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8. ABSTRACT

The multiple objectives of this project were to assess the utility of a project management training program that has been established by the Africa Bureau, to relate its outcomes to the potential benefits of alternative or supplementary approaches, and to offer specific suggestions on improved programs for upgrading management performance and on superior methods for evaluating results. To date, project management training in Africa has taken the form of four two-week seminars conducted in 1973-74 by Syracuse University personnel, preceded by a pilot seminar conducted by the Governmental Affairs Institute in February 1973. Additional offerings of the seminar are planned in the expectation that all project managers in Africa will receive this training.

Section II of this report describes our findings about the job of the project manager, with special reference to the areas that require improvement. Section III relates these needs to the seminar objectives, and summarizes the participants' evaluations of how well they were achieved. Section IV suggests a number of ideas for improvements in the seminar, and for additional AID/W initiatives that might be helpful.

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

A Review of the AID Experience in Africa

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coordinators and managers; directors rather than actors. As more sophisticated planning and evaluation requirements have been imposed, they have had to learn new methodologies, acquire new types of skills. As administrative support functions have been eliminated, they have had to master the esoterics of manual orders and bureaucratic detail. As programs have become part of large multi-national undertakings, they have had to operate without the leverage that the earlier bilateral arrangements afforded. The project manager's job in particular has taken on new, heroic proportions, as the focal point on which all of these pressures converge.

To help its field staff make this transition, the Africa Bureau has sponsored a series of project management seminars, conducted by Syracuse University teams. These are two-week courses that feature lectures and practical exercises on planning, evaluation, and human relations techniques, as well as AID-specific presentations on the new program directions and internal administrative procedures. The first seminar was held in Addis Ababa in November-December 1973, the second in Monrovia in February 1974, the third in Tunis in April 1974. Each was attended by project managers from a number of Missions.

The objectives of the AIR study were (1) to identify the major project management problems, (2) to evaluate the impact of the seminar series in helping to ease these problems, and (3) to suggest improvements in the seminar, as well as other approaches that might be helpful. Data were collected through interviews of 67 seminar participants and other knowledgeable observers in seven African Missions in May and August 1974. Fifty-eight of the interviewees were AID direct-hire staff; forty-two of the interviewees had attended the project management course.

For purposes of this data collection, extensive use was made of the Critical Incident Technique. Whenever a respondent reported a problem that limits his effectiveness, or characterized a component of the seminar as beneficial, he was asked for a specific example or "incident" illustrative of this point that actually happened to him in his job. Approximately 150 separate incidents were assembled, and much of the report is based on the dominant, recurrent themes that emerged from this sample of actual field vignettes.

The impact of the "new directions" on the project managers of the Africa Bureau was found to vary significantly across people, projects

[illegible] in the new AID [illegible]. Field personnel had serious doubts, for example, about their ability to be especially responsive to the needs of the poor within the confines of sector programming, or to produce more payout more quickly from projects controlled by intermediaries, or to extract from the world's least developed countries the managerial and administrative effort that the new directions seem to impose. They felt that numerous issues had not been adequately treated in the AID/W airgrams, and wondered if they had been adequately considered.

- The second was fairly widespread confusion and skepticism about the project manager's job and the AID/W expectations. Some had misunderstood the explanations that had been provided. Some wondered about the career implications. Some pointed to complementary changes in personnel policies that had not yet been made. Many thought that the total package, when all the pieces are fitted together, is at this point unrealistic.

- The third was the prediction that project quality will erode when monitoring is transferred from specialist to generalist surveillance. Many examples were cited of timely interventions by specialist project managers that saved the day. The fear is that the necessary interventions will not be made if the protection of AID interests is left to a resident generalist supported by specialists who drop in on the project once in a while.

- The fourth is the feeling that the AID/W approach to the use of the new analytic management tools that have been introduced has been naive. The use of such tools in AID is seen as a positive step forward. But field staff believe that each of these tools calls for a different distribution of responsibility within the Mission and between the Mission and higher levels, and therefore for different skills and training requirements for the project manager position. These have not been developed.

- The fifth is continued frustration with the AID documentation procedures. The incidents reported point to gaps in the project managers' knowledge of the manual orders, to mickey-mouse review procedures at the Washington end, to the lack or slowness of constructive follow-up action, and to the redundancies and duplication of effort that make this chore overwhelming. Though none of these problems is new, the project managers claim that they cannot meet the new, more important responsibilities they have been given if the long-needed solution continues to be postponed.

- The sixth is a sense of helplessness in dealing effectively with intermediaries, the host government, and other donors under the constraints

[illegible] and AID/W has not suggested any to date.

All six of these areas raise systems problems, to which training can offer only partial solutions. One would expect a single, two-week seminar to have at best modest impact, and this expectation was confirmed by the data. Greater impact would probably be realized if the seminar content were to be modified so as to give greater emphasis to fewer training objectives, and if follow-up opportunities for further practice and learning were to be provided, along the following lines:

- To the issues of strategies, roles, and expectations that dominate the first three areas of difficulty noted above, a residential multi-Mission seminar offers an especially attractive approach. For these kinds of issues call for the give-and-take discussions and cross-country perspective that alternative training approaches would not provide. It is in these areas that the potential impact of the project management seminar is likely to be the highest.

Part of this potential appears to have been realized from the seminars that have been conducted. About two-thirds of the participants reported that they had found the total experience (including the informal interactions) rewarding. The opportunity to exchange views on common problems with other project managers, to interact with the responsive, stimulating Syracuse team, and to get away from the job nitty-gritty to reflect on broader issues was cited as a major seminar contribution by many respondents. But in giving them new insights on their most pressing concerns, the seminar was disappointing. It provided a sophisticated summary of the material they had already read in the AID/W airgrams, but no answers to the questions the airgrams provoked. Except for brief (and highly praised) visits by senior Bureau officials, the people who might have answered these questions or at least debated the issues just were not there.

In light of the prevalence of these concerns and the uniquely appropriate vehicle that the seminar offers for meeting them, greater emphasis on this part of the seminar program is recommended. More than one day should be spent on these topics; appropriate Bureau officials should participate; frank, no-holds-barred exchanges should be encouraged. This would provide the project managers with the inputs they now do not get, and might be no less beneficial to the Washington people in getting a better fix on the field points of view.

- On the analytic management tools, such as PERT, CPA, or Systems Analysis, the seminar's impact appears to have been somewhat greater. A number of specific applications of this training following the project manager's return to his job was cited. But the ceiling on the magnitude of impact that

[illegible] skills apply to situations more than half of the group on each topic covered.

If these skills are important, it would seem necessary to introduce a program for developing them to the level necessary for operational use. This can be done in a number of ways. The one recommended is to devise suitable self-study and practice materials for use at post, and to devote the seminar sessions to the background and procedural skills that the effective use of these self-study materials requires.

- In the area of AID regulations and documentation procedures, the instruction provided on the Logical Framework appears to have been particularly appropriate and effective. Of all of the seminar topics, this was the one that the participants reported had helped them the most. The instruction on AID regulations and administrative procedures, which was provided by direct-hire resource personnel, was not productive. Most of the participants reported that these lectures covered mainly familiar ground or wandered into abstruse issues of no relevance to the job.

The implication is for a tutorial approach on documentation, in which the participants carry out practical exercises under expert guidance. These exercises could be prepared especially for training purposes, or might be based on actual, project-related documentation that the participants bring with them, as a number of respondents suggested. Training on regulations and the use of manual orders may be better left for at-post study, along the lines suggested above. All Missions appear to have personnel who, in addition to their normal job functions, have in-depth knowledge of such problem areas as procurement; and these could serve as the nucleus for local training.

- In the area of negotiations with intermediaries, host country officials, and other donors, the impact of the seminar is not easy to gauge. But it appears to have been modest at best. Only a few of the respondents could report applications of this training, or even visualize situations in which they might use it. The training focused almost entirely on adroitness in interpersonal dealings, which is only part of the problems in this area that the project managers reported.

A number of participants suggested that this instruction would have been more useful if an attempt had been made to induce general principles or guidelines from the specific difficulties they encountered in these role-playing exercises and games. Such synthesis, to the extent that it is feasible, could be helpful.

- The major recommendations made about the seminar are to emphasize field-Washington interchanges on issues of controversy or doubt, to use a

[illegible] approach to documentation, and to convert the one-shot transmission of analytic techniques into the first step of a program of continued self-study at post. Additional, more specific suggestions on each topic are also presented.

- To be fully responsive to the demands imposed by the new directions, a training course is not enough. A number of administrative actions is suggested, including the streamlining and standardization and documentation; the development of more precise requirements, standards, and performance appraisal procedures for the project manager position; and the exploration of ways to expand the REDSO concept to provide the project manager with additional types of specialist assistance. The increased use of job aids also is recommended. The more general adoption of the project monitoring procedure developed by one of the Missions, the redesign of the manual orders, the publication of a comprehensive project manager's Guide are among the possibilities that might be considered.

