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FINAL REPORT

ANALYSIS OF THE ASSISTANCE
REQUIRED BY REGIONAL BUREAUS
TO UTILIZE AID'S 'MEMORY' DATA BASE

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I INTRODUCTION

In an effort to improve the way in which information is acquired, stored and disseminated, in 1976, The Agency for International Development (AID) established a Development Information Service (DIS). DIS, predicated on the concept that the information requirements of AID Project Designers should be given the highest priority, was to become a formally structured organizational unit of AID.

The purpose of DIS was to acquire, select and store development information in order to provide AID Project Design Teams with the specific information necessary to create first-rate projects.

The information to be stored in DIS was characterized in three categories:

1. Experiential information describing AID's (and possibly also other donors') previous project experience.
2. Technical data covering the state-of-the-art in project-related technologies.
3. Context data describing applicable social, economic and political variables.

In summary, DIS was chartered to:

- A. Establish the mechanisms necessary to acquire development information.
- B. Implement a computer system to store the information in a structure which would allow appropriate retrieval.
- C. Provide the AID User Community (e.g. Project Designers, Evaluation Teams, Regional Bureau Staff) with the necessary training tools and documentation to utilize the DIS Information Bank (i.e. The AID Memory Database/DIS).

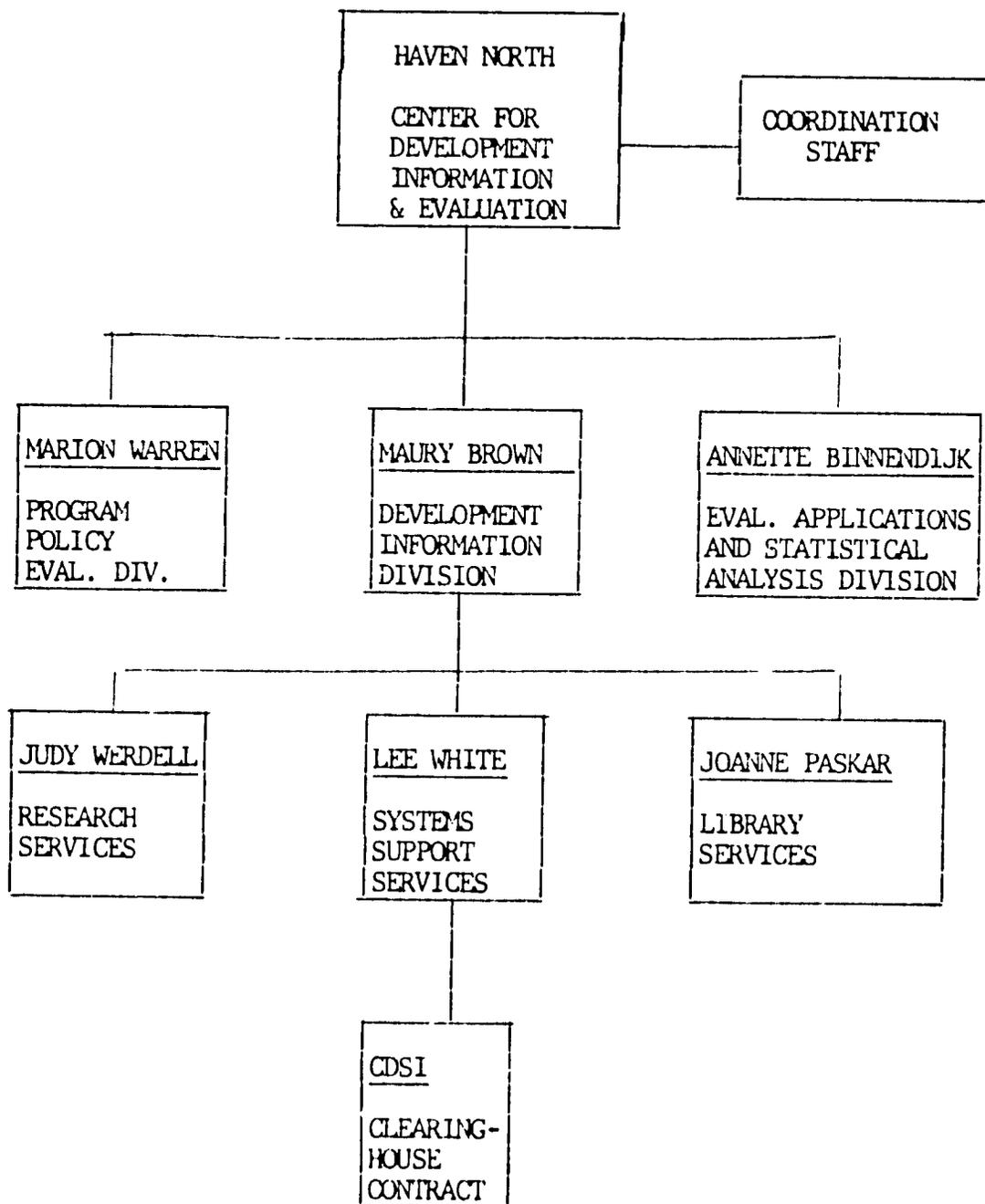
In 1982, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) examined how AID identifies and uses experiential knowledge for new Project Design. The principal finding in the GAO Report is that AID Staff applies lessons learned in developing new projects primarily through personal initiative and individual experiences and does not utilize the AID "Institutional Memory" System (i.e. DIS).

