

SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS
OF A MEETING ON SOCIAL SCIENCE
RESEARCH AND THE COOPERATIVE
AGREEMENTS

Washington, D.C.
December 6-7, 1984

Harvard Institute for International Development
Cambridge, Massachusetts

These proceedings and the meeting on which they report were funded by the Office of Rural and Institutional Development, Bureau for Science and Technology, Agency for International Development, Project No. 931-1016.

INTRODUCTION

The cooperative agreement mechanism has had considerable success in accommodating the diverse interests of AID/Washington, missions, and cooperators in generating high quality research and technical assistance for rural development specialists and AID field missions. Recently, however, more stringent budget constraints have created pressures to make these mechanisms more efficient in producing high quality research and applied field work. This has caused stress in institutional relationships and produced a need for adjustments in expectations and procedures related to the contractual agreements.

In December 1984, a meeting was held in Washington D.C. to address these issues. The meeting on Social Science Research and the Cooperative Agreements sought to solicit recommendations from a group of Agency and cooperator representatives that would ease the current transition to new standards of performance as well as provide guidelines for more effective cooperation in the future. The meeting was attended by project officers and staff of the Office for Rural and Institutional Development and the Directorate for Human Resources, representatives of five cooperative agreements, and staff of the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). A list of participants appears in Annex C.

The discussion focused on issues raised in a report produced by HIID in October 1983.¹ Funded by the Office of Rural and Institutional

1. John M. Cohen, Merilee S. Grindle, John W. Thomas, Knowledge Building for Rural Development: Social Science and the Cooperative Agreements (Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1983).

Development, the report: (1) reviews the social science research output of nine cooperative agreements; and (2) makes recommendations for using the cooperative agreement as a mechanism for uniting basic and applied research with technical assistance to AID field missions. This report was used in the meeting as a point of reference to discuss three issues: (1) the quality of research produced under the cooperative agreement mechanism; (2) the dissemination of research output; and (3) the management of cooperative agreement institutional relationships. The following pages summarize the discussion and recommendations that emerged from the meeting.

There was considerable agreement among participants that cooperative agreements have yielded significant benefits to mission personnel, central bureaus, universities, and consulting firms. It was noted that cooperative agreements have: (1) facilitated the involvement of professional researchers in regional bureau and mission activities, providing them with focused, analytically useful studies that have assisted in the formulation of coherent plans for rural development interventions; (2) contributed to the expansion of general knowledge relating to rural development strategies, policies, programs, and projects through the publication of numerous books, articles, and monographs; (3) assisted in the development of professional networks for the exchange of ideas and information on focused topics; (4) increased professional capacity in universities and consulting firms by bringing researchers and advanced graduate students to the field; and (5) engendered a productive relationship among AID, host governments, and other donor organizations.

At the outset of the December meeting, Ruth Zagorin challenged participants to think creatively about the future of the cooperative agreement mechanism under stringent budgets and expanded expectations. In her remarks, she stressed that the future must be characterized by more focused research that produces generalizable results and employs the highest standards of methodological and analytical rigor. In addition, she noted, cooperators must continue to provide high quality applied technical assistance to field missions. Thus, notwithstanding the significance and scope of past accomplishments, coherent and explicit plans for increasing research quality and mission service must be developed if the cooperative agreements are to be maintained and strengthened.

In response to this challenge, a general consensus on the following points emerged at the meeting:

(1) The goals of applied research and knowledge building must and can be pursued simultaneously. Central to accomplishing these goals is the formulation of clear analytical objectives, explicit theoretical and methodological approaches, and workable strategies for generating research that has comparative value and that contributes to filling important gaps in existing knowledge.

(2) The pattern of inquiry should be linked to appropriate funding sources. That is, research undertaken in the "context of discovery" and resulting in a series of working hypotheses may be most appropriately funded by missions; more generalizable hypotheses chosen for closer examination and resulting in comparative insights and policy prescriptions might be most appropriately funded by core resources. AID project officers and cooperative agreement directors should collaborate in distinguishing among responsibilities to be assumed by various funding sources.

