MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

Center for Development Information and Evaluation

Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination

April 1988

Eric Chetwynd

Julius E. Coles

Barbara Ludden

Sean Walsh

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March 1, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO : PPC/CDIE/PPE, Joe Lieberson
PPC/CDIE/DI, Maury Brown

FROM : PPC/CDIE, Sandra Marone-Gilmer

SUBJECT : Management Review

Haven met with the team that will conduct the Management Review of CDIE yesterday. They will return next week to spend several days reviewing materials and conducting in-depth meetings with our various units. I will need your assistance in putting together additional briefing materials.

The team report will focus on the following questions outlined by the Appropriations Committee:

- are we achieving our stated objectives;
- can these objectives be achieved more efficiently through an alternative organizational structure;
- do the objectives remain valid in light of funding and personnel limitations;
- how well are our programs integrated into the mission project portfolios.

Could you provide a two-page narrative for each function indicated below which outlines what the service is, the volume, and how the volume has changed over the last four years. Quantitative information should be provided wherever possible. I understand that Gerald and Lee are working on a matrix which can be used as an attachment.

Program and Policy Evaluation Division

- Evaluation Studies
- Evaluation Management
- Technical Assistance

Development Information Division

- Document and Information Handling
- Economic and Social Data Service
- Research and Reference Service
- USDA Technical Inquiry Service

Could I please have your input no later than COB March 4.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to one of the requirements set forth in the 1988 Continuing Resolution, this report covers the management assessment of the operation of the Center for Development Information and Evaluation of the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (CDIE/PPC). The report was based on data collected through personnel and telephone interviews, review of numerous documents and cable exchanges with USAID Missions.

Based on this review, it was determined that CDIE goals and objectives generally remain valid. The Center has sought to create a viable information and evaluation unit within the Agency and to promote the development, storage, dissemination and application of information and lessons learned. The Agency needs to establish a policy for the strategic use of development information and to give higher priority to the use of evaluation in the Agency's decision making.

CDIE management and staff have done an outstanding job of establishing the CDIE unit from information and evaluation functions located in two separate Bureaus in the Agency. The Center has established a credible A.I.D. memory, increased dramatically the demand for its information services, provided guidance and stewardship in evaluation and given the Agency a position of leadership among the donor community in the information and evaluation fields. There still is room for improvement, however, especially in linking CDIE more effectively into Agency policy priorities and promoting within the Agency a wider knowledge of its available services.

Reports from the USAID Missions and A.I.D./Washington offices generally are favorable towards CDIE, especially with respect to information services. Nonetheless, there does persist a clear perception that the results of CDIE evaluations and lessons learned are not regularly or evenly used in Mission project and program development exercises. There is a need for more targeting of evaluation studies for users.

Organizationally, the concensus is that CDIE is properly located and organized but suffers from a lack of physical access to and integration with the rest of PPC and the geographic Bureaus. CDIE is doing its job well with its existing staff and budget resources, but may be required to make some internal resource adjustments to increase the utilization of its evaluation results and information services. If the demand for CDIE services continues to grow, and budget and staff allocations remain at present levels, the quality of CDIE's product will undoubtedly suffer.

I. INTRODUCTION

In response to a requirement contained in the FY 1988 Continuing Resolution, the A.I.D. Administrator appointed a team to assess the management and performance of the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of the Bureau of Policy and Program Coordination (PPC). The team was composed of three career A.I.D. Foreign Service professionals and one outside consultant.

The team decided to focus the assessment on four basic questions asked in the legislation. In addition to reviewing documentation describing the Center's goals, objectives and programs, and reports on program achievement, the team agreed to hold a schedule of "off the record" interviews with representatives of other Bureaus and Offices, USAID Missions and others doing business with CDIE. The Center, itself, was cooperative and produced quickly, efficiently, and in very usable form all documents and materials requested during the course of this management study.

Interviews were conducted with current and previous senior officials of the Bureau of Policy and Program Coordination, the Division Chiefs and other senior staff of CDIE, Mission Directors, officers of other Central and Regional Bureaus, and representatives of major donors and international organizations during the course of the assessment.

The initial meetings, with senior officers of the PPC Bureau and the CDIE Office, were attended by the entire team. Subsequent interviews with other offices and organizations were carried out by dividing the full team up into sub-teams of two members each.

Cabled field responses to a general inquiry concerning interaction and responsiveness were reviewed by the entire team and the results were incorporated into the assessment.

All material collected was reviewed and discussed. Based on these discussions, individual team members drafted assigned sections of the report. The drafts were then critiqued and edited by each team member. The final edited report was endorsed fully by the team.