In its Report GAO further states that the DIS is a potentially valuable and useful tool and recommended that AID implement actions which will lead to successful utilization of the DIS.

Part of AID's plan to reestablish the DIS as a useful institutional memory was to reorganize the DIS; this was done in 1983 and the DIS was removed from S&T and merged with the Evaluation Group in PPC with the new name "Center For Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE)" under the direction of Haven North (See Figure 1 - CDIE Organization).

FIGURE 1

CDIE ORGANIZATION



II PROJECT PURPOSE

One of the key issues which CDIE is addressing is why the DIS is not being utilized by Project Designers. The client population which can and should utilize the DIS (e.g. Project Designers, Review Teams, Evaluations) is geographically divided into two groups; Mission Staff in the Field and Regional Bureau Staff in Washington.

The purpose of this project was to conduct an analysis of Regional Bureau Staff utilization of the DIS and determine the assistance required by the Regional Bureaus to become "self-sufficient" active users.

The detailed Project Plan, with outlines, the activities necessary and sufficient to achieve the project purpose, is shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2OFFICE OF CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CONTRACT NO. : OTR-0085-0-00-3448-00

PROJECT: 930-0085

PURPOSE: Conduct analysis of the assistance required by Regional Bureaus, who are beginning to try to utilize their new equipment, to access the AID "Memory" database which is now accessible within the Bureaus.

DETAILED PROJECT PLAN

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Date</u>	<u>Actual Completion Date</u>
1. Have preliminary discussion with Project Manager, Maury Brown.	10/18/83	10/18/83
2. Prepare detailed plan.	10/18/83	10/18/83
3. Obtain approval on detailed plan from Project Manager.	10/19/83	10/19/83
4. Identify key staff in the Regional Bureau to be interviewed regarding this Project.	10/19/83	10/19/83
5. Organize interviews with key staff from the Regional Bureaus.	10/20/83	10/20/83
6. Perform interviews per schedule (5).	12/1/83	11/10/83
7. Present and discuss initial findings and preliminary hypothesis to Project Manager.	12/15/83	11/10/83
8. Gather additional data as required by (7) above and as allowed by the level of effort of this contract.	12/15/83	12/16/83
9. Prepare, present, and discuss with Project Manager a draft report on the findings and recommendations.	1/15/84	1/12/84
10. Incorporate additional information and prepare final report.	1/31/84	

III APPROACH

The working hypothesis formulated at the beginning of this project was that Regional Bureau staff believes that there is significant value to the function of the DIS and would like to become functionally independent (self-sufficient) in the utilization of the DIS Data Base.

This working hypothesis would be validated (or negated and reformulated accordingly) through direct personal interviews with selected staff in the Regional Bureaus. This process would include a reassessment of user requirements upon which recommended changes to the DIS would be predicated.

The selection of the staff to be interviewed in order to capture an accurate picture of DIS utilization at the Regional Bureaus, was based upon a review of their current organization (see Figure 3, Regional Bureaus - Organizational Matrix).

The selection was made such that a representative sample would be chosen to include the major categories of the DIS user community (e.g. Bureau Administrative Staff, Project Designers, Backstops, Project Document Review Teams, Project Evaluators, Preparers of Issue Papers, Technical Support).

