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First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group
on Exchange of Development Information

Report

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Hosted by the OECD Development Centre
at the Académie Diplomatique Internationale
in Paris, 19th-21st June 1991

Executive Summary

1. The participants in this First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information¹, representing intergovernmental organisations, bilateral donors, non-governmental organisations and research institutes², discussed approaches and instruments aimed at **improving the exchange of information on development activities**³. The meeting was held against a background of continuing pressure on the level of financial resources available for development activities. It was generally acknowledged that **improved co-operation between development aid donors is urgently needed to prevent duplication of donor efforts and the wastage of available resources.**
2. The participants in the meeting recognised that facilitating the exchange of information could lead to an improvement of the ability of donors to execute development activities more effectively.
3. The participants supported the introduction of a **Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information (CEFDA)**⁴.

¹ This first General Meeting, hosted by the OECD Development Centre at the Académie Diplomatique Internationale, was preceded by three meetings of a preparatory Study Group on the Exchange of Development Information, held in Paris at the OECD Development Centre on 6th-7th June 1989, 15th-16th February 1990, and 2nd-3rd October 1990. All four meetings were chaired by Mr. Maury D. Brown from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Reports from the preceding meetings are available from the Rapporteur: Mr. Terry Gavin, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada K1G 3HG, Fax: (1-613)-238-7230. Rapporteur for the First General Meeting was Mr. Henny Helmich, External Co-operation of the OECD Development Centre, 94, rue Chardon Lagache, 75016 Paris, France. Fax: (33-1)-4524-7943.

² For a full list of participants and organisations see Annex A to the main report.

³ The agenda of the meeting is attached as Annex B to the main report.

⁴ The definition of development activities used in this report is "...those activities of a development co-operation character that seek to mobilize or increase the potential and capacities of countries to promote economic and social development and welfare, including the transfer of resources to developing countries or regions in a tangible or intangible form." United Nations, General Assembly. Resolution 35/81 of 5 December, 1980.

4. The proposed CEFDA considered by the meeting consists of a common record structure, in the form of a minimum list of data fields required to identify and describe a development activity, and guidelines as to the content of each field (the field description)⁵. The format is designed for retrieval of information (descriptive data elements, e.g. by subject, geographical area, and organisation). It is not designed for the management of financial flows, comparative analysis or the keeping of statistics.
5. The CEFDA facilitates the sharing of development activity information between organisations. The expected benefits through this information sharing are:
 - A. The cost of information exchange activities for each agency could be decreased. Presently, when agencies share information, the cost of data collection, interpretation (both linguistic and intellectual) and verification is very high. This high cost is compounded because different standards and concepts exist not only between countries but also within each organisation. Different interpretation of exchanged data generally leads to inconsistencies, impeding the effective use of information from other users in or outside an agency.
 - B. Management information systems could be improved. Each agency could use the CEFDA to introduce its own activity information systems, or to improve the co-ordination of various existing databases within its organisation. Agencies which are just embarking on the establishment of information systems could use the CEFDA as a useful format for the basis of their systems.
 - C. Agencies could strengthen their learning and planning capabilities. Because of the improvement of the availability of information on past, current and planned development activities, experiences of agencies might be exchanged more easily. This would also be beneficial to each agency's planning capacity, while reviewing the "lessons learned" with past and on-going activities.

⁵ Di Lauro, Anne., Consultant, Proposed Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information, Study prepared for the First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information, Paris 19th-21st June 1991 (Annex C to the main report). The CEFDA as presented by Di Lauro will be modified following comments of the participants at the meeting.

- D. **Duplication between agencies could be avoided.** Through the availability and accessibility of information on past, on-going and future activities, agencies might avoid duplication of initiatives and activities.
 - E. **Costs of evaluation of activities could be reduced, and evaluations could become more effective.** Agencies might compare development experience from within their own organisations with evaluation programmes of other organisations. Through the collective experience of various development actors, similar evaluation programmes would be based on a much broader practice.
 - F. **Time/cost for planning-missions could be reduced.** Through the availability of current development activity information, development organisations could considerably reduce the time and cost of feasibility missions. By avoiding duplication of planning missions, agencies could use scarce resources for these tasks to undertake activities in other areas.
 - G. **Agencies could identify more opportunities for co-funded programmes.** Agencies could quickly learn of other development activities in similar areas. Thus, co-funding partners could be found and duplication could be avoided.
 - H. **Agencies could improve their accountability.** Through the available data, agencies might be able to make their record of achievement much more visible towards taxpayers, contributors, and their constituencies.
6. The participants further called for a compilation of a **Directory of Existing Development Activity Databases**. This Database Directory will contain descriptions of those existing databases in development agencies ready to participate in information exchange using the CEFDA. These descriptions would contain technical information on: the type of data available from those databases (activities information, research in progress, statistical data, evaluation reports, etc.), the format for data storage used, address, information about the 'contact point' in the agency, and the terms on which the agency is prepared to share information from this database.
7. The participants at the meeting studied various approaches to the strengthening of information exchange. With the availability of a CEFDA and a Directory of Existing Databases, the basic instruments would be in place to exchange information between agencies. These exchanges would

establish a 'network' of relations which would be improved over a period of time with increasing experience in co-operation. Through this improved exchange, the participants expected that the existing databases would be strengthened and would include more relevant and up-to-date information.

8. Finally, the participants discussed the feasibility of creating a **Central Development Project Database**, with the CEFDA data elements, in place of this network of bilateral exchange relations. The basic argument for discussing such an undertaking is that a central database would **replace the manifold bilateral relationships** (in which an information-providing agency would have to supply information repeatedly) with a one-to-one relationship of information providing agencies with the database management unit. This central database would make all information available to all collaborating agencies periodically on **Compact Disc-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM)**. With this approach, the establishment of a Central Database would provide **important economies of scale**.
9. The **DAC Secretariat and UN-ACCIS representatives** offered to provide their development activity databases in the common exchange format for inclusion in the central database, once conversion and reformatting issues into the CEFDA have been resolved. The DAC's Credit Reporting System (CRS) and the UN-ACCIS Registry of Development Activity Databases would provide access to most on-going bilateral donor and UN multilateral development activities.
10. The participants supported **the creation of a prototype CD-ROM** which would contain collections of development activity information, such as the DAC-CRS and UN-ACCIS Registry databases, in the CEFDA format from participating organisations.
11. The participants at the meeting unanimously agreed to set up a **Co-ordinating Unit** with the following **main⁶ tasks**:
 - A. The elaboration of a final proposal for a CEFDA.
 - B. The collection of information using the CEFDA from all participating agencies and the transcription into a format for CD-ROM distribution.
 - C. The creation of a **Directory of Development Activity Databases**, and the maintenance of the **Register of Information Providing Agencies**.

⁶ A full descriptive list of tasks of the Co-ordinating Unit is provided in the main report.

- D. A quarterly newsletter to network participants.
- E. The investigation of the feasibility of establishing a more comprehensive Central Database with expanded data elements beyond the CEFDA definition.
12. A proposal that the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** in Canada would host the **Co-ordinating Unit** for an **initial period of 18 months** was unanimously welcomed by the participants.
13. **IDRC agreed to host the Co-ordinating Unit** for an **interim period** of two months and offered to extend that period to 18 months, provided that sufficient revenue commitments were obtained from the meeting's participants during the interim period⁷. The participants agreed to meet again, after the 18 months initial period, to review the progress which had been made.
14. IDRC estimated that **US\$ 250,000** in revenue commitments would be necessary to perform the co-ordinating unit tasks for an **18 month period**.
15. A number of **revenue-generating mechanisms**, such as subscriptions or memberships, were explored as a means to support the **Co-ordinating Unit** functions.
16. The Steering Group of the Informal Study Group determined that **organisational commitments** in the form of **US\$ 5,000** or **US\$ 10,000** memberships subscriptions⁸ would be required to fully fund the co-ordinating unit for the next 18 months.
17. The result of the First General Meeting is the establishment of a mechanism of donor co-operation, which represents more than simply an information-sharing agreement. The mechanism established is a **major step forward in the support of significant donor co-ordination**. It will contribute to improved efficiency in the use of resources, the quality of design of development activities and increased accountability of development co-operation. The General Meeting has succeeded in bringing together a group of committed persons interested in sharing information on development activities. This group is the guarantee that this major step forward in donor co-ordination will provide tangible results.