(3) Dissemination strategies should be made explicit, incorporating plans for a variety of written and verbal outputs designed to reach diverse audiences. Summarizing and disseminating substantive research should be the responsibility of the research institutions.

(4) AID must actively support dissemination strategies, providing earmarked funding, regular publication series, links between

cooperators and missions, and systematized information regarding the needs of AID officials.

(5) Work plans and on-going financial reports should be simplified and standardized. Reporting requirements should be clearly stated and pursued within a schedule agreed upon by AID and the cooperators.

(6) Institutional innovations must be undertaken to ensure continuity of research funding. AID and university administrators should meet to explore new modes of funding and modification of stipulations on the use of funds. Strategies to complement core resources with alternative funding sources should be devised.

CENTRAL ISSUES DISCUSSED

The participants at the workshop were asked to consider three issues:

(I) research quality; (II) dissemination strategies; and (III) management improvement. The following report is divided into sections corresponding to these issues and paralleling the organization of the meeting. Each section begins with a summary of the discussion at each session; an identification of more specific issues and recommendations follows. It is important to note that no vote was taken on these recommendations and that a variety of perspectives emerged in discussing several of them. Nevertheless, sufficient consensus about them emerged at the meeting to justify their inclusion here, particularly to preserve thinking on the issues identified by Ruth Zagorin at the outset of the meeting. A summary list of recommendations discussed during the meeting also appears in Annex A and the meeting schedule is reproduced in Annex B.

I. HOW CAN RESEARCH QUALITY BE IMPROVED?

The session began with a review of the findings presented in the HIID study of the research output of nine cooperative agreements. The most evident concern voiced by meeting participants was the frequently

conflicting demands placed on researchers in the cooperative agreement projects, such as the dual emphasis on applied technical assistance and focused, long term research. It was generally agreed that research quality often suffers from the dual demands made on the cooperators. A second major issue was to find ways of making social science research more useful to AID officials while maintaining the integrity of the research process and the intellectual independence of the researchers. Clearly, researchers have the methodological skills needed for high quality social science research, but they often feel forced to abandon strict adherence to research canons in order to accommodate demands for more immediate technical assistance.

A. Research Climate for the Social Sciences

Participants expressed two views regarding the extent to which AID is specifically interested in sponsoring social science research. Some argued that reduced levels of research funding have contributed to a stronger emphasis on policy related research and narrowly defined technical assistance. Diminished interest in the kind of social science research that characterized earlier cooperative agreements was attributed to the fall in large scale sector lending and a strengthening of support for the hard sciences. A more widely held view stressed the implications of diminishing stocks of accumulated research, arguing that there is an increasingly acute need for research leading to the accumulation of new social science knowledge. The complexity of rural development as a field has increasingly been acknowledged, as has the need for more specific intervention strategies. As a result, research requirements in the field are likely to increase rather than diminish in the future. This perspective was qualified

by the observation that future research also needs to be highly focused and relevant to mission needs. The future research agenda, it was argued, must be designed with the cooperation of, and in response to, the needs of field missions.² The challenge is to design such applied work so that it contributes to larger knowledge building efforts that have comparative value. There are no longer sufficient funds to allow for specific studies that do not have such linkages.

Recommendations:

1. More communication and collaboration among AID/Washington, missions, and cooperators should occur during the design of terms of reference for field research projects.
 - Early collaboration will facilitate the generation of research more directly relevant to mission concerns and promote better working relationships during the field work.
 - However, this process necessarily places demands on management efficiency and will require AID/Washington and missions to be able to specify clearly the research topics that are most relevant to their needs and to set priorities among them
 - AID must assist the cooperators to find field research opportunities by facilitating links between them and the missions. A central record of regional meetings of directors and rural development officers should be kept, noting the current concerns of practitioners.
 - Mission staff may be reluctant or unable to engage actively in policy dialogue with host country governments because of lack of expertise and contacts. This is an area in which the cooperative agreement projects can make significant contributions.

2. In regard to future research issues, see the other products of the USAID-HIID project: John M. Cohen, Merilee S. Grindle, and John W. Thomas, Future-Oriented Agenda for Research on Rural Development (Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1983); Merilee S. Grindle and S. Tjip Walker, eds., Priorities for Rural Development Research (Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1984); S. Tjip Walker, Summary Proceedings of the Workshop on Rural Development (Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1983).