The project management seminar should become part of a larger, integrated system of training and non-training innovations.

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I: OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The multiple objectives of this project were to assess the utility of a project management training program that has been established by the Africa Bureau, to relate its outcomes to the potential benefits of alternative or supplementary approaches, and to offer specific suggestions on improved programs for upgrading management performance and on superior methods for evaluating results. To date, project management training in Africa has taken the form of four two-week seminars conducted in 1973-74 by Syracuse University personnel, preceded by a pilot seminar conducted by the Governmental Affairs Institute in February 1973. Additional offerings of the seminar are planned in the expectation that all project managers in Africa will receive this training.

Implicit in these project objectives was the no less formidable task of delineating the areas of management performance that have been affected by the "new directions" in AID operations, and require re-training or other supports. For it is clearly impossible to compare alternative methods for doing something until one has determined just what it is that has to be done.

Accordingly we divided the field work into two separate phases. In Phase I, the process of data collection was completely unstructured: respondents were encouraged to report problems of all types that affect their job performance, to assess the utility of the seminar as it had been conducted in resolving these problems, and to suggest any other forms of remedial measures that might be helpful. The objective in this first phase was to cast the broadest possible net. In Phase II, the initial questions asked were again unstructured, to verify that no major themes or issues had been missed in the first round of data collection. But most of the interview consisted of probing questions on the issues that had emerged as particularly important from the Phase I results.

The objective of the [illegible] was to [illegible] problems.

In both phases, [illegible] use of the "critical incident" technique. Whenever a respondent reported a problem that limits his effectiveness in his position, or characterized a component of the seminar as beneficial, he was asked for a specific example or "incident" illustrative of this point, that actually happened to him in his job. Approximately 150 separate incidents were assembled. The more pointed of these are cited in this report, to show the nature of the impact on actual job operations.

The Phase I data collection was carried out in Kenya, Tanzania, and Tunisia. A total of 44 individuals was interviewed, including 38 direct-hire USAID officials from the Mission in Nairobi (12), from REDSO/East (11), from the Mission in Dar es salaam (5), from the Regional Development Office (2), and from the Mission in Tunis (8). The six other interviewees included three contract team leaders, two host national employees, and one host government official.

Of this sample, a total of 25 individuals had been participants in the seminar series. Four had attended the GAI pilot seminar (11-23 February 1973); eight had attended the Addis Ababa seminar (26 November - 7 December 1973); two had attended the Monrovia seminar (4-15 February 1974); and eleven had attended the seminar in Tunis (8-19 April 1974). The interviews were conducted during the period 9-25 May, six months after the first and only a few weeks after the last of the three seminars conducted by then by the Syracuse team.

Phase II data collection was carried out in Ethiopia, Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria. A total of 23 individuals was interviewed, including 20 direct-hire USAID officials from the Mission in Addis (10), from REDSO/West (2), from the Mission in Lagos (6), and from the Mission in Dakar (2). The three other interviewees were host country national USAID employees. In

The second sample, a total of 17 individuals had been participants in the seminar series. Eight had attended the seminar in Addis; four had attended the seminar in Monrovia; and five had attended the seminar in Tunis. These interviews were conducted during the period 5-15 August, approximately three months after the Phase I data collection.

Most of the interviewees had between five and ten years of experience in AID; twenty of them had ten years of experience or more. Their answers were thoughtful and fully responsive. In East Africa, Schwarz and Montgomery conducted the interviews jointly; Montgomery collected the data in Tunis; and Murray collected the Phase II data in Ethiopia and the West African countries.

Section II of this report describes our findings about the job of the project manager, with special reference to the areas that require improvement. Section III relates these needs to the seminar objectives, and summarizes the participants' evaluations of how well they were achieved. Section IV suggests a number of ideas for improvements in the seminar, and for additional AID/W initiatives that might be helpful.

II: THE "NEW DIRECTIONS" IN AID OPERATIONS

AID's conception of the project as the analytical unit of country programming was fully articulated by the late 1960's, and celebrated in yellow books, blue books, green books, and other, less colorful programming aids. By the mid-60's, the project had become the primary focus of program control. AIDTO Circular A-104 (5 October 1964) formally requested each Mission to appoint "project coordinators" responsible to the director for monitoring performance in accordance with plans, and this function has been a mainstay of AID management practice since. Even in the heyday of the large institution-building contracts, the USAID project officer remained a pivotal figure in field operations.

Thus it was not a conceptual break in AID's operational plan when, in response to "increasing pressure for reduction in overseas personnel," the manual orders began to distinguish the functions of project management from those of project operations, so that the latter could be shifted to intermediaries through a personal or institutional contract arrangement or an interagency loan. The project management tasks that the "new directions" require are tasks that have been part of the foreign aid program for a decade or more. But there have been fairly significant changes in the allocation of responsibility for these tasks within the field Missions, and in the constraints under which they have to be done. Though it is far from a new ballgame for experienced AID hands, the changed line-ups and rules do impose new performance demands.

Specifically, our respondents pointed to six tangible and highly visible changes that have affected the traditional project management functions:

(1) The first is that the field Missions have become smaller, and no longer provide the services of comparable numbers and varieties of specialized support personnel. Tasks that the project manager formerly left to others to do he now must learn to do by himself. In the absence of a Training Officer, he must prepare his own PIO/P's, for example.

(2) The second is that the dividing line between Capital Assistance and Technical Assistance is disappearing. Increasingly, CA projects include also a TA component, and officers who formerly specialized in one or the other function now must be conversant with both. For many, this entails a mastery of esoterics they never encountered before. (Though for some technicians, whose experience dates back to the 1950's, this merger is a return to earlier practice.)

(3) The third is that the emphasis in AID/W's monitoring of field operations has shifted from project implementation to project design. More stringent design requirements are being imposed; more sophisticated plans and analyses must be prepared. A level of analysis formerly limited to country programming is now being applied to the individual projects. The project manager has to learn new methods and jargon, and attend at least as much to form as to substance.

(4) The fourth is that more operational responsibility is being transferred to intermediaries over whom he can exercise limited control. Whereas contractors once had to report through the project manager on significant dealings with host government officials, he now finds himself off-line or totally out of the loop. He can still terminate contracts or ship people home, but for less extreme modulations has few effective sanctions that he can apply.

(5) The fifth is that AID's vision of "self-sufficient" contractors has not only failed to materialize, but that the trend actually appears to be in the

opposite direction. On a project staffed by individuals rather than teams under OPEX arrangements, the project manager may find himself double-hatting the job of Chief of Party, to provide the necessary coordination and to attend to the logistics that fall through the cracks. On contracts given to inexperienced institutions so that AID can contribute to their development as a domestic by-product of overseas aid, he may have to prop up weak or indifferent backstopping units as well. The demands for a role he is not supposed to exercise in the grand plan are growing.

(6) The sixth is that he is a much smaller frog in a much larger pond. Because the USG contribution to a project of the 70's often is part of a large multi-national effort, he no longer enjoys the influence or leverage of earlier days. Imposing AID's wishes on the directions of a project to which the USG is contributing six percent of the costs, as one of our respondents was trying to do, is a formidable assignment.

Two other changes that were cited as likely to affect the project manager's functions significantly are the emphasis on sector programming, and the push for the distribution of benefits to the least advantaged segments of the population. But, either because of our respondents' vague perception of the operational impact of these changes or because most of them are still "locked into" long-standing projects, the consequences of these trends came through as much less tangible at this point in time than the six recurring, dominant themes enumerated above.

The impact of these changes appears to vary tremendously from one project manager to another. This variation is attributable partly to differences in their current jobs, and in Mission and host government characteristics; partly to differences in the nature of their prior assignments; and partly to individual differences in talent and inclinations. The range of impact extends from the woes of the technician who is an acknowledged superstar

in a certain agricultural specialty but a rank novice in administration to the equanimity of the project manager who finds that "this job is just like Nigeria in 1965 (or Indonesia eight years ago) when I did the same kinds of things." The problems and needs of the individuals assigned to the job of project manager cannot be resolved by a single, standard prescription.

Still, the information that we assembled about project management does point to a number of common problems or "dissonances" that cut across jobs and locations, and that are appropriate targets for training programs and other kinds of across-the-board remedial measures. Those most frequently cited concerned

- The logic of the new AID rationales,
- The role of the project manager,
- The provisions for in-depth specialist skills,
- The use of planning and management tools,
- Compliance with AID rules and procedures, and
- Relations with intermediaries, the host government, and other donors.

These six areas of concern emerged from the critical incident data in Phase I, then again in Phase II from a separate sample of respondents. They would appear to be the areas in which AID/W initiatives in support of the new directions would be most productive. We shall discuss the nature of the problems in each in the remainder of this Section.