⁷ A budget and a timetable is annexed to the main report as Annex G.

⁸ Subscription levels would be dependent on full or partial services required by each organisation from the Co-ordinating Unit.

Report

1. The First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information took place in Paris, from 19th to 21st June 1991¹. The meeting was hosted by the OECD Development Centre at the Académie Diplomatique Internationale and chaired by Mr. Maury D. Brown, Chief, Development Information Division of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Rapporteur for the meeting was Mr. Henny Helmich, Administrator, External Co-operation of the OECD Development Centre.
2. More than 80 participants were welcomed by Mr. Giulio Fossi, Head, External Co-operation of the OECD Development Centre on behalf of Mr. Louis Emmerij, President and Mr. Jean Bonvin, Director of Co-ordination of the OECD Development Centre, and by Ms. Kyra Bodart, Secretary General of the Académie Diplomatique Internationale. The participants represented multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, research institutes, non-governmental organisations and associations².
3. The welcoming speeches were followed by a keynote address of Mr. Stephane Hessel, Ambassadeur de France. Ambassador Hessel recalled his support for co-ordination in the field of development co-operation and called for a decisive step forward to ensure that development organisations would be better informed about each other's activities and avoid redundancy and duplication of efforts. "Development and its kindred concern, environment, are going to require on the part of all concerned true professionalism in the new era. True professionalism means serious information and serious information must be shared information", according to Ambassador Hessel³.
4. Mr. Maury Brown recalled the conclusions of three preparatory meetings of the Informal Study Group on the Exchange of Development Information which took place at his initiative⁴. The purpose of these meetings was:

¹ The agenda of the meeting is attached as Annex B.

² For a list of participants and organisations see Annex A.

³ A complete version of the keynote address of Ambassador Stephane Hessel, Ambassadeur de France, can be found in Annex D.

⁴ The preparatory meetings were held in Paris at the OECD Development Centre on 6th-7th June 1989, 15th-16th February 1990 and 2nd-3rd October 1990. Reports from these preceding meetings are available from Mr. Terras A.G. GAVIN, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The members of the

- A. To identify issues inhibiting the exchange of information.
- B. To formulate a plan for pursuing the establishment of procedures to facilitate the exchange of information on "development activities".

A number of donor representatives participated on an informal basis to

Preparatory Informal Study Groups were (in alphabetical sequence): Mr. Ingvar ÅHMAN, Coordinator of CESI, World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva; Ms. Janet BALLANTYNE, Associate Assistant Administrator, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), United States; Mr. François-George BARBIER-WIESSER, Chef du Département de l'Information et de la Documentation, Ministère de la Coopération et du Développement, France; Mr. Maury D. Brown (Chairman), Chief, Development Information Division, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Center for Development Information and Evaluation, United States; Ms. Mary CAMPBELL, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; Mr. Stephan DENIS, Information Specialist, Donors to African Education Information System, The World Bank; Mr. Giulio FOSSI, Head, External Co-operation Programme, OECD-Development Centre, Paris; Mr. Terras A.G. GAVIN (Rapporteur), Associate Director, Information Science Division, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; Mr. Jean-Louis GROLLEAU, Development Co-operation Directorate, Reporting Systems Division, OECD, Paris; Mr. Michel GUIGNARD, Délégué Général D'Ibiscus, Réseau d'Information sur les Pays en Développement, France; Mr. Henry HELMICH, External Co-operation and Data Base, OECD Development Centre, Paris; Mr. Keiso KATSURA, Information and Systems Management Division, General Affairs Department, Institute for International Co-operation, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Japan; Mr. Mario MALARA, Evaluation Analyst, Evaluation Division, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada; Mr. Tosio NAMAI, Information and Statistical Division, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan; Mr. Masahiro NOMURA, Deputy Director, Information Division, Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan; Mr. Peter PEE, Deputy Executive Secretary, Special Programme for African Agricultural Research (SPAAR), The World Bank; Mr. Jean Quesnel, Director, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada; Ms. Linda SCHIEBER, Chief, Documentation and Statistics Office, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York; Mr. Bevin STEIN, Head, Reporting Systems Division, Development Cooperation Directorate, OECD, Paris; Mr. Charles SZABO, Evaluation Division, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada; Mr. Gengiz TARHAN, Directorate for Computers and Communications, OECD, Paris; Mr. Patrice TAUPIN, Directorate for Computers and Communications, Systems Development Division, OECD, Paris; Mr. Ikufumi TOMIMOTO, Deputy Head, Research and Development Division, Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan; Ms. Céline Foster WALKER, Executive Secretary, United Nations Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS), Geneva; Ms. Alice WATSON, External Co-operation and Documentation, OECD Development Centre, Paris; Mr. Lee WHITE, Deputy Director, Development Information Division, United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), Center for Development Information and Evaluation; United States.

establish an approach to identify sets of information common within the donor community and the steps to be undertaken to define guidelines to simplify the exchange of information within the donor community.

5. Ms. Céline Foster Walker, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS), reported to the meeting on the various information systems and databases reviewed during the preparatory study group meetings and commented on the common aspects of the various systems⁵. She stated that most databases were primary referral databases.
6. During the time of the preparatory meetings USAID had been in contact with more than 115 agencies, research institutes and NGOs⁶ and informed them about the results of the meetings. More than 90 agencies responded positively to a letter of USAID about becoming involved in a general meeting on information exchange. Fifty-five of these agencies were represented by participants in this meeting.
7. The participants were presented with a study proposing a Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information (CEFDA). The proposed CEFDA considered by the meeting consists of a common record structure, in the form of a minimum list of data fields required to identify and describe a development activity, and guidelines as to the content of each field (the field description)⁷. The format is designed for retrieval of information by descriptive data elements, e.g. subject, geographical area, and organisation. It is not designed for the management of financial flows, comparative analysis or the management of statistics.
8. The CEFDA facilitates the sharing of development activity information between organisations. The discussion focused on the possible benefits which agencies would receive through this information sharing:
 - A. **The cost of information exchange activities for each agency could be decreased.** Presently, when agencies share information, the cost of data collection, interpretation (both linguistic and

⁵ Availability of Development Information Databases, Paper presented by Céline Walker, Executive Secretary ACCIS, Annex E to this report.

⁶ These various organisations will be referred to in this report as 'agencies'.

⁷ Di Lauro, Anne., Consultant, Proposed Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information, Study prepared for the First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information, Paris 19th-21st June 1991 (Annex C). The CEFDA as presented by Di Lauro will be modified following comments of the participants at the meeting.

intellectual) and verification is very high. This high cost is compounded because different standards and concepts exist not only across countries but also within each organisation. Different interpretation of exchanged data generally leads to inconsistencies, impeding the effective use of information from other users in or outside an agency.

- B. **Management information systems could be improved.** Each agency could use the CEFDA to introduce its own activity information systems, or to improve the co-ordination of various existing databases within its organisation. Agencies which are just embarking on the establishment of information systems could use the CEFDA as a useful format for the basis of their systems.
- C. **Agencies could strengthen their learning and planning capabilities.** Because of the improvement of the availability of information on past, current and planned development activities, experiences of agencies might be exchanged more easily. This would be also beneficial to each agency's planning capacity, while reviewing the "lessons learned" with past and on-going activities.
- D. **Duplication between agencies could be avoided.** Through the availability and accessibility of information on past, on-going and future activities, agencies might avoid duplication of initiatives and activities.
- E. **Costs of evaluation of activities could be reduced, and evaluations could become more effective.** Agencies might compare development experience from within their own organisations with evaluation programmes of other organisations. Through the collective experience of various development actors, similar evaluation programmes would be based on a much broader practice.
- F. **Time/cost for planning-missions could be reduced.** Through the availability of current development activity information, development organisations could considerably reduce the time and cost of feasibility missions. By avoiding duplication of planning missions, agencies could use scarce resources for these tasks to undertake activities in other areas.