II. VALIDITY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A 1982 General Accounting Office Report entitled "Experience -- a Potential Tool for Improving U.S. Assistance Abroad", criticized A.I.D. for failing to use its experience in the management of the foreign assistance program. The Agency's response was to undertake in 1983 a major reorganization of its evaluation and information functions. As a result, a new Office of Evaluation and Development Information Services (EDIS) was established in the Bureau for Policy Planning and Coordination (PPC) by combining two divisions of the former Development Information Utilization Services (DIU) of the Science and Technology Bureau (S&T) and two divisions of the Office of Evaluation within PPC that dealt with evaluation studies and program evaluation systems. At the time of the establishment of this new office, A.I.D. envisioned that it would help the Agency to:

-- rebuild analytical capacity
-- focus on user needs for information
-- keep the memory and library functions more in touch with their clientele
-- bridge the gap between "evaluation methods" and "evaluation studies".

In 1984, EDIS was renamed the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). The overall goal of CDIE was defined as: the fostering of the use of development information in support of A.I.D.'s assistance effort. This goal was expected to be achieved by:

-- acquiring and analyzing information on A.I.D.'s development experience and transforming it into meaningful program planning guidance;

-- promoting the application of lessons of experience in program planning and management, and in policy formulation;

-- increasing A.I.D. staff awareness and use of evaluation and development information; and

-- extending development information and evaluation experience and methods to the LDCs and other aid donors as an integral part of program management.

In furtherance of this goal, CDIE has established the following specific objectives over the FY 1984 to 1988 period:

1. To establish a new unit within A.I.D. to promote the use of development information and assist the Agency in learning from experience.

2. To improve the management of Agency programs by promoting the systematic use of information for decision making.

3. To enhance A.I.D.'s knowledge of lessons from experience in key development topics.

4. To promote the use of development information and evaluation and the use of lessons of experience by other donors and LDCs.

5. To stimulate a demand for development information and evaluation by marketing, targeting and tailoring CDIE products and services for users, in particular USAID Missions.

6. To upgrade the quality of CDIE products and services.

While CDIE's goals and objectives basically are valid as currently stated, modifications or additions should be made to take into account the Agency's need to: (1) develop an overall policy on the strategic use of development information; (2) give higher priority and importance to the role evaluation should have in policy, program, project approval and decision making processes at the senior-management level; and (3) improve the overall quality of the Agency's evaluation reports.

III. HOW WELL CURRENTLY STATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ARE BEING ACHIEVED

Objective No. 1 - Establish a New Unit to Promote the Use of Development Information

The decision to create CDIE from two former separate units was sound. CDIE's establishment has helped to overcome the problems of responding to user needs for information, keeping the memory and library functions more in touch with their users and bridging the gap between evaluation methods and studies. The appointment of a highly respected Senior A.I.D. Foreign Service Officer with the rank of Associate Assistant Administrator, reporting directly to the Assistant Administrator for Program and Policy Coordination has helped to give the Center more clout within the Agency. CDIE management and staff have done an excellent job of pulling the two previously separate units together by integrating, staffing,

upgrading and modernizing them and giving them more outreach to the USAID Missions and the development community as a whole. While there has been a decline in the Agency's overall budget, PPC has continued to give CDIE high budgetary priority within the Bureau.

CDIE is a complex, yet well-functioning unit. It has evolved over the past five years as a unit with organizational identity, teamwork and a common sense of purpose. While CDIE has made significant achievements, there still are a few areas where further progress is needed. One of these is the need to integrate CDIE into the overall operations of the PPC Bureau. In addition CDIE has not been able to acquire the necessary technology available for information collection, presentation and distribution, including production of color graphics, use of telecommunications for sending information quickly, and compact disk storage technology. While these technologies are available and desired by Agency analysts--especially economists, other social scientists, and program officers--the Agency has made a conscious decision to proceed slowly on the adoption of these technologies until industry standards have been established.

Objective No. 2 - Systematic Use of Information for Decision Making

Since 1984, CDIE has made an effort to enhance the use of development information and evaluation as a management tool for the Agency's decision makers. One important approach has been through direct technical assistance to USAID Missions in the areas of information needs assessments, library development, statistical analysis support, evaluation planning and project evaluations. There are numerous examples of CDIE's having provided this assistance and USAID Missions have commented favorably on such support.

Another approach used by CDIE has been the planning, design and pilot testing of a new workshop on "Collaborative Evaluations". The purpose of the workshop is to provide the geographic Bureaus with a model workshop through which key Missions and counterpart agencies could be oriented to the importance of evaluative information as a program management tool. Since 1985 CDIE has held workshops in collaboration with the geographic Bureaus in Tunisia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ecuador, Senegal and Kenya. Other workshops are being planned for Nepal, Guatemala and the Regional Development Office in the Caribbean. A state-of-the-art workshop on the measurement of program impact, especially in agriculture and

rural development programs, was held and included staff from A.I.D., World Bank, UN, IFAD and various universities. Without exception, the geographic and central Bureaus, as well as the USAID Missions, have highly praised the quality of these workshops.

