Development Information Services
Final Report
June 2006

I. Introduction

The Development Information Services (DIS) contract, funded by USAID from 2001-2006, provided development information and analysis to USAID/Washington and USAID missions as well as USAID contractors and development partners. The contract consisted of a core, partly funded by PPC, and buy-ins that funded the provision of services to sector/pillar and regional bureaus. Skills of DIS staff included librarians, research and communications analysts, statistical data analysts, and web specialists. At its peak there were an estimated 80 staff managed by a team of six (6) Key Personnel and several team leaders. The implementing partners consisted of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and DevTech. Logical Technical Services (LTS) also partnered in the provision of information technology (IT) support to DIS staff. The DIS project collaborated extensively with the LTS-managed Development Experience Clearinghouse whose collection of more than 100,000 development experience documents was extremely useful for DIS in performing its research and information dissemination functions. In turn, the subject matter expertise of DIS researchers and librarians assisted the DEC with their mission of facilitating access by USAID staff and partners to USAID documentation.

Throughout the life of the contract, DIS met and in most cases exceeded both the qualitative and quantitative terms of the contract. As evidenced by the project's accomplishments, DIS was able to take advantage of the combination of skills and experience of its staff and partners to provide USAID with the highest quality services possible. The collaborative spirit engendered by professionals of so many different disciplines working together and communicating on a daily basis provided a powerful resource to USAID. Working under the guidance of the CTO and other USAID staff, the project management team is confident that DIS has played a significant role in furthering USAID's mission.

The following table sheds some insight into the magnitude and type of requests generated over five years and reflects the degree to which USAID is a knowledge intensive organization.

Table 1 – Cumulative Number of Requests Completed by DIS

Request Type	Number
Customized research requests	*13,669*
Quick information requests	*57,532*
Inter-Library loan and acquisition of documents from sources outside USAID	*60,626*
Library circulation	*15,416*
Quick data and data research requests	*335,659*
In-depth analytical data requests	*4,742*
In-depth issue briefs, concept papers, etc	*66*

As a demand-driven, cost-plus-fixed fee contract, the main source of the tasking for staff was in the many short, medium, and long-term requests that USAID originated. Many taskings were quick turn-around requests that required responses within 24 hours, while others needed more time for synthesis of information and analysis. Illustrative products and services included analytical memoranda and papers, lessons learned analyses, reference services, computerized database searches, bibliographies, interlibrary loans, tailored information packages, and several regular publications.

II. Background

The DIS contract was signed on April 23, 2001 for a base value of $40,312,627 with a total ceiling of $64,174,817, if options included were implemented. It was a large and complex contract that represented a coming together in one instrument the delivery of related knowledge services consisting of library, research, and statistical data analysis.

Throughout the 1990s, AED offered research and reference (library) services via a series of three contracts titled Research and Reference Services (R&RS). Similarly DevTech's Economic and Social Data Services (ESDS) managed USAID's socio-economic data by adding to and updating a data base powered by SAS software which permitted multiple uses: the delivery of annual Congressional reports and use for strategic and program planning in USAID. USAID's decision to combine the two related knowledge functions under one roof made USAID project management and coordination efficient and seamless. The talent and skills from the two partners' teams proved to be highly valuable for high profile policy related products over the life of the contract.

At the end of the DIS contract, the total obligated value added up to approximately $46.7 million. Contract options that included implementing an expanded Leland internet training initiative begun earlier under R&RS in USAID's Africa Bureau did not materialize and neither did options specified for the Policy and Program Coordination (PPC) and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Bureaus.

The Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) resided within the Development Information Division of the Office of Development Evaluation and Information (DEI) known previously as the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE).

The original contract end date was April 22, 2006, but after a five-week extension to May 31, 2006, the contract closed in part attributed to the transition of USAID to new senior leadership and the reform of US bilateral assistance under Secretary Condoleeza Rice's guidance.

III. Project Components and Approach

The project and the contract were organized around three components and in turn three main teams: Knowledge Resources, Knowledge Services, and Knowledge Sharing. A summary description of each follows.