- G. Agencies could identify more opportunities for co-funded programmes. Agencies could quickly learn of other development activities in similar areas. Thus, co-funding partners could be found and duplication could be avoided.
 - H. Agencies could improve their accountability. Through the available data, agencies might be able to make their record of achievement much more visible towards taxpayers, contributors, and their constituencies.
9. The participants also pointed to the cost of participation in information exchange using a CEFDA. Primary costs would be:
- A. The conversion of existing data to the new CEFDA. Although no participating agency would be required to change its existing database, conversion would be necessary for exchange purposes. However, through the use of a CEFDA these conversion costs would be rather limited.
 - B. The reception of data in a CEFDA and the interpretation and intellectual evaluation of the data received.
 - C. The translation of textual information from one language to another (before expedition or after reception).
 - D. The servicing of follow-up queries of exchange partners. Since the data exchanged would be mainly of a referral quality, participating agencies would have to organise the response to follow-up questions on the references provided. The provision of follow-up information will be vital for the quality of the information exchange and for the benefits derived from the system for each participating agency.
10. According to the present phase of information system building within any given agency, the cost for each agency will be different. The cost of some of the items listed will be considerably lower for those agencies not yet having a central information system. The introduction of a CEFDA might actually lower these costs notably.

11. The General Meeting continued its deliberations in four working groups⁸:
 - A. Organisational Issues and the Exchange of Information;
 - B. The Format of Development Information;
 - C. The Use of Development Information; and
 - D. Technical Support for Information Exchange.

12. The main issues debated in Working Group A on Organisational Issues and the Exchange of Information were:
 - A. Each agency would itself be able to decide on the benefits and costs of participation, but would also have full control of the limits to which data would be provided. In this way the issue of confidentiality could be kept outside of the concerns for the exchange network.
 - B. Many agencies use information at various levels. Some of this information is available and useful only at a intermediary management level in the agency. The increasing use of personal computer systems has created several information levels within agencies. Agencies would have to decide which information is relevant for its own use only, and which information can be shared. The introduction of a CEFDA and the participation of the agency in an exchange agreement could provide the incentive for agencies to introduce better management information systems to organise all existing information data bases in their own organisation.

⁸ The Working Papers for these Working Groups were prepared by Mr. Ron Davies, Consultant, and are attached as Annex F. The groups were chaired by Mr. Ingvar ÅHMAN, Coordinator of CESI, World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva; Mr. Terras A.G. GAVIN, Associate Director, Information Science Division, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; Ms. Linda SCHIEBER, Chief, Documentation and Statistics Office, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Mr. Lee WHITE, Deputy Director, Development Information Division, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Center for Development Information and Evaluation, United States.

- C. After the CEFDA-network was established on the basis of a network of several bilateral exchange agreements, the information provided could be expanded to various types of information. In this regard interest was expressed by some participants for the inclusion of descriptive information on development activities, and socio-economic indicators used by several agencies in various areas. The socio-economic indicators are particular elements of feasibility studies which carry high costs for agencies to calculate individually.
- D. The group looked into the possibility for **strengthening the existing databases** such as the **UN-ACCIS database**, in Geneva, and the database managed on behalf of the bilateral donor agencies, the **Credit Reporting System (CRS) of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)** monitored at the OECD Secretariat by the Development Co-operation Directorate in Paris.
- E. Special emphasis was given to the participation of NGOs in an exchange network. NGOs might be facing relatively high costs of participation in such a system, but would also receive relatively higher benefits of early information on activities in areas where they themselves want to undertake activities. NGOs would also have to confront decisions about which part of the information is to be kept confidential.
- F. The group proposed to study the feasibility of creating a **Central Development Project Database** with the CEFDA data elements, in place of this network of bilateral exchange relations. The basic argument for discussing such an undertaking is that a central database would **replace the manifold bilateral relationships** (in which an information providing agency would have to repeatedly supply information) with a one-to-one relationship of information providing agencies with the database management unit (in which the information will be provided only one time per year). Various representatives of larger donor agencies, preferring the approach of strengthening existing reporting systems (ACCIS and CRS/DAC/OECD), would look more favourably at exchange systems in which the cost of providing information to different users would be avoided.
- G. The group finally called for a study on the way in which **recipient countries** could participate in exchanging information on development activities.

13. The main conclusions from Working Group B on the Format of Development Information were:
 - A. The proposed CEFDA was generally an adequate instrument, which would facilitate exchange of information. The group proposed some modifications to the set of fields to be studied before the final presentation of the CEFDA in late 1991. January 1st 1992 was suggested as starting date for the use of CEFDA.
 - B. The group found that almost every agency represented had already established a contact point of the agency to act as an intermediary for information issues.

14. Working Group C on the Use of Development Information had the following discussions and conclusions:
 - A. The group reviewed the various user groups of development activities information and focused on the diverse types of information required by each user group. The group identified the following broad types of information:
 - (1). Evaluation of development activities;
 - (2). Descriptions of development activities: who is doing what, where?;
 - (3). Basic documentation available for each activity (activity design, bibliographic data, etc.);
 - (4). Statistics;
 - (5). Research in Progress;
 - (6). Directories.
 - B. The specific use of information has to be left to the decision of each individual agency. For the system as a whole it would be difficult to generalise. User definitions were found not to be useful.
 - C. The group called for a compilation of a **Directory of Existing Development Activity Databases**. This Database Directory will contain descriptions of those development agencies ready to participate in information exchange using the CEFDA, and their existing databases. These descriptions would contain technical

information on: the type of data available from those databases (activities information, research in progress, statistical data, evaluation reports etc.), the format used for data storage, address information about the 'contact point' in the agency, and the terms on which the agency is prepared to share information from this database.

- D. The group discussed various means and goals of **enhancing and promoting the use of information** between and within agencies.
 - E. The group expressed some concern on the **human resource implications** involved in the establishment of information exchange networks. It recommended that the issue of user-fees for access to database information be studied. This would be important for a cost-effective management of information exchange, but could also create barriers for the use of the information by recipient countries and NGOs.
 - F. The group called for the establishment of a **Co-ordinating Unit** to carry out important support functions. (See below point 16/F)
15. Working Group D on **Technical Support for Information Exchange** discussed the following technical problems related to the collection, processing and exchange of development activity information:
- A. The group recognised the need, **within organisations**, for greater user participation in establishing information management guidelines; better user documentation and training; the establishment of focal points to co-ordinate information collection, processing and dissemination; and to the degree possible, standardization on hardware and software internally.
 - B. The group suggested that as a means of knowing more about existing databases and software a **Directory of Existing Development Activity Databases** be established (see suggestion from working group C, point 14C above). In addition, there should be a reference to the type of hardware and software being used to manage this information and what conversion tools, if any, were being used to transfer data between different hardware and software systems.
 - C. Recognising that there are differences between established industry market standards and international information standards, the group suggested the definition of a **simplified, tag-data format**, that

could be used in conjunction with the CEFDA as well as the ISO 2709 exchange format. This simplified format may facilitate the exchange of information by those organisations who use software which does not produce or accept data in the ISO 2709 exchange format⁹.

- D. The group acknowledged that language and character sets were major hurdles to overcome in exchanging information. There was a suggestion that standard conversion procedures be established to handle diacritical characters¹⁰ in Latin based languages.
- E. The group studied the basic problems of providing information in an ad-hoc way on a one-to-one relationship to various users, and a larger exchange system. It suggested the establishment of a Central Development Activities Database using the CEFDA to which the information would be provided by all participating agencies and which would take over the distribution of the data to all participants. The establishment of such a Central Database would involve important economies of scale.
- F. The group expressed interest in developing a guide to assist in determining the appropriate use of hardcopy, on-line access, magnetic media and CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) to disseminate information. All forms were deemed to be relevant but were dependent upon factors such as the intended recipient of the information, the urgency, the frequency of update and the volume.
- G. The use and benefits (eg. cost, speed, ability to transfer computer files) of electronic mail were discussed. The group suggested that the possibility of establishing an electronic-mail network for the

⁹ The ISO 2709 Format is based on the International Organisation for Standardization. Documentation (ISO) - Format for Bibliographic Information Interchange on Magnetic Tape. Geneva, ISO, 1981. (ISO 2709-1981. The International Standard specifies the requirements for a generalised exchange format which will hold records describing all forms of material capable of bibliographic description as well as related records such as authority records. It does not define the length or the content of individual records and does not assign any meaning to tags, indicators or identifiers; it only describes a generalised structure, a framework designed specially for communications between data processing systems and not for use as a processing format within systems. See for a detailed description Annex 5 of the Study of Di Lauro, Annex C to this report. (ref. Footnote 7). Although the ISO Standard is designed for magnetic tape, its structure may be used for other data carriers.