Another of CDIE's major accomplishments over the past year has been the publication of the "A.I.D. Evaluation Handbook", which establishes the Agency's policy and basic procedures for evaluations. This document seeks to lay out an evaluation process that is useful to the Agency in its decision making and management processes. A companion video tape has also been made available. In general, the overall reaction to this handbook has been very positive.

Other guidelines and manuals developed or published in cooperation with other Bureaus by CDIE over the past three years in its series on Program, Design and Evaluation, and Methodology include: "Selecting Data Collection Methods and Preparing Contractor Scopes of Work"; "Evaluation Guidance for Non-project Assistance: Commodity Import Programs"; "An approach to Evaluating the Impact of A.I.D. Projects"; "A Manual for Evaluating Small Scale Enterprise Development Projects"; "Conducting Group Interviews in Developing Countries"; "Guidelines for Data Collection, Monitoring and Evaluation Plans for A.I.D."; and "Rapid, Low Cost Data Collection Methods for A.I.D."

In the area of economic and social data collection, CDIE is establishing the Country Trends Monitoring Network (CTM/N) to facilitate the exchange of country trends data between and among A.I.D./Washington Offices and the USAID missions. This network uses standardized classifications and coding schemes in the computerization of the Agency's data bases and standardized formats for the exchange of data. The principal mode developed for data exchanges is computer diskette, and the development of the network includes plans for converting existing country diskettes into a two-way data exchange system. Currently, the network is being field tested in one or two USAID Missions in each region and the full system is scheduled to be inaugurated in August 1988. Once this system is established, it should eliminate one of the principal complaints of the Agency's economists which is that the economic and social data obtained by CDIE from international sources is too outdated to be useful.

Another tool that CDIE has used successfully for promoting development information and evaluation as a management tool is the periodic meetings of the CDIE led Project Evaluation

Committee composed of the evaluation officers from each of the central and geographic Bureaus. This Committee is used by CDIE to discuss common evaluation problems and issues, share news of the Agency's evaluations activities and coordinate evaluation initiatives, methodologies and findings. Members of the Committee interviewed during the course of this assessment have found the committee to be useful for the exchange of information and as a vehicle for learning about new Agency evaluation initiatives.

Objective No.3 - Enhance A.I.D.'s Knowledge Base of Lessons from Experience

CDIE has pursued this objective by carrying out individual evaluations (54 completed over the past 3 years and 48 currently underway); publishing 12 Occasional Papers on A.I.D. programming topics (e.g. project design, monitoring and evaluation); completing 7 special evaluations requested by A.I.D. senior management; and completing and distributing two syntheses of A.I.D. evaluations covering the years 1984-86.

The quantity of CDIE's in-depth, field based evaluation work has contributed significantly to the Agency's overall knowledge base of lessons learned even though its budget and staff resources have been limited. CDIE's budget for evaluation activities has decreased from about $1.7 million in FY 1985 to $1.3 million in FY 1988. These reductions are primarily the result of an overall cut in the Agency's budget.

Even though CDIE has made progress in building up the Agency's knowledge base of lessons learned from experience, CDIE still needs to develop better systems, techniques and procedures to increase and better track utilization of lessons learned in project and program assistance. Some of the evaluation reports which have been reported to have had specific program impact are the CDIE reports on Women in Development, Social Marketing of Contraceptives, Agricultural Higher Education series, Small Farmer Credit, U.S. Response to the African Famine and Information Systems for Policy Reform programs. However, CDIE has not developed a system to assess or document the impact of its own program effectiveness.

Objective No. 4 - Promote the Use of Development Information and Evaluation by Other Donors and LDCs

The Agency through CDIE has been influential in serving as a model for other donor countries and organizations which, having observed the CDIE approach, wish to combine their own

evaluation and information systems into a similar single interactive system. CDIE has assisted a total of 10 bilateral donors in establishing such a system. In addition, CDIE has worked closely with multilateral agencies including the World Bank and UNDP, which have provided similar access by CDIE into their information and data systems.

CDIE is active in its outreach to other organizations and in network building. It has collaborated with some 33 national and international information centers on sharing of development information. On the domestic side, for example, it is collaborating with the Peace Corps, USIA and the State Department in the sharing of information and evaluation materials.

Over the past three years, CDIE's Director has chaired the Expert Group on aid Evaluation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC). During this period impressive progress has been made in the systematic sharing of information among DAC and OECD members. Much of the progress achieved by DAC in this area has been attributed by member countries to the leadership of the Chairman and the example set by CDIE.

Examples of this progress include: (1) a focus on key development issues as opposed to a preoccupation with methodology and process; (2) establishment of an information exchange system among DAC members for sharing of development experience; and (3) production of reports on specific evaluation topics, including a compendium of donor experience with aid evaluations published in four languages, a report categorizing and synthesizing issues from aid evaluations, a review of non-project experience, and other reports on cross-cutting issues such as rural development, sustainability, women in development and environmental impact. The U.S. Chairman played a key role in getting the DAC to sponsor an international seminar with representatives from the developing countries for the first time to promote the use of evaluation in their countries.