2. Innovative cost-saving mechanisms should be developed to lower applied research costs and assist missions in specifying research needs.
 - Host country social science institutes and local academics should be drawn upon to assist missions in defining research issues.
 - In some cases, rapid appraisal techniques may prove to be more cost effective than extensive base line studies. Where appropriate, such techniques should be considered as useful tools to refine research needs.

B. Combining Technical Assistance and Research Demands

There was general consensus that mission, AID/Washington, and university interests often coincide and that the cooperative agreements have been an extremely useful mechanism for accommodating the varied professional interests of these groups. However, the relative weight each group places on research outputs and technical assistance products varies, causing divergent emphases and expectations. Two main issues emerged during the discussion of this theme.

First, representatives of the cooperative agreements indicated that researchers face problems in integrating the demands for time-bounded mission assistance with high quality social science research. Many felt that AID's new emphasis on mission related technical assistance by cooperators comes at the cost of opportunity to pursue more general state-of-the-art research. Similarly, determining and complying with the political needs and bureaucratic procedures of regional bureaus and missions has sometimes proved taxing to the cooperators and costly in terms of scarce professional time. Some participants argued that the ambiguities of researcher responsibilities are often compounded when academic involvement begins after a project has already been initiated. This often confines the

researchers to the task of responding to the research project rather than actively participating in its design. It was also noted that technical assistance and purely "reactive" research tends to be short term; this context does not lend itself to the long term opportunities required for high quality research.

The second principal issue raised during the discussion was the extent to which research quality is compromised by the need to design research projects in a way that makes them attractive to particular missions so that they are more likely to be funded. This issue generated discussion of the funding constraints present in the cooperative agreements. The utility of disaggregating technical assistance and applied research was explored, and there was lively debate about the perception of an inherent conflict between these two objectives. Some participants argued that research can be effectively conducted as projects unfold, without compromising either the research or the objectives of the project. Others argued that this relationship was stressful at best and suggested that technical assistance might be formally separated from focused research efforts. But it was also clear that performing mission focused service was a prerequisite for obtaining support for more comparative knowledge building exercises.

Recommendations:

3. Research contributing to the core focus of cooperative agreements is more likely to occur if "directive" rather than "reactive" research strategies are followed. This is more likely to occur when Recommendation 1 is followed.
4. Sustained research activity in a single geographic area is desirable. It is more conducive to high quality research and allows cooperators to avoid the complexities of recruiting and funding diverse sets of research personnel with specialized disciplinary and language skills.

5. Project evaluations promote knowledge building and core cooperative agreement objectives when they are focused on understanding important processes of rural development as these are relevant to the project. Evaluations undertaken with the intention of post-hoc justification of the project do not make such contributions.
6. The pattern of inquiry should be reflected in the source of funding support.
 - Research addressing mission-identified problems should result in the generation of "context of discovery" working hypotheses and can be most effectively funded primarily by the missions.
 - More rigorous knowledge building research conducted in the "context of justification" should begin with a carefully selected set of broader hypotheses for comparative study. This research should yield generalizable results and policy relevant conclusions. Such efforts are most appropriately funded primarily by AID/Washington.
 - The implementation of these suggestions requires a clear and timely definition of research interests and mission priorities within AID. For their part, academics must have a clear appreciation of important gaps in existing knowledge that need to be addressed through cooperative agreement research. They also need to have the experience to recognize when an applied research task has potential to contribute to filling gaps in existing knowledge.

C. Improving the Methodological Quality of Research

There was overall consensus that there is a need for more rigorous methodological standards in research output. However, it was recognized that previous lapses in meeting the strictest standards of methodological excellence often resulted from a research context that stresses reactive research. More specifically, it was observed that research often reflects a spectrum of objectives, including systematic understanding, policy clarification, and advocacy. These objectives tend to encourage a blending of normative and analytical concerns. Some topics, such as "participation" or "women in development," particularly lend themselves to a blurring of

these boundaries. A tendency to over-generalize and to obscure relationships between data and conclusions has at times led to simplified portrayals and has inhibited the ability to assess the generalizability of findings. Sampling methods are often not specified, hindering the replication and evaluation of findings.