¹⁰ Accented characters with marks used to indicate different sounds or values of a letter.

community of development assistance organisations participating in the meeting be explored.

16. The participants at the General Meeting arrived at the following conclusions:
 - A. The participants supported the introduction of a **Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information (CEFDA)**.
 - B. The **DAC Secretariat and UN-ACCIS representatives** offered to provide their development activity databases in the common exchange format for inclusion in the central database, once conversion and reformatting issues into the CEFDA have been resolved. The DAC's Credit Reporting System (CRS) and the UN-ACCIS Registry of Development Activity Databases would provide access to most on-going bilateral donor and UN multilateral development activities.
 - C. The participants supported the **creation of a prototype CD-ROM** which would contain collections of development activity information, such as the DAC-CRS and UN-ACCIS Registry databases, in the CEFDA format from participating organisations.
 - D. The participants suggested the compilation of a **Directory of Existing Development Activity Databases**.
 - E. The participants suggested the study of the feasibility to establish a more comprehensive **Central Development Activities Database** with the inclusion of additional descriptive information, "lessons learned" and performance indicators beyond the present CEFDA contents.
 - F. The participants at the meeting unanimously agreed to set up a **Co-ordinating Unit** with the following main tasks:
 - (1) The elaboration of a final proposal for a CEFDA.
 - (2) The collection of information, using the CEFDA, from all participating agencies and the transcription into a format for CD-ROM distribution in collaboration with USAID.

- (3) The creation of a Directory of Databases, the maintenance of the Register of Information Providing Agencies, and the dissemination of information about changes between editions of the Directory.
 - (4) The provision of news to network participants by publishing a quarterly newsletter.
 - (5) The investigation of the feasibility of establishing a more comprehensive Central Database with expanded data elements beyond the current CEFDA definition.
 - (6) The provision of consultative services for agencies looking to set up their own development activities databases.
 - (7) The elaboration of ways to bring recipient countries into the exchange system.
 - (8) The execution of advocacy tasks for the improvement of the exchange of information on development activities.
 - (9) The servicing of the Steering Group in between General Meetings.
 - (10) The elaboration of a fund-raising programme for the Exchange Mechanism.
17. A proposal that the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** in Canada would host the **Co-ordinating Unit** for an initial period of **18 months** was unanimously welcomed by the participants. IDRC was requested to provide the participants with an initial budget and time-table for these activities¹¹.
18. **IDRC** agreed to host the **Co-ordinating Unit** for an interim period of two months and offered to extend that period to 18 months, provided that sufficient revenue commitments were obtained from the meeting's participants during the interim period.
19. **IDRC** estimated that **US\$ 250,000** in revenue commitments would be necessary to perform the co-ordinating unit tasks for an **18 months** period.

¹¹ See Annex G.

20. A number of revenue-generating mechanisms, such as subscriptions or memberships, were explored as a means to support the Co-ordinating Unit functions.
21. The Steering Group of the Informal Study Group determined that organisational commitments in the form of US\$ 5,000 or US\$ 10,000 membership subscriptions¹² would be required to fully fund the co-ordinating unit for the next 18 months.
22. The participants would meet again after this period to review progress made and the efficiency of the exchange mechanisms resulting from the First General Meeting. The Steering Group consisting of members of the preparatory Study Groups (see footnote 1) would supervise the progress made before the next General Meeting on Development Information Exchange. Because there was no NGO representation on the Steering Group, the chairman asked for volunteers from NGOs represented in this meeting. Several individuals expressed an interest.
23. The result of the First General Meeting is the establishment of a mechanism of donor co-operation, which represents more than simply an information-sharing agreement. The mechanism established is a major step forward in the support of significant donor co-ordination. It will contribute to improved efficiency in the use of resources, the quality of design of development activities and increased accountability of development co-operation. The General Meeting has succeeded in bringing together a group of committed persons interested in sharing information on development activities. This group is the guarantee that this major step forward in donor co-ordination will provide tangible results.

¹² Subscription levels would be dependent on whether full or partial services were required by each organisation from the Co-ordinating Unit.

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The

Exchange of Development Activity Information

Newsletter

March 1993

Number 4

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Coordinating Unit News

- The Steering Committee for the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information plans to convene a **second general meeting** of the Informal Study Group, to be held in **Paris** during October 1993. More information will be found in the next issue of this Newsletter.
- New subscribers to the products and services of the Coordinating Unit are: **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and World Health Organization (WHO) Environmental Health Directorate.**
- The second edition of the DAI CD-ROM has been compiled and will be distributed in May 1993.

The DAI CD-ROM - second edition

The second edition of the DAI CD-ROM will be distributed in May 1993. This edition contains more than 88,000 records of development activities, current to January 1993.

All but two of the agencies which contributed to the first DAI CD-ROM were able to send updated data to the Coordinating Unit, for the second edition. One of the two agencies which did not update its contribution of data was the **International Centre for Ocean Development**; this agency was closed by the Canadian government last year and its programme of support for research in ocean resources management and development was taken over by the Canadian International Development Agency.

The **World Bank Group, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and CAB International** are new contributors to the second DAI CD-ROM. The language of records from the World Bank Group and CAB International is English; records from GTZ are in German. Another new contribution comes from the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)**; as well as its IDRIS database, IDRC has submitted data from its EVIS database of project evaluation information.

Users of the first DAI CD-ROM have suggested changes that they would like to see made to the CD-ROM search software and database structure. We were not able to implement them all for the second edition, but here are some of the new features that users can expect to see: in Guided Search mode, users may be able to **undo** more than the last search; an **ANY geographical region** feature (e.g. ANY AFRICA) will enable searchers to find all countries in a geographic region; CEFDA field 004 (**Submitting Organization**) can be searched; and fields **040 (Funding Organization)** and **100 (Funding Source)** can be searched separately.

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Tips for DAI CD-ROM users : how to make the most of system resources

Some users of the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM report that they have encountered problems with obtaining enough memory to use the Guided Search mode of the CD-ROM. If you encounter problems of this type, you may wish to logon to the CD-ROM with one or more of the following qualifiers:

- e use expanded memory, if available
- x use extended memory, if available
- m##### reserve ##### bytes RAM for the database server
(minimum is 20000; maximum is 100000)

These qualifiers are entered after the DAI command; they may be entered in combination and in any order, and are preceded by a space. For example, to specify that you wish to reserve only 20,000 bytes of RAM for the database server, logon to the CD-ROM as follows: **dai -m20000**

Comments on the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM

The following comments were expressed by users of the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM. As indicated on page 1 of this issue, we have been able to implement some of the changes suggested below in the second edition of the CD-ROM, but did not have the time or resources to address all of these requests. We are grateful to the users who took the time to give us their evaluation of the first CD-ROM.

● **I do not** have sufficient space in RAM to run guided searches, but I feel a lot happier with the advanced search facility anyway which is running well. ● If I output to printer, I cannot change the configuration on the CD-ROM from continuous printing to breaking between each page.

● **As regards the problems we experienced with memory ...** I found that I could not reserve more than about 23,000 bytes. Even then, there were memory problems in the guided search, and we have experienced memory problems when performing complex searches in advanced searching. ● The enquiries we have had included variations on "everything on India". We do need the facility to download these records to disc because we have neither the time nor the resources to print off hundreds of records. Anything that can be done on this issue for the next edition will be much appreciated. ● My main concern is that the information retrieval software ... is inadequate for a file of differently structured records, which are not indexed to the same standards of quality and detail. ● In the Manual, you use the example of "Education in Nepal" and illustrate how the search can be expanded by searching for the word-stem "education" in a range of fields. However, this can only work where the word-stem is the first word in the indexed term. You would need the Macrothesaurus on hand to ensure you used all the appropriate terms for education such as "access to education", "adult education", and so on. The facility to search for any word-stem in any part of a record would make retrieval quicker and may improve relevance, especially where standards of indexing are so variable. The hypertext facility does not resolve this problem. ● I also notice that if you need to search for a continent or a region, individual countries have to be included. ● Compared to most CD-ROMs that I have used, I feel DAI is among the least user-friendly. It takes a deal of careful thought to improve retrieval and relevance. Searches are time-consuming when other software packages would allow far better searching ... ● Despite my comments, DAI does offer us a valuable source of information which would continue to be fed into [our] work.