A. Knowledge Resources

The DIS team under this component was required to acquire, maintain, provide access to, and disseminate USAID and other developmental organizations' information and knowledge to the international development community at large and for use by the DIS Knowledge Services team. In large measure, this component was designed to keep the USAID library on the cutting edge of making available and pushing out to USAID users a variety of data bases and electronic journals in order to ensure that USAID staff had desk-top access to the full range of knowledge and experience relevant to development, including that from other development organizations and the business and academic sectors.

Knowledge resources also included the Economic and Social Data Base (ESDB) which drew from over 40 international development data sources at the inception of the contract and expanded to 80 and more sources by the end. The primary users were USAID staff, although through an agreement with the State Department, selected economic officers had access to the data base. In the closing months of the contract, other USG agency users such as OMB and DoD developed an interest in tapping this resource.

B. Knowledge Services

The Knowledge Services team was an overarching concept that formed the bulk of DIS services. The larger team was broken down into smaller teams divided by sector or USAID geographic regions that corresponded to pillar and regional bureau buy-ins to the contract. This organizational model reflected USAID's intent to provide an integrated response to USAID's research requests, using the library and its range of electronic and human resources, the ESDB, and the skills of analysts. The model worked to USAID's benefit, as there was considerable cross-team collaboration in bringing the right knowledge to USAID offices at the right time.

C. Knowledge Sharing

This component was designed to promote the products, services, resources, and technical assistance support capabilities of USAID' Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). Over the life of the contract the DIS Knowledge Sharing team developed materials—brochures, one-pagers, and websites- that promoted the DIS project and its services to all clients served under the project. The Knowledge Sharing team was also responsible for preparing quarterly and annual reports, arranging brown bags on current development topics, and in the last two years of the contract assisting USAID officers in preparing for USAID's Summer Seminars. The significance of the Knowledge Sharing team grew with the added responsibility of collaborating with USAID in the development of a Knowledge for Development (KfD) strategy and the application of well-recognized knowledge management techniques such as communities of practice and after action reviews.

IV. Key Developments under the DIS Project and Achievements

This section present highlights of the significant accomplishments of the project in relation to evolving US foreign assistance policy and priorities over its five-year history.

A. Knowledge Resources

Over the life of the project, DIS staff in the USAID Library successfully increased the electronic access of information on USAID desktops—an essential step in helping USAID staff find information and locate critical knowledge by themselves, thus increasing the number of USAID staff able to access this information. Significant accomplishments included:

- Increased access to electronic resources including the expansion of the Library holdings to include 2,033 full-text journal titles available through the Academic Search Elite database.

- In collaboration with the Development Experience Clearinghouse, assessment of the historical collection of annual reports, statistical information, green books, and congressional presentations in the Library in preparation for digitization.

- Assistance in the development of USAID's KfD Program in which staff were extensively involved in the Taxonomy and Yellow Pages Working Groups of the Business Transformation Executive Committee's (BTEC) KfD Subcommittee.

- Support for the formation of a Librarian Community of Practice (CoP) for partner librarians working on USAID-sponsored activities. This CoP, sponsored officially by CDIE, improved knowledge and information sharing.

- Performance of training and outreach, including presentation of DIS, USAID Library, and Learning Resources Center (LRC), and DEC products and services to new entry professionals (NEPs) and other new Agency staff.

While the library resources were expanding and becoming increasingly electronic, DIS socio-economic data resources experienced their own expansion to correspond to new development trends. Uninterrupted maintenance and updates were critical to the data base utility. Key accomplishments included:

- Publication of successive annual editions of *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants, Obligations and Loan Authorizations*, commonly known as "The Greenbook," which showed a complete historical record of U.S. foreign aid. A web version was designed and posted in FY2001 and contained the entire Greenbook database with an interactive format that allowed external web users to query and construct their own statistical tables.

- Continued on-line access to the Global Education Database and Economic and Social Database (ESD B). D IS staff created a portal for access to the ESDB through the DIS web site, enabling 12 State Department economists (including six in U.S. embassies) to access the ESDB.

- Use of the ESDB to implement a survey of Democracy and Governance (DG) awards by USAID from 80 missions to prepare detailed reports showing the distribution of over 350 assistance and acquisition awards within the DG sector over FY 04 and FY 05. The survey report enabled USAID to respond to a key Congressional inquiry.