Logic of the New AID Rationales

When a large organization introduces significant changes in its policies and procedures, confusion, dissension, lost motion are the standard

price of transition. Because language remains an imperfect vehicle for communication, there always are misunderstandings. Because there never is time to explore all of the ramifications before the date the changeover has to begin, there always are questions for which answers as yet do not exist. Because the de-bugging process depends on the lessons of actual use, there always are shortcomings that will not be corrected till later. In an organization so widely dispersed as AID, one would expect the transition price to be especially high, and our data suggest that it is. Most of our respondents have serious reservations about aspects of the new approaches that they believe have received inadequate AID/W attention, and that frustrate and/or alarm them.

These concerns go far beyond the personal anxieties of those who may lose their jobs. Our sample included a goodly number of experienced, thoughtful officers entirely secure in their positions who have analyzed the concepts as they have filtered down to the field, and have found certain elements wanting. Two types of concerns in particular were cited over and over.

The first of these pertains to apparent contradictions among the stated objectives, policies, and procedures of the new directions. The following sample of comments was cited in the Phase I report as illustrative of these types of concerns:

- These new directions impose additional demands not only on the project manager, but perhaps even more on the host government. There are huge differences among the LDCs with respect to the capabilities and administrative machinery that this new look requires. Sixteen of the least developed countries in the world are in Africa. Is it sensible to insist that the identical pattern be used world-wide, without regard to local conditions? The new look may be ideal for other places and maybe for this country in a few years, but right now I don't think it can be managed.

- What this country needs most is to beef up its capabilities in planning. They asked us to provide help on this, but we had to turn them down. Even though everyone agrees it's the most critical need, it doesn't fit our present charter.

- Reaching the most disadvantaged 40 percent of the people is going to take a comprehensive delivery system that can deliver a wide range of government services and programs. How are we going to do this when we have to isolate the activities in one sector from the essential supporting inputs of others? If we want to push the broad distribution of benefits, we're moving in precisely the wrong direction.

- Parker says he wants to see projects get done and not drag on forever. We should do in three years what used to take eight. But every change that's been made adds more time to the process. It doesn't add up unless we don't care about the results.

- When we sit down with the host government, we and they know from the beginning that there is a very narrow range of U.S. priorities. Even though we ask them what kind of help they really want most, in terms of their own development plans and aspirations, we still have to sell them our wares. That's a collaborative approach?

- Collaborative style? The Ministry knows it can't staff our program documentation; they don't even read it. What they really want are advisers to help them decide which way to go, not a bunch of bodies they have to manage. They use the technicians we give them to figure out travel vouchers and do other odd chores. Shouldn't we use a little collaborative style and get LDC inputs before we make major policy changes?

These themes were repeated in the Phase II survey, which also produced the following types of comments:

- Which new directions are we talking about? The 1968 directions? The 1970 directions? The 1972 directions? Or have things flip-flopped again? Four years ago we

were supposed to concentrate our African aid on the eight biggest countries because they could provide the local inputs it takes to make an aid program work. Really poor countries were out. Now we're supposed to shift to the 25 poorest countries because they need help the most. Don't we care about the effectiveness of aid anymore? Or were we wrong four years ago? What gives?

- Every time I hear about the newest set of new directions, I think "Who? Me? In this country?"

The dissonance between the real world as the field people believe it to be and as they read about it in the AID/W airgrams is large.

The second category of concerns relates to the delegation of the implementation function to intermediaries who have no long-term commitment to the foreign aid program. Our respondents were aware of the pressure that forced this change, and were resigned to the fact that it probably cannot be altered. But they continue to wonder if all of the trade-offs have been adequately considered. There was general consensus that projects carried out under contracts are more expensive, that they take longer to mount and complete, that they are likely to be distorted in directions the contractor prefers to the original plan, that much of the necessary administrative and logistic work has to be done by the Mission in any event because of contractor inexperience, and that, when the project is over, all of the experience that the contractor has gained is withdrawn, adding nothing of lasting value to AID's storehouse of skills and resources. Numerous "horror stories" of the following type were cited as illustrative examples:

- We wasted a year trying to find a contractor for this project. Then, when the team finally arrived, it proved unacceptable to the host government, and we had to start from scratch to recruit replacements.

- Our main goal in this program is to increase the delivery of services to the people. But the contractor was more interested in the public education component. Instead of training educators from scratch, he recruited the Ministry's service personnel for these functions, weakening the delivery system, and leaving us worse off than before on our major objective. Under the terms of the contract, there was nothing that I could do to force him to recruit one type of person rather than another.

- One of my intermediaries was supposed to arrange for a spray plane program. But he was spending so much time on personal business (I think his graduate studies) that he did not get the plans done in time for spring planting. We lost the whole year.

- There was no way we could get the contractor to supply a replacement in time, despite continuous pressure... We couldn't get the short-term people we needed because our schedule didn't fit campus vacations ... Five of the six team members picked up and left after the first year because they didn't like it.

One of our respondents predicted that the impact of this approach on the foreign aid program would be an "unmitigated disaster."

Confounding this issue is another, related factor. This is that field personnel do not see how this approach contributes to the "low U.S. profile" that it is presumably intended to foster. Local officials do not distinguish resident Americans as being contractors or direct-hires, so the overall profile looks the same. A great deal is being sacrificed by this practice, our respondents believe, without any offsetting advantage whatsoever.

Whether any of these observations has merit we cannot judge. But we do believe the concerns to be real, and we need hardly point out that one of the requirements for effective performance in any job is a strong belief in what one is doing. More complete explanations of the new policies, the Washington realities, the true outcome expectations can only be helpful. And since such explanations are most effectively provided through the medium

of direct, face-to-face discussions, we regard this first area of concern as an exceptionally suitable target for the management seminar series.

Role of the Project Manager

Considerable concern and confusion were also expressed about the definition of the project manager's functions in the new scheme of things. Different respondents expressed different concerns. Overall, four types of problems emerged.

The first is that some field personnel appear to have misunderstood or misconstrued the descriptions that Washington has provided about the scope of the project manager's job. The job is perceived (correctly, we think) as the focal point on which all matters pertaining to the project converge. But that this responsibility stops short of subsuming all Mission functions has apparently not been made clear. In one of the Missions, it was believed that the project manager is to take on the accounting functions normally performed by the controller, and that the latter's activities in matters of project disbursements would be greatly reduced or abolished. In one of the other Missions, it was believed that the Program Office would lose its monitoring role in insuring conformance with AID regulations and the bilateral agreements. In yet another instance,

- The project officer thought that others in the Mission had prepared the procurement papers; everyone else in the Mission thought that he had done it. Much time was lost before someone discovered that the items had never been ordered at all.

The boundaries on the project manager's responsibilities and his relationships with other Mission elements need to be defined and explained more precisely.

The second concern, shared by most of those who think they have read the job descriptions correctly, is that the AID/W expectations are unrealistic. The Washington concept calls for a superman, in their opinion. The project manager is to serve as monitor of contract compliance, perform programming and logistical services, bear the responsibility for the technical performance of project tasks, carry out negotiations with other donors and the host country, serve as middleman between a contract team and its leaders (or assume the leadership function), be responsive to the demands of a truncated USAID and a bloated AID/W structure. A project officer, in the words of one bearer of that title, is supposed to be an "Abominable Snowman," invisible but omnipresent, fearsome but harmless. The job that Washington describes is a myth, according to many of our respondents.

The reality of the job as it works out in practice varied widely among our respondents. Some had worked out patterns of co-existence with AID/W that permitted them to focus on the activities they considered important, and stave off the rest. These people in effect wrote their own job definitions, and clearly enjoyed what they were doing. Some others found themselves hopping from one dull chore to the next, with no opportunity for growth or intellectual stimulation. Their jobs boil down to housekeeping, paperwork, bird-dogging; just "donkey work," as one young officer put it. At present the term "project manager" encompasses individuals who perform quite different functions.

Some variations of this type are inevitable, of course, as the result of differences in projects, Mission leadership, and individual talents and styles. But the promulgation of performance standards that have no credibility with field personnel and that they therefore reject out of hand would appear to leave too much to chance. Especially for the bright, young officer near the beginning of his career, more clear-cut statements of the expectations should prove beneficial.

The third concern is related to this. Several young project managers wondered about the career implications of being held accountable for outcomes that are almost entirely outside the scope of their authority and control. Many of our respondents noted, in almost identical words, that

- The real "project manager" in AID's current mode of operations is the intermediary. He calls the shots. We have only the title.

But the AID evaluation system equates the quality of their performance with the degree of project success. If the patient dies, the surgeon (or, in this case, the surgeon's supervisor) was ipso facto at fault. Will their performance appraisals be contingent on a contractor's performance?

The clearer statement of standards and expectations suggested above should be partly responsive to this concern. But provisions for linking these standards to the performance appraisal mechanism also would have to be considered.

The fourth concern is Agency rather than self oriented. This is that the recruitment and transfer policies are incompatible with the concept of an elite corps of managers supervising all projects. One of our respondents put it as follows:

- There are two paradoxes in our staffing of these positions. First, we fill a large number of these slots with people whose backgrounds are entirely inappropriate to these functions. Second, we take people who perform really well as project managers, and move them into administrative slots further removed from the action. It seems like the re-training process will have to go on forever.