Other donor organizations have given high marks to CDIE on the quality of its products and have also indicated that many CDIE materials are used in their organizations. UNDP has adopted the Development Experience Abstract four page format developed by CDIE and is producing its own series based on this format entitled "Findings".

Donors, both international and bi-lateral, appear to have derived considerable benefit from CDIE leadership, initiative and achievements. It is less clear how much this has benefited

the Agency. In view of the small size of the CDIE staff and its limited resources, the time and effort spent on this donor coordination effort have probably diverted some of CDIE's management and staff time away from its work for the Agency.

Objective No. 5 -- Stimulate Demand for Development Information and Evaluation by Marketing, Targeting and Tailoring CDIE Products and Services

CDIE has taken a number of steps to market its development information and evaluation services. Specifically, CDIE has developed a variety of brochures, information packets, newsletters and publications designed to increase the Agency's staff awareness of CDIE services and capabilities. It has also used seminars, workshops and Agency training programs as techniques for increased utilization of CDIE products (i.e. evaluations) and awareness of its services.

In order to overcome the communication problem associated with physical separation from the main body of A.I.D./Washington clients, CDIE has set up an information center in the Department of State building. This center is part of a larger effort to market and increase user awareness of and demand for CDIE services. While there has been an increase in demand for the use of CDIE services through the center in New State, this demand has not been as great as originally expected. However, in the future, CDIE plans to set up in this center a model Information Center for possible replication by USAID Missions.

CDIE has continued to develop new products and services, including the Occasional Paper series, MICRODIS, and the Research and Reference Service. It has modified existing products and services in both its Evaluation and Development Information Divisions to meet client needs and to stimulate additional demand.

Statistics provided by CDIE demonstrate a significant increase in the requests for CDIE information and reference services. For example, requests for Research and Reference Services totaled over 12,000 in FY 1987 versus 11,000 requests in FY 1986. During the first four months of FY 1988, requests have been running at an annualized rate of over 18,800.

CDIE's Development Information Division has assisted 25 USAID Missions over the past 4 years in establishing or expanding development information centers. Mission requests for documents from the Documents and Information Handling Facility have increased from 14,000 in 1984 to some 22,000 in 1987.

CDIE has also introduced new or modified evaluation products in an attempt to remain relevant to its clients' needs and increase demand and use. An example is CDIE's redirection of its Evaluation series to focus more on cross-cutting issues, non-project assistance and special program evaluations.

CDIE management recognizes that the Center is a service office, and has devoted substantial effort to making those services known and to a continuous upgrade in service to expand its clientele.

Further improvements include attractive packaging, user response forms, training classes, bibliographies and abstracts, and growing sophistication in the use of data processing systems. The steady and significant increase in use of the materials and services of the office, doubling since 1985, indicates that these measures are bringing some measure of success.

Objective No. 6 - Upgrade the Quality of CDIE Products and Services

CDIE has experienced dramatic growth in the content and quality of its information data base over the past four years, and has, for instance, entered into formal agreements to exchange information with thirty-three organizations, national and international, including the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Resource Center, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, UNCTAD/GATT and others. Informal arrangements also exist with the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Bureau of the Census, National Technical Information Service, National Library of Medicine and others.

The computerized Development Information System (DIS) provides on-line access to citations of over 45,000 documents for more than 6,000 projects. These documents are available on microfiche and in paper copy.

The accessing system, MICRODIS, a software package, was developed by CDIE to help USAID Missions manage and access their document based development information. This package has been installed in 21 organizations, including Private Voluntary Organizations, USAIDS, and foreign governments and organizations. Outstanding requests for MICRODIS installation in French or Spanish have been received in the last six months from seven organizations in four foreign countries. CDIE

provides demonstration opportunities for potential MICRODIS users. CDIE has also provided demonstrations or demonstration copies to a broad range of organizations in-house, nationally, and internationally since August of 1985. Sixty-three such requests have been honored, eleven in 1985, twenty-seven in 1986, nineteen in 1987, and six in the first two months of 1988.

The A.I.D. Library, Research and Reference Service (which now provides "value-added" information to requesters), Document Handling Facility, USDA Technical Information Service, and the Economic and Social Data service, have been used extensively by those within and without the Agency and constitute the bulk of requests for CDIE services. There has been growing demand on CDIE resources as these services have become better known.

Of the 70 USAIDs, 66 have made use of CDIE's information services. All services are free to the Missions, and CDIE has taken a number of creative steps to inform Mission personnel about its services and to upgrade such services to be continuously more responsive through follow-up questionnaires, video tapes, and personal presentations in training sessions and in workshops and conferences. A training module on the services of the office has been developed and is included in the New Entry and Senior Executive Training Course offered by A.I.D.

