

MID-TERM EVALUATION
OF
THE UNIVERSITY LINKAGES PROJECT
(263-0118)

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University Linkages

INTRODUCTION

The University Linkages Project has come under a considerable amount of criticism in recent months. For one thing, it is a year and a half behind schedule in terms of its expenditures. For another, it was implicated indirectly in an attack in the Egyptian press concerning U.S. interference in domestic research and information gathering. Finally, there have been concerns within the USAID that this project unnecessarily overlaps with a number of other USG-funded research efforts in Egypt.

After three weeks of investigation, the evaluation team finds that, while the ULP is not without some problems, the extent and nature of the criticism that has been directed at it is, in large part, unfounded, in our opinion. We have a number of recommendations to improve the current performance of the project, but these recommendations are largely a matter of enhancing the already good start on the project and do not reflect a need for radical changes in any way. We wish to emphasize from the start that our overall impression of the project's progress to date is quite favorable; our criticisms, both positive and negative, should be read in this context.

PROJECT STATUS (delivery of inputs and outputs)

With this project's inception in 1980, a new organization, the Foreign Relations Coordination Unit (FRCU), was established under the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU-which, in turn, is under the Ministry of Higher Education). The role of the FRCU is twofold: on the one hand, it serves as the coordinator of all CIP procurements for the eleven public universities in Egypt, and, on the other hand, it is a granting agency, reviewing, approving/disapproving and funding applied

research in Egyptian universities. This second role is the realm of the ULP.

Since the fall of 1981, the FRCU has been working to establish and put into motion a research granting mechanism. Of the \$ 29.8 million in total project grant funds, \$ 24.5 million is to be contributed by AID and \$5.3 million is to be contributed by the GOE; of the \$ 4 million of "support" costs (technical assistance, training, FRCU/Committee support, evaluation, etc.), \$ 3 million is to come from AID and \$ 1 million from the GOE.

In its first year of existence (fall of 1980 to fall of 1981), the FRCU dealt primarily with commodity procurements. By in late 1981, the functions and structures necessary for the ULP were established and underway. To date, the organization needed to receive, review and fund applied research proposals is in place and functioning. While improvements can be made, it is in general performing very well. All eleven universities eligible are involved (although to varying degrees). This performance is commendable under any circumstances but that it has been achieved in only a year and half is even more remarkable.

The FRCU is composed of five branches: 1) technical services, 2) information services, 3) computer services, 4) financial services, and 5) procurement. While all of these branches are staffed and functioning, the degree of their development varies. The technical services branch is by far the most fully developed and the best functioning (in ULP terms -- the procurement branch is more concerned with CIP efforts and was not a subject of this evaluation), while the information, financial and computer services lag somewhat behind. There are several reasons for this varied performance:

1) In terms of the research granting process, the technical services branch occupies the most immediately important and visible function,

while the information and computer services functions can afford to wait to some extent. Since the information and computer services are, in part, support services to the technical services branch, this sequential development of branches is not necessarily illogical or detrimental.

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2) The FRCU is badly understaffed, especially in those branches that lag behind. There are very few full time staff members at the FRCU; instead, most of the staff is seconded from either the SCU or Cairo University. Very often, employment at the SCU or the university is retained, so that FRCU responsibilities mark an addition to an individual's work load rather than a change in jobs. This situation has meant that those FRCU staff members who are full time (or those part timers who are exceptionally dedicated) are greatly overworked and that some work never gets done (or, at least, not done systematically). As the work load of the FRCU increases in the coming years, this shortage of staff will become even more critical. Such a situation has broad implications for the eventual "institutionalization" of the FRCU, since a self-sustaining, on-going institution will need a coherent staff with properly delegated responsibilities. It is important to add, however, that the full time staff brought into the FRCU should be composed of strong and capable individuals, willing and able to take initiatives and accept responsibility. At present, decision-making is highly centralized in the hands of the FRCU Executive Director (and, over him, the head of the SCU); as the FRCU grows in size and volume of work, increasing delegation of authority will be critically important. The FRCU should begin now to hire competent professionals who over time can assume greater responsibility and take more initiatives on their own. Recommendation: The FRCU should be staffed to a greater extent than present by individuals who can devote their attentions and loyalties more fully to the FRCU and its development. These individuals should be willing to accept responsibility and take risks. (One corollary to this recommendation is that the FRCU will need more office space over time. The other corollary is that new staff members--and the existing

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staff--be paid an adequate salary to ensure full-time effort and permanent loyalty to the FRCU.)

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The Technical Services Branch

Since the technical services branch is more developed than the others, we should elaborate more on its nature and functions. This branch of the FRCU is the heart of the research granting process. At its inception, the FRCU determined eleven priority development areas* (since reduced to ten - human resources and population having been combined) under which research proposals could be considered. Each of these priority areas has a review committee ("priority committee") composed of usually eight to ten members, including university administrators and faculty, ministry and government research institution representatives and, in some cases, industry representatives. These committees review the research proposals submitted by faculty members and approve/disapprove it for funding. To date, the committees have considered over 700 proposals and have approved for funding, in three rounds, 87 research proposals in all. Of these 87 proposals approved, about half are funded currently (the remainder are either still tied up in the ministries or are being processed for funding). Each research activity approved can receive up to \$ 50,000 per year for research. (Two research activities were discontinued once funded, one for double funding and one for lack of sufficient research progress.) Once research is funded, the priority committee is responsible for follow up with the investigators (through quarterly reports and site visits) to ensure adequate progress. It is on the basis of these reviews that funding is renewed on an annual basis.

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* These are, in order of priority: 1) Food Production and Agriculture; 2) Energy; 3) Economic Policies; 4) Land Development; 5) Health; 6) Population; 7) Industry; 8) Infrastructure; 9) Human Resources; 10) Environmental Studies; and 11) Applied Sciences.