That part of the current problem is the large number of specialists whose functions have become obsolete is understood. The concern is that appropriate

recruitment and career development practices for the "new" project manager positions have not been developed.

Only the first two of these four concerns seem relevant to the project management seminar series. Misunderstandings can readily be clarified in a seminar context, and so can performance standards and expectations (once these have in fact been developed). The concerns about recruitment, appraisal, and career ladders calls for a re-examination of personnel policies rather than training.

Provisions for In-Depth Specialist Skills

This concern might have been included in the earlier discussion of the logic of the new rationales, because it also reflects an apparent difference in the Washington and field points of view. We treat it separately because of its different action implications.

Basically, the central issue is this:

- The new documentation suggests that the project manager can discharge his technical responsibilities for the project effectively even if he is only a generalist by bringing in short-term specialist assistance whenever he needs it.

- The preponderance of field personnel we interviewed believe that project quality will be seriously compromised if there is not continuing surveillance by a direct-hire technician who is himself a specialist in the technical field central to the project's objectives.

Close monitoring, they feel, is essential because technical issues crucial to USG interests can pop up at any moment, and because neither the host government specialists nor the intermediaries will approach these issues from a USG point of view. A generalist monitor will be lost or bamboozled.

Many specific examples of contributions that project officers with specialist knowledge can and do make were cited. The following are a sample:

- The project manager met with a Member of Parliament when the program came under attack, and was able to provide him with the necessary technical information to enable him to defend it.

- The project officer sat in on a meeting between the contract team and the host government officials so that he could give translation help to the contractors who were not fluent in French. In the process, he discovered that the technical directions being taken were wrong, and took action to get the project back on track.

- The project officer discovered that the contract team working on forage was limiting the effort to dairy cattle, and ignoring the quite different and much more important requirement for beef cattle forage.

- The project officer had to correct a miscalculation of herdsize projections because the contractor had used a "compound interest" model rather than the more accurate "biological" model.

- Because the contractor building the road was unaware of local conditions, the project manager had to point out that the rainy season was about to begin and that it would be wise to advance the schedule for building ditches and culverts.

- The project officer persuaded the contractor to abandon his plan for importing hybrids, and to develop open pollenated corn seeds instead. This reduced the costs to the farmers and led to a more stable variety.

Had these project officers been generalists, our respondents suggested, these important inputs probably would not have been made.

Examples of this type do document the need for specialized technical inputs, including long-standing familiarity with local conditions. But the implied desire to return to the Point Four era seems misdirected. For AID's plans, as we understand them, are not to eliminate specialist inputs and review, but rather to switch from a "continuous feed" to a "batch feed" model. The crucial questions are whether procedures have been developed for determining in advance the crucial points in the life of a project at which specialist inputs should be provided, so that they can be programmed for these critical nodes; whether project monitoring procedures exist that can diagnose technical deficiencies in time for corrective action; whether arrangements have been made to provide fast-response specialist services that the project manager can call on as unplanned needs arise; and whether non-specialist program managers are receiving adequate orientation on these procedures and arrangements, and the management of a batch feed approach.

In Phase II, we tried to assemble some preliminary data on these questions. We asked each of 19 project managers whether they ever had occasion to ask for specialist help and, if so, what happened. Seven reported that they had asked for such assistance, four of them more than once. And all seven indicated that they were able to obtain the needed specialists easily and on a timely basis in every instance. Apparently, mechanisms for providing specialist inputs exist and are working well.

But we also noted (in both Phase I and Phase II) that few if any of our respondents could indeed be termed "generalists" in a literal sense. At this stage of the transition, a sizeable number of project managers are in fact specialists, and most of the rest have technical skills and experience in closely related fields. The project officer who was managing a poultry

project with no specialist background in poultry raising but with training in agronomy and experience in extension work was typical of the degree of "generalist management" that we were able to find. The type of specialist assistance that the current crop of project managers requires is limited mostly to short-term specialized specialists, such as hydrologists, who are needed for one particular phase of the project, but not for overall project surveillance.

What will happen if and when recruitment policies change and the current, large cadre of specialists and near-specialists have been replaced cannot be predicted from the experience available at this early stage of the transition. The most optimistic of our respondents suggested that

- A specialist manager is best. But I think generalists can manage these projects if they are given a really good PROP, a detailed Log Frame, and better evaluation procedures than we're using at present. Given these things, he should be able to tell if the project is going right or wrong, and when to call for an expert.

And these would indeed seem to be the minimum requirements for making the batch-feed approach of the new directions effective.

This suggests one clear-cut training implication, and raises a number of questions. The training implication is for skill in the use of PROPs, Logical Frameworks, and similar devices as monitoring tools, and for complete information about the specialist resources in Washington and the field on which the project manager can call. The questions concern the preparations (rather than use) of these monitoring tools. Are the present specifications for PROPs and Logical Frameworks sufficiently demanding to permit effective monitoring by a generalist manager who uses them as his bible? Will these demanding specifications be met if the generalist manager is required to prepare these tools as well as to use them? Should generalist project managers be trained in the preparation of these tools, or should preparation remain

a specialist function? These questions recur in a broader context in the following discussion.

Use of Planning and Management Tools

The emphasis being given to increasingly sophisticated analytic techniques for planning and progress assessments in perhaps less attributable to the new directions than to the natural evolution of AID management practice. But, whatever the genesis, this emphasis is seen as highly desirable by our respondents. The engineers, economists, and scientists who comprise most of our sample grew up on data, and firmly believe in data-based management systems.

The one question that did arise, however, pertains to the nature and degree of involvement of the project manager in these systems. This question came up repeatedly, in a number of different guises, as in the comments below:

- Doing a real sector analysis takes a long time. When we use a real sector analysis, it's done by somebody else like the World Bank. A project manager doesn't need to be able to do this.

- I can think of one example of a sector analysis that really worked. It was done for a combination of the education and health sectors. It took 142 people two years to do it.

- I know PERT, and have for years. But it's the contractor who is really managing the job that can make good use of this method; it's worthless to me in this off-line position. Making my own chart to monitor him would be a waste of time because I know that his PERT chart is based on cash flow, and the two wouldn't come out nearly the same.

- Should the project manager really be responsible for long-range planning on top of everything else that he has to do? This should be done at a higher level.

- I used PERT in my former assignment in another country. I think a project manager needs to know this, but hardly in-depth. It's peripheral rather than central.

- How can I chart out this project when almost all of it is being done by other donors. If I leave their inputs out, it doesn't make sense. If I put them in, it suggests we can control them. For a multi-donor project, it's an exercise for no purpose.

As individuals interested in their own professional development, each of our respondents would like to improve his skill in these techniques. As project managers, they wonder how much sophistication is necessary and how much application is realistic.

These are the same questions that were raised at the end of the preceding discussion about the use of generalists to prepare detailed project plans. The nature of the answer that quite a few field people seem to prefer was indicated quite clearly by two of our Phase II respondents:

- Nobody in the Mission needs to be able to do a sector analysis. You have people in the regional office, or resource personnel in Washington.

- For Log Frames, you should have one resident expert in the Mission. Not everybody needs to be able to do this.

In our own view, we are inclined to believe that the appropriate answer differs for the various types of management tools. Careful analysis would probably show that there are certain techniques in which project managers should be reasonably proficient; that certain others call for no more than broad-brush familiarization.

Sorting out the actual requirements for proficiency vs. familiarization would have highly significant training implications. For these requirements determine the training objectives. And, as we shall suggest in a later Section,

the ambiguity of current training objectives has been one of the key limitations of the management seminar series to date.

Compliance With AID Rules and Procedures

More comments by far were directed at this area than any of the others. Four kinds of dissonances were noted.

The first is that project managers have not yet acquired the mastery of manual orders and documentation that their functions require. Though our respondents report a significant improvement in these skills over the past few years, problems of the following type continue to arise in field operations:

- Just yesterday, one of our project managers tried to buy German tractors without getting a waiver.
- I asked everybody in the Mission how to order books for my project, but nobody knew. It took me three days digging through the Manual Orders to find the procedure.
- When I ordered the commodities, I didn't realize that I should cut my own stencils, Washington had to reproduce the material, and we lost a whole year on our delivery schedule.

These kinds of difficulties were anticipated when the new look was introduced, and need not be elaborated. They represent another need that has clear training implications.

The second dissonance is in the standards that Washington imposes. Field personnel object to Washington's eulogizing of form over substance, and cite examples such as the following as illustrative of their problems:

- A World Bank team spent two years doing a sector analysis, which we accepted without modification. But AID/W wouldn't accept their report in the form

in which it was written. I had to translate it into a PROP, which took me four months and added absolutely nothing to the project that was not there before.