CDIE's management recognizes that as it moves to provide ever-increasing and improved services the demand will grow. With limited resources, CDIE faces the certain possibility that this increased demand will very likely result in reduction in the quality of service. On the other hand, the office continues to look ahead, and has developed and is investigating the application of high density, mass storage devices (optical/laser disks) which would enable storage of large amounts of textual information as well as diagrammatic and tabular information. Through the use of this technology massive amounts of data could be placed on tiny disks and could serve as mini-libraries and storage facilities in USAIDs.

The availability and potential of this technology has become symbolic of a broader dichotomy between CDIE and IRM, the office which sets the Agency standard in hardware and software systems. Although there seems to be no question as to the delineation of responsibility between the two offices: IRM is a service office, and CDIE, in this instance, is the client, it is not difficult to detect the differences between them. CDIE is attempting to establish firmly A.I.D.'s lead as an exceptional information source and model both for other Federal

agencies and other donors. On the other hand, IRM in trying to minimize costs seeks to ensure that an industry standard prevails for each of the new technologies available before it gives the approval for the purchase of the requisite hardware and software.

The situation between CDIE and IRM is similar to the basic conservative budget vs. high technology implementation dialogue that has become the hallmark of corporate America. For CDIE to succeed in obtaining this technology, it must make a compelling case for its next move into the 21st Century in order to maintain its leadership position. The reluctance of Agency managers to buy into high tech systems leaves CDIE in the position of having few strong allies on this issue. IRM is, it appears, willing to accommodate the new technology, but does not share the same sense of urgency and is driven by concerns for agency-wide standardization to contain costs and facilitate acquisition, training and servicing. Top management of both offices is aware of both sides of this issue but has not worked out the next steps that should be taken to improve upon the information storage and retrieval technology. Much more discussion is needed between these offices if the Agency is to move ahead with the new technology required.

The more highly visible function of CDIE, which actually commands less in terms of resource allocation, is the evaluation activity, which is divided into two functional areas. First, it designs, implements, and publishes special in-depth evaluative studies of A.I.D. projects, programs, and policies, including impact evaluations focused on A.I.D.'s performance in a specific sector, policy-oriented evaluations, and evaluations of special programs, non-project assistance and country assistance programs. The second function is to encourage application of the findings of these evaluations to decision making within the Agency as well as to provide support for Agency decentralized evaluation activities. CDIE has made great efforts to disseminate these materials, including production of four page summary documents and lessons learned extrapolations, placement of articles in A.I.D.'s Newspaper (Front Lines), and in sponsorship of workshops and conferences. Nevertheless, Agency readership and application, while improving, appears to be uneven.

IV. PERFORMANCE IN PROVIDING SERVICE TO A.I.D. BUREAUS, OFFICES AND MISSIONS

CDIE is a service office. The collection and dissemination of data, provision of data bases and relevant data transfer

mechanisms, compilation and operation of the A.I.D. library, and provision of evaluation guidance and design, as well as the much-used research and reference capacity, are all client useful service functions.

In order to have a market for the data which CDIE compiles and stores, it is necessary that its services be known, that the materials it collects and produces be relevant and valuable to the Agency's managers and to others in the field of development work and that the products of its systems be readily accessible, understandable, timely and integrated into the work of the Agency. However, CDIE has a continuing problem, expressed succinctly by a former Mission Director and current Bureau senior manager who had used CDIE extensively: "How can this wonderful resource be made known to AID/W and USAIDS so that it will be drawn on?"

The Center is physically isolated not only from its users in the field, but from many of its users in Washington. In addition, based on recurring comments from some outside of CDIE, the Center is also isolated within the Agency in that its management is not consistently included in policy level meetings where strategic applications of information and of the evaluation process might be discussed, and is not privy firsthand to the discussions in which Agency policy and directions are set. It is believed by many of those interviewed that the inclusion of the Center's Director in these formative meetings would be of value to all concerned in highlighting little known data already in the system and signalling areas of potential interest for future data gathering and evaluation.

On the positive side, CDIE has developed an impressive array of reference materials, including databases for Moody's, Standard and Poor's, Dun & Bradstreet, the U.S. Yellow Pages, Who's Who, and others; the statistical data bases of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and, in the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Agriculture, Donnelly, and Export Reports. Other data bases in the areas of the U.S. Government, major U.S. Newspapers and wire services, business, Research in Progress, agriculture, economics and international organizations are also accessed. Research and reference services are available on request which will search, screen, assemble, and summarize information on any subject relevant to AID's present concerns, although detailed value added analysis is not within the purview or staff capacity of the office. In addition, the Center conducts both an expert search service and a quick reference service upon request.