The level of activity of the priority committees varies both by the number of proposals received (the Food Production and Agriculture and Energy Committees, for example, receive the vast majority of the proposals) and by the interest and energy of the committee chairman (the Economic Policies Committee, for example, is virtually non-existent due to lack of a functioning chairman). Procedures between priority committees vary somewhat as well, some committees seeming to be more flexible and more innovative than others. Nonetheless, for the most part, the committee system is in place and working quite well. Over time, the FRCU should work to improve the comparability of procedures between committees to a greater extent, so that all proposals, regardless of field, receive comparable consideration. There is a "technical secretary" on each policy committee who also serves on a cross cutting "Technical Secretariat Committee" that works to coordinate the committees' work. However, at least some of these technical secretaries are junior in experience and age in relation to most priority committee members, a fact that may diminish their potential influence on the committees' functioning. Thus although the potential mechanism for improvement exists and may need only some time to develop, there may be an alternative as well. Recommendation: A senior level FRCU staff member should sit with each priority committee (perhaps 3 committees per staff members) in order to standardize procedures and disseminate innovations more widely.

One of the major concerns about the ULP has been the potential for research redundancy with other USG funded research efforts in Egypt. However, through its committee membership, the FRCU has managed quite successfully to avoid duplication of research. At least one member (usually more) of each priority committee is an appropriate ministry representative who is (or at least should be) aware of related and relevant research work being performed both within the ministry itself and in the broader Egyptian context. In this way, proposals that

duplicate research already underway under different auspices are not considered for funding (and, to their credit, the committees try to put the proposer in contact with those individuals or agencies already researching the problem). Also, attempts are made to combine or coordinate research proposed by different faculty along very similar or closely related lines. Although there can be no guarantees of complete avoidance of redundancy, the FRCU system seems to be doing as much as possible in this regard and doing it as well as could be expected.

There have been some problems in getting the technical services branch, and within it, the priority committees, underway. Among them:

1) The dissemination of information to each of the eleven universities has been uneven (the larger and nearer universities being better informed than the smaller, further ones). In part, the universities themselves are responsible for this situation, since some have actively distributed FRCU bulletins and requests for proposals, while others have failed to pass information on. The FRCU, however, has relied on university administrators--and personal ties within the various universities--to spread the word of their purpose and the availability of research funds rather than more actively and directly contacting individual faculty members with information on the FRCU. Realization of the uneven distribution of information about the project has moved the FRCU to rectify this problem to some extent already. Over time, word of mouth and experience will help communicate even more about the ULP.

2) The distribution of research is heavily skewed toward agriculture and engineering faculties. In part, this may be a matter of distribution of information (either by the FRCU or by the individual universities). In part, the responsibility must lie with the level of effort and interest of the priority committees. Recommendation: Measures must be taken to activate all priority committees and stimulate acceptable proposals in all priority areas. Such measures could include

brainstorming sessions to identify priority research topics not covered by proposals submitted and special advertising and discussion sessions with university faculty (rather than just with deans and other administrators).

3) There has been a reluctance to reject any proposals outright. Instead, those proposals deemed inadequate or inappropriate for funding ordinarily have been "shelved" with no notification to the proposer as to the status of his proposal. (The rationalization for this indefinite postponement of a final decision--that the proposal does not currently fall within the development priorities of the FRCU but that, as priorities change, it may be appropriate for funding and will be reconsidered by the committee at that time--is weak, since priorities are not likely to change rapidly.). This lack of communication with proposers has created some bad feelings among certain faculty members. However, the FRCU is aware of this problem and is working to improve its communications, not only as to the committee's final decision but also upon initial receipt of the proposal (prior to consideration) as well. Recommendation: The FRCU should continue to improve its communications with proposers and should not hesitate to notify a proposer of the rejection of his proposal. A further recommendation: The FRCU should establish specific deadlines (perhaps every three or four months) for the submission and consideration of proposals. This would establish clearing points in the granting process, allow clear and explicit expectations of notification and provide a useful sense of competition rather than a bottomless bag of funds (useful not only for current procedures and expectations but also as a precedent for the future, when research funds may be the limiting factor on the acceptance or rejection of proposals).

4) Membership on the original committees (appointed by the Minister of Higher Education) was skewed disproportionately to representation by the three traditionally strongest -- and the oldest -- universities (Cairo, Alexandria and Ain Shams -- especially Cairo). In addition, the

initial group of proposals funded included a large number from Cairo University. These two factors have led to some resentment by the newer regional universities that the odds of "getting their fair share" of the ULP are stacked against them. (While there is some truth to the perception of over-representation by Cairo University, it must be placed in context. First, Cairo is by far the largest and oldest university and is staffed by some of Egypt's most prestigious faculty. It is to be expected, then, that, in selecting experts to serve on priority committees and in selecting quality proposals, Cairo may be disproportionately represented, at least until other universities have a chance to develop themselves further. In addition, the disproportionate nature of Cairo's share is not as great as should be expected, given its size, i.e., Cairo has relatively fewer proposals accepted per faculty member and per submission than most other universities).

The FRCU is sensitive to criticisms of favoritism toward some universities over others and has taken steps to rectify the situation. Specifically, additional priority committee members have been added to include greater regional university representation. In addition, consideration of many proposals from Cairo University faculty has been frozen while consideration of proposals from other universities proceeds. (While this may seem rather unfair, Cairo University professors do have alternative opportunities -- e.g., the CU-MIT project -- not available to other universities at present). In addition, it would seem that the FRCU can do more to improve its image as fair to all universities. Recommendation: Tenure on the priority committees (currently unlimited) should be given a specific time limit (e.g., two years), and membership should be rotated over time so that more individuals who possess a certain expertise in their fields have the opportunity to serve on committees. In this way, more university (and ministry and industry) people are brought actively into the granting process, potentially improving the understanding of and communications with the FRCU.

