

SUMMARY

Second Annual Review of IAC Regional Project

"Science and Technology Information Transfer"

December 13 and December 20, 1978

Participants of Meetings: Helen M. Ortiz, IAC/LR/HR, Kenneth L. Martin, IAC/DR/HR, James D. Singletary, IAC/DR/HR, Howard D. Lusk, IAC/DR, Terrance Lindemann, NTIS, Paul Bundick, NTIS, Frank Post, NTIS, Rita M. Cunningham, NTIS, Vietta Dowd, NTIS, Paco Pardo de Zela, NTIS, Richard Martin, IAC/DR/HR, Erick Trizarry, IAC/DR/HR, Nona Vreeland, DS/DIU, Thomas R. DeGregory, DSP/OPT, Jack Francis, IAC/DP and Peter Theil, IAC/DP.

At the first of the two review meetings held on the project, Terrance Lindemann, NTIS Foreign Affairs Administrator, and his staff presented a detailed description of their activities over the past year. A draft paper was submitted and discussed and a second meeting was called so that NTIS could respond to an issues paper which sought to focus on a number of elements in the Evaluation Plan which were inadequately dealt with in the draft document.

Most project activities, as carried out by NTIS/Washington, appear to be progressing at or above the anticipated level. A conference held in April in Salinas, Ecuador successfully brought together the directors of the Latin American cooperating agencies (including some representatives from AID graduate countries), NTIS/Washington staff and AID/Washington staff for a frank interchange on the "new directions" in appropriate technology which the project has taken. Two two-week intensive seminars were held for technical information managers to familiarize them with NTIS products and services, to acquaint them with other sources of U.S. technical information (such as NAS, NSF, Library of Congress, etc.), and to introduce them to modern information handling techniques. NTIS was distributing more than 20,000 copies of NTIS, its monthly announcement of selected development-oriented materials; in FY 78, it was published for the first time in Spanish and French for the developing world. End-user seminars were held in participating countries, organized by the local agents in order to introduce clients and potential clients to the full range of services available through NTIS and to create a general awareness of the value of information in various development endeavors.

A major important activity of NTIS has been the development of an Appropriate Technology Clearinghouse. The general orientation of NTIS since its inception in the World War II period has been the provision of highly sophisticated scientific and technological information to the U.S. and other industrialized nation end-users. Under the IAC project, the switch in orientation to low-capital, high labor intensity, "intermediate" technology has necessitated not only a change in approach but also the active acquisition of such appropriate technology materials. In FY 78, an intensive effort was

made to acquire information in such areas as agriculture, rural development, small business administration, health, construction engineering and energy. Close contact was established with a number of international appropriate technology groups such as Appropriate Technology International (ATI), Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA), the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG - England), GRET (France), TOOL (Germany) and Brace Research Institute (Canada). Arrangements were made for the exchange of documents and their translation into Spanish and French were deemed useful.

NTIS is also encouraging its cooperating agencies to input AT documents from their own countries into the system, though by the end of FY 78 only thirty-four had been received. To date, there has been a hesitancy on the part of Latin Americans to contribute their information gratuitously but NTIS hopes to overcome this by an exchange of free documents of their choice up to an equal approximate word count.

Other purely AT activities include: (1) publication of a document entitled Selected AT from the NTIS Data File which includes some one-hundred titles selected for their special relevance for development programs -- IDG's; a more comprehensive volume is soon to follow; (2) preparation of an "Appropriate Technology Reference Guide" which is a training tool that defines the concepts and identifies other sources of information outside the network such as VITA, ITDG, GRET, TOOL and Brace; (3) negotiations with the Peace Corps to place third-year volunteers to assist in cooperating agencies; and (4) establishment of a \$75,000 account to provide for free dissemination of documents for AT activities benefiting the poorer sectors of AID countries.

While this presentation was promising in terms of what NTIS/Washington has done in FY 78, the Review Committee felt that a number of important issues remained to be raised. Principal among the concerns of the group was whether or not all of these efforts were, in fact, impacting on the poor of the region. Although this is an extremely difficult item to measure, it was felt that information on the volume and nature of documents and the kind of recipient, combined with individual case studies on end use of information received, would serve as at least indirect indicators of success. The December 20 meeting addressed itself more directly to this point.