A further information service, the Economic and Social Data Base (ESDB), is an automated computer system for the storage, analysis and dissemination of economic and social statistical data. The staff does analyze data and provide statistical reports in response to specific information requests in this area.

In the Evaluation area, CDIE is responsible for A.I.D.'s central evaluation functions and provides guidance and technical assistance in the application of lessons from A.I.D.'s experience to project design and implementation, as well as for overall policy development.

With all of this available, it might be thought that the staff would be inundated with requests for information and for assistance. In reality, the use is uneven from Mission to Mission and from office to office. The demand, while increasing, seems to grow exponentially as a user has experience with the products and responses of the Center. CDIE is identified more closely with evaluation even though the actual demand by users is heavier on the information, research and reference side.

Numerous Missions responded to the AID/W inquiry on CDIE performance by cable. Several Mission Directors and former Mission Directors were interviewed as well. The general response was positive, depicting CDIE as responsive, relevant, and prompt. The most frequently expressed comment focused on the prompt manner in which the request was handled. A number of Missions indicated frequent use of CDIE services and characterized CDIE's function of serving as a central point for obtaining information as an invaluable asset. Specific remarks were also made concerning the importance and value of CDIE materials in project design and strategy conceptualization. In addition, special mention was made of the importance and convenience of the diskette library materials. While the bulk of comments focused on the information and research and reference services of the Center, high marks were also given on the overall quality of the Evaluation Handbook and the CDIE Impact Evaluations.

Mission criticism was not overwhelming, but did in several instances comment that some economic and social data information is substantially out of date when received. One Mission indicated that suggested revisions to this data are not made. Several Missions indicated a need to be more selective on the part of CDIE when providing responses and bibliographies so as not to, in the words of one, "drown" the Missions in

paper and information. The most frequent concern expressed highlighted a lack of sufficient publicity on the various services and materials which CDIE has to offer. Some Missions indicated they would like to be more involved in setting the CDIE evaluation agenda. The comments made about CDIE are fairly uniform from the smaller to the largest Missions. It was interesting to note that the more use a Mission has made of CDIE's services, the more positive is the response to CDIE.

On balance, the responses from USAID Missions indicate that they are well served by CDIE in light of its limited staff and budgetary resources. Out of the total of some 70 USAID Missions, 66 have had some interaction with CDIE, and interest is growing in MICRODIS and other computer system interchanges as CDIE continues to upgrade its capacity in this area. There was also generally favorable, although not overwhelmingly positive, response on the part of the geographic Bureaus, where the evaluation function appears to be much better known or associated with CDIE than the information function.

The question of the contribution of CDIE's studies and other outputs to the state-of-the-art must be looked at from both the information and evaluation sides of the operation. Consultations with other donors indicated that CDIE's information system is a leader in its field among the donors. The Canadian International Development Agency, the United Nations and the World Bank are in various stages of plugging into and emulating the CDIE system. The system developed by CDIE is regarded as state-of-the-art by peer agencies, even though some in the Agency believe that the system is being constrained in some respects by lack of access to the latest technology for information systems. The document storage and retrieval system, and the information search and summary systems truly have given A.I.D. a memory--a memory that is growing in its use by the Agency and yet still is greatly under-utilized.

On the evaluation side, a good effort has been made to insure the quality and relevance of CDIE studies. However, evaluations by nature are retrospective. They look at what the Agency has done in the past in order to gain insights into the future. There is a tension between this aspect of evaluation and the need for the Agency to use evaluation to look ahead in its policy and program development.

There is, in addition, a timeliness issue. A year or two is required to carry out a major evaluation, as well as a year or more for publication, creating a serious time-lag factor.

This must be addressed if the Agency and the development community are to achieve the desirable rapid feedback on the results of CDIE evaluations and studies.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT AND RESOURCE ADEQUACY

At the time the information and evaluation functions were combined within PPC in 1983, the Agency envisioned that this reorganization would bring a more rational and coherent organizational structure to these key functions. It was also believed that the restructuring would help to insure that the Agency's evaluation, information and economic and social data functions would be better integrated into the PPC Bureau's central programming, economic analysis and policy functions. While PPC has made an effort to achieve some integration of the various functions to improve the Agency's overall economic analysis, planning and policy responsibilities, the results leave room for improvement.

Within PPC's current organizational structure, the Office of Policy Development and Program Review (PDPR) is the Agency's central source of expertise, information and guidance on major policy issues and options on U.S. economic assistance matters. The Office of Economic Affairs (EA) provides the expertise, information and policy guidance on international economic policy issues and longer term world-wide economic and social trends, and provides in-depth analysis on developmental problems. While these critical offices should be heavy users of CDIE information, evaluation and data resources, this is not the case. Rather, staff in these offices state that the kinds of information being obtained and stored by CDIE are not the right kinds of information needed or desired in their own work. They further state that these data are often outdated and are not stored in a usable form. Part of the problem apparently is that much of CDIE's work deals with matters past. As such, it is contended by these offices that CDIE is not providing state-of-the-art material or the kinds of information that these offices feel they need.