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5) After the first group of proposals was funded, the (political) decision was made on the second round to have those proposals approved by the FRCU priority committee process further approved by the appropriate Minister (i.e., that Ministry that would ultimately use the research results). This decision inevitably has meant lengthy delays in approving some proposals. Understandably, there have been some misunderstandings and confusion for proposers as a result. The FRCU (and the Ministry of Higher Education/SCU) has agreed to forego this additional, ministerial approval now for the third round of proposals and send the proposals to the appropriate ministry only for notification purposes, so this should no longer be a problem.

6) The concepts of peer review of a research proposal and of cooperation and sharing of research progress and results are not particularly traditional in Egypt. While many faculty members expressed no problem with such concepts, others indicated a certain degree of suspicion regarding personal favoritism and inter-organizational jealousies (e.g., that ministries would not use the results of their research solely because it would be university and not ministry research, or that faculty colleagues would block projects out of professional jealousy.) The evaluation team is unable to attest to the validity of these claims, but the fact that they are expressed at all gives reason for some concern. There seems relatively little that the FRCU can do (except to be on guard against personal favoritism in the approval of proposals). Over time, as the concepts of peer view and interagency cooperation grow and take hold, it can be hoped that these perceptions will diminish.

One means by which the FRCU may be able to ameliorate the perceptions of professional favoritism or jealousy is to ensure that the research follow up (the reading and response to quarterly reports and site visits) is carried out quickly and effectively. In order to ease the burden of

research follow up, the FRCU can streamline the system. Recommendation: The first and third quarterly reports required on all research should be very brief (perhaps 5 pages) and should be commented on to the researchers within one week of submission.

7) There has been some trouble with the FRCU accounting system that has resulted in a three month hiatus in funding on all research. The problem seems to have been twofold: first, the FRCU is not requesting AID funds far enough in advance to allow for AID's rather lengthy processing time and, second, there seems to have been some misunderstanding about the FRCU accountant's reporting/fund request to AID. (Whether this was a question of who was to do the accounting, of how the forms were to be filled out or of an Egyptian versus an American system is unclear to the team). While the FRCU claims that it now understands the latter situation and can submit the required paperwork to AID in the future, there may still be some cause for concern on the amount of lead time the FRCU gives AID to secure the funding requested. Recommendation: The FRCU should request funding at least a quarter in advance of its needs to allow AID sufficient processing time. Systematic fiscal reports and cash needs statements also need to be kept. In addition, AID as an agency should always be in search of ways to minimize its own bureaucracy and consequent delays in processing.

Maxilinkages

Up to this point, all proposals and processes discussed have concerned only the "minilinkages" -- i.e., the very specific, focused research activities. The FRCU is now preparing to begin consideration and funding of the "maxilinkages" -- the larger, interdisciplinary, more broadly developmental research efforts included in the project's design. Several maxilinkages are currently under development, but there is little as yet for the team to evaluate. Several recommendations, however, can be made:

1) To the extent possible, a preference for interdisciplinary maxilinkages would be advisable, as a means of establishing and cementing linkages between various academic faculties as well as between universities.

2) More than one Egyptian university should be actively involved in maxilinkage research, as a means of drawing Egyptian universities more closely together, of strengthening the capacities (and confidence) of newer universities and of disseminating research results and subsequent impacts more widely.

3) Where several similar minilinkage efforts are already funded, thought should be given to making them a coordinated effort under a maxilinkage. The several minilinkages on schistosomiasis research currently funded are an obvious example of where coordinated research might enjoy some economies of scale in stimulating ideas and solutions.

4) It is easy enough to imagine that maxilinkages will be somewhat difficult to keep on track and focussed. While each maxilinkage is to have its own steering committee (made up of members of the appropriate priority committee plus outside experts, if necessary), the need for a) an FRCU staff member on this steering committee (to ensure smooth operations and progress of the research) and b) a strong committee head (who can keep the research directed and moving) seem important to mention.

5) In addition, the FRCU should be urged to focus its attention on the maxilinkages in the remainder of 1983, so that the larger research effort foreseen by the ULP's design will have the opportunity to develop and grow before the project is completed.

Capacity Building

In addition to the minilinkages and maxilinkages, the project design provided funding for university "capacity building" that is to be used "in support of direct problem solving, or justified in terms of eventual importance to the Egyptian development effort". Each of the eleven universities has available up to \$ 250,000 to be used for five capacity building projects (of \$ 50,000 each). Eligible activities include faculty exchange, joint seminars/workshops/conferences, one-way U.S. consultative/advisory role, and U.S. graduate study for Egyptians.

With the possible exception of U.S. graduate study for Egyptians, it is not readily apparent from the original design how capacity building efforts were intended to differ from minilinkages. That is, capacity building ideas are to be submitted to the FRCU as proposals and go through the review of the appropriate priority committee. Given the reality of many of the on-going minilinkages (and potential maxilinkages), such things as faculty exchange, joint seminars and U.S. consultative/advisory role (see the section on "U.S. role, American counterparts" for more detail) already are taking place under the minilinkage activities. The major distinction between minilinkage proposals and capacity building proposals, then, is that the latter are reviewed less rigorously by the priority committees.

The evaluation team is concerned with the FRCU's interpretation of capacity building. In fact, we would consider this the least impressive activity and most troublesome aspect of the ULP. While it is true that the project design does not clearly specify the unique intent of the capacity building activities, the most useful interpretation (in the team's opinion) for the universities involved and, over time, for Egyptian development, would seem to be activities that strengthen the university as an institution in some way (e.g., that expands the research

ability of a university -- not an individual -- in a particular field or that increases the sensitivity to development problems and priorities across all faculty members), so that the university will be better able to respond effectively to Egypt's development needs in the future.

