

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D C 20523

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MEMORANDUM

TO : Distribution

FROM : ST/POP/R, JBailey *Jerry Bailey*

SUBJECT: Mid-Project Review of the Population Council's Family
Planning Operations Research Efforts in Asia

I am enclosing the referenced report to provide you with a current assessment of the project. In summary the project has progressed satisfactorily. The technical workshops have been well organized by the Population Council and enthusiastically received by Asian researchers and program managers. Population Council staff have provided technical assistance to nearly all Asian countries and have been given very high marks by most of the USAID Missions where they have worked. The number of approved subprojects is lower than anticipated and this has led to an underexpenditure of project funds for subprojects. We anticipate that the project will be extended for a year, until September 30, 1985 and that additional funds will be made available to provide technical assistance to USAID Missions in Asia and to the researchers working on the subprojects.

If you wish to see any or all of the appendices of the mid-project review or if you have any comments or suggestions, please let me know.

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Mid-Project Review - Family Planning Operations Research in Asia

The Population Council and A.I.D. have jointly conducted a mid-project review of the Family Planning Operations Research in Asia project. Using the Sixteenth Month Progress report prepared by the Population Council and a status report prepared by the Cognizant Technical Office in AID/W as principal reference material (see Appendix A), a series of discussions were held in Washington on March 4, 1983 between representatives of the Population Council (Barnett Baron, Margaret McEvoy) and A.I.D. (Jerald Bailey, Elizabeth Maguire, James Shelton). This memorandum has been prepared based on these documents and meetings and constitutes the mid-project review, together with the USAID Missions' responses to an AID/W cable soliciting their views (see Appendix B). The review covers the period of September 1981 through March 1983.

The purpose of the review as stipulated in the contract is to determine project effectiveness and the future of project activities; in particular, to determine if the project should continue. While this decision is an emphatic yes, the mid-project review provides an opportunity to make adjustments in the focus and priorities of the project and to improve the administrative procedures followed by A.I.D. and the Population Council.

The fundamental purpose of the contract is to improve the efficiency and acceptability of Asian family planning programs through operations research and the dissemination and applications of these research findings. The project is to promote OR projects through technical research workshops, provide technical assistance to researchers, administrators and USAID Missions in the design and implementation of family planning operations research, provide financial support to OR projects, and to disseminate the research results from these OR projects.

Two one-week long international review and development workshops have been conducted in Bangkok. Thirty researchers and administrators have attended these workshops and have rated very highly the training and technical assistance they have received. One in-country workshop which was largely funded by the USAID Mission was held in Nepal; another was funded by the Philippines Population Commission. Technical assistance has been provided to every eligible country in Asia except Burma and Pakistan. More than one quarter of the professional staff time has been spent on duty travel within Asia where all of the project personnel live.

These activities have resulted in 16 projects being submitted to the Population Council for funding under the OR project. At the present time the following four projects have been approved.

- . Increasing Family Planning through Development Programs in Northeastern Thailand - \$57,910
- . An Experimental Field Research Study to Increase IUD Acceptance in Sri Lanka - \$56,987
- . Collection of Village Level Data to Permit an Analysis of the Impact of Contraceptive Availability and Accessibility in Reproductive Change, 1969-1979 Thailand - \$8,258
- . The Introduction of an IEC Package for the Rural Women of Maguindanao: A Pilot Study, Philippines - \$24,432

Two projects which were developed at the workshops in Bangkok (A Study to Determine the Effect on DMPA Acceptance of Different Pricing Levels in Thailand, and Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness of Metro Manila Outreach Program) have been funded by other sources.

Three projects which have been developed with project resources are currently under consideration and may be funded under the OR project.

Based on the results to date, it is clear that the OR project meets an existing need in Asia. Asian researchers and administrators have willingly participated in the workshops, sharpened their skills and prepared a sizable list of potential projects. The USAID Missions have sought and received a wide range of technical assistance. The technical assistance has included an evaluation of a pilot service delivery system in Nepal, work on the improvement of specific OR project proposals and monitoring of on-going projects. In India project resources have been used to help develop an action plan to implement a major Mission funded operations research program. In Thailand, at the request of the USAID Mission and the Ministry of Public Health, the Population Council provided consultant services for two weeks to help develop three family planning research studies. The expectation is that the demand for the services and support provided by the OR project will increase.

In two separate instances Mission requests for technical assistance have been referred to other sources. These requests for help with the management information systems in Pakistan and Indonesia were considered tangential to the major thrust of the OR project which emphasizes research which has actionable family planning program implications. Also, other sources of support had resources which were specifically programmed for these types of needs.