One of the problems hindering achievement of a more functional integration of CDIE into the PPC Bureau has been the physical isolation of CDIE which is located in Rosslyn, Virginia. This has made it difficult to achieve the necessary communication and interaction. CDIE has often operated on its own with only general guidance on priorities for its work from the Agency's senior management. If co-location of the various CDIE offices is not possible in the near term, a greater effort on the part of the Bureau will be required to overcome the

adverse effects of this physical isolation and would seem to be in order. This might include more frequent meetings and interactions among these offices to exchange ideas and develop common objectives.

Other options for the location of CDIE were explored and included: (1) CDIE as a major office reporting directly to the Administrator; (2) CDIE combined with the Policy Development and Program Review Office in PPC; (3) movement of CDIE evaluation functions to the geographic Bureaus; and (4) establishment of CDIE within A.I.D. as a prestigious Center for Development Studies, to include visiting fellows from academia and elsewhere in the development community. This would include long term training/study assignments for AID personnel. Each of these options is discussed below.

The first option, that of establishing CDIE as a major office reporting directly to the Administrator, is a popular one for major corporations in the private sector. These corporations have opted to place information and evaluation functions near top management with a separate Vice-President to cover such functions. This option offers the benefit of placing considerable resources in the hands of top management for use as a management tool thereby elevating the priority of the function. From the perspective of Agency management, however, such a move would add another staff supervision burden to the Administrator's office. This could also result in CDIE's being less of a service organization for the rest of the Agency than it now is by isolating it at a higher level.

Another option explored was that of combining CDIE with PPC's PDPR Office. While this might overcome the present problem of insufficient integration into the policy process, this appears to be an extreme solution to a communication problem for which there are other and preferable solutions. CDIE is designed to be a service organization while PDPR is viewed to function in more of a critical review role. While CDIE should feed the policy process, its evaluation and information systems work should remain independent from the high pressure environment of a policy office.

A third option explored was that of decentralizing the evaluation functions to the geographic Bureaus. This option was recommended as a method of placing the evaluation function closer to the Agency's operational decision makers. Nevertheless, the geographic Bureaus generally have given a low priority to allocation of direct-hire positions for evaluation, except for the Asia and Near East Bureau. Dismantling an office with central focus and critical mass and a global as

well as a geographic focus would not appear to offer advantages toward improving the Agency's evaluation functions but would more than likely result in the Agency's giving a lower priority to its evaluation functions.

An additional option explored was that of establishing a Center for Development Studies. This option offers the advantage of giving the Agency a development studies "think tank" and holds out the attraction of drawing highly qualified professionals from the academic community and the private sector to spend excursion tours in the Agency. Such an approach could strengthen the quality of the Agency information and evaluation services, as well as its links with academia and the private sector. It could also provide the Agency with an opportunity to give its operational staff an in-house sabbatical period to write and reflect on personal development experiences. The down-side of this option is the substantial additional cost it could entail for the Agency.

Based on this review, CDIE appears to be properly placed as a separate office within PPC. Its lack of proximity to the rest of PPC and the geographic Bureau should be improved. In addition, CDIE should be better integrated within the overall decision making apparatus of the PPC Bureau.

In regard to the question of the adequacy of staff and financial resources, CDIE in 1985 went through an Agency mandated staff reduction as a part of an overall Agency staff reduction exercise. CDIE staff was reduced by 40%. The evaluation side of CDIE was harder hit. Effectively, the evaluation staff declined from a level of 28 full and part time staff, to 9 full and part time employees. This large loss in staff has been offset slightly by the arrival of an Evaluation Applications and Methods Contract (4 employees) with the 8(a) firm of Labat-Anderson. Without this contract, the methodology support and special studies functions of CDIE would be in serious difficulty.

The reduction has also had an impact on CDIE's evaluation capability. Junior level positions have been dropped which has resulted in professional staff performing far more administrative and routine work than one would expect at the GS 13 and 14 levels. Field work has also been drastically curtailed and contract employees, especially on the methods side, have been used to take up some of the slack caused by the direct hire cutbacks. Unfortunately, using contract employees for the methodology work has left less money remaining for impact type evaluations. These evaluations have been cut to

about two topic series per year from an average of about four in earlier years. CDIE has tried to compensate for these cuts by increasing the number of desktop evaluations and special studies, using both direct hire and contract employees. It has become increasingly difficult for CDIE to obtain direct-hire personnel for its evaluations due to the Agency's overall reduction in personnel. Between one and two dozen of these studies are done per year. The rationale has been that these studies are cheap and can be done relatively quickly. Reports on their quality have been mixed.

