. The initial response is an illustrative sample of what materials the DIS has to offer. It includes short summaries of similar

projects. Of these hundred, about fifteen follow-up requests resulted in complete response packages being produced. The major cost incurred, since time on the underutilized AID computer is not charged for, is for salaries. The average amount of time spent on the packages is about three weeks at a cost of approximately \$1500. The DIS has a staff of five presently producing responses to requests for information. They are basically generalists with research and analytical skills. The cost of producing the two general papers has not been determined, as most of the initial work was done for other purposes and later incorporated into the "automatic" response packages. Half of the DIS total budget of \$900,000 is used for the Aid Reference Center (ARC) which is a part of the DIS system.

Efforts are being made to evaluate the effectiveness of the DIS. A cablegram was recently distributed to users seeking answers to questions which will help the DIS to identify "the costs and benefits of the of the service" and "the optimum approach to providing information, from the user's point of view."

Limitations

It should be noted that the information from US AID experience with projects is culled from the Project Paper, which is the finalized version of a proposed project. Although the PP contains explicit information about the projected course of a project, the actual experience of implementation is not captured. It is hoped that the new Project Evaluation Summary (PES) forms will provide more useful information than the PARs have in the past.

However, it doesn't appear that the shortcomings of the evaluation of development projects have been overcome, namely, the very limited capacity to assess the socioeconomic impact of projects (the P to G level of the logical framework) and the tendency of evaluations to be little more than exercises in advocacy.

Another limitation of the DIS system is that the information is sent out to the missions after the PID has been received (i.e., after the decision has been made.) Rather than supplying the information early enough to help in identifying the best means of tackling a problem, it is sent to the mission after the fact when, although it is possible to rework a project design, it is often used merely to reinforce or verify a fait accompli.

The DIS recognizes this deficiency and is contemplating methods of anticipating the information needs of the line personnel. They are undertaking a publicity campaign to educate their constituency about their services. It is hoped that the benefits of having relevant information at hand when identifying and designing projects will be recognized, but it is often said that there are few incentives for AID personnel to use such information. However, a pattern of use of the DIS is emerging which may prove to be an incentive, albeit a negative one, for missions to produce optimal plans of action. It seems that staff members in the geographical bureaus and central bureaus, such as PPC, who are responsible for project review and approval, are, by their own initiative, using the services of DIS to determine whether the project under consideration has been well conceived. They review what has been done

in the past in the particular country and also similar projects done elsewhere, to assess the appropriateness in the historical context. In order to defend its proposal, the mission is thus pressured into at least familiarizing itself with the relevant materials offered by the DIS, if not actually utilizing them in decision-making. The cost and time involved in conducting such a materials search in the past prevented very thorough appraisal of project proposals. Now it is becoming part of the routine procedure.

The lines of communication between the missions and AID/W have never been clearly drawn. If information was needed in the field it was first of all unclear who should be contacted, and secondly, the missions were disinclined to seek help from Washington, especially in the event of a problem, lest a request for information be read as deficiency in some form. Materials can be obtained through the DIS without fear of reproach. It represents a non-threatening, non-judgmental source of information. The head of the DIS has expressed concern that his office remain autonomous and not be incorporated into the evaluation operation for fear that the DIS be perceived as a critical adversary. It is unfortunate, but telling, that the evaluation group is looked upon in such unfavorable light.

Another group of DIS patrons consists of staff people responsible for formulating AID policy. Maury Brown, the acting chief of the DIS, named several people from PPC bureau involved in policy formulation, who have utilized the DIS. Desk officers are requesting the response packages from the DIS to keep themselves informed on their countries. They also serve as a conduit relaying information requests from the field to the DIS. The system provides valuable information to those responsible for producing the

Congressional Presentation. Having historical data on AID's experience in different areas, and analyses of trends and patterns in development available quickly and economically insures consistency and accuracy in responding to inquiries from outside interest groups such as Congressional Committees.

Another aspect of the DIS which in effect circumscribes its capability is the lack of information about AID as an institution or awareness of organizational factors of development. The system is keyed primarily to respond to functional, technical subjects and not to procedural or institutional issues centered either on the Agency itself or on host countries. Thus, for example, the DIS cannot help in dealing with issues such as the effects of uncertainties or fluctuations in funding on host country willingness to support projects, or the dangers inherent in superseding traditional institutions with exotic structures dependent on external support. Although such considerations can be crucial to successful performance (particularly in the long run), there isn't an institutionalized mechanism, such as the pp for chronicling project activity, by which the DIS can accumulate and preserve such experience.