The project approval process is lengthy and cumbersome. A project must pass through a local institution for approval, then often national approval is needed before it is formally submitted to the Population Council. USAID Mission approval and AID/Washington approval must be obtained which includes approval by the Research Review Committee. In addition, approvals by the Population Council in Bangkok and New York must be obtained. Subsequent to these approvals a draft subcontract agreement is prepared by the Population

Council in New York and must be approved by the AID/Washington contract office before a project is formally approved and expenditures are authorized. One project took seven months from the time AID/Washington received the initial proposal to the date of the A.I.D. Contract Office's formal letter of approval. Two projects were approved in four months and another took three months.

The approval process has been modified each time it has been jointly considered by the the Population Council and A.I.D. These changes have facilitated the approval process. Additional changes are under consideration which may further shorten the approval process.

From the time of the initial submission of the unsolicited project proposal there has been an ongoing dialogue about the kind of projects that could or should be funded under this contract. The Population Council believes that it is sometimes useful to include projects that are diagnostic, i.e., where the research effort was intended to describe or identify family planning service delivery problems before attempting to modify the delivery system. A.I.D. initially said that these diagnostic projects should not be presented and that only projects that manipulate service delivery variables and test the impact of these changes on cost effectiveness and acceptability should be included. Subsequently, A.I.D. and the Population Council agreed that the principal study variable should be actionable by program administrators. That is to say, it must be plausible that the study results would be helpful to a program manager to take action to improve family planning service delivery. Among the approved projects, the Sri Lanka IUD study and the Philippine Maguindanao project will modify service delivery variables and measure their impacts. The two Thai projects are less directly related to service delivery. A.I.D. and the Population Council agree that the mix of project types will include some service delivery manipulation and some diagnostic projects but that all of the projects will have actionable implications for family planning program managers.

Project promotion and proposal development have been undertaken through the workshops and through consultation with researchers. The workshops provide intensive staff guidance to individual researchers or small groups from a single country to assist them with the development of a detailed research proposal. Two or three Council staff work throughout the six-day workshop with approximately fifteen participants. Over half the time is devoted to one-on-one, face-to-face proposal development assistance.

Population Council staff also travel frequently to countries within the region to identify and work with researchers interested in family planning operations research. In Thailand, a special effort was made to identify capable and interested persons in the provincial universities of Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Songkhla. Several proposals are now being developed at these institutions. Visits have also been made to research institutions and individuals in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines.

During the next year of the project, Population Council staff will continue to provide proposal development and research assistance through the workshops and individual consultation. Considerable staff time will be devoted to follow-up activities and assisting former workshop participants with on-site proposal development and project implementation.

The Population Council and AID/Washington have somewhat different views on the role and objectives of the review and development workshops in this project. A.I.D. sees the workshops as one mechanism for the development of specific fundable operations research projects which are seen as the most important output of this project. The Population Council accepts research proposal development as the central purpose of the workshops, but also views them in a capacity-building perspective. That is, in the Population Council's view, the technical training materials developed for the workshops represent a valuable resource that can be translated into local languages and used as part of the regular in-service training provided by national family planning programs in Asia. In this way, the Council hopes to reinforce the concept of operations research as a useful management tool. In the coming year, the Population Council staff will work with those national family planning programs that wish to utilize Council-developed training materials for in-country workshops with a view to institutionalizing the workshops within national programs funded by in-country sources of funds.

Project activities have developed where there has been an opportunity rather than on the basis of an explicit priority schedule. During the remaining period of the project some consideration will be given to establishing a way to give emphasis to A.I.D. priority countries.

During the course of the project, communication between the USAID Missions, AID/Washington and the Population Council offices in Bangkok and New York have occasionally been less than adequate. There have been misunderstandings which have largely been the result of incomplete information. Through a more complete and comprehensive exchange of information among all parties, problems which derived from the lack of information should be minimized. Phone calls should be used when speed is important.

It is important that the results of the research projects funded under this contract be disseminated widely. A.I.D. has encouraged the Population Council to pursue this activity. A.I.D. and the Population Council agree that resources from the project are not to be used to disseminate general research results or to publish operations research methodologies on a periodic basis.

At the mid-project review meetings, several additional important points were agreed to in principle. The effective termination date of the contract should be extended to provide time to complete projects which will continue beyond September 29, 1984. In a separate administrative action, the Population Council will request that the contract be extended until September 29, 1985.

The curricula for the international workshops has been put together in a handbook for family planning operations research design. The handbook is of high quality and fills a definite need in the field. A.I.D. has agreed that project funds could be used to produce up to 5,000 copies which would be

distributed to participants in the future workshops, other interested researchers and administrators and to USAID Missions. The Population Council will make a specific proposal to A.I.D. for final approval in the near future.

A.I.D. and the Population Council agreed that the contract should be modified to provide the Cognizant Technical Officer the authority to approve subcontracts for up to \$75,000. The Population Council will request the appropriate contract modification in a subsequent action.