In contrast to this situation, the Development Information side of CDIE over the same period has dropped from 11 to 9.4 full and part time direct hire positions. The cuts in this area have been less severe since the Agency required a basic core staff to maintain the basic data and information systems. This small staff is further supplemented by two large and two small contract operations. These four include a Document and Information Handling Facility (25 contract employees); a Research and Reference Service, including the AID Library (18 contract employees); an Economic and Social Data Service (5 contract employees); and a Technical Inquiry Service (5 USDA RSSA employees). Contract levels have remained about the same for the development information contracts, although the Document Information and Handling contract has dropped 10 positions. This reduction was necessary because costs were escalating and CDIE was unable to come up with the additional funds required to maintain these positions.

The demand for and supply of services from CDIE has been growing dramatically in recent years and there appears to be a high degree of satisfaction with the speed and quality of service in the development information areas. However, CDIE management indicates that the service is being pushed to the limit now and that quality and performance will fall off as demand increases further. Moreover, as the Agency increasingly focuses its program on the problems and prospects of economic growth, new types of demand will be created in the area of search synthesis and presentation--areas in which the development information side of CDIE is not well staffed at the present.

With respect to the budget, at $4.3 million, it has held fairly steadily in the face of substantial Agency cutbacks. CDIE feels that an increased budget to about $5 million total would: permit extension of outreach through workshops and

conferences; increase quality control by permitting use of peer review panels; allow the performance of more impact studies; and facilitate acquisition of more effective hardware and software. Currently, it appears that staffing is about right for the budget levels provided. However, there is no question that additional staff will be required if CDIE is to meet the anticipated growth and demand for its services. Some of those interviewed have expressed concern that CDIE should have more Foreign Service personnel on its staff.

CDIE is a complex and multifaceted organization. It engages in a broad range of services and activities. There are many questions of opportunity costs and alternative uses of staff and resources. These should be reviewed programmatically and strategically by the Agency before substantive changes are made. There clearly is room for improvement in the services being provided but CDIE has shown professional growth and has had a beneficial impact on the Agency and the development community in general.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

CDIE appears to have a valid set of goals and objectives and has made good progress toward achieving them. However, the timing appears right for the Agency to consider more broadly the strategic use of development information and to give a higher priority to the application of evaluation results.

CDIE's management has done a remarkable job of integrating and upgrading the information, evaluation and evaluation methodology units that now constitute the Center and of giving them substance and firm direction. Agency memory, data and information systems are in place and functioning well. CDIE has provided leadership both internationally and within the Agency in the information and evaluation fields. Nonetheless, challenges still remain. Achievements in one area seem to create needs and opportunities in others.

In both its information and evaluation functions, CDIE has attempted to link more effectively into Agency policy priorities. Yet, there still is room for improvement. Perhaps most important is that Agency senior management should take a more active role in setting evaluation and information priorities than is presently the case.

CDIE has made a tremendous effort through publications, syntheses, workshops, guidelines and networking to make the Agency aware of its services and to have them used in Agency programs, especially in the field. Important inroads have been made in some programs in which lessons learned from experience and the Agency's memory have been used very effectively.

However there persists a perception that Missions are not taking full advantage in program design of the information, lessons and guidelines that CDIE has to offer, despite the requirement to do so set out in the Agency's handbooks.

The problem appears to be twofold. First, the Agency is experiencing an information overload. Any service unit such as CDIE faces a fiercely competitive information market. There is a need to engage in fewer studies of higher priority and focus on quality control, rapid turn-around time and face-to-face dissemination and field utilization. Second, greater priority should be given by the Agency to using the memory it has so effectively put into place.

Despite this perception and problem, CDIE has been effective in dissemination and marketing of its services. Demand has increased overall by some 200% in the past four years. The problem exists, however, that utilization is uneven, increasing geometrically in the Missions that have been "reached" while remaining very thin or non-existent in others. This suggests a considerable latent demand in the field and Washington Bureaus and gives urgency to the question of whether CDIE can cope, within present budget and staff resources, with further marketing success.

CDIE has created for the Agency a position of leadership in the information and evaluation fields with the international donors. Several major donors are trying to emulate the combined information and evaluation approach pioneered by CDIE and have become part of an information sharing, electronically linked network promoted by CDIE. In evaluation, some have followed CDIE's lead in the type of evaluation and evaluation reporting they pursue. This leadership brings with it costs in time, energy and resources as well as obvious benefits. It may be time to consider cutting back on these activities.

CDIE has attempted to keep the Agency in the lead technologically as well in terms of the rapidly improving computer and software applications in information storage, retrieval, analysis and presentation. However, there is tension between this desire on CDIE's part and the Agency's management focus on standardization of computer technology choices.

Organizationally, there is a range of options as to how CDIE might be reorganized or located differently within the Agency. However, most of those interviewed appear comfortable with the present arrangement in PPC, calling only for closer integration within PPC and greater physical proximity to the geographic bureaus.