B. Knowledge Services

With the arrival of a new Administrator in 2001, USAID's research and analytical requests quickly reflected the important new initiatives launched by the Agency. Project staff representing a team approach responded with distinction to USAID's priorities. Notable accomplishments included:

- Research and statistical support in economic growth, global health, democracy and governance, and conflict prevention for the task force responsible for the preparation of Administrator Natsios' report on *Foreign Aid in the National Interest.*

- Research and publication of a landmark study of U.S. government support for trade capacity building in developing and transition countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The study was prepared for the 2001 Doha Round of Trade Negotiations. The report titled *United States Government Initiatives to Build Trade Related Capacity in Developing and Transition Countries* covered a wide range of technical assistance activities that promoted WTO accession, export competitiveness, labor standards, and other aspects of trade capacity building. Based on an exhaustive survey of other USG agencies and USAID missions, the report provided funding data and program descriptions not found in any other source. In 2003, Two years later the DIS team collaborated with USAID staff in preparing a follow –on study for the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico.

- Assistance with the launch and maintenance of the Online Presidential Initiative Network (OPIN) which captured the results of all presidential initiatives managed by USAID. OPIN provided excellent visibility to USAID programs supported by the President.

While trade continued to play a prominent role on the foreign policy agenda, in 2002, the United States was still grappling with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. It was a time when USAID began to focus on understanding and alleviating the causes of Islamic extremism, while continuing its ongoing mandate of helping people throughout the developing world. In this regard, DIS provided valuable contributions in both endeavors,

assisting USAID with long-term, high-profile research and analysis. At the same time through another lens, DIS researchers also supported a variety of other substantive research assignments that advanced USAID's knowledge of the way it does or might deliver development assistance.

The following accomplishments were illustrative of the policy relevance of DIS research and analysis at a critical point of USAID development assistance. They are:

- A study on strengthening education in the Muslim world, which involved an in-depth analysis of public religious schools in 15 Muslim countries.

- Compilation of information on USAID programs that provided benefits to Muslim populations in Asia and Africa to support the United States' outreach to the Muslim world.

- Research support to PPC for the development of syllabi for courses in development studies proposed for the Army War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in response to increased USAID collaboration with the Pentagon in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other post-conflict settings.

- A survey of over 20 USG agencies and the report *Working for a Sustainable World: U.S. Government Initiatives to Promote Sustainable Development*, in collaboration with PPC/CDIE staff and outside consultants. The full report was distributed to delegates and participants at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

- Support for PPC as well as individuals in other USAID bureaus to create an outreach paper for distribution at the G-8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland in early July 2005 that detailed all U.S. government international development activities. Building on an earlier draft by DIS and PPC, a DIS team conducted research on such topics as remittances, credit leveraging, and how total U.S. development funding matched the goals of the Millennium Declaration, among other topics. Working with USAID, the team drafted a 20-page document.

- Support for an evaluation of the use of general budget support as an aid mechanism. The team conducted in-country studies of non-project assistance in East Timor, Mozambique, Malawi, and Nicaragua.

- A review of USAID's past practices with implementation mechanisms, those of other donors, and examination of the feasibility of using past USAID and other donor mechanisms today. The initial findings were presented to the BTEC, and further developed as a paper for the 2005 Mission Directors' Conference.

As donor coordination gained increased prominence within the international community, USAID played a leadership role in defining coordination agendas with the help of project staff in support of the PPC Bureau's Office of Donor Coordination. Operations of an

ongoing nature included managing USAID's Early Project Notification system for multilateral development bank partnering to flag issues of policy relevance for US Executive directors at international institutions. Illustrative of the high-level nature of products were:

- Briefing books for the USAID delegation that attended the U.N. Millennium +5 Summit and USAID–sponsored side events in New York City.

- Materials compiled for the USAID delegation to the World Bank/IMF annual meetings in Washington, D.C.

- Briefing books prepared for the USAID Administrator's participation in a ministerial meeting with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Under the regional and sector/pillar bureaus, staff provided regular research and analytical support to priority activities, including:

- Assistance with the development of a strategy statement to be used as a model for African Transformational Development country missions under the Africa Bureau's Strategic Framework.