FIGURE 3REGIONAL BUREAUS - ORGANIZATIONAL MATRIX

<u>ORGANIZATIONAL OFFICE</u>	<u>REGIONAL BUREAU</u>			
	<u>AFRICA</u>	<u>ASIA</u>	<u>LATIN AMERICA</u>	<u>NEAR EAST</u>
1. Program Management Resources/Executive Management Staff	AFR/PMR	ASIA/EMS	LAC/EMS LAC/CONT	NE/EMS
2. Development Planning	AFR/DP	ASIA/DP	LAC/DP	NE/DP
3. Technical Resources/Support	AFR/TR	ASIA/TR	LAC/DR	NE/TECH
4. Project Development	AFR/PD	ASIA/PD	--	NE/PD
5. Regional Affairs	AFR/RA	--	--	--
6. Geographic Affairs	AFR/SWA	ASIA/BI	LAC/CAR	NE/NENA
	AFR/SA	ASIA/PNS	LAC/CAP	NE/E
	AFR/CA	ASIA/PTB	LAC/SA	NE/ME
	AFR/CWA	ASIA/ISPA	--	NE/EUR
	AFR/EA	--	--	--

The resulting selection is shown in Figure 4. Regional Bureaus - Staff Selected To Be Interviewed. During the interview process, certain selected people were not available and other people were contacted as it became clear that their input would contribute significantly to this project.

Consequently the initial list of 17 people selected to be interviewed grew to 45 people actually interviewed (see Figure 5 Regional Bureau Staff Interviewed).

Beyond the objective of validating this Project's working hypothesis, the interviews conducted with the Regional Bureau staff were directed towards obtaining DIS User Information on specific issues.

1. Which Regional Bureau functions require utilization of the DIS.
2. How the Regional Bureau staff would like to use the DIS.
3. The current utilization (or the current non-usage) of the DIS.
4. Types of support necessary to permit Regional Bureau staff to use effectively the DIS.
5. Quality, quantity and currentness of the information in the DIS database available for use by the Regional Bureaus.

The information gathered was analyzed and evaluated together with the Project Manager (Maury Brown) and the results (findings, conclusions and recommendations) are presented in the following sections of this Report.

FIGURE 4REGIONAL BUREAUSSTAFF SELECTED TO BE INTERVIEWED

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ROOM</u>	<u>TELEPHONE</u>
AFR/ADM	Dep. Asst. Adm.	Alexander R. Love	6936	632-9244
AFR/DP	Dep. Director	Edward I. Donoghue	3913	632-8214
AFR/TR	Director	Lane Holdcroft	2497	632-8178
AFR/PD	Director	Norman Cohen	2497	632-9780
ASIA/ADM	Dep. Asst. Adm.	Eugene S. Staples	6212	632-8572
ASIA/DP	Director	Larry Smucker	3208	632-7302
ASIA/TR	Director	Robert Simpson	3327A	632-8964
ASIA/PD	Director	G. R. Van Raalte	3310A	632-8164
LAC/ADM	Dep. Asst. Adm.	Marshall Brown	6256	632-9108
LAC/DP	Director	John Oleson	2245	632-7937
LAC/DR	Director	Dwight B. Johnson	2248	632-9148
NE/ADM	Dep. Asst. Adm.	Bradshaw Langmaid	6724	632-9126
NE/DP	Director	Charles W. Johnson	6723C	632-9116
NE/DP	Acting Dir.	Peter Seller	6723C	632-3850
NE/TECH	Director	Kenneth H. Sherper	6660	632-8306
NE/PD	Director	Robert Bell	4441	632-9122
NE/DP	Chief, Eval.	Robert Zimmerman	6642	632-9114