The information system can only respond to issue-shifts over time with great difficulty. Once abstracted and stored in the computer, the cost of updating in response to current development vogues would be prohibitive. For example, if the Congress should identify a new group that foreign aid must be directed to help much like the recent initiative to focus on women:

...in development, it would be a herculean task to reexamine and appropriately key materials already stored in the computer which address the next issue.

ESDB

The Economic and Social Data Bank is a computerized system for the storage, analysis and dissemination of "macro" and "micro" socio-economic data relevant to AID activities. A report prepared in February 1977 described the ESDB as having two main components: the file system and the tape library. The file system contains the Agency's official "macro" data file; the Agency's historical loans and grants file and four files of data aggregated to the country level. Each of four country data files will cover 140 countries over 30-year periods. One file will contain data elements relating to national accounts and certain socio-economic indicators, which provide a basic country profile. In addition, each country will have three files corresponding to functional sectors as delineated by Foreign Assistance Act: Agriculture; Health and Nutrition and Education and Human Resources.

The tape library will be an archive of "micro" data sets generated by research and other individual studies in LDCs. Each data set will be on computer tape. Retrieval of the data is facilitated by an index of key words for each set.

The data elements in the ESDB must be managed and analyzed carefully to verify the quality and relevance prior to utilization, since they are culled from a variety of sources external to AID. Initial examinations have indicated wide variation in the reliability of the data, confirming in general the findings of other investigators as to the inadequacies of LDC statistics.

Most of the "macro" data (approximately 65 percent comes from the World Bank, the IMF or the USDA, the rest from AID sources or private institutions.

"Micro" data is less readily available. At present a contractor with AID is gathering existent data from universities and other sources in the U.S. and Canada, as well as from previous AID projects which had a data gathering component. Another source of data has been the U.S. Census Bureau.

After assessing existing LDC "micro" data sets, the Agency will be able to identify data gaps with respect to geographic location, timelines, relevance and to recommend strategies for addressing the gaps. H. Patrick Peterson, the current chief of the ESDB, estimates from examining budget submissions for 1979 that \$68 million of AID project money is slated for data gathering of varied sorts. In the past, much of this data gathered for project-specific use has been lost or filed away in individual researchers' records essentially inactivated. It is hoped that in the future it will be mandated that all such "micro" data generated by AID operations be routinely sent to the ESDB. In addition, the ESDB would like to be able to review all projects with a data gathering component so that efforts aren't repeated (i.e., data isn't generated which already exist in the ESDB or some other accessible source), and that data which the ESDB deems necessary be gathered concomitantly with project-specific data so that the bank be augmented.

It is projected that, once the ESDB is fully operational, the demand for its services will be considerable. About five different groups of

potential users have been identified; AID/W staff, mission and field support staff in Washington, other development assistance donors and U.S. departments and agencies; the academic community, and the LDCs.

The AID/W people have need of the ESDB for policy planning and coordination, the working up of the Congressional presentation and budget preparation for the OMB. It falls to the ESDB to provide consistent, reliable data which AID can draw upon to explain and defend its programs. Ideally the ESDB will supply data in a processed form showing economic trends and cross-country comparisons in a graphic, easily digestible form. Currently, there is an Economics Ph.D. and a Math/Stat Ph.D. analyzing the available data for such presentations.

The Regional bureaus and missions have need of the ESDB services for developing the comprehensive Development Assistance Plan (DAP) for each recipient country. A task of the ESDB is to insure consistency of data by supplying the "official" data to missions for inclusion in their annual budget submissions (ABS). Once contextual data in sufficient quantity and quality is available the missions will be able to draw on it for use as one of the tools necessary for developing more effective and significant (in terms of development impact) programs and projects. This contextual data is of the sort needed for accurate assessment of the socio-economic impact of projects over time.

Presently up-to-date and reliable data on such measures of well-being as changes in infant mortality, real family income, employment, agricultural productivity and population growth are deficient in most LDCs.

According to the current head of the ESDB the resources of the bank will be accessible to others outside of AID. Other development assistance donors, and U.S. departments and agencies in need of this kind of data will be allowed access to it. Also individuals and institutions engaged in research will have access to the services of the ESDB. The ESDB is envisioned as being the prime depository for "micro" and "macro" data on LDCs..

A keynote of this collection and utilization of data is the collaboration of the developing nations. There is a general recognition of the rights of access of LDCs to the information in the data bank. Having this data on hand should contribute greatly to devising sensible development strategies. Presently there are few systematic assessments of development performance, and therefore data, to help the developing countries themselves identify constraints and to pinpoint desirable changes in policies, programs and projects.