- My Log Frame got bounced because I did not list "favorable weather conditions" as an assumption. How silly can you get? I didn't list the absence of earthquakes either.

- The system is so rigid that I can't bend it to fit the realities of this project and what we actually plan to do. So I maintain parallel systems for project monitoring and for feedback to AID/W. I've got to keep the AID/W documentation away from the host government because if they ever saw it and thought that was the real plan there would be terrible confusion.

- The Mission's real work is at a standstill because the Director has cancelled all field trips. We have to be in our office throughout May and June so that we can answer Washington questions on documentation.

- It's easy once you understand that it's not what you do but what you say that's important. I know that the people back there won't support the roads we need so I wrote a requirement for "agricultural rural sector feeder links." It was approved without question.

This type of dissonance has no immediately apparent training implications (except for the suggestion offered by several respondents to provide training also to AID/W backstopping staff.)

The third dissonance is in the <u>sense of futility</u> that field personnel frequently express about the impact of the documentation that they are required to file. The following are just a few examples of the numerous incidents of this type that were reported:

- The PAR is useless. That is, the document itself is good, but the project manager knows that no one will read it. I get to the "action page" and just shake my head, because of the futility of expecting any action to be taken.

- You can't believe the idiocy of our waiver procedures. We had an entirely satisfactory tender from one contractor except he wanted 180 days to deliver the product instead of the 150 days which were called for in the original bid statement. The thirty extra days didn't really make any difference, but we had to go through a long round of complications in order to get the selection of this contractor approved. Naturally, this process took far longer than the thirty extra days which he had requested in the first place.

- The first PAR we did was very candid and very complete. We thought that its purpose was to try to improve the project, and so we described all of the problems that need to be solved. But Washington used the PAR to emasculate the project. The next time we did a PAR, we toned down everything we thought Washington wouldn't understand.

- The people in Washington don't read a ..... thing. I was back on TDY to Washington and had to spend 45 minutes explaining a technical point about contract clearances in this country which I had described in lavish detail in memos I sent to those very same people.

This tug-of-war is, of course, in no way a product of the new directions. It has been endemic in AID for as long as we can remember, and is typical of all organizations that maintain central and field locations. We doubt that the seminar series can be helpful.

The fourth dissonance in this area is in the sheer quantity of documentation required, which nearly all of our respondents cited as their main problem in life. This finding is neither new nor unexpected. In the largest official survey of field operations every conducted (see Report on Project Management Problems, AID, 1969) interviews of 106 project officers from eight countries showed that the key problems lay in excessive documentation requirements,

and in inexplicable duplication among the individual forms required. Precisely the same summary statement fits the reports that we assembled. Our respondents do not understand why there is so much internal repetitiveness within the PROP, why the same material has to be recast again for a ProAg, then again for a PIO/T, for PIO/Cs and PIO/Ps when these are required. Much of their time goes into the preparation of these documents and into answering the questions AID/W invariably raises on each.

This problem does not call for a training solution, but it may be one that has to be solved to make training effective. As the demands on the project manager have grown and as the available support personnel have diminished, it emerges as a more appropriate target than ever before for review and appropriate action.

Relations With Intermediaries, Host Government, Other Donors

In this sixth area lie without doubt the most telling impacts of the new look on field operations. But these impacts appear also to be the most complex and subtle. Though our respondents talked about them at length, neither we nor they could quite pin down the kinds of management skills that they call for, or the AID initiatives that would be most helpful within the established constraints.

In relationships with contractors, there are three basic requirements which call for specialized knowledge and skills. The first is the provision of supervisory, administrative, and logistic services to intermediaries assigned under individual contracts that provide for neither leadership nor support. As earlier noted, this is not a planned project manager function. But it is one that a number of our respondents have perforce had to assume; and, for specialists dubbed generalists under the new look, it can impose demands for which neither their training nor their experience adequately

prepares them. The second is to exercise control over an activity without the authority that effective control normally requires. This is a problem we have already described in an earlier discussion; no solutions or approaches to solutions were offered by our respondents. The third is to assist the host government in screening potential contractors and concluding satisfactory contract arrangements when the USG contribution is limited to the provision of money. This is another demand for skills to which the background of most project managers contributes little relevant guidance.

Relations with host government officials may be more troublesome now than they will be in future because the memory of earlier days is still vivid in the minds of senior technicians. They find that they have to adjust to the reduced influence of a reduced assistance program, and learn to cope with situations such as

- The Finance Minister told me not to be too fussy about AID's special requirements because the size of our loan was less than the statistical error he uses in budget calculations.

They also find that they have to make a psychological adjustment to a new role vis a vis host government officials. One respondent told us

- I finished a four-year tour in this country five years ago. During this earlier tour, I spent 90 percent of my time at the Ministry, helping them with just about everything they were doing, and being regarded by them as one of their own. When I came back to essentially the same position, PASAs had taken over my functions. I sit in my own office and manage, and interact with the same people as an outsider.

Such greatly changed situations clearly require responses quite different from those of the past. But the nature of the effective responses is not entirely clear.

Relations with other donors are encumbered by two other tensions. The first is that the USG typically supplies the smallest portion of a multinational loan, but imposes the most stringent demands. The second is that host governments prefer to deal with the various donors in one-on-one situations, and actively discourage interdonor consultation. Most of our respondents felt that they should be doing more in building bridges with other donor organizations, but did not know what form these bridges should take.

Guidance on these complex interrelationships would be undeniably helpful to key project management functions. But AID/W is probably too remote from the scene to provide it. This may be an area in which project managers will have to look to each other for help, and the seminars well might provide an appropriate forum.

Training Implications

The preceding discussion raises fifteen specific problems or dissonances that merit attention. But not all of them are training problems. Nor are all those that do have training implications appropriate targets for the management seminar series. There are severe limitations on the types and amounts of training that can be accomplished in a two-week course of this general type, and it should clearly focus on those training needs for which the residential seminar format is likely to be especially productive.

In the following Section, we shall examine the seminar in terms of the portions or aspects of the above management needs that seem to us to be especially amenable to seminar approaches. Then, in the final Section, we shall consider also the other types of training and non-training actions that these needs suggest, as important adjuncts to the seminar series.

III: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SEMINAR SERIES

Our approach to the assessment of the seminar outcomes was neither elegant nor precise. The decisions to be made on the basis of the results did not require elegance; the realities of sample size, baseline data, controls, and timing precluded precision. We simply tried to find out, on the basis of the best data that we could assemble, what it was that the seminar had and had not accomplished, and what kinds of changes are most likely to make future offerings more productive. And we are quite confident that we did.

This Section summarizes the different types of data that we assembled. We shall look at the seminar outcomes in terms of (1) the participants' reactions to the seminar as a whole, (2) the participants' reports of contributions the seminar made in each of the six categories of problems developed above, (3) the apparent impact of the seminar on actual job performance; and then combine these three separate perspectives into an overall appraisal.

General Reaction

Before guiding the discussion to specific seminar topics, we asked each of the 42 respondents who had attended the course for a global assessment of the seminar's overall value to him. For we strongly believe that activities of this type can have important motivational and attitudinal benefits, quite apart from their specific impacts on job performance. And, given the mixed bag of participant reactions at the evaluation sessions that concluded each seminar, we were frankly curious about the responses that would be obtained after the passage of time had put the ups and downs of the seminar proceedings into perspective.

The responses were of four general types, which we categorized and labeled as follows:

Overall Course	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Tremendous	2	2	4
Interesting and useful	14	11	25
Marginal; should have been better	7	4	11
Useless; a waste of my time	2	0	2

Roughly two-thirds of the participants had an overall positive recollection after some weeks or months back on the job.

A number of oversimplifications are buried in this summary table. Four of the eleven respondents who considered the course to be of only marginal value are not typical of the majority of the sample: two of them took the preliminary GAI version, and two others attended the seminar hosted by their own Missions and were subjected to frequent disruptions. Three of the four respondents who considered the course "tremendous" are also atypical in comprising two host national employees and one contractor Chief of Party. One would expect these individuals to have more to learn than experienced direct-hire technicians. But these anomalies do not affect the general sense of the results. Most of the participants regarded this experience as highly worthwhile.

Responsiveness to Key Training Needs

Areas 1 & 2: New Rationales and Management Functions

Each of the three Syracuse seminars devoted the opening day to the new directions and their impact on project management functions. The morning was spent on comparisons of management styles, as reported by

the participants; the afternoon on explanations of the new policies by Syracuse and AID/W personnel. Relevant airgrams and other reading selections were also provided.[1]

In light of the serious and widespread concern about the new rationales that we described in the preceding Section, it is difficult to imagine that a single day's session could be adequately responsive, however competently conducted. And the evaluation of this part of the program of the 38 participants in these sessions is consistent with this expectation. The vast majority found them unsatisfying, as shown in the following summary of their remarks:

New AID Rationales	Phase I	Phase II	Total
I learned something from this	4	6	10
This may have been useful for others	1	3	4
A waste of time	12	6	18
Too many mistakes	1	0	1
Confirmed the chaos in AID/W	2	2	4
I don't remember this session	1	0	1

Four of the ten participants who claimed to have profited from these sessions were host national employees, moreover. For them it was the first entry ever into the "inner sanctum" of Washington thinking; for nearly all AID regulars it was old hat.