● **To be really useful**, the CD-ROM should include information from all major donor organizations.

● **The search for the activities of a certain donor agency is cumbersome, because in many cases, the funding agency or the submitting agency are not the institutions in charge of the development project or programme.** With the given data structure, it is almost impossible to gather information on - for example - the activities of a given donor in a particular region or type of activity. Therefore, we suggest to add a field containing the name of the donor agency in charge of the implementation. Furthermore ... the same agencies appear under different abbreviations [in the Organizations indexes]. ● **The full benefit of the Development Activity Information CD-ROM will only materialize if all major donors contribute information on their projects.**

● **I liked the Guided Search but felt that the Advanced Search was lacking in features that other CD-ROM interfaces had, specifically the ability to AND or OR the current search to the result of a previous search.**

● **We found that the system is user friendly, the search facilities are well designed and the documentation is sufficient.** In order to further improve the services provided by the system, I suggest to add an option which would enable the user to save the result of a search in table format, in a dBASE file. It would facilitate the secondary dissemination of information among interested staff members through customized printed reports.

● **The CD-ROM is not particularly useful to us.** The following remarks are intended constructively, since other recipients of the CD-ROM may find their use of the data hampered by the factors we flag, and remedial action may be possible: ● clearly there is no verification on type and content of input; ● there is no effort made to "filter out" commitments/projects which are notified twice or more; the search for double entries for certain commitments is time-consuming and costly, and - in the absence of an international identification number - may fail; ● the DAI CD-ROM retrieval software is very slow; apparently, moreover, (using the guided search option) there is no way to produce any other output except text (ASCII); ● unless and until all organizations holding databases on development activity make submissions to the CD-ROM, the only advantage CEFDA offers is - in principle, but because of the above, not necessarily in practice - speed of transmission made possible by the common format.

● **From the users' point of view, we think the information [on the DAI CD-ROM] is very easy to access and understand.** It looks attractive on the screen. The menus for guided search are clear and easy to follow. We already consider the DAI CD-ROM a useful source of information. As we have been informed that the next edition will include the World Bank as funding agency, we believe the usefulness of this edition will increase considerably.

● **The CEFDA file downloaded doesn't have standard field headers.** This posed a problem in writing programs for uploading the CEFDA file. If it's not possible at present to make the tag data format the standard format, at least the field headers should follow a standard. ● **It will be a big help if the ISO code is used for the country field, instead of the country name.**

● **We would like to see a more compact version of the documentation, perhaps a pocket reference guide.**

● **When searching in Guided Mode, it is difficult to go back to an earlier result in the search, without losing the entire search.** ● **Please implement the related term display feature implemented in Advanced Search mode.**

● **[Our] recommendations for enhancement of selection criteria:** ● provide an option to select all related terms... As long as agencies use different terms in titles and varying macro-terms, it will be impossible to do a meaningful search unless one knows which terms are used by a specific agency in project titles or macros for a certain sector/area. It is, therefore, recommended that the search criteria for "related terms" and "broader terms" be enhanced; ● incorporate the possibility of storing a specific selection routine to be used and/or modified for new searches; ● the "broaden search" function does not follow the same logic as the "narrow search" function. If broadening on one criteria, all earlier selected criteria are lost; ● allow the possibility to undo more than the last step. ● **[Our] recommendations to enhance display and printout options:** ● provide the possibility to print out reference lists, macros and local terms; ● add alternative printing formats, in particular in the form of a summary/overview; ● add a display of project summaries ... before display of records or ... printout options; ● provide an option to print a cover sheet with selected search criteria.

New ISO country codes : Supplement to Annex 1 Country and region codes of the CEFDA Manual

Country Code Update (1) - new ISO 3166 codes

The ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency Secretariat has confirmed and released for public use the country codes listed below.

Bosnia and Herzegovina	BIH
Czech Republic	CZE
Slovak Republic	SVK

Country Code Update (2) - changed country names

The country names and codes listed below on the left already appear in Annex 1 Country and region codes of the CEFDA Manual. Please note their new form, listed below on the right. This information was taken from the ISO Bulletin October 1992.

Micronesia	FSM	is now Micronesia (Federated States of)	FSM
Russia	RUS	is now Russian Federation	RUS

Subscribers to the Coordinating Unit

Subscribers

Canadian International Development Agency	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
InterAmerican Development Bank	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
International Development Research Centre	United Nations Development Programme
Japan International Cooperation Agency	U.S. Agency for International Development

Associate Subscribers

Australian International Development Assistance Bureau	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit	OPEC Fund for International Development
Export-Import Bank of Korea	Rockefeller Foundation
Foster Parents Plan International	United Nations Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems
International Fund for Agricultural Development	United Nations Children's Fund
International Labour Office	United Nations Environment Programme
International League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau	World Health Programme, Environmental Health Directorate
	World Food Programme

Purchasers of the DAI CD-ROM

Overseas Development Administration	Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries
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The

Exchange of Development Activity Information

Newsletter

August 1992

Number 3

In this issue:

- ◆ *status report on the DAI CD-ROM - first edition*
- ◆ *the DAI CD-ROM - second edition*
- ◆ *call for information from the IFLA ALP focal point*
- ◆ *call for information from the Centre for Amazonian Studies*
- ◆ *information for DAI CD-ROM users - hypertext searching*
- ◆ *current list of subscribers*

Coordinating Unit news

- The first edition of the DAI CD-ROM has been produced and distributed. The DAI CD-ROM contains the Central Development Project Database of 68,000 records describing development activities.
- The Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) have been added to our list of subscribers to the Coordinating Unit (see page 4 of this issue for the current list).
- The CEFDA manual and worksheet are being revised to include recent changes to the CEFDA format, as published in issue Number 2 of this Newsletter.
- The Coordinating Unit's new fax number is (613) 563-3858.

The DAI CD-ROM - first edition

The first edition of the DAI CD-ROM has been released and distributed to subscribers, purchasers (i.e. organizations which do not subscribe to the services of the Coordinating Unit but have bought a copy of the CD-ROM) and a number of developing-country organizations. The Coordinating Unit is grateful to the United States Agency for International Development and Logical Technical Services (LTS) Corporation of Arlington, Virginia, for their assistance in producing this CD-ROM.

The second edition of the CD-ROM is scheduled for release in February 1993. On page 2 of this issue we have more information about this release, for those who are interested in making a new contribution to the second edition, or updating their data if they have contributed to the first CD-ROM.

This first edition is a **prototype** which was designed, as documented in *First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information : Report*, to test the feasibility of "the collection of information, using the CEFDA, from all participating agencies and the transcription into a format for CD-ROM distribution ..".

The next step in this endeavour is to **evaluate** the first edition, by collecting comments and suggestions on ways that the CD-ROM can be improved. Users of the CD-ROM will be canvassed for their comments on the database, the search software, user guide and CEFDA format.

This Newsletter is published by the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information, International Development Research Centre, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9. Fax: (613) 563-3858, Tel: (613) 236-6163.

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The DAI CD-ROM - second edition

The Coordinating Unit plans to publish the **second edition of the DAI CD-ROM** early in 1993 and is soliciting data for this edition from development assistance agencies. If you are interested in contributing your data to the second edition of the DAI CD-ROM, please note that the deadline for data submission is **1 December 1992**.

Revisions to the CEFDA format

The Steering Committee has resolved to table any further discussion of proposed changes to the CEFDA format, until the next general meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information. Until this takes place, the CEFDA format remains as is, with the addition of two new fields (**004 Submitting organization** and **210 Organization contact point**) and the merging of the "notes" fields **071, 111, 121, and 160** into the revised field **160 Notes**, as reported in issue Number 2 of this Newsletter.

With these changes in mind, the CEFDA manual (*Proposed Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information*) is being revised. As well as descriptions of the new fields, the next edition of the manual will also contain the most recently-available

- ISO 3166 country codes;
- United Nations Statistical Office area codes for regional groupings of countries; and
- ISO 4217 codes for the representation of currencies and funds

in Annexes 1 and 3 of the manual.