NTIS feels that, owing to the delay in start-up of the project in FY 77, it has had only one full year to set up an entirely new program. The first steps had to be the acquisition or at least location of pertinent AT material, to be followed by training activities for agents and end-users to make them aware of the existence of such information and how to obtain it. These efforts are outlined above. While these two activities will continue, the major emphasis in FY 79 will be on dissemination -- getting the information to the poor. It should be understood here that while the ultimate goal of the project is improvement of the lives of the poor, it is designed to put information into the hands of their representatives, be they government agencies, private voluntary organizations or cooperative groups which are in a better position to translate information into action.

NTIS/Washington has compiled a list of more than 300 organizations in nine AID countries* which it identifies as potential users of NTIS information. This information is to be passed on to the country agent representatives so that they may be approached directly with an offer of services. In two countries, El Salvador and Panama, AID Missions are aiding NTIS in carrying out an in-depth survey of groups involved in development activities and it is hoped that by year's end this will be completed in all AID countries.

Current information on buyers of NTIS information is too incomplete to judge adequately the impact of the program on the poor. However, what little information is available would indicate that the preponderance of NTIS material continues to be of a more sophisticated nature, going primarily to commerce and industry. NTIS feels confident that in FY 79 dissemination of AT materials will increase markedly. A new survey instrument designed to identify clients and their information needs more clearly is to be required by cooperating agencies for FY 79 although NTIS expects some resistance from agents, who are understaffed and are not reimbursed for such additional responsibilities.

Although the volume of AT document sales for FY 78 was not impressive, a cross section of information solicited serves to show a wide range of interests being served. Among the titles requested were included: Fuel and Energy Production by Bioconversion of Waste Materials, Teaching Manual: School Gardens and Nutrition, Accounting for the Small Business: Teaching Manual, Handbook for the Small Business, The Challenge of Housing Shelter and Fish Culture Energy -- Energy.

Of some concern to the Review Committee was the fact that under the project no apparent increase has occurred in the volume of distribution of documents to Latin America and the Caribbean. In fact, the value of sales for eleven AID countries** rose only 7% between FY 77 and FY 78 -- all of which appears to be absorbed by price increases -- and the number of documents actually fell by 27%. Lindemann attributed the decline to factors external to the NTIS program: the severe economic problems of Peru (which represents virtually all of the decrease), political unrest in Nicaragua, and the extreme unreliability of the mails in Bolivia (recently resolved by sending documents through AID Mission). This may or may not be the case, but the crucial test should come in early calendar year 1979 when publicity for free appropriate technology documents enters into full swing and a marked rise should occur if the project is functioning as anticipated.

* Bolivia (34), Colombia (43), Costa Rica (30), Dominican Republic (21), El Salvador (21), Guatemala (67), Panama (21), Paraguay (16) and Peru (53).

**Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

A last issue discussed was that of the schedule of disbursements which shows, as of the start of FY 79, a pipeline of \$156,800. It was explained that the reason for this sizeable figure was the delay in commencement of the project in FY 77. As the PASA was not signed until late September, 1977, NTIS had funded the project provisionally out of other funds which were to be repaid out of the \$250,000 allotment for FY 77. While NTIS did this willingly in order to keep the project (inherited from TAB) functioning during the interim period, it judiciously spent at a lower level than that outlined in the project paper for that year. The bulk of remaining activities and corresponding funds will be accounted for in FY 79 with just a small possible carryover into first quarter FY 80.

The last order of business was a discussion in NTIS country representatives. Sub-agencies to deal specifically with appropriate technology now have been established in Ecuador and Costa Rica and negotiations are underway for similar arrangements in other countries in an effort to ensure that AT information is effectively reaching our target group. A country-by-country review of the representatives revealed that in general the groups were functioning effectively and that cooperation between them and their respective USAID's was good. The single serious exception to the latter point was Honduras where the Mission was dissatisfied with the current agent representative arrangement and wished to see three others named. NTIS/Washington and LAC/DR are working to resolve the problem.

General Conclusion

The regional "Science and Technology Information Transfer" project is making satisfactory progress, given the delay in start-up date and the amount of work involved in setting up an appropriate technology competency within NTIS. The Committee stressed the importance of seeing the results of these efforts as early as possible in FY 79.

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TO THE FILES

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