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The Case for Refocusing on Development of
HUMAN RESOURCES and INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

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It is commonly, and I believe validly, asserted that the hunger problem is basically a poverty problem. The global trade glut of agricultural (food) commodities, the depressed condition in production agriculture, and the exercise of production constraining policies all reinforce this conclusion. The route to food sufficiency and security for a given area is then economic development; economic development as an incentive for indigenous production and distribution and/or as capacity for participation in international trade.

But, economic development must be based upon the resources and characteristics of the country or area involved. For many developing countries, especially in Africa, the resources inventory tends to be long on land and people. This circumstance directs particular development effort to the arena of agriculture. This in turn means that progress is manifested as enhanced food security, either directly or through earned foreign exchange for importation. Historic examples of development successes suggest the likelihood of a combination of increased production of local commodities and a broadened dietary regime involving imported commodities.

History, as well as reason, also suggests that development is a long term process. It requires not only sustained effort but consistent effort. Real sustainable progress does not often result from "quick fix" politically defined thrusts. Nor is the development goal optimally served by two or three year donor input horizons, shifting Agency attitudes related to personnel rotations or politically induced vacillations.

Sustainability is an essential characteristic of real development progress. This applies to the continuing benefit of development accomplished. It also applies to the process of continuing development. The latter, inherently provides the former. Sustainability must incorporate survivability after eventual weaning from donor inputs. Thus, real progress must be in the form of indigenous capability and the institutional capacity to utilize, preserve and expand that capability.

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Admittedly this rationale involves over-simplification and perhaps geographic area exceptions. However, it seems basically valid for much of the developing world. It is also verified by experiences of past programs; both successes and those others not often cited.

What does this mean for U.S. participation in development assistance programs for the 1990s? It seems obvious that it should cause us to focus our efforts on:

- Human resource development for a spectrum of functions including education, policy formulation, administrative/management, scientific, technical and operational.
- Institutional development for productive expression of the human resource capabilities and for sustaining and expanding that resource pool.
- International linkages for viability maintenance and growth of people and institutions through mutually stimulating communication and collaboration.

It means returning to the thrusts of our development assistance programs of the 25 year period immediately following World War II. It means focus on education of key personnel and development of educational institutions. But it also means institutions, public and private, for generating and executing development policies, technologies and practices. It means learning from the success examples of Brazil, India, Taiwan, Thailand, Morocco, et al.

Other national development successes of that era and form have become rather frustrated by internal turbulence and stress; e.g., Ethiopia, Colombia, Nigeria, and the Philippines. But even in these situations there remain the trained people and established institutional capacity. There is residual accomplishment. Equipment disappears or deteriorates, money dissipates (perhaps while substituting dependency for initiative), food is consumed and expatriate substitutes leave. But trained nationals and institutional development continue.

To be sure, developing country conditions vary through time and circumstances; Chad is not another Brazil nor Botswana a Taiwan. Most countries of Africa and many of south Asia are very young in their independence. They lack the experience, infra-structure, international posture, etc. of an India, Taiwan or Brazil. Development assistance programs must be fitted to their circumstances. Neither can the stencil of development stages of more developed countries be applied. U.S. farmers did not shift from a hand scythe to a horse drawn reaper with knowledge of self-propelled combines. They at any stage moved to the most advanced known technology. Illiterate peasants of Upper Volta know of the existence of advanced methodologies. This changes things.

But, what is unchanged is the basic need for people equipped to develop their own initiatives and institutional mechanisms to implement the processes. This is where our aid should be focused, even as it was 25 years ago, yielding the examples we now like to cite. This is the concept of the authors of Title

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XII although it has not been extensively implemented in that manner. Congressman Paul Findley, who together with Senator Humphrey sponsored the Title VII legislation, recently wrote that:

"Support for building agricultural universities has been the heart of USAID programs since the launching of formal U.S. technical assistance. The experience of the 1950s and 1960s showed that long-term sustained commitment was essential, that there was no cookbook made to follow, that pay-off was long-term and that patience was required.

There were three main reasons why I supported the University contract idea. First, I felt that there was an important potential in the long-term relationships between an American university and a university of another country. Second, I felt that given the educational nature of technical assistance, a university was a most natural institution for carrying it out. Third, universities were repositories of the expertise which had to be tapped if an acceptable program were to be carried out."

The concept is still valid. Unfortunately, AID programming of this form has decreased in relative emphasis since 1980. Emphasis has shifted away from educationally focused technical assistance to food aid and economic aid. The evolved pattern is quite completely counter to this rationale and the lessons of the past.

Food aid on an emergency basis, a la Ethiopia, is certainly not to be argued against. But food aid on a regular basis, even food for work, is not leading to a lasting solution to chronic food deficiencies. Indeed, it may have a counter effect on development of real food security. (Nor is it a practical solution to U.S. surplus production.)

Neither is check writing for economic aid, unrelated to technical development assistance, yielding development toward long term stability and self-sufficiency. Rather it tends to engender addiction and disincentives to real development. Superimposed on this concern is the low correlation of the most massive economic aid checks to the severity of poverty and hunger; and the relatively conspicuous political pressure dimension of the process.

And so in conclusion, I return to the thesis that U.S. bilateral ^{assistance} should undergo a major shift back to human resource and institutional development for real indigenous sustainable progress.