The Coordinating Unit plans to distribute the **revised CEFDA manual** and worksheet in September 1992. If you have any questions about the modifications to the CEFDA format in the meantime, don't hesitate to write to Mary Campbell at the Coordinating Unit.

Guidelines for data contribution

If you wish to contribute data to the second edition of the DAI CD-ROM, we ask you to:

1. Convert your data to the Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information (CEFDA) described in the CEFDA manual, revised edition.
2. Send your data to the Coordinating Unit **no later than 1 December 1992**, in one of these formats:
 - ISO 2709 format for information exchange (described in Annex 5 of the CEFDA Manual);
 - or tag-data format (see below).on
 - unlabelled magnetic reel tape
 - or floppy diskettes - either 3½" or 5¼", high or double densityor, if your data is not in machine-readable format
 - on the CEFDA Worksheet.

As mentioned above, the revised CEFDA manual, CEFDA worksheet and information on tag-data format will be distributed shortly.

If you have contributed data to the first edition of the CD-ROM:

If your data is already on the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM, we hope that you will update your contribution for the second edition. You may choose to simply send us only your new records, or you may, if this is more convenient for you, send both old and new records. Either option is acceptable to the Coordinating Unit.

This issue contains requests for information from two members of the international development community: the IFLA Advancement of Librarianship in the Third World Programme (ALP) and the Centre for Amazonian Studies at the University of Glasgow. While these requests are not directly related to our activities, we are happy to publicise these and similar requests in this Newsletter.

Call for information from the IFLA ALP focal point

The ALP Focal Point of the IFLA is seeking help from readers of this newsletter for any information that they can provide about printed sources or databases covering funding organisations, national or international, which support libraries and librarianship and information or cultural activities in developing countries.

The IFLA ALP Focal Point is one of the permanent bureaux of IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and is concerned with support to libraries and librarianship in developing countries. It was set up in late 1989, and is based at Uppsala University Library in Sweden. Its goals are

- to assist library staff, library schools and library associations in education and training programmes
- to promote the establishment and development of library and information services to the public with particular attention to the needs of rural and urban marginal areas
- to encourage the involvement of libraries with literacy work and to endeavour to make them more closely identified with national literacy programmes.

Among the future tasks suggested for the ALP Focal Point is that of a clearing-house and information function 'by creating a database containing information about institutions and agencies which support librarianship in developing countries, their geographical and action areas, and their principles and criteria for supporting different programmes; experts; developments ...'

A necessary first step is a study to establish what information is already available, what databases exist, and what is needed. Some information is available about databases which exist in a variety of other organisations (including IDRC, IMRO in Zagreb, OECD etc.) and we have had most generous help from IDRC and a number of experts, but a considerable amount of further research is needed.

We are seeking

- sources of 'uirectory'-type information covering organisations and their policies and references to printed sources
- details on existing databases in appropriate organisations, and the form in which they are held.

We would be very glad to hear from readers who can contribute information, and will be doing our best to share the results! All comments and enquiries will be very welcome.

*Eve Johansson, ALP Focal Point, Uppsala University Library
Box 510, 751 20 Uppsala, Sweden, Tel. (46) 18 18 39 89, Fax. (46) 18 18 39 13*

Call for information from the Centre for Amazonian Studies

The Centre for Amazonian Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, the University of Glasgow, has asked us to draw your attention to their search for information on professionals in Europe with Amazonian expertise, in all disciplines. Elizabeth Allen of the Centre for Amazonian Studies writes:

"The Centre for Amazonian Studies, in conjunction with the Planning Exchange, has started a computer-based listing of expertise on Amazonia in Europe called the Amazonian Register. This now has over 150 individual entries and a rapidly growing number of institutional entries. New experts and institutions are being added at the rate of up to 20 a week, with the view to opening up on-line consultation of the Amazonian Register a little later in the year."

If you have information that would be of interest to this organization, please write to Elizabeth Allen, Centre for Amazonian Studies, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland.

Information for DAI CD-ROM users - Hypertext searching

Hypertext searching in the context of the DAI CD-ROM is the technique of searching on any word which appears in a record display. The search can take place in the same index that was used to find that record, or in another index. Hypertext searching can be used to browse only, without adding the search to your strategy, or it can be used to build your strategy directly from search words the current record set.

This technique is available in the **Advanced Search** feature of the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM. It was not documented in the **DAI CD-ROM users' guide**, partly because it cannot be used to search for words with accented characters - for example, the French or Spanish data on the CD-ROM. Also, the way in which it operates can be confusing unless the user understands that this feature assumes that every line of text or every item followed by | is a "key word". If you highlight one word in a line of the Activity Title, the software assumes that the entire line is a key word and tries to find this line in the index. For this reason, you may be able to start with a search in the **Country/Region** or **Macro Terms** indexes, and expand the search by a hypertext search in the **Title Word** or **Abstract Word** indexes, but not be able to use the hypertext feature when you start with a Title Word or Abstract Word search. However, you may find it interesting to explore this feature, by following the instructions below.

To browse, but not add hypertext search results to your strategy:

1. Highlight the first letter of a word appearing in the record display by moving the cursor to that letter.
2. To search for that word in the same index, press F2. To search for that word in another index, press CTL F2 and select an index from the list displayed.
3. The records found are displayed. Press ESC to return to the previous record set.

To add hypertext search results directly to your current search:

1. Highlight the first letter of a word appearing in the display.
2. To search for that word in the same index, press ALT W. To search for that word in another index, press CTL W and select an index from the list displayed.
3. The records found are added to your search. A look at the search strategy (F4) shows that the hypertext search has been added.

Example: if you have searched for Africa in the Country/Region index, and entered F9 to see the first record that you found, try a hypertext search by moving the cursor to Africa where it appears followed by |, hitting CTL F2 and choosing the Title Word index. The next record that you see will be the first record with Africa in the Activity Title field. Hit ESC to return to the original record.

Current list of subscribers to the Coordinating Unit

Subscribers

Canadian International Development Agency	Netherlands: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
InterAmerican Development Bank	United Nations Development Programme
International Development Research Centre	U.S. Agency for International Development
Japan International Cooperation Agency	

Associate subscribers

Australian International Development Assistance Bureau	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
Export-Import Bank of Korea	OPEC Fund for International Development
Foster Parents Plan International	Rockefeller Foundation
International Labour Office	United Nations Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems
International League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	United Nations Children's Fund
	United Nations Environment Programme
	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
	World Food Programme

The

Exchange of Development Activity Information

Newsletter

April 1992

Number 2

In this issue:

- ◆ *Status report on the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM*
- ◆ *List of subscribers to the Coordinating Unit*
- ◆ *Meeting of the Steering Committee, October 1991*
- ◆ *New CEFDA fields*
- ◆ *New ISO 3166 country codes*

Status Report

● The first edition for the Development Activity Information (DAI) CD-ROM is in production. Programming of the search software and production of a User Guide are being completed. Almost 68,000 records have been contributed from eleven agencies for this edition. More information about the data on the DAI CD-ROM can be found on page 2 of this issue.

● The Steering Committee for the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information met in October 1991 to discuss proposals for changes to the CEFDA (Common Exchange Format for Development Activity information) submitted by delegates to the Paris conference of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development

Information. A summary of these discussions - including the introduction of new CEFDA fields - can be found on pages 3-4 of this issue.

- Twenty-one organizations have subscribed to the products and services of the Coordinating Unit.

Subscribers to the Coordinating Unit

Below is the current list of subscribers and associate subscribers to the products and services of the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information.

Subscribers

Canadian International Development Agency
InterAmerican Development Bank
International Development Research Centre
Japan International Cooperation Agency

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
United Nations Development Programme
U.S. Agency for International Development

Associate subscribers

Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
Export-Import Bank of Korea
Foster Parents Plan International
International Centre for Ocean Development
International Labour Office
international League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OPEC Fund for International Development
United Nations Fund for Population Activities
United Nations Environment Programme
United Nations Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems
World Food Programme

This Newsletter is published by the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information, International Development Research Centre, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9. Fax: (613) 238-7230, Tel: (613) 236-6163

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What's on the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM

The first edition of the DAI CD-ROM will contain a database of almost 68,000 records contributed by the eleven agencies listed below. Fuller descriptions of each contribution will be published in the user guide which accompanies the CD-ROM.