The FRCU, however, seems to have chosen a different interpretation of capacity building, specifically, that it is a "pay off" to universities for participating in the ULP. Thus, capacity building so far seems to mean either approval of otherwise inadequate or unacceptable proposals (e.g., of poor quality or not research oriented) or a commodity drop without thought to the "capacity" that will (or will not) be built. In the case of poor quality proposals, "capacity building" would not seem to be promoted if the submitting university thinks either that its work is acceptable (technically and/or developmentally) or that it can submit poor quality proposals and still receive funding. In the case of commodity procurement (in the absence of meaningful, "institution building" activities), the CIP is available to all universities (also through the FRCU), therefore large commodity purchases are completely inappropriate to the ULP.

Recommendation: The FRCU should reconsider its definition of capacity building and the presentation of this concept to the universities. Clear and specific guidelines should be formulated (and explained to all universities) that focus capacity building on improving the institutional abilities of a university to participate in development work in the future. It should be an activity that is taken seriously by both the FRCU and the universities as a means of strengthening the university itself. (For example, a university interested in becoming more responsive to community problems might establish ties and make trips to U.S. universities and organizations that have community outreach programs and/or establish greater ties with SOE entities concerned with similar community problems.) The training of a single individual does not seem appropriate as capacity building since that individual may leave the

university over time (and take its "capacity" with him). In addition, specialization in a very narrow field does not seem appropriate (under most circumstances) since a narrow focus will have a limited contribution to Egyptian development as well as the university's capacity.

Recommendation: Efforts should be made to assist professors in better proposal preparation. Whether this is done with "capacity building" funds or by the FRCU as an administrative matter, all universities could benefit from improved understanding of how to conceptualize and present a research idea for funding. *all-*

Technical Assistance: Arthur D. Little International

The project design specified the need for a technical assistance contractor to assist in the development of the FRCU. The actual contract was signed with Arthur D. Little International (ADLI) a year after the FRCU had been established and begun work on the ULP. Thus, ADLI entered the ULP picture with the FRCU already staffed and progressing on the project's objectives.

The evaluation team has considerable doubts about the effectiveness of Arthur D Little in its assigned role and about the soundness of that role as well. To begin with, the three "players" -- ADLI, FRCU and AID -- have evidently very different views of the role. AID's project paper described the role as that of a "long term US contractor... to assist in the development and management of the FRCU and the grant process, but the role seems more precisely to have been envisaged as providing assistance to the FRCU (1) in anticipating obstacles and shortening the trial-and-error process of establishing itself and (2) in mediating between two bureaucracies--AID and the Egyptian educational establishment. The FRCU seems to have had a similar view of the task, but it sees ADLI as an outside consultant rather than an integral,

mediating part of the institution-building process, to be called on for specific studies and advice. ADLI seems to see itself as (1) a mentor to the FRCU as it takes its first steps along a uniquely conceived road (that at least one member of the ADLI team helped to invent in the U.S. context over a quarter of a century ago) and (2) a guide to the establishment of the Egyptian institution as a highly integrated computerized world-linked synapse. The differences in these three role views are subtle but important.

The FRCU does not seem particularly happy with ADLI's role and contribution. In fact, working relations between the FRCU and ADLI seem strained in some areas. Egypt is the world's oldest bureaucracy in continuous operation, and if this causes some problems to be overcome, it also puts the country in a different status than a newly developing country emerging from a non-bureaucratic experience. The FRCU members are not novices and in fact are among the best of the scientist-administrators in Egypt. To say (as they might) that they want to be able to make their own mistakes without ADLI interference would be going too far, although it might be ~~ADLI's~~ ADLI's perception of their attitude. More accurately, they want ADLI to keep them from tripping where a pitfall can be avoided and to give specific reports and advice when asked. They do not feel that they have gotten this. There have been some recent improvement in relations between the FRCU and ADLI, but the problem of a redundant ADLI staff remains, now possibly to be extended beyond its initially planned period, unsure of what it should be doing.

Beyond the unclear role of the ADLI team and the often strained relations this creates between the FRCU and ADLI, a second part of the problem lies in ADLI's output. In some areas, ADLI has been useful. Its data and information advisor seems to be providing a useful and well-received service (although none of the evaluating team was well enough versed in computer matters to make a good judgment). The ADLI draft "policies and

procedures" is a useful publication (although somewhat late). A few other positive examples might be cited. However, much of the rest is absent, late, irrelevant, or superfluous. ADLI's "Workplan" contains (1) self-assignments that ADLI is incapable of fulfilling (e.g., to assist FRCU in obtaining optimum balance among universities and priority areas), (2) broad oversight goals that do not give much precise guidance (the "review and assess" and "identify and assist" tasks) and (3) specific tasks that have not been done (e.g., find appropriate American linkages). The FRCU's development has had some of problems (discussed elsewhere throughout this report) which ADLI might have helped to prevent but did not (e.g., confusion by professors on proper preparation and submission of proposals). This may be a problem of the FRCU to request help from ADLI (or even to keep them informed), a problem of ADLI unresponsiveness to an FRCU request, or a combination of the two.

The third part of the problem lies with AID's expectations for ADLI. Provision for a technical assistance contractor was placed in the original project design automatically, the assumption apparently having been made that an Egyptian organization could not get started without American guidance. In retrospect, this seems patronizing and unnecessary, particularly given the extreme competence of the top management at the FRCU. Recommendation: AID should not assume that technical assistance always will be needed to assist host country organizations; instead, provision can be made for technical assistance should the need arise, but need not be forced on to a host country entity.