FIGURE 5REGIONAL BUREAU STAFF INTERVIEWED

ALTER, Dean	ASIA/EMS	Dep. Director
BISSET, Al	LAC/DR	Asst. Dir. TS,
BORK, Timothy	GC/AFR	Asst. Gen. Cnl.
BOSSARD, Jim	IRM/SM	Comp. Analyst
BROWN, Scaff	LAC/DR	Chief, RD
CARLSON, Roger	AFR/SA	Director
COHEN, Norman	AFR/PD	Director
DONAHUE, Edward	AFR/DP	Dep. Director
ERBE, David	LAC/DP	Chief
FRANCIS, Jack	LAC/DP	Chief, SD
GOLDSTEIN, Bernice	LAC/DP	Chief, MA
GOVAN, James	AFR/DP	Asso. Asst. Adm.
HYNES, Richard	AFR/CA	Chief, CA
IMHOFF, Gary	ASIA/PD	Project Officer
JOHNSON, Dwight	LAC/DR	Director, Res.
JOHNSON, Harladene	AFR/DP	Director
JOHNSON, Jay	AFR	DAA
JOHNSON, Richard	NE/DP	Chief, FL
KVITASHVILI-Kay, Elizabeth	ASIA/PD	Intern
LANGMAD, Bradshaw	NE/ADM	Dep. Asst. Adm.
LEE, Ted	AFR/PD	Chief, IPS
LEVY, Irwin	LAC/DR	Dep. Dir. RS
LOVE, Robert	AFR	D/A
MANN, William	PRE/HUD	Senior H. Off.
MATHESON, Patricia	ASIA/PD	Project Officer
NORTON, Maureen	ASIA/DP	Chief, Eval.
ODELL, Bruce	ASIA/PD	Chief, EA
OLESON, John	LAC/DP	Dir, DP
PATTERSON, Glen	AFR	DAA
REILLY, Donald	AFR/TR	Dep. Director
ROBERTSON, Douglas	GC/AFR	Attorney
RUBLEE, George	AFR/PD	Asst. Dir/PS
SCORDATO, Frank	AFR/CWA	Dep. Director
SHERPER, Kenneth	NE/TECH	Director
SHERWIN, Walter	AFR/RA	Dep. Director
SIMPSON, Robert	ASIA/TR	Director
SMALL, Bill	AFR/	Asst. Adm.
SPRIGGS, Edward	AFR/EA	Director
STAPLES, Eugene	ASIA	Dep. Asst. Adm.
VAN RAALTE, G.R.	ASIA/PD	Director
WENDEL, Dennis	ASIA/PD	Project Officer
WILLIAMS, Barbara B	AFR/IRM/EMS	Director
WILLS, Judy	NE/	Eval. Officer
ZIMMERMAN, Robert	NE/DP	Chief, Eval.
ZUVEKAS, Clarence	LAC/DP	Intl. Economist

IV FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The most encouraging feedback from the DIS user community was the validation of this Project's Working Hypothesis. It was unanimously stated that an AID 'Memory' is necessary to improve Project Design and that Regional Bureau staff would like to be self-sufficient in the utilization of the DIS Data Base.

Regional Bureau staff expressed interest in Institutional Memory Information for most all bureau functions (e.g. Program Management, Development Planning, Technical Support, Project Development, Geographic Affairs). The information requirement may vary in substance and form, however, everyone interviewed felt that DIS would be utilized, if the information were current, sufficient and easily retrievable.

The DIS utilization at the Regional Bureaus during the last four years has apparently decreased from a low level to a nearly insignificant one. The principal reasons given for this very low usage of DIS information are:

1. Incomplete responses to user inquiries.
2. Excessive response time.
3. Information not current (e.g. documents known to exist are not found).
4. Abundance of non-applicable information.
5. Abstracts generally not helpful; they do not furnish sufficient insight into document.

6. Do not have necessary hardware (e.g. compatible terminal, modem).
7. Organization of data does not permit access to necessary information.
8. Unfamiliarity with information available in DIS Data Base.
9. Insufficient training on how to use the DIS.
10. Absence of reference/user manual for DIS usage.
11. DIS data not consistent with other sources.
12. Poor references (regarding the DIS) given by colleagues.

Regional Bureaus need to (a) understand more clearly the functions in the DIS, (b) be continuously aware of the information available to them, (c) receive repetitive instruction (training and manuals) on how to access the DIS Data Base, (d) be instructed on how to provide information to be stored into the DIS Data Base, and (e) have the necessary hardware. When these needs are met, the Regional Bureau staff will utilize the DIS and in turn provide the feedback necessary to make AID's Institutional Memory a vital tool for Project Design.

The salient conclusions which have been derived in this Project can be summarized as follows:

1. The DIS, AID's institutional memory, is necessary for better Project Design and has significant potential to become an essential tool to Regional Bureaus staff.