A number of participants praised the presentations of the Syracuse team as being more cogent than the explanations AID had provided. But they found them to be no more than a better organized rehash of the materials they had already read (the people who felt their jobs were in jeopardy were especially

[1] In this and all other cases our description of what happened is based on what was supposed to happen, according to the schedules we were provided. Not having attended any of the sessions ourselves, we have no first-hand knowledge to draw on.

avid readers). The gaps in the information that really concerned them were not treated adequately because neither the Syracuse people nor, disappointingly, the AID/W resource personnel seemed to have answers to give the.

Some participants also indicated, about this and other sessions, that the intellectual level was pitched too low, as though a conscious attempt were being made to aim for the "lowest denominator" of the participants present. They felt that a level of discourse geared to the level a competent project manager must be able to handle would have been a more productive approach. Sending the participants an advance list of topics and readings, and issues to think about before coming to the seminar was another, more specific suggestion.

Our own suggestions would be to orient these sessions toward the more complex and controversial issues that concern the participants, perhaps determining these from advance questionnaires to the participants to be invited; to invite also a number of carefully selected AID/W officials who have given these matters serious thought; to conduct no-holds-barred round table discussions; and to communicate a readiness to review policies that seem deficient. Participants in the Addis seminar specifically praised the remarks of the Assistant Administrator, and commented on the appropriateness of the blunt, no-nonsense line that he took. We noted in Section II that strategy issues are uniquely amenable to seminar-style training approaches. With a somewhat greater investment, the treatment of rationales, logic, and trade-offs might become the most productive of the components of the seminar series.

Area 3: Provisions for Needed Specialist Skills

This need was not specifically addressed in the seminars so far conducted, although the topic no doubt came up in broader discussions. The focus, as earlier noted, should be on

1) the development of monitoring tools that will enable the generalist manager to assess programs, and take suitable action at times when specialist review or inputs must be provided, and

2) the delineation of the degree to which the generalist manager should take responsibility for or participate in the preparation of these tools for his project, above and beyond his responsibilities for their application.

When this has been done, project monitoring would be a highly suitable topic to include in the seminar program.

Area 4: Use of Planning and Management Tools

Management tools were the subject of a number of seminar sessions. Instruction was provided in sector/systems analysis, CPA, PERT, linear programming, and some others in less detail. (The Logical Framework, which has become integral to official documentation, we shall take up in the discussion of internal procedures.)

The general reaction to these sessions reflected the participants' uncertainty earlier noted about the project manager's use of such methods. If the participants were expected to master them, not nearly enough time was provided. If the objective was only general familiarization, too much time was devoted to soon-to-be forgotten details. The presentations as given were neither fish nor fowl. Appropriate objectives should be established, and these should determine the scope of the instruction.

More specific reactions to the major presentations in this area follow:

Systems/Sector Analysis. Our respondents were highly complimentary of this part of the course. Though they agreed that the technique could not be mastered on the basis of the instruction provided, most of them thought that it was extremely well taught. With respect to the utility of the instruction for project management functions, reactions were divided, as follows:

Systems/Sector Analysis	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Have already used it	1	1	2
Should be able to use it	2	0	2
Learned something from this	0	2	2
Already knew this; did not add	6	3	9
Insufficient instruction for use	10	8	18
Technique is unnecessary	2	2	4
Hardly remember this session	0	1	1

The number who knew so much before that this session did not help them or who knew so little that it provided no useable skills total three-fourths of the participant group. The instruction was not in synch with the background of the trainees.

A number of participants suggested that the presentation would be greatly improved if the problems were drawn from AID operations rather than military weapons systems. One technician with Latin America experience suggested that AID sector analysis has probably been used in that region long enough to provide more useful examples.[1]

PERT and CPA. Reactions to this material resulted in a similar pattern:

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[1] The conversion of general to AID-specific exercises has since been completed. We are told that the most recent seminar was based entirely on exercises concerned with foreign aid operations.

PERT and CPA	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Have used instruction	0	3	3
Expect to use	3	2	5
Interesting	3	6	9
Already knew this	7	3	10
Need more instruction	8	3	11

Again, the number of participants who know too much or too little to profit materially from this instruction numbered more than half of the group.

Area 5: Compliance With AID Rules and Procedures

The major topic in this area was the Logical Framework, including a session on the design of indicators for monitoring project results. Shorter sessions were devoted to such topics as contracting, procurement, and participant selection. The latter were conducted by AID/W resource personnel.

The Logical Framework. Most of the participants had already worked on Log Frames in the course of their job assignments, and a number of them had taken the longer course on this technique. It was by no means a new topic for them, but many of them nevertheless profited from this additional instruction:

The Logical Framework	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Can now do it better	9	5	14
Need more before use	3	4	7
Interesting	2	2	4
Already knew this	4	6	10
Useless technique	2	0	2
Presentation unrealistic	1	0	1

Three of the four respondents who found this no more than "interesting" were two host national employees and a Chief of Party, who would not normally

use it; the two respondents who found it "useless" were criticizing AID's use of the Logical Framework rather than the instruction. Overall, the sessions on the Log Frame emerge as the seminar component that the participants appreciated the most.

This highly positive finding is attenuated somewhat by the reasons that a number of respondents gave for the value that they attached to this instruction. They felt that it was profitable to them not as a means of improving project planning or evaluation, but as an assist toward spending less time on irrelevant Washington demands. This sentiment is a part of the attitudinal dissonances described in the preceding Section.

A similar attitudinal component seemed to shape also the participants' reactions to the instruction on the development of indicators of project outcomes and their impact on development gains. The following reactions are hardly commensurate with the extreme technical difficulties that the task of devising appropriate indicators presents:

Indicators	Phase I
Can now do this better	3
Topic requires more time	4
Already know this	8
Not relevant to job	4
Who's kidding whom?	2

The participants who offered the last of these reactions suggested that sophisticated measures of output are pointless since AID's main interest is insuring a "clean" accounting of project expenses, irrespective of the results.

Regulations and Procedures. These sessions were regarded as unproductive by the vast majority of the participants, as shown in the following tabulation:

Regulations and Procedures	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Have already used this	2	1	3
Found this interesting	3	5	8
Nothing useful or new	14	8	22
Not related to job	1	0	1
Should have focused on documentation	0	3	3

The participants' major complaints were that the content was too simplistic (participant selection), too abstruse (varieties of contracts), or impossible to treat adequately within the available time (procurement). A number suggested that these topics were more appropriate to separate workshops in-depth than to a seminar that spans many topics.

The only one of the participants who was truly enthusiastic about this part of the program was the one who learned that there is a unit in AID/W that will handle procurement if asked to do so. Since returning from the seminar, he has simply assembled specifications for the commodities needed, and shipped them off to AID/W to process the rest of the way. If there are other resources in the region or in Washington that project managers may be unaware of it, it would clearly seem useful to emphasize these and the correct methods for utilizing them in this part of the program.

Area 6: Intermediaries, Host Government, Other Donors

A considerable portion of the seminar was devoted to the techniques of working with the other parties involved in a joint undertaking, including both conceptual presentations and "live" practice sessions. The main elements were an analysis of each participant's own management style, role-playing exercises to illustrate the "collaborative style" in planning and administering projects, and full-fledged management games that were designed to integrate these interpersonal approaches and the other management techniques presented in the context of actual project operations.

Self-Analysis. This session was unquestionably the most controversial part of the program in the first two seminars, and was de-emphasized in the third. It was assessed only in Phase I, and reactions were polarized at the extremes:

Self-Analysis	Phase I
Increased my self-awareness	7
Reinforcing and reassuring	2
Interesting	2
Worthless	9
Juvenile	1

The participants who reacted positively were mainly those who scored well on the test, although three of them did note that they became aware of weaknesses that they are trying to correct. The major objections to the approach were based on the use of labels (such as "executive" or "missionary" or "autocrat") to describe the participant's management style, on the dubious validity of the test questions, and on the perceived irrelevance of an approach designed for industry to foreign aid operations.

As would be expected, the intensity of the negative reactions was considerably stronger than that of the positive votes. The net effect of including this type of material in the seminar may well be a minus.

Collaborative Style. Reactions to the role-playing exercises also were mixed, though there was none of the resentment that was directed at the self-analysis portion. Half of the participants felt that they had profited from this; half felt that they had not:

Collaborative Style	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Have made use of this	3	1	4
Gained new insights from this	3	4	7
Enjoyed this	2	6	8
Already knew this	8	4	12
Found this contrived, ritualistic	5	1	6
Would have been useful ten years ago	0	1	1

Among those with negative views, quite a few thought that these skills have to be learned from experience and cannot really be taught.