Evaluation of the system, whose trial run occurred in August, 1977 is premature. Presently, the ESDB is a modest operation consisting of a staff of four with an operating budget of approximately \$50,000. When asked how he might utilize an increase in his budget, the current head of the division pointed out that money was not a major constraint right now, that primarily he could use some administrative assistants to attend meetings, etc. so that his professionals could get on with collecting, verifying and analyzing the data. He is concerned about what he senses is a weak commitment from "higher levels" of management concerning the future of the ESDB. His budget now is primarily personnel salary. The AID computer is under utilized and

the ESDB is not charged for its use.

A major task at present for the ESDB is educating its constituency. First of all they want to create awareness of their existence, and then to provide training in data retrieval. This entails sending out memoranda, holding seminars for Washington staff and regional bureau people and disseminating information to the missions. Unlike the DIS staff who prefer to interpret "messy," individually composed requests for information, the ESDB group prefers a clean, properly coded request which can be programmed as is. A year is the envisioned time horizon for getting the system fully operational and for educating potential users of its capabilities.

Peterson would like to see a closer union with the Country Program Data Bank (CPDB) which contains all the country program information. The CPDB contains information on the number of projects, and the funding level of the AID program and its composition in each country. The rationalizing of AID programs, a function partly performed by these two information sources, would be enhanced by their more complete integration. The ESDB would present the picture of the recipient country, and the CPDB would show AID's part in the overall scene.

The budget officer for the PPC had a figure of \$120,000 and a workforce of 30 for the Program Information and Analysis System (PIAS). This is the blanket unit comprised of the ESBD and CPDB.

Much is made of the functional differences between the DIS and ESDB and too little of their similar objective (i.e., effective development performance). Not enough effort is being made to identify ways these services might cooperate and to dovetail their operations. The services of

the ESDB and DIS are complementary and the consequences of their being institutionally remote from one another might adversely affect their roles. The functional statement from the budget office points up the DIS's project-specific function of retrieving "evaluative, technical, sociological, economic and political data to be utilized by AID personnel in project design, implementation and evaluation." The statement for the ESDB system shows a program-specific function of preparing "analyses and recommendations for program directions and other key program issues based on sophisticated probing of data, regression, and other advanced statistical and social measurement techniques, analyses, socio-economic quantitative techniques, and interpretation of national and sectoral information and data on target populations."

The optimal information package for the missions should be a mix of the technical DIS materials and the contextual information of the ESDB. If the information consumer is wise enough to know, first of all, what is needed, and secondly, where to get it, the present system is like ordering the rough-cut pieces of a jigsaw puzzle from various companies. The object is to draw together data from a variety of sources to construct a composite picture of the LDC into which a variable, the project, will be injected, then watching over time for change and, hopefully, evaluating the outcome. It is a formidable task which demands that the mission be supplied with a totally integrated, analyzed data package drawn from the various resources available, if success is to be expected.

The New PPC Division

The studies division's contribution might be conceived as growing from the interface of these information services of AID. Avoiding redundancy, the new office could integrate the services and help advance them from their present seminal state by helping them to identify information gaps which need filling as they seek to anticipate users' needs. Because information services are not designed to handle these types of issues, his office might give attention to the ways that the structure, staffing and procedures of both AID and the host countries, as well as program and project design, affect the impact of development activities on intended beneficiaries. The information services (particularly the DIS) are both invaluable sources of information and indispensable vehicles for disseminating the office's findings. This office would draw available information from the banks, show how it might be absorbed and utilized, and then insert the findings into the information network for circulation.

The new PPC office must be careful to keep informed of studies being done elsewhere in AID to avoid charges of duplication of functions. In addition to extramural research, a couple of examples of "issue-oriented" looking studies done in AID come to mind. One is an ESDB analysis of data which seemed to show that patriarchal societies in Africa readily adopt innovations which have cash crops as an output. Conversely, matriarchal societies are more amenable to adopting changes which result in food crop production.

Another source of studies is the environmental impact office in TAB. Along with the PID the missions must submit an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) for each new project. If the administrator determines that a project (or group of projects) will have significant environmental impact, he can commission a major study which will generate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). One \$200,000 programmatic study was completed on pesticides which resulted in a change of policy. No longer can foreign aid funds be used to provide pesticides to LDCs. They can only be expended for the provision of technical training or infrastructure building related to the use of pesticides. Two more studies may be undertaken on the environmental effects of irrigation and integrated rural development. Even though the "issue" here is narrowly defined (i.e., environmental impact), it behooves the new office to be aware of other hunters in the woods.

The new office might achieve some immediate credibility by taking completed studies and proving that studies, per se, are worthwhile. Before embarking on a time-consuming primary study, it might be wise to take an already completed study and show how it can be absorbed and utilized. Demonstrating the learning dimension or intrinsic value of studies would be a significant first step for the new division.