PN ABI-722

**AIRGRAM** **DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

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TO - AIDTO CIRCULAR A-XXXX 263

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DATE SENT
6-27-78

FROM - AID/W

SUBJECT - The Views of the Administrator on Program Evaluation

REFERENCE - AIDTO CIRC A-118 dated 3/10/78
AIDTO CIRC A-186 dated 4/22/78

In recent months we have sent messages and made reference (e.g., in the budget guidance) concerning the need to determine the effectiveness of Agency development assistance programs. These messages reflect strong, continuing interest in both the executive and legislative branches. The closely related subjects of effectiveness and the capability of the Agency's program evaluation system have received increasing attention from the Administrator and senior Agency staff. The most recent discussion of program evaluation resulted in a memorandum from the Administrator to bureau heads requesting information on the current status, problems and future prospects for program evaluation in their bureaus. The memorandum included a statement by the Administrator of his views on the role of evaluation at the executive level. The Administrator has directed that this statement be transmitted to all field missions. The text which follows summarizes the reporting requirement and quotes the Administrator's statement of policy.

A. Reporting Requirement

(While this request is directed to Bureaus it is included in this message as most of the concerns listed are thought valid for the field too.) The Administrator requested each regional and staff bureau to report by July 7 on current status and planned future actions in the evaluation area. The report is to cover the following topics and should include any additional initiatives, ideas and constraints that the bureau wants the Administrator to know about.



| DRAFTED BY | OFFICE | PHONE NO. | DATE | APPROVED BY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H.D. Turner, PPC/PDES | | 20226 | 5-20-78 | Alexander Shakow, AA/PPC |

A. I. D. AND OTHER CLEARANCES
R. Berg, PPC/E ASIA/DP (info) NE/DP (info) AA/SER (info)
LA/DP (info) DS/PB (info) PDC,(Info) OPT (info)
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The following is to be covered:

1. Provisions for management control of evaluation schedules, documents, actions, resources, etc.

2. Steps taken or planned at the design and review stages to assure that new programs and projects are evaluable.

3. Plans for, and use of special evaluations at Mission and bureau levels, including sectoral and inter-country comparisons.

4. Possible approaches to establish quality control of evaluations, and to assure more utility of evaluation findings.

5. Steps taken to assure utilization of evaluation findings in bureau and Mission decisions in project design and implementation, programming and budget, etc.

6. Adequac of staff resources, methodological guidance, support services.

B. The Administrator's Statement on Evaluation

Given the Agency's previous predominant concern with the supply side of evaluation, we believe that the emphasis in the Administrator's statement below, on the demand for evaluation findings clearly reflects an important change of emphasis. The statement is quoted in its entirety.

> "I would like to give you my views on the role of evaluation at the executive level and to invite you to comment either in the report described above, or in a separate memorandum to me.
>
> Much of our New Directions effort must necessarily be experimental and high-risk. But we need not act as if no past experience is relevant to our decisions. Many of the past activities in LDCs, often activities assisted by AID, are highly relevant to finding out what will and what will not work in the future.
>
> At the executive level in AID, decision making is concerned more with policy, resource allocation and program management and less with the management of individual projects. We tend to become isolated from the demands and benefits of the Agency's main evaluation activities because these activities

are perceived largely as project-specific. The Agency also tends to leave evaluation activities in the hands of middle and junior management on the assumption that the system does not and will not produce information which serves higher level needs.

I would like to challenge this pattern and to consider how you and I can make evaluation more responsive to our needs.

I believe it fundamental that policy and program management decisions be based as much as possible on organized and broadly based analysis of relevant prior experience wherever it may be found. Stated more simply, executive decisions should be preceded by systematic efforts to exploit evaluation findings. This applies both to regional bureaus in their management of operational programs and to staff bureaus in their formulation of policy, program and technical guidance.

I understand that our existing evaluative holdings have qualitative and quantitative shortcomings. When you and I ask for evaluative material we may not get what we need when we need it. I believe we must continue to ask until the supply catches up with the demand. The professional staff of AID is responsive to clearly expressed demands from the Agency leaders.

If your own immediate bureau staff is unable to deliver relevant and timely evaluation material in operationally useful form from their own or other Agency sources, then you should press for the acquisition or creation of such material. If the information you require is specific to your own functional area and geographic region then you may want to initiate appropriate evaluation studies. If the information you want is less specific then you should turn to DSB which provides evaluative information services through its Development Information Service and PPC, which is now building an in-house evaluation capability.

We can increase the probability of getting the kinds of evaluation material we want if we spell out at the start, in the most explicit terms we can, what questions we want answered, what issues we want examined and what hypotheses we want tested. Evaluations can be designed to produce the kinds of information specifically needed by decision makers.

The Agency has had vast experience in development and with attempting to improve the economic and social status of the poor. Although the current policy emphasis dates only to 1973, in fact many programs and projects addressed these priorities long before that time. I think we can assume that most of today's questions can at least partially be answered by a serious examination of relevant past experience.

I hope we keep the issues discussed above live and that sometime after June 30 we review our progress in these areas.

signed: John J. Gilligan "

VANCE

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