The most common constructive comment was that some attempt should have been made to present a "school solution" to each exercise after the participants had gone through it. Expecting them to draw their own conclusions and formulate their own generalizations left a number of participants wondering just what it was they should have learned.

Management Games. About two days were spent on management games, which attempted to draw together some of the lessons that had been presented in separate sessions. Most of the participants enjoyed these games, and some found them useful:

Management Games	Phase I	Phase II	Total
Learned something about interactions	3	5	8
Learned something about colleagues	2	4	6
Enjoyed this	9	5	14
No value	6	2	8
Complex and unrealistic	1	1	2

A number of those who enjoyed it indicated that this type of an activity is a welcome change of pace in the proceedings.

As on a number of other components, participants suggested that management games would be more useful if they were more job-specific. Though they recognized that it would be too costly to produce games appropriate to each technical field, several felt that activities less technological than road-building would afford a better fit to the kinds of activities in which most participants in fact are engaged.

Impact on Job Performance

In each of our interviews, we probed for specific examples of applications of the seminar training to actual job operations following the participant's return. We probed in Phase I, we probed in Phase II. And in both cases we came up virtually empty. On the major seminar topics, we asked for examples at least 266 times (38 participants times 7 topics), and obtained no more than 20 examples. We also asked the supervisor of one of the larger contingents of seminar participants, comprising one-fourth of our sample, for incidents that he had observed since his people returned that showed changed performance. He reported that he had himself pondered this question when he heard of our impending arrival, and had concluded that there had been no visible changes to date.

In our Phase I report, we qualified these seemingly negative findings, by pointing to the many limitations of the data we had assembled. We noted the large variations in the prior training and experience of the participants in the skills the seminar covered, the short time that had elapsed between the seminars and this follow-up study, the lack of data on the number of opportunities the participants had had to apply these skills since their return, and the extreme difficulty of detecting changes in the subtle area of interpersonal relations, which had been a prime seminar focus. At that time, we described the findings on impact as "murky."

In Phase II, we tried to clarify the situation with respect to these extraneous factors. And, even though only fragmentary data on these factors could be assembled, we believe that these additional insights (and the confirmation of the Phase I findings on a separate sample) permit us now to offer a more confident assessment.

The seminar's impact on the project managers' acceptance or understanding of the new rationales and their own job functions appears to have been negligible or nil. This is shown not only by the overwhelmingly negative reactions of the direct-hire participants to this part of the instruction, but, even more persuasively, by the fact that they asked us for answers, weeks or months after the seminar had been completed. If these concerns persisted after the seminar, there can be no impact on job performance, no matter how long one waits for the right opportunities to arise in the field.

The one tangible impact of this part of the seminar that was reported was achieved by a host national employee; and for this group the content and style of the presentation no doubt was helpful. The questions of the experienced technicians were not resolved, in part perhaps because entirely adequate answers do not yet exist.

The seminar's impact on the project managers' facility with AID regulations and administrative procedures appears to have been equally slight. Again, the participants' reactions to the material presented on these topics were overwhelmingly negative. And, when we asked the 14 project managers interviewed in Phase II about the opportunities that they had had to engage in such activities since they returned from the seminars to their jobs, we obtained the following responses:

	Have Encountered One or More Since	Seminar Affected My Actions
Administrative tasks covered in Seminar	14	0

It seems highly unlikely that the further passage of time will reveal impacts that had not occurred by the time of our visit. The instruction provided in these sessions was apparently not responsive to the on-the-job needs of seasoned technicians.

The seminar's impact on the use of analytic techniques clearly was greater, as judged by the participants' reactions and the examples of on-the-job applications they cited. The exact magnitude of this impact we could not determine, but we did try in Phase II to set boundary conditions on its probable extent, including both the examples we could assemble at the time of our visit and those likely to occur in the future. From each of the Phase II interviewees, we obtained an estimate of his proficiency in sector/systems analysis, in PERT/CPA, and in the Logical Framework before the seminar and after, and his best recollection of whether or not he had an opportunity to engage in these functions since he returned to his job. And these responses provided a basis for the following, rough extrapolations:

- 42 positive impact reports could have been obtained by asking 14 project managers about 3 techniques.
- 6 positive reports of impact to date were obtained.
- 6 reports of possible impact in future were obtained. These were cases in which the respondents reported that they could use the technique, that the seminar had improved their performance, but that no opportunities for application had come up since their return to post. If and when the opportunities arise, the increment in their skills that the seminar effected would probably come into play.
- 12 reports of improbable impact were obtained. These were cases in which the respondents reported that they had not learned enough of the technique to apply it, and had had no further opportunities for learning or practice since their return. They must be considered

improbable because erosion is rapid when learning stops before the learner has learned enough to put the instruction to use. "Six months later, you can barely remember the kind of techniques that were taught," as one of our respondents put it.

- 18 reports of impossible impact were obtained. These were cases in which the respondent reported that he already knew the material covered in the seminar when he entered the course.

In only thirty percent of the reports was there a reasonable expectation of impact, now or later.

The reasons for this limited impact would seem to lie in the mismatch between the backgrounds of the participants and the content and pace of the instruction, and in the lack of provisions for follow-up practice or training. With appropriate modifications, greater impact in this area almost certainly can be achieved.

The seminar's impact on the project managers' effectiveness in interpersonal relations is difficult to gauge. Self-report data on personal behavior are not a reliable guide. But we did ask the Phase II interviewees for reports of opportunities and impacts, and obtained the following responses:

	Have Done This Since	Seminar Affected My Actions
Interact with intermediary on a substantive issue	10	1
Interact with host country official on a substantive issue	8	2

These data suggest modest impact at best. And, given the extreme difficulty of modifying interpersonal behavior, the brevity of the training,

and the substantial field experience of many of the participants, we are inclined to accept this assessment as probably correct.

The seminar's total impact on job operations, as we see it, adds up to modest impact on the use of analytic management tools, slight impact on performance in troublesome interpersonal relations, and negligible impact on administrative functions and on the understanding of the project manager's job and the new AID rationales.

Overall Appraisal

The overall benefits of a residential seminar away from the job are a combination of what is learned in the formal sessions and what is gained from the setting and interactions outside of the class. The data and observations presented in this Section suggest the following appraisal of the seminar as a whole:

On the positive side, one can say that the seminar was well-received and appreciated by most of these participants, and that even those who were disappointed with the total package had good things to say about one or more of its components. Many participants commented favorably also on this rare opportunity to get away from the "pressure cooker" and reflect; on the incidental learning that resulted from their interactions with each other; and on the stimulation of chewing the fat with members of the Syracuse team after hours. The seminars had a decidedly positive effect on morale, which in these times of rather turbulent anxieties must be considered as useful if not important.

Another positive indication that we can report is an overwhelming vote of confidence for the Syracuse team. In light of the suggestions that had been made to transfer the instructional functions to in-house personnel, we

tried to check this aspect specifically, and to a number of respondents put the question directly. The typical response was one of admiration; even critics of the substance were quite generous in their praise of the process.

The impact on job performance is disappointing. But we frankly do not see how the results could have been otherwise, in light of the constraints. Three constraints in particular seem to us to be crippling from the point of view of impact on job performance.

The first is that the training objectives were not tied to the backgrounds of the participants or to the perceived needs of field personnel. The simple questions we asked about the job and the operational problems provided a reasonably clear picture of the needs and of suitable training targets. They might have been asked before training rather than after.

The second is that too many topics were covered. Time was a constant problem. Philosophic or intellectual discussions could not be pursued; adequate practice could not be provided. Skills of practical utility on the job could not be developed within the time allotted for each.

The third is that the seminar was an isolated training experience rather than one step of an integrated system. The applications and follow-on experiences that can gel instruction were left to chance, and chancy events seldom happen. One participant told us that he had on his own initiative ordered books to pursue this initial training. This and similar steps should have been taken by AID as part of the program.

We shall focus on these three constraints in the suggestions we offer in the following Section.

IV: ALTERNATIVE AND SUPPLEMENTARY APPROACHES

In our earlier discussions of project management problems, we noted that certain types of improvements are especially appropriate targets for training, while others call for alternative approaches, instead of or in addition to training. In this Section, we shall describe the specific ideas that we developed for both training and supplemental approaches, as the result of suggestions made by field personnel or of our own observations and judgments.

In the area of understanding and acceptance of the new rationales, we have already commented on the appropriateness of the seminar approach as a means of improving communications. For the reduction of dissonances on complex issues, there are unique benefits to be gained from the opportunity for face-to-face discussions, from the broader perspective that is promoted when personnel from different Missions are intermingled, and from the presence of high-level outsiders to help to articulate and focus the insights developed. This area of need perhaps justifies the expenses of a residential, multi-Mission seminar more clearly than any of the others, and we suggest that its role in the seminar be expanded.