Conceptually, it makes no sense for a U.S. agency operating in a foreign country to employ a U.S. contractor (not normally operating in that country) to translate the agency's requirements into terms understandable to the foreign country's institution. Although it may not have been the original intent to place ADLI in a "middleman" role between the FRCU and AID, the lack of a clear need and a clear role for ADLI has perhaps lead to ADLI interpreting its own role as such in some instances. For example, some of the accomplishments to which ADLI lays claim (accounting

for a small job to start the money flowing in order to overcome AID regulations against forward financing, devising a simple contract that looks like a purchase order in order to meet AID regulations requiring a contract for purchase) are wheels that should have (and probably have) been invented long ago and somewhere else in AID's career and that should not require ADLI's services to reinvent. (See the section on "U.S. Role: USAID" for more on this issue).

Recommendation: ADLI should be reduced to its one Data and Information Advisor, and the other current personnel on the ADLI team should not be extended, as is now planned. Instead, as the need arises, AID personnel on short temporary duty assignments can be used much more efficiently and effectively to meet specific needs.

Timing

When viewed from its originally scheduled timetable, this project is a year and a half behind. This delay has brought the project under considerable criticism and scrutiny. However, there are several reasons for the delay that should be borne in mind in judging this project.

First, the question of project timing in this case seems analogous to that of whether a glass is half empty or half full. That is, the standard against which the project is judged as seriously delayed is an arbitrary and wildly unrealistic original schedule that anticipated an organization's establishment and institutionalization in only five years. In reality, AID should never have expected so much in so short a time. When viewed from the perspective of how much has been achieved in only a year and a half, the FRCU's accomplishments seem very good. Where there was nothing in the fall of 1981, there is now a complex committee and support structure that is awarding grants for research that is actually being performed. As a basis of comparison, the reader should

consider the U.S. National Science Foundation that took five years between its establishment and its first grant award. Recommendation: AID should revise the ULP's timetable (retrospectively, if necessary) to reflect more realistic expectations of how swiftly "institutionalization" can occur. In addition, AID should continue to be prepared for even more delays since institutionalization always may take longer than anticipated. The concept of a granting organization, after all, is not a matter of bricks and mortar but of human cooperation that inevitably involves changing attitudes, new channels of communication and so on, none of which can be predicted adequately and none of which can (or should) be pushed too rapidly by AID.

There is another explanation for the project's delay that should reflect more positively than negatively on the FRCU. There has been a very deliberate and thoughtful policy of carefully reviewing research proposals and approving for funding only those that offer priority ideas in a quality presentation. (See the section on "capacity building" for the exception to this policy.) Thus, the FRCU could have been spending money faster if it had encouraged the priority committees to approve more proposals regardless of their quality or importance to development. It seems to the FRCU's credit that it has proceeded more slowly and carefully and attempted to use grants funds as productively as possible.

Having justified the project's delayed timetable, however, there have been some problems that could have been avoided and that would have meant less delay. For example, the decision to have committee-approved proposals further approved by appropriate ministries inevitably lead to delays in funding research. Also, the FRCU request for funds/accounting problems and subsequent lengthy AID processing of fund requests have slowed expenditures dramatically in recent months. Both of these problems hopefully have been resolved now; however, others may appear over time to replace them. Such problems inevitably arise in

establishing a new organization. None of them so far seem to indicate a fundamental structural weakness or an irresolvable problem in the FRCU.

IMPACTS (progress toward purpose achievement)

Research

The most important part of the University Linkages Program is that it is accomplishing development-oriented research which would otherwise never be done. Such research would not be done in Egypt in the absence of the large sum of money provided through the ULP. The ULP research funds provide two things. First, it buys "released" time (although in the Egyptian system, it is not released from but rather added onto the professor's teaching time), as well as equipment, supplies, labor, etc. Second, the funds stimulate changes in relative values: applied research is revalued (upward), since someone is willing to pay money for it. It is clear from interviews with researchers that there was a latent and even pressing interest in conducting large-scale, applied research but little incentive or material ability to do so in the absence of adequate funds. Many researchers had already done small-scale projects related to their ULP research but had no time or money to go on to the level of a minilinkage effort without the ULP money.

It would be wrong to think that applied research is unheard of in Egyptian universities; were that true, even money would not have accomplished the revaluation and reorientation of efforts required, and such projects as the (university-financed) grass-eating carp project in Suez Canal University or the (Dow Chemical supported) soybean pest project in Minya would not have existed. Instead, applied research was merely marginal, and ULP money has helped to remove its marginality. It is worth noting that the practice--perhaps viewed as suspect to Americans--of involving the top departmental or even university administrators in a ULP project is an important way of ensuring higher level recognition of applied research as a valued activity by junior faculty for promotion purposes.

However, money flow is a potential problem. The program has aroused such enthusiasm that researchers jump into their projects with a deep commitment and then are doubly disappointed if the funds do not continue to appear on schedule. Many researchers have paid out of pocket when ULP funds have been delayed and then have been pinched in their personal finances if the money for reimbursement fails to come through on time. The several reasons for funding delays have been discussed earlier. These delays are the greatest single source of dissatisfaction with the project. (See earlier recommendations on funding resolutions).

The final test of the project will be the quality of research conducted under it. This item is difficult for the team to judge at present since even interim research results are not available in the short time since project funding has begun. Quality control procedures seem quite sound, although slow in the initial stages, as mentioned in the section on the Technical Services Branch. Some general observations can be made of the 41 mini-projects approved and in most cases funded through January, 1983. In general, both the identification of the problem, the assessment of societal need, and the elaboration of research to investigate the problem and find solutions all appear to be of the highest quality. The team was impressed with the selection of projects on the basis of need and challenge posed, not on the basis of easy or available solutions or of simply academic interest or practical feasibility. Furthermore, on the basis of interviews carried out with investigators of about a third of these projects, work appears to be underway on time and with competence and enthusiasm.