2. AID should support actively the activities which are necessary to render the DIS useful to its user community.
3. The current reorganization of the DIS into PPC/CDIE is an important step in the direction of reestablishing the DIS as an integral part of AID.
4. The DIS should be structured to provide the functionalities which permit utilization (e.g. information collection, Data Base design mechanisms for easy access). The DIS should not provide functionalities which belong to the professionals in the Regional Bureaus (e.g. Analysis, Synthesis, Issue Papers).
5. The DIS should make its user community aware of what is available, provide the necessary training, and allow user-friendly, easy access to its Data Base.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this Project, which was dedicated to better understand the DIS user perspective of the Regional Bureaus, there results a series of recommendations directed at improving the utilization of the DIS. The following outline highlights the principal recommendations which have been divided into three categories:

- I. User Related - Actions directed at improving relationships with users.
- II. Organizational - Steps necessary to establish a structure which will support functionalities required by the users.
- III. Technical - Issues related to the system that maintains the DIS Database.

I. - USER RELATED

1. Initiate an advertizing program to inform Regional Bureaus of the new CDIE organization and the restructure of the DIS. This could be done with an initial communication describing in sufficient detail the new "DIE "IRA" (providing functions, structure, names, objectives) and with follow-up periodic and episodic information communications (e.g. Newsletters) whose purpose is to continue promoting and advertising DIS utilization.

2. Develop and implement a formal training program for users. It must provide both an initial in-depth training for users (i.e. Regional Bureau Professionals and Para-Professionals) and a continuous updating program which will maintain the necessary level of user skills. This is particularly significant for Regional Bureau staff due to the frequent rotation of mission staff.

3. Develop a DIS user manual which will facilitate DIS utilization. This manual should be maintained and periodic update should be published and disseminated to all potential users. The principal initial objective of the user manual should be to remove the causes for the major current reasons for non-usage (i.e. "I do not know how to access the DIS Database" and "The access mechanisms are complex and not user friendly").

II - ORGANIZATIONAL

1. Assign specific staff in the DIS to each Regional Bureau. The purpose of having Regional Bureau liaison staff in DIS is to provide a continuity of contact for the users and to give the users a specific person who will become sensitive to the Regional Bureau needs. These liaison staff should not perform functions which belong to the Regional Bureaus (e.g. Document Analyses and Syntheses) but should promote and facilitate user self-sufficiency in utilizing the DIS.

2. Establish a formal liaison with IRM. Regional Bureaus are purchasing various hardware (e.g. Personal Computers) and using IRM support. This hardware is being obtained generally without consideration for compatibility with DIS requirements. Liaison with IRM together with closer contact with Regional Bureaus will ensure that hardware requirements be satisfied for DIS functions.

3. Provide continuous technical support (hardware/software) to the Regional Bureaus. Specific hardware and software issues should be followed by qualified DIS staff and do not fall under the responsibility of the DIS Regional Bureau liaison staff (II.1 above). The technical support staff should also be sensitive to user feedback in order to continuously incorporate technical improvements into the DIS.

4. Establish a formal discipline and methodology to ensure the collection of data necessary to meet user requirements. It is essential to keep the DIS Database updated and current. There should be a formal and systematic flow of information from the users to the DIS for the collection of AID Project Documents and other pertinent AID documentation. It is essential that the DIS harness all pertinent information within the Agency and demonstrate to the users that the DIS AID Memory is complete, current and useful.

5. Place the responsibility of document abstracting with the users (i.e. Document Authors, Evaluators, Review Teams). DIS responsibilities include Database Design, Document Indexing and Storage, and Retrieval Mechanisms; the substantive aspects of the information in the DIS Database should be the responsibility of AID professionals who use the system (i.e. those who use the system should be responsible for the quality of the data in the system).

III - TECHNICAL

1. Reassess the DIS system specifications to determine how well the user requirements are (can be) met with the current system facilities. The principal issue is whether the Database structure and the related retrieval capability permit the user to access the Database and converge on the subset of information which is desired. DIS's major function is to provide its users a complete and current Data Base accompanied by a mechanism which allows easy retrieval of what is useful.

2. Evaluate other Database systems (other than MINISIS) and determine the desirability and feasibility of using them. This evaluation must be done after the review of user requirements and the reassessment of the DIS system specifications mentioned in (III.1 above).

3. Establish a technical liaison with other Data Bases both those in AID which are currently available to AID users (e.g. the Data Bases in the Evaluation Applications and Statistical Analysis Division in PPC/CDIE; the Data Bases available to the Regional Bureau users in IRM) and those outside AID (e.g. World Bank, WHO). It should be an ultimate goal for the DIS to integrate all Data Bases useful to AID professionals and allow easy access via a common mechanism. This technical integration can be accomplished eventually if there is a close liaison with and understanding of the requirement/specifications of the above mentioned Data Bases.