Specifically we think that the issues of most vital concern to field personnel should be inventoried more systematically than we were able to do in this limited study, that more than one day should be allocated to the discussion of these issues, and that the most thoughtful of AID/W personnel who can be assembled should attend the seminar to join project managers in free-for-all debates. If the field personnel who suggest topics for this discussion are asked to write position papers on them both before and after the seminar, evaluative data of the type that could not be recaptured in this post hoc survey could readily be assembled. We realize that this will raise costs and cut into the time of other seminar topics, but predict that the gains for field personnel (and for the Bureau staff who participate) will justify this extra investment.

In the area of delineating project management functions, the immediate needs are not for training. They are for a more careful analysis of appropriate project manager functions, in terms of those that he indeed must perform and those that can be off-loaded to others; for a more realistic articulation of standards and Washington expectations; and for the explicit incorporation of these standards in the mechanisms for performance appraisal. Compatible policies for the recruitment of project managers and for the "career ladders" available to them also must be developed. When all this has been done, an explanatory session on the job of the project manager would be a suitable and highly useful seminar topic.

In the area of specialist technical inputs, we have discussed the need for mechanisms to support the new "batch feed" approach, and for familiarizing project managers with these resources. A complementary approach might lie in innovations in organizational structure. We were highly impressed with the quality and efficiency of REDSO operations. Perhaps this model could be expanded.

In the area of analytic management tools, it seems quite clear that a one-shot seminar cannot make significant progress on as many techniques as were presented. Our interviewees made three types of suggestions for modifications which AID may wish to consider. The first is to treat these topics as "electives," offering instruction in them concurrently, and letting each participant sign up for the one that is most relevant to his needs and job. This would probably require advance inquiries to the participants on topics of interest, so that suitable materials and schedules could be arranged. The second is to devote individual workshops of longer duration to these topics, such as is being done in the case of the Logical Framework at present. This would be most appropriate for techniques that are central to the project manager's function in most locations. The third is to focus the instruction provided at the seminar on the entry skills that are necessary for further

study in-depth, and to provide plans and schedules whereby this further study can be undertaken. The latter could be based on reading lists, self-instructional materials, and/or follow-up seminar sessions.

Our own preference is for the last of these suggestions. The seminar training should be structured to bring each participant's skills up to a specified minimum level, and appropriate self-study materials should be provided to enable interested participants to develop their proficiencies further. Mission personnel who already have these skills can serve as free but highly effective tutors for the self-instructional portion, and the materials developed should take full advantage of these resources, which appear to exist at most if not all locations.

A supplementary, non-training approach is to establish a systematic program of management assistance within the Mission. We observed one locally developed system in USAID/Tanzania which seemed to be effective. This was based on the development of flow-charts and schedules for each project against which progress was reviewed in the regular staff meetings, and on the provision to each project manager of a written checklist of important steps to be taken, as identified in each progress review. Such systems could be developed centrally and furnished to all field Missions as suggested management aids.

As a prerequisite to the development of effective training and support systems in this area, it seems highly important to determine the actual needs of the project manager more precisely. The levels of expertise that are required for developing these tools, for using them intelligently, or for recognizing the need for their introduction are different, and have quite different training implications.

In the area of <u>regulations and documentation</u>, a tutorial approach could be quite effective. A number of participants suggested that they might

have brought with them the documentation on which they were working at the time of the seminar, and complete it with the help of expert guidance. Instructional materials based on their own projects would have greatly promoted learning, in their opinion. If the logistics of this can be managed, the idea seems worthy of trial.

A feasible alternative to training in this area may be to rely on the present method of learn-by-doing. In Phase II, we asked each of 18 project managers about their levels of skill in preparing the major types of AID documentation. We obtained the following responses:

Documentation	Can Do	Need Help
PROP	10	8
ProAg	14	4
PIO/T	17	1
PIO/C	13	5
PIO/P	13	5
PAR	13	5
PPP	8	10

Then, we asked the same individuals how they had acquired these skills. Their answers were consistent with our Phase I observations:

Skill Was Acquired	Number
Primarily from Manual Orders	3
Primarily from samples in files	6
Primarily from USAID colleague	8
Primarily from a training program	1

Project managers pick up these skills on the job by studying manual orders, asking questions, and having early efforts reviewed by experienced staff.

If this pattern of on-the-job learning can be facilitated and strengthened, better results are likely to be obtained than can be achieved through special, add-on training programs at irregular times.

Such facilitative measures might take the form of self-training "packages" that the inexperienced technician can consult when he encounters an actual documentation requirement in his job, or of guidelines for local, USAID-administered training sessions that would integrate the lesson available from the manual orders, past samples of excellence, and resident expertise. There is no doubt in our minds that the USAIDs can competently handle such programs, and the development of local training capabilities would also help the field to keep pace with the frequently changing regulations, as an additional bonus.

Central action toward greater standardization and more explicit instructions would also be helpful. There could be standard invitations for bid, for example, so that these need not be crafted anew for each procurement, standard discrimination clauses, a standard contract form for a supplier who serves many projects, etc. Better job aids in the form of step-by-step checklists also could be provided. Any and all simplifications would reduce the learning task that the new project managers are facing, and thereby the need for specialized training.

The greatest simplification of all, of course, and the one most devoutly wished for by field personnel would be the elimination of needless or redundant documentation. A modularized PROP that could be assembled in different ways for purposes of a ProAg, PIO/T, PIO/C, or PIO/P without requiring the project manager to re-write the same information over and over was one specific suggestion. Such reforms no doubt lie well without the jurisdiction of the Africa Bureau, but seem sufficiently important to warrant central review.

In the area of relationships with intermediaries, host governments, and other donors, seminars of the type that have been conducted are probably as good an approach as any so far developed to promote performance improvements. But their impact well might be increased if an investment were made in the articulation of the important concepts and dynamics, however rudimentary in format, so that the participants could take away with them a number of guiding principles in addition to discrete, unrelated observations. Developing exercises more closely linked to the participants' actual job functions was another of the participants' suggestions that would no doubt be helpful, if funds for this can be provided.

Because skillful performance in this area does not depend solely on interpersonal relationships of the type on which the seminar focused, attention should also be given to the knowledge and information components. Effective monitoring of a contract requires factual information on a broad range of topics to which many project managers have not before been exposed. Last year, AID published a Team Leader's Guide; an updated and expanded Project Management Handbook would seem no less important.

* * *

As a brief post-script, we would add a final word on the importance of the non-training approaches. Though training is the first remedy that comes to mind when there is a need to upgrade performance, it ranks in fact no better than fourth in the hierarchy of desirable solutions. The best, cheapest, and surest solution is to eliminate or reduce the requirements for complex performance, whenever this can be done; and it can be done surprisingly often. Next best is to redistribute or reorganize responsibilities so that each job focuses on the types of functions that the incumbents in that position can best perform. Third best is the provision of job aids that provide the incumbent with all of the information and instructions he needs to accomplish a task at the time

he actually has to do it. Training is more costly and demanding than any of these, and is by virtue of continuing, inevitable personnel shifts a process that must be repeated over and over. To the extent that the three superior approaches have not been fully exploited, the training requirements will be needlessly encumbered.

Our own ideas on the important non-training solutions to be pursued have been presented throughout the preceding discussions. In Phase II, we systematically surveyed our respondents, to obtain their sense of the priorities for procedural change or other corrective action. From the Phase I data, we selected 17 topics that one or more of the Phase I respondents had flagged as a source of recurring problems. And we asked our Phase II interviewees to rank-order these with respect to their importance to the project manager's job, and then with respect to the urgency for reform.

Though there were some disagreements, a reasonable consensus emerged. This is shown in Table 1, which lists the 17 topics in perceived order of importance. In the collective view of these field personnel, this listing is an appropriate agenda for AID/W action.

The emphasis that we are giving to non-training solutions in these closing remarks is not meant to detract from the potential significance of the seminar series. In providing field personnel with a broader perspective than day-in day-out project operations, in giving them an opportunity to register and perhaps resolve concerns and doubts, in introducing them to new techniques and approaches, and in stimulating an exchange of ideas on problems to which no one has confident solutions, the seminar could and should make significant contributions. We wish simply to underscore the importance of looking as critically at the management system as at the manager's performance.

Table 1:

PM View of Priority Targets for Reform

A: Critical to Job; Reform is Urgent

1: Mechanisms for project approval
2-3: Procurement procedures
2-3: Procedures for project evaluation
4: Quality of direct-hire personnel

B: Critical to Job; Change is Needed

5-8: Opportunities for further training
5-8: Quality of contractor personnel
5-8: Financial monitoring of projects
5-8: AID/W - Field communications
9-11: Monitoring of contractor performance
9-11: Range of project manager's responsibilities
9-11: Relationships with host country officials
12: Relationships among donors

C: Not Critical to Job or Not a Serious Problem

13: USAID support functions
14: Responsibility for contractor's logistics
15: Support services from AID/W
16-17: Sector approach programming
16-17: Relationships among contractors