- Publication of the annual brochure, "Making Progress in Africa," for the Africa Bureau. The brochure covered USAID activities in all sectors and success stories from selected countries. With increasing global attention placed on Africa, the DIS Africa Bureau Information Center (ABIC), produced a 12-page brochure entitled *Delivering on Africa's Promise* in collaboration with the NSC. The brochure was used for the June 2003 G-8 meeting in Evian, France. It was updated for the 2005 G-8 meetings in Gleneagles, Scotland.

- Assistance with strategic planning and performance management to the ANE Bureau including facilitation and preparation of performance management plans (PMPs) for the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy, and USAID programs in Cambodia, East Timor, and West Bank/Gaza. DIS also assisted with the drafting and editing of the ANE Bureau's regional framework and strategic plans for the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy, the South Asia Regional Initiative for Equity, the Pakistan Basic Education Program, and country programs in Sri Lanka, Yemen, Mongolia, Morocco, and Liberia.

- Support for drafting and editing testimony and talking points for the Assistant Administrator and the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the ANE Bureau in preparation for hearings with the House International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In collaboration with the ANE Bureau, DIS prepared talking points for a plenary at the State Department to officially launch negotiations under the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

- Publication of the *Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Databook*, containing key economic and social data for the LAC region.

- Organization and facilitation of the Democracy & Governance (DG) annual conferences and workshops to disseminate new ideas and lessons learned on democratic practices around the world.

Throughout the five year period, DIS provided ongoing support to improve many of the Agency's online web sites, a growing means by which USAID communicated internally and externally, using the latest information technology. Web specialists from the project assisted in the redesign of the Africa Bureau's intranet site, several ANE mission web sites, the Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) external web site, the DG intranet, the LAC internet and intranet sites, and others.

USAID also saw the potential application of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a development tool and with DIS staff helped USAID missions integrate ICT into their programs. They designed and facilitated workshops focusing on national level telecommunications policies, setting up an ICT activities database, capturing ICT success stories and developing monitoring and evaluation indicators for ICT projects.

C. Knowledge Sharing

As the third component of the project, Knowledge Sharing was of equal importance to the knowledge formation process as was Knowledge Resources and Services. Coordination of the Agency's 'first annual' Knowledge Fair, attended by more than 200 USAID staff and partners, was a major milestone in raising awareness within USAID of the importance of knowledge management. The sharing of knowledge and knowledge access tools and repositories underscored the Fair's major theme. Among other pioneering USAID achievements that DIS staff was proud to be associated with, the development of a Knowledge for Development (KfD) strategy stands out. Other accomplishments were:

- Planning and support for USAID's Summer Seminars in 2004 and 2005. The sessions were well attended by USAID staff, other government agencies, and NGOs.

- In collaboration with the USAID Evaluation Office, development of EvalWeb, USAID's website in support of the evaluation community of practice.

V. DIS Innovations

Over the course of the DIS contract, AED introduced significant innovations from ideas and recommendations that the research and statistical analysts raised to improve knowledge access and to improve client satisfaction.

Knowledge Access Tool
As the emphasis on the project evolved away from tracking the numbers of requests fulfilled and the time put into work for each bureau and office, in cooperation with the CTO, DIS performed a project-wide requirements analysis for a system to track requests and store and retrieve research products. DIS customized an off-the-shelf software package to fit specific requirements. The result was the DIS Knowledge Access Tool (KAT), a highly effective tool for capturing, sharing, and reusing the knowledge of a large research project.

Geographic Information Systems
One of the major shifts in the nature of requests over the life of DIS was in the increasing numbers of requests to produce data and information heavy maps of all types. USAID clients challenged DIS to produce maps showing USAID countries receiving certain types of funds, showing various activities in different countries and areas of the world, etc. As clients requested these graphic presentations of geographic data, DIS acquired the software to produce these maps and trained a cadre of staff capable of producing increasingly sophisticated mapping products that assisted USAID in high level briefings or in resource planning exercises.