- **The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)** contributed a summary of its bilateral projects since 1968 from its **Corporate Memory** databank of project summaries of CIDA's development activities, and information on delivery mechanisms and channels used, recipient country funding, key project documents, other donor evaluation findings and lessons learned from CIDA and other donor evaluations.
- ◆ **The Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) Department II of the Export-Import Bank of Korea** has contributed information on its Development project loans and Equipment loans.
- ◆ **The International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD)** has contributed its IPIS database of projects in the field of ocean resources management and development.
- ◆ **The Inter-American Development Bank** has contributed 3,686 records from its **Project Information System** of information related to Projects, Loans, Technical Cooperations and Small Projects since 1960.
- ◆ **The International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** has contributed its **IDRIS (Inter-Agency Development Research Information System)** data base, containing information on research projects funded or managed by IDRC and five other development assistance agencies.
- ◆ **The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** has contributed its **SURVEY** database of information about JICA's development studies which include surveys for formulating master plans, feasibility studies, inventory studies of natural resources and aftercare studies to review completed surveys etc., in response to requests from developing countries.
- ◆ **The German Federal Government's development bank, the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)**, has contributed information on 3326 development projects and non-project tied aid financed or envisaged to be financed within the framework of German Financial Cooperation with developing countries.
- ◆ **The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has contributed 10,354 records from the **Creditor Reporting System (CRS)**, representing development co-operation transactions for 1989 and part of 1990, reported by the governments of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- ◆ **The Special Programme for African Agricultural Research (SPAAR) Secretariat** has contributed 3600 records from its **SPAAR Information System (SIS)** database, describing agricultural research projects in Africa, funded by SPAAR member organizations.
- ◆ **The United Nations Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS)** has contributed 23,854 records from the **Register of development activities of the United Nations system (RDA)**. The Register contains information on all development activities current in 1990 and executed or funded from regular and extra budgetary sources by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as data on the loans, grants, credits and equity investments approved in 1990 of the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and United Nations Capital Development Fund.
- ◆ **The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE)**, has contributed records identifying USAID bilateral development assistance projects which were either planned, active or completed during the period 1974-1991.

Meeting of the Steering Committee, October 1991

Members of the Steering Committee for the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information met in October 1991 to review proposed changes to the CEFDA submitted by delegates to the First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information (Paris, June 1991).

Conclusions: New and changed CEFDA fields

- ◆ The Committee agreed to define two new CEFDA fields - **004 Submitting organization** and **210 Organizational contact point**.
- ◆ The four CEFDA "notes" fields **071 Terms of assistance notes**, **111 Start date notes**, **121 Completion date notes** and **160 Descriptor notes** will be merged into a single field called **160 General Notes**.

These changes will be reflected on the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM. Definitions of the new fields are found on page 4 of this issue. Revised versions of the CEFDA Manual and Worksheet will be available later in 1992.

Other conclusions

- ◆ A request to redefine CEFDA fields **002 Principal language of record** and **020 Activity title** as repeatable was rejected by the Committee. This proposal did not meet the present purpose or definition of these fields.
- ◆ The Committee concluded that **local classification and budget code data** and other local data fields could be accommodated by the new **160 General notes** field.
- ◆ A request was submitted to make **050 Country/Region** a country field only, using the ISO 3166 country codes, and to create a new region field which would use **region codes defined by the funding organization**. The premise was that many organizations would find it difficult to map their local regional codes to the CEFDA regional codes, because of conflicting definitions and geo-political/cultural groupings of countries which have no equivalent regional code in the current CEFDA. However, the Committee felt that it was important to have, as much as possible, a common coding system for retrieving development activities on a regional basis. The present **050 Country/Region** field provides a mechanism to approximate regional coding of development activities across organizations. When organizations have regional categorizations which do not match the regional codes defined in the CEFDA Manual, they should convert their codes to the next higher regional code in the hierarchy. For example, a local regional code which spans two regional code definitions in the CEFDA Manual can be converted to CEFDA inter-regional code "QWA". In addition, the local regional code or name can be placed in **160 General notes**. The Committee will consider the feasibility of future expansion of CEFDA regional codes to include other geo-political/cultural groupings of countries.
- ◆ A proposal was received from members of the NGO community to add a new field for **"beneficiary"** to the CEFDA. The Committee agreed that this information was an important aspect of a development activity description. However, to add it as a separate field would likely require the development of a separate beneficiary classification scheme that could be employed by all participating organizations. The Committee recommended that this issue become a point of discussion at the second general meeting of the Informal Study Group; in the meantime, beneficiary data can be entered in CEFDA field **170 Abstract**.

Items tabled for future discussion

Questions on the submission of "essential" fields as part of CEFDA exchange and requests for a closure on **source-funding-executing organization definition** were tabled for consideration by the Committee at a later date, as was a request to establish a separate **unit of account data** field to describe the development activity budgets of regional development banks.

The Committee also tabled two other requests: for **standard sector or classification codes** which could be used for categorizing development activity projects, and for a method of handling the cross-referencing of **co-financed or jointly managed development activities** which are carried out by a funding organization with the support of one or more cooperating agencies. The Committee felt that these issues should be investigated by committees established by the Informal Study Group.

New and revised CEFDA fields

004 Submitting organization

This field is used to identify the name of the organization which submits the data (even if it is the same as the funding organization) and the name of the database or information system (if one exists) from which the data was produced. This field is **Essential**.

210 Organization contact point

This field is used to facilitate access to additional development activity information maintained by the funding organization. The field contains the address, including telephone and fax numbers, of the unit within the funding organization which is responsible for responding to requests for source documents referenced in the field **200 Source documentation**, and any other information about the development activity referenced in the record. The provision of an individual's name as an organization contact point is optional for this field. This field is **Optional**. However, the Steering Committee strongly recommends the inclusion of field 210 in each record to facilitate access to additional development activity information maintained by the funding organization.

160 General notes

This field, formerly called **160 Descriptor notes**, is now a general notes field. Data formerly input to **071 Terms of assistance notes**, **111 Start date notes**, **121 End date notes** and **160 Descriptor notes**, as well as local regional codes or names, and local classification and budget code data, can be entered in this field. This field is **Optional**.

New ISO country codes : Supplement to Annex 1 Country and region codes of the CEFDA Manual

The ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency Secretariat has confirmed and released for public use the country codes listed below. Anyone planning to contribute data to the second edition of the DAI CD-ROM should be aware of these codes.

Country Code Update (1) - new ISO 3166 codes

Armenia	ARM	Kazakhstan	KAZ	Russia	RUS
Azerbaijan	AZE	Kyrgyzstan	KGZ	Slovenia	SVN
Croatia	HRV	Latvia	LVA	Tajikistan	TJK
Estonia	EST	Lithuania	LTU	Turkmenistan	TKM
Georgia	GEO	Moldova, Republic of	MDA	Uzbekistan	UZB

Country Code Update (2) - changed country names and/or codes

The country names and codes listed below on the left already appear in **Annex 1 Country and region codes of the CEFDA Manual**. Please note their new form, listed below on the right:

Byelorussian SSR	BYS	is now Belarus	BLR
Germany, Federal Republic of	DEU	is now Germany	DEU
Ukrainian SSR	UKR	is now Ukraine	UKR

The

Exchange of Development Activity Information

Newsletter

October 1991

Number 1

This Newsletter is published by the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information, International Development Research Centre, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H9.

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In this issue:

◆ *follow-up to the First General Meeting, Paris, June 1991*

◆ *subscription form for the DAI CD-ROM and other services*

◆ *guidelines for contributing data to the DAI CD-ROM*

◆ *CEFDA Worksheet*

The First General Meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information, held in Paris, June 1991, resulted in the following recommendations by the participating agencies:

- A central **Coordinating Unit** should be established at the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** in Ottawa, Canada for an initial period of 18 months, to coordinate a number of specific tasks which will facilitate the sharing of information among development assistance agencies;
- The Coordinating Unit should be funded through organizational commitments in the form of SUS 5,000 or SUS 10,000 subscriptions;
- A central database of development activity information should be created through contributions by development assistance agencies, to be compiled by the Coordinating Unit and distributed on a CD-ROM.