Institution Building

It is too early as yet to comment on the FRCU's potential as a self-sustaining, permanent institution. Progress in its first year and a half is impressive; an institutional structure has been defined and put

into operation. Time is needed for that structure to establish its niche, define its unique role and make itself integral to Egyptian development. The team has little doubt that, in and of itself, the FRCU is fully capable of establishing itself as a viable, permanent institution. However, several factors external to the FRCU will play a role in its eventual institutionalization.

First, as a part of the Supreme Council of Universities, the FRCU lacks a certain amount of autonomy in the granting process itself that may inhibit its institutionalization. Its decisions are not always its own but may be subject to higher level approval. This may serve to create frustrations and to reduce the incentive to perform at the highest capacity on the part of the FRCU staff. It also reduces the risk in decision making to the FRCU that may be necessary to a strong and permanent institution.

Second, in order to be a self-sustaining institution, the FRCU will have to have an on-going source of financing, including a replenishing source of research funds. The FRCU staff already is thinking ahead to covering some of its own administrative support costs (the computer, for example, can be self-supporting by selling time, research resources and services can be sold to cover other costs, etc.) But in order to be truly self-supporting, the FRCU will have to (1) convince individual ministries and firms to pay for the research they get (in which case the very purpose of the FRCU may reverse from one that now supplies research to users to one that demands it from professors); (2) convince other donor(s) to contribute the necessary funds to operate the unit and the granting process; and/or (3) rely on GOE financing. The FRCU management is resourceful and innovative; left to their own devices, it more than likely could fund itself through a variety of means. However, as discussed above, the FRCU is not left entirely to its own devices, at this stage at least. The issue of eventual funding for the FRCU needs to be taken up by those that make decisions on the FRCU.

Finally, as already discussed, more full time, responsible and self-initiating staff members are needed at the FRCU. The decision to hire more and higher level employees for the FRCU lies outside of the unit's realm of control. Even more important than hiring a full time staff is keeping them as permanent, loyal FRCU employees; this will require an adequate salary level to attract and motivate good people. Insufficient pay is a ubiquitous problem in Egypt and obviously cannot be solved by the FRCU on its own (if it is to remain a public institution).

These comments are not to say that, even within its current context, the FRCU cannot become a viable, on-going institution. It is still too early to assess the potential nature, extent of influence and permanence that the FRCU may have eventually. When viewed alone, the potential for institutionalization appears good; however, this potential realistically may be tempered by the external factors that affect the FRCU. In order to support the further institutionalization of the FRCU, it would be useful for it to examine other granting institutions for ideas on staffing, financing and organization. Recommendation: Several of the top management in the FRCU should visit major U.S. granting organizations (e.g., the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission) for stimulation of ideas and alternatives in structuring and running the FRCU.

U.S. Role

There are two different groups of U.S. actors involved in the ULP -- the USAID and the American university counterparts. For purposes of this evaluation, the two need to be dealt with separately.

USAID: As the project is designed, the USAID has a relatively low key role. (See the section on "Technical Assistance: ADLI"). Its fundamental purpose is to fund the project and monitor progress. In retrospect, the USAID's role might have been made more active, therefore

more helpful, to the FRCU. That is, as discussed in an earlier section, the ADLI technical assistance team was imposed on the FRCU as a part of the original design. In part because the ADLI team did not arrive until the FRCU was already well underway, in part because the FRCU did not need and/or want technical assistance, in part because ADLI's role was not clearly defined, the contractor has tended to become (in some instances) a middleman, with the expectation that as a part of its responsibilities, it should help interpret AID rules and regulations as they apply to the FRCU and should train the FRCU staff in the effective application of AID procedures. It would seem to be more efficient and productive for the USAID to explain its own policies and procedures directly, thereby reducing the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Such a requirement would not seem to place an unnecessary burden of extra work on the USAID; instead, it would seem to offer a trade-off in time and effort between passing on information directly and from the outset or passing it on through an intermediary and then having to step in at a later date and resolve problems and misunderstandings. Recommendation: In future project designs, AID should reconsider the need for and/or the specified role of technical assistance middlemen. To the extent that TA firms are being asked to interpret and teach AID's own rules and regulations, AID should consider the possibility of doing the job itself, thus avoiding putting the TA firm in the middle on purely procedural matters and consequently avoiding a number of potential problems.

U.S. University Counterparts: The project design envisioned "university linkages" to be Egyptian-American joint research efforts. However, in reality, physical distance makes truly joint research very difficult. In addition, ULP research funds are inadequate to fund extensive international travel for long visitations in either country, not to mention inadequate to cover the high salary expectations (by Egyptian and ULP standards) of American university professors. For these reasons, most U.S. university counterparts have become consultants, advisors and information disseminators to Egyptian research efforts

rather than collaborators. However, just because the reality of the U.S.-Egyptian faculty relationship differs from the original design, it should not be viewed as a drawback to or a failing of the project. To the contrary, the team thinks that this U.S. consultant/advisor role is quite positive. Most Egyptian participants in the ULP appear very satisfied with this relationship. This U.S. counterpart role seems to allow for a mutual sense of collegiality and an exchange of valuable information without forcing too close a working relationship.

