Organizaional Changes in the Africa Program

Since the beginning of assistance programs in Africa, the Bureau has tested various forms of regional support offices and multicountry program management arrangements to optimize staff utilization, achieve economies of scale and encourage intra-African development cooperation. Through the 1960s the rapid expansion of independent countries in Africa was accompanied by an equally rapid expansion of bilateral aid programs. There were no country limitations in the legislation or by executive decision. During this period, bilateral field posts were established in which direct hire staff were responsible for program planning, management and implementation.

In July 1964, President Johnson announced a New Africa Policy that aid would be expanded for selected countries. The "Korry report" proposed concentrating aid on those Africa countries which had both the potential and the promise for rapid development. At about the same time, Congress inserted a country limitation requirement in the FAA. This limited the total number of countries that could receive USG bilateral AID through out the world.

From about 1965 to 1968, the Africa programs were administered by bilateral missions in 8 to 10 countries. A regional USAID located in Washington administered all other programs. These regional programs were a combination of programs to/through African regional organizations (OMVS, the Entente, EAC); projects implemented by one contractor but which benefitted 2 or more countries (AMDP); multi-donor capital projects either in one country or crossing national boundaries; and bilateral grants to strengthen a national institution when that institution agreed to accept regional responsibilities..

From 1968 through 1973, the regional USAID concept went through several incarnations and reorganizations. It was based in AID/W then transferred to Dakar in FY68 with an AID/W backstop office. At various times, East Africa regional and Central West Africa regional and Africa regional were handled in AID/W together and/or separately (CWORA, NARA, CWR, etc.). From FY 71-74 central/west Africa field programs were handled by three regional offices in Dakar, Niamey and Yaounde; the East Africa Community regional programs were administered by the RDO in Arusha; and southern Africa by OSARAC in Swaziland.

These various organizational arrangements were based on modifying and reallocating basic program responsibilities in an attempt to "do more with less". For example, at different times, the central west Africa field offices were held

responsible for program management but planning and budgeting were done in AID/W; then field offices were responsible for planning but implementation was to be handled by REDSO; and/or AID/W was responsible for planning, African regional organizations were to be responsible for implementation, and REDSO was to monitor. For management purposes, an AID officer could be assigned to the country with no support staff, with technical support staff but no program or controller staff, or programs could be handled by staff located in one country but given multi-country repsonsibilities.

In about 1973, the East and West Africa Regional Economic Support Offices were started. They have proven efficient and cost effective in providing quick response, specialized technical and design support for the 37 country programs. Enlarging regional programs and regional support capacity clustered around specific sub-regional strategies will be increasingly important elements as both program and management evolve in the 1980s.

Historically A.I.D.'s role in Africa has been somewhat unique. Because of resident multi-disciplinary mission staff, A.I.D. has been a singularly successful agent in influencing African thinking on many development issues. In this respect, resident direct hire staff have been important contributors of technical assistance. A.I.D. has been perceived by many African governments as more sustained, comprehensive and reliable, which has opened opportunities for policy review. A.I.D. has often been viewed as the innovator, as the catalyst to bring various parties together to address particular new problems. In the last five years, A.I.D. activities have brought a consciousness not coming from other donors, on basic needs, agriculture policies, population, women's role in development, energy and reforestation. The openness and reinforcement of this development dialogue with African countries will be even more crucial in responding to the worsening problem set emerging in the 1980s. In many instances, this development dialogue has been or could be our only substantive dialogue with these nations. This role and its potential importance have been carefully considered in proposing the levels, mix and distribution of staff in Africa.

While in most geographic areas, disasters are a common occurance, the Africa continent has experienced an extraordinary occurance of droughts, civil strife, famine, endemic disease, refugee problems and other disasters which has required on ground-preplanning, coordination and response capability. In many instances, the U.S. has been the lead donor with on-site U.S. direct hire personnel, providing the leadership role and coordination function to address these problems.

Some of the Issues that are Raised for Small Country Programs

The attention being given to the number of country programs in Africa and the relative size of these programs grows out of a number of independent concerns that sometimes conflict and make it difficult to recommend one choice solution.

These concerns range from:

A. Political Concerns

-- Political and strategic necessity as seen by State and other U.S. government organizations. These can include the Indian Ocean program.

-- Domestic political concerns such as the Congressional initiative for programs in the Sahel which include some smaller programs, such as Cape Verde and Mauritania.

-- Membership of countries in African regional organizations where all members view assistance to individual or collective units as benefitting the whole and would likely view the dropping of programs in one country as discriminating against that country.

B. Internal A.I.D. Concerns

-- Management desires to optimize the shrinking of direct hire staff to focus or concentrate on areas with maximum return.

-- The option that small programs can't be effective and therefore, if bilateral programs are a necessity, they should be solely training programs.

-- The desire of some U.S. staffs to limit the size and number of activities in the small countries while at the same time encouraging other activities such as population programs, PVOs, Special Self Help, Peace Corps, ORT activities, etc., which in many instances are high priorities for the U.S. but are viewed by the host government with less concern than other activities.

C. Other Issues

Depending on how the small program issues are resolved, several considerations will need to be examined with regard to how A.I.D. deals with these countries.

-- If we drop out of these bilateral programs, what knowledge of the development process in these countries will be required by us and how do we obtain it?

-- Whether we stay or go, are our documentation requirements and reporting requirements unrealistic for the level of our involvement?

-- Are we prepared to exclude these countries from participating in regional or centrally funded activities? If we are prepared to fund regional and central programs (a) how are they managed, what specific programs will we consider; and (b) what expectations for country specific programs do regional and centrally funded programs imply for U.S. and more importantly, expectations of host governments.

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