Status Report

Since the Paris meeting, these activities have taken place:

- the final report of the Paris meeting has been distributed;
- the Coordinating Unit has been established at the International Development Research Centre, and is now collecting data for the first edition of the **DAI (Development Activity Information) CD-ROM**, to be released early in 1992;
- in addition to hosting the Coordinating Unit, the International Development Research Centre will provide SCAD 27,000 as its contribution to the cost of operating this Unit over the next 18 months;
- a letter has been sent to participants in the Paris meeting, asking for organizational commitments to the support of the Coordinating Unit, and for contributions of data to the DAI CD-ROM; and
- commitments have already been received from the development assistance community to fund one-third of the Coordinating Unit budget for the initial 18-month period, and to contribute information to the DAI CD-ROM.

Additional copies of this issue of the Exchange of Development Activity Information Newsletter may be obtained from the Coordinating Unit for the Exchange of Development Activity Information, IDRC, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9.

Organizational commitments

Your organization is invited to assist in supporting the activities of the Coordinating Unit for Exchange of Development Activity Information, for an initial period of 18 months - September 1991 to March 1993 - by subscribing to the products and services offered by the Coordinating Unit, as outlined below. A subscription form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Regardless of subscriber status, until you indicate otherwise, your organization will remain on the Coordinating Unit's mailing list for

- invitations to future General Meetings of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information
- future issues of this Newsletter

Products and services provided by the Coordinating Unit

The Coordinating Unit will provide the following products and services to subscribers:

- the DAI (Development Activity Information) CD-ROM - a central database of information contributed by agencies in the international development community, available on a CD-ROM
- a directory of databases, software and conversion tools in use within the development assistance community
- access to consulting services, for agencies wishing to establish or improve their internal information system on development activities
- membership in an electronic mail communications network, to be established by the Coordinating Unit

Subscription fees

The subscriber/associate subscriber fees listed below apply to the initial 18-month operating period of the Coordinating Unit.

The **Subscriber** fee of \$US 10,000 entitles your organization to:

- two (2) copies of the first and second editions of the DAI CD-ROM
- the directory of databases, software and conversion tools
- access to the consulting services described above, to the value of \$US 5,000
- membership in the electronic mail communications network described above

The **Associate Subscriber** fee of \$US 5,000 entitles your organization to:

- one (1) copy of the first and second editions of the DAI CD-ROM
- the directory of databases, software and software conversion tools

Multiple copies will be available at discount to subscribers/associate subscribers only, at a cost of

- \$US 200 - per copy for 1-5 extra copies
- \$US 150 - per copy for 6-20 extra copies
- \$US 125 - per copy for more than 20 extra copies

The first edition of the DAI CD-ROM will be available to non-subscribers for:

- \$US 2,500 for organizations which do not contribute data to the DAI CD-ROM
- \$US 1,500 for organizations which contribute their data to the CD-ROM
- and free of charge (subject to availability) to governments and qualifying non-profitmaking organizations in developing countries

No volume discount will be available to non-subscribers.

Non-subscribers who wish to contribute data to the DAI CD-ROM, and government or non-profitmaking agencies in developing countries, should not use the enclosed subscription form. Instead, please write to the Coordinating Unit for additional information on how to acquire copy(ies) of the DAI CD-ROM.

The DAI CD-ROM

The data

- The centralised database on the DAI CD-ROM will be in the CEFDA format.
- Through this issue of the Newsletter, the Coordinating Unit is soliciting contributions of records from the development assistance community. Records have already been pledged from
 - the Development Assistance Committee monitored at the OECD Secretariat by the Development Cooperation Directorate (from their Credit Reporting System)
 - the United Nations Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems (from their Registry of Development Activity Databases)
 - the U.S. Agency for International Development (from their Development Information System)
 - the Japan International Cooperation Agency (from their SURVEY database)
 - and the International Development Research Centre (from their IDRIS database of research projects, which includes data contributed by JICA, IFS, BOSTID, SAREC and FINNIDA)
- This data will cover a wide range of development activities, including
 - projects with well-defined terms of assistance, duration and budgets
 - programmes which describe thematic activities, but may not have a specific duration or terms
 - capital transfers, which could include loans, grants, scholarships or technical assistance
 - and survey information which is used to lay the groundwork of a project or programme

Minimum hardware and software required to search the DAI CD-ROM

- To read the DAI CD-ROM, your organization will require the following hardware and software:
 - an IBM-compatible microcomputer with a minimum of 640K RAM
 - DOS 3.0 or later
 - the Microsoft Extensions to DOS 2.0 or later
 - a CD-ROM reader which is ISO 9660 or High Sierra compatible
 - and any type of monitor
- Software for searching the data will be provided on the DAI CD-ROM; a user's guide will also be provided.

Contributing to the CD-ROM

If you would like to contribute data to the first edition of the DAI CD-ROM, we ask you to:

1. Convert your data to the Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information (CEFDA) described in the CEFDA manual (*Proposed Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information*) which was distributed at the Paris meeting and with the final report of the Paris meeting.
 - Additional copies of the CEFDA manual can be obtained from the Coordinating Unit.
2. Send your data to the Coordinating Unit **no later than 29 November 1991**, in one of these formats:
 - ISO 2709 format for information exchange (described in Annex 5 of the CEFDA Manual);
 - or tag-data format (described on page 4 of this issue of the Newsletter).on
 - unlabelled magnetic reel tape
 - or floppy diskettes - either 3½" or 5¼", high or double densityor, if your data is not in machine-readable format
 - on the CEFDA Worksheet enclosed in this issue of the Newsletter.

The contribution of a database for incorporation into the CD-ROM constitutes permission to IDRC to copy the said database in whole or in part for the purposes of this activity. It is agreed that IDRC shall own the copyright of the comprehensive database on the CD-ROM, while each donor of databases retains its right to the contributed database.

CEFDA tag-data format

This is a very simple format which can be created on any wordprocessing or text editor system, and can also be generated by many database management systems. In this format, each data field is preceded by its CEFDA field tag, with a non-alphabetic character (usually !) before and after the tag; for example:

!020!Banana and plantain information network

The tag-data file is an ASCII text file with a maximum physical record length of 256 characters. Fields longer than 256 characters can span physical records. Each logical record begins with the character string !rec-id on a line by itself. There is no limit to the number of records that can be input in a tag-data file.

Other rules to remember when creating the file:

- although ! is the standard symbol that is used to delimit tags, any character that doesn't appear in your data may be used, as long as it is used consistently throughout the tag-data file;
- where fields are repeatable, each occurrence of the field must be preceded by the tag;
- fields can appear one after the other on the same line, or begin on separate lines - but the !rec-id legend must appear on a separate line at the beginning of the logical record, by itself;
- where a field folds over onto subsequent lines, the subsequent lines must be indented one space.
- field tags may appear in any order, after !rec-id

Below is an example of a tag-data file with a physical record length of 80 bytes. Note that fields may appear either by themselves on a separate line, one after the other on the same line, or in any combination of these two styles. In this particular file, long fields fold over on a word boundary, and the rest of the physical record is filled with blank spaces. This is acceptable; the blank spaces will be stripped before input.

In tag-data format, the IDRIS record on page 77 of the CEFDA manual might look like this:

```
!rec-id
!001!105!002!en!003!19910415!010!60!SDC/3-6
!020!Industrial Instrumentation Technology Center of Espirito Santo / SENAI
!040!JICA!050!BRA
!060!Research project!070!1!080!3
!090!SENAI/ES Industrial Instrumentation Technical Center, Espirito Santo
!110!1985!111!Year funds committed!120!1990
!130!426544000!131!JPY
!140!/technological institutes/ instrumentation industry/ electronics/ measurement/ Brazil/
!170!The project will establish the Industrial Instrumentation Technical Center of the Espirito
Santo Regional Department of SENAI, to provide Brazilian trainees with knowledge and skill in the
field of industrial instrumentation through training programs at the Center. The training programs
will be conducted by Brazilian experts under the guidance of Japanese experts. The details of the
training program will be agreed upon between the two governments. The General Director of SENAI
will bear overall responsibility for the implementation of the project.
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**SECOND GENERAL MEETING OF THE INFORMAL
STUDY GROUP ON THE EXCHANGE OF
DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION**

Académie Diplomatique

4-6 October 1993

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