Recommendations:

7. Research designs should include explicit statements that justify the research strategies followed.
 - The rationale for the selection of specific methodological approaches must be explained and the limitations of data and methods must be discussed. Where appropriate, the utility of alternative methodologies or different data sets should be spelled out.
 - In cases where questionnaires or other survey tools are used, sampling techniques, the operationalization of key concepts, and the representativeness of the population must be discussed. Questionnaires should be appended to the body of the research report.
 - Clear distinctions must be made between the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of both the research design and the final product. The primary assumptions informing policy prescriptions based on the research findings should be clearly stated.
8. Mechanisms to ensure a high standard of research quality should be adopted. There was considerable debate regarding the most effective way of implementing this general recommendation.
 - One suggestion was that a committee for research standards should be convened. Half the membership should be drawn from academic institutions not involved in the cooperative agreements; half of the members should be AID officials. The purpose of the committee would be to assist project managers in resolving the methodological tensions and constraints faced by researchers serving both their core objectives and mission needs. This group would also discuss the possibility of providing formal guidelines for standardizing the quality of scholarship in the cooperative agreements. Supporters of this suggestion indicated that such a committee would fill the needs of the cooperative agreements and relieve AID officials of undue strain in monitoring research.

- Others argued against such a committee, stating that methodological choices are the primary prerogative and responsibility of cooperative agreement contractors and that the diversity of design and methodologies prohibit such standardization.
9. The extent of methodological description should be commensurate with the type of report to be produced and the audience to which it is directed. For example, final project reports should include the most detailed discussion, while reports designed for senior AID officials should include only a brief indication of methodological questions to alert these readers to the basis on which particular recommendations are made.
 10. Different formats, standards, and explicit statements of purpose will help separate the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of the research. More attention should be given to distinguishing formally between different types of reports and standardizing formats to be used.

II. HOW CAN RESEARCH BEST BE DISSEMINATED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF PRACTITIONERS?

In the session on issues of dissemination, there was general agreement that much valuable information for rural development practitioners is generated through the research undertaken by the cooperative agreement projects. It was less clear, however, that the most effective methods for the dissemination of the research findings were being followed.

Considerable interest focused on capturing and standardizing the more successful strategies that have been used by various projects.

A. Responsibility for Dissemination:

Considerable discussion surrounded the question of who should be primarily responsible for the dissemination of research. Some argued that each project should design and implement a dissemination program as part of its general contract with AID. Others indicated that this is not possible without specific funding allocations for dissemination. In the discussion of solutions to this problem, it was agreed that the use of independent

contractors for disseminating research would compromise the original emphasis and thrust of the research. It was agreed, therefore, that researchers should be primarily responsible for synthesizing the findings of their work for various audiences. There was also general consensus that AID should share some basic responsibilities for dissemination, including potential users, specifying the needs of AID and mission officials, and providing centralized mechanisms for dissemination. Funding for dissemination was also a major issue in the discussion as this is generally the first service to be discarded when budgets become more stringent.

Recommendations:

11. Primary responsibility for synthesis and dissemination of research products should rest with the cooperators.
 - Explicit strategies for dissemination should be included in the design of the cooperative agreements and in specific research projects for missions.
 - AID should play a supportive role at all stages of the process, providing lists of mission and bureau personnel to be reached.
 - AID should participate in designing various formats for dissemination that would best serve the needs of various audiences. It is the responsibility of AID to contribute to the knowledge of cooperators concerning the consumers of research. It should provide links between researchers and mission personnel that facilitate the effective communication of research findings.
12. Funding for dissemination should be provided as a distinct budget line item in the cooperative agreement and mission project contract. It was suggested that mission funds should be used for dissemination in the field; universities should fund dissemination to the broad academic community; and core funding should be used for state-of-the-art papers and monograph publications.

A. Types of Dissemination: Needs and Objectives:

Dissemination strategies must respond to a wide range of users.

Audiences for research include senior agency decision makers, congressional

staff, host country officials, managers, technicians, academics, students, and private individuals. All the participants agreed that senior AID