E-Newsletter and E-Zine
One of the primary means of communicating and sharing the results of DIS' work with a wide audience, required by the DIS contract, was the monthly Requests and Responses newsletter. This began as a totally hard copy newsletter. In order to ensure that both USAID staff and partners could use the newsletter regardless of their access to technology, for the past three years of the contract, the new electronic newsletter has been distributed in basic text, as well as PDF and HTML format for presentation on the web, via email or downloaded in a fully formatted version.

The Democracy and Governance Information Unit introduced an electronic magazine to share the results of Tuesday Group forums and other significant knowledge sharing events with the wider DG community.

Distance Learning Module
In response to the need to train large numbers of DG Officers and partners quickly and cheaply on Anti-Corruption, t he Democracy Governance Information Unit produced, promoted and distributed a well-received Distance Learning module on this subject.

Knowledge for Development
DIS led the way in a number of innovations in this area, including in production of the KfD Strategic Plan, implementing and supporting Communities of Practice and leading a number of KfD working groups, including the KfD Tools workgroup and the KfD Taxonomy working group.

Knowledge for Development Center/E-Library
To support USAID's Knowledge for Development initiative, DIS produced a concept paper on what a KfD Center would do and look like, and took steps to implement this center. As part of this vision, DIS overcame technical difficulties and worked closely with USAID Information Resources Management (IRM) make third party online databases available to staff at USAID missions, as well as to USAID staff in Washington. DIS then focused on making available in electronic format as many of the resources of the library as possible and practical.

The DIS also made creative use of a blog to communicate news about Library resources and events, creating an efficient way to update the Library web site.

Web Based Data
At the beginning of the project, much of the information and analysis of data from the Economic and Social Database had to be done on an individual, custom basis by economic analysts. DIS worked hard to innovate in this area, and most types of data presentation can now be produced on an individualized basis on the fly, from the ESDB web site. Data can be requested by Country, Region, Sector and other variables, and it can be presented for web viewing in HTML, or as an Excel spreadsheet.

Africa Bureau Photo Library
DIS created the first USAID sponsored photo library, available to journalists, and scholars. Featuring high resolution photos (suitable for publications) and lower resolution versions (for web sites and general use), the photo library was organized to make photos easily retrievable by subject and location. The ANE region used this as a model for its own photo library.

VI. Overall Project Management

During the five years project implementation, project management responded to many new challenges and demands on services that resulted from changing and new Agency directions and initiatives. The DIS record (Quarterly and Annual Reports, plus numerous publications), demonstrates the range of new and changed services that DIS provided.

New applications for DIS skill set
Demand for various services increased, and DIS management was always ready to provide specialized staff in order to meet those needs. Major examples of this included developing a five person team to support the DCHA/Conflict Management and Mitigation office. This team provided essential services, including research, writing, editing, conference planning, and web site development.

Another example was in DIS support of the USAID branding and communications initiative. In addition to hiring staff to support these efforts, DIS staff was recognized as experts in this area, developing and providing training for mission Development Outreach and Communications Officers.

DIS Office Move

With the expiration of the lease on the office space at 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, in the third year of the DIS project, it was essential for DIS to find a new home. Fortunately, we were able to find a sub-lease within the contractually mandated distance from USAID's offices and at a very favorable below-market rate. The new space provided excellent conference rooms which were used extensively by USAID clients, including PPC.

VII. Conclusion

AED and its partners are proud to have served, through the DIS contract, an important role as a partner in achieving the goals of USAID. The project management and staff are particularly pleased that to have provided fast, efficient, effective, and high quality services to help USAID clients—serving so many bureau front offices, program, technical, and regional offices, as well as numerous missions—find specialized talent and services that would have been very difficult and time consuming for them to acquire through other mechanisms. Throughout the span of the project, we followed the vision that was laid out for by the CTO, remaining flexible when necessary to help USAID achieve its goals within the terms of the DIS contract and finding ways to better serve the client. We attribute our success largely to the management team's ability to find extremely talented staff and establish successful professional partnerships with other organizations that brought additional talents to the project. DIS was able to bring that assembled combination of talent and experience to bear on every task, drawing on the staff's knowledge of how to meet the Agency's needs and providing a unique synergy only possible in such a highly collaborative environment.

We wish to thank USAID for this opportunity, and we look forward to future opportunities for continuing our partnership with USAID by being responsive to the Agency's vision and requirements.