*How well
chosen*

The nature of the Egyptian-U.S. faculty relationship varies, of course, and some U.S. counterparts are more active than others. At least in part, the extent and nature of the interaction depends on the way in which the linkage was established. Many Egyptian faculty members have been trained in the U.S. and/or have other previously existing professional contacts in the U.S. For these individuals, "establishing a linkage" has meant contacting a friend or a former professor or colleague. It is easy to imagine that these relationships have been more active than those that were initiated solely as a result of the ULP. (Some Egyptian ULP participants without previously existing U.S. ties contacted their counterparts on the basis of the Americans' publications, while others found their counterparts through the recommendation of the FRCU or of a colleague).

*It
was
a
very
good
idea*

Overall Perception of the U.S. Role: In general, the U.S. is perceived as offering a new and important opportunity to Egyptian universities through the ULP (i.e., funds for research and for the critical equipment needed for that research). Satisfaction with the project seems high, and perceptions of American involvement in it seem positive. However, there are a number of misconceptions about what exactly the U.S. role is. A number of university professors thought that "the U.S." had to approve all research proposals. At least one had thought that the agreement of a U.S. university professor to serve as a ULP counterpart constituted project approval. While no one voiced a

complaint about having to "buy American" or having to have an American counterpart, there were some complaints that procurement of vehicles or construction of any buildings are prohibited under the project. (The FRCU is investigating alternative means of getting vehicles to participating researchers and has been very flexible on the definition of "construction" so that these constraints hopefully will diminish over time). None of the misunderstandings about the U.S. role can be termed particularly negative; there certainly does not seem to be a perception that the U.S. interferes with the project or with the individual research efforts. To the contrary, there appears to be an enormous degree of pent up demand for research funds within Egyptian universities and a good deal of enthusiasm for the funds made available by the U.S. for this purpose.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Despite the impressive progress of the ULP to date, the FRCU as an institution must be placed in its broader context in order to consider the full extent of its eventual contribution to continued Egyptian growth and development. There are a number of organizations that could -- and perhaps do -- perform a similar function to that of the FRCU. For example, within the GOE, individual ministries have their own research bodies and there is an Agency for Scientific and Technical Research, and under it, a National Research Center. Within AID's own realm of activities, there is the Development Planning Studies project (more commonly called the "CU/MIT project") that has created the Development Research and Technological Planning Center; in addition, there are a number of other AID supported "single" linkages, such as the Boston University connection with Suez Canal University (in the Suez Community Health Personnel Training project) and the University of California at Davis connection with a variety of Egyptian institutions (in the Agricultural Development Systems project). Finally, there are other donor agencies and non-Egyptian research organizations working in Egypt.

While none of these organizations performs precisely the same role as the FRCU, there is enough similarity -- in their mutual orientation toward applied research on Egyptian development problems -- to have raised concerns about the extent of demand versus the amount of supply of research in Egypt (i.e., about excess supply in the form of redundancy of research efforts in Egypt). Several points can be made on this question. First, efforts are being made to unify the research information system in Egypt so that supply and demand can be brought more into line and so that unnecessary redundancy can be avoided to the extent possible. USAID/Cairo will contribute to this effort through its own upcoming assessment of its support to science and technology activities in Egypt. However, it must be acknowledged that any efforts to unify and coordinate research in Egypt will take a great deal of time and probably always will remain incomplete. The second point is that some redundancy of research (i.e., excess supply) is not necessarily a bad thing. There will not always be any one and only correct solution to a development problem; simultaneous research efforts along several different tracks may produce a better solution than regulated, single research on one solution at a time. Countries such as the U.S. do not regulate the supply of research on a given problem; to the contrary, the competitive spirit and the exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas is considered healthy and beneficial. Nonetheless, there is a legitimate point to be made in saying that, whatever the merits of simultaneous research on a single problem may be, AID need not spend its limited resources to support such redundancy. To this end, AID can (and will, through its S and T assessment) limit its own support of research redundancy. However, in the team's view, broader concern for redundant research in Egypt as a whole is not especially valid or pressing at this time. Egypt has the manpower capable and willing to perform research; it also has a plethora of problems that require research for effective solutions.

Another external factor, that of decision-making powers that rest over and affect the functioning of the FRCU, have already been discussed in the section on "Institution Building".

LESSONS LEARNED

Although this project is only mid-way in its implementation, there are several lessons already apparent from experience: to date that should be applicable to AID's work in other sectors and in other countries.

First, and most important, institutions are not built overnight. AID tends to think and plan in terms of achieving a significant development impact in five years or less. Such an expectation seems unreasonably unrealistic and tends to underrate a project's performance (i.e., when judged against an impossible task, actual achievement cannot help but appear inadequate). If AID is sincere in wanting to make a meaningful and valuable contribution to development, then it must plan accordingly and have the patience and consistency to follow through on its plans.

Second, AID should not ask a middleman to do its work for it. Where particular technical expertise is needed, especially for relatively long periods of time, it is appropriate for AID to seek outside assistance. But where the expertise required involves interpreting and implementing AID's own rules and regulations, then AID staff would seem the best qualified to perform the task.

ANNEX I

SUMMARY OF ALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1) The FRCU should be staffed to a greater extent than present by individuals who can devote their attentions and loyalties more fully to the FRCU and its development. These individuals should be willing to accept responsibility and take risks. *feasible*

2) A senior level FRCU staff member should sit with each priority committee (perhaps 3 committees per staff member) in order to standardize procedures and disseminate innovations more widely. ✓

3) Measures must be taken to activate all priority committees and stimulate acceptable proposals in all priority areas. *what*

4) The FRCU should continue to improve its communications with proposers and should not hesitate to notify a proposer of the rejection of his proposal.

5) The FRCU should establish specific deadlines (perhaps every three or four months) for the sub-mission and consideration of proposals.

6) Tenure on the priority committees (currently unlimited) should be given a specific time limit (e.g., two years), and membership should be rotated over time so that more individuals who possess a certain expertise in their fields have the opportunity to serve on committees.

7) The first and third quarterly reports required on all research should be very brief (perhaps 5 pages) and should be commented on to the researchers within one week of submission.

8) The FRCU should request funding at least a quarter in advance of its needs to allow AID sufficient processing time. In addition, AID should always be in search of ways to minimize its own bureaucracy and consequent delays in processing.

9) The FRCU should reconsider its definition of capacity building and the presentation of this concept to the universities. Clear and specific guidelines should be formulated (and explained to all universities) that focus capacity building on improving the institutional abilities of a university to participate in development work in the future.

10) Efforts should be made to assist professors in better proposal preparation. *how*

11) Recommendation: AID should not assume that technical assistance always will be needed to assist host country organizations.

12) ADLI should be reduced to its one Data and Information Advisor, and the other current personnel on the ADLI team should not be extended. *7. 2000*

13) AID should revise the ULP's timetable (retrospectively, if necessary) to reflect more realistic expectations of how swiftly "institutionalization" can occur. In addition, AID should continue to be prepared for even more delays since institutionalization always may take longer than anticipated.

14) Several of the top management in the FRCU should visit major U.S. granting organizations (e.g., the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission) for stimulation of ideas and alternatives in structuring and running the FRCU.

15) In future project designs, AID should reconsider the need for and/or the specified role of technical assistance middlemen.

ANNEX II: EVALUATION OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

In th Project Paper, three major evaluations were planned during the 5-year life of the Project. The first evaluation, to be performed two .. years after the signing of the Grant Agreement, was intended to determine if the ULP is progressing as designed. The second, at project completion, is intended to evaluate success in achieving the project purpose and the overall effectiveness of the implementation strategy. The third evaluation, to be performed two years after project completion, is expected to study the status of linkages formed during the project and the involvement of participating faculty in post-project development problem solving activities. (i.e., the extent of institutionalization of the FRCU). The current reports presents the findings of the first of these three planned evaluations.

The team's methodology in performing this evaluation involved the following:

- a) Extensive meetings with the executive director and all of the major staff members at the FRCU and with the three Arthur D. Little, Inc. representatives concerning their individual roles in the FRCU, their ideas on the current status of the FRCU, and the ULP and their expectations for the future of the FRCU and its granting function;
- b) Extensive interviews with members of several of the priority committees on committee procedures and functions;
- c) Extensive interviews with university faculty members (from six of the eleven participating universities) who are investigators on minlinkage projects concerning the nature and progress of their research and their

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experiences with the FRCU from their initial proposal submission to the present;

*which has
been selected*

d) Interviews with university administrators from several participating universities concerning the university's role in and attitude toward the ULP;

e) Interviews with a few American counterparts available in Egypt at the time of the evaluation concerning their role in the ULP and what they expected to receive from the project;

f) Interviews with several potential users of the ULP research (primarily ministry officials) concerning their interest in and knowledge of the project*.

Of the 11 universities covered by the ULP program, six were visited (Cairo, Ain Shams, Alexandria, Suez Canal, Minia and Assiut) and representatives of two others (Menoufia and Zagazig) were involved in discussions with the team in other venues. Interviews were skewed toward a predominance of agriculture and engineering faculty and ministry representatives, reflecting the greater involvement of the groups on the project and the personal interests of the FRCU members who helped us set up our interview schedule.

* It is worth noting that several individuals interviewed filled more than one of these roles -- e.g., a faculty member with a research grant might also be on a priority committee and/or be a university administrator.

C. Logical Framework

UNIVERSITY LINKAGES

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General Statement	Quantifiable Indicators	Means of Ascertaining Accomplishment	Important Assumptions
<p>GOAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase Egyptian productivity and the PQLI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) National Income Statistics (II) Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Analysis of statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Events external to the project do not obscure project effect (II) Information generated by the project is disseminated and acted upon
<p>PURPOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To engage Egyptian university faculty in Egyptian development problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Egyptian faculty time engaged in development problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Baseline survey by FRCU (II) Post project survey by FRCU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Egyptian faculty can be motivated to do development problem solving by provision of opportunities and monetary compensation (II) Problem solving capacity can be enhanced by on-the-job collaboration and other activities with experienced U.S. faculty
<p>OUTPUTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant award process - Collaborative development problem solving activities - Collaborative university capacity building activities - Informed potential users, publicity of project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Establishment of organization, procedures and guidelines for FRCU and related committees (II) Approved linkage proposals (III) Completed linkage activities (IV) Contact with potential GOE, public sector and private sector users (V) Distribution of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) FRCU Quarterly Progress Reports (II) Physical inspection by AID Project Manager (III) Sample survey interviews during interim and post project evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) FRCU can be developed to direct an effective grants commission operation (II) Advisory Committees and Executive Board function as intended (III) Serious effort is made at liaison with potential users of problem solving and in distributing project results
<p>INPUTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AID grant - Technical assistance/training - Commodities - FRCU facilities and personnel - Egyptian faculty and facilities - U.S. faculty and facilities - Advisory Committees and Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) \$27.5 million grant (II) U.S. Contractors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 40 months Sr. Advisor - 24 months Ass't. Advisor - 24 months short-term consultants - 24 person months U.S. training - in-country training program (III) FRCU equipped per contractor's recommendation (estimated \$0.2 million) (IV) Linkage commodities (estimated \$4.4 million) (V) FRCU facilities and personnel as recommended by contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) Project Grant Agreement (II) Host Country Contract (III) FRCU Quarterly Progress Reports (IV) AID inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (I) U.S. and Egyptian universities are willing to participate in cost sharing linkage activities (II) Egyptian compensation guidelines for FRCU employees and linkage faculty participants are adequately resolved by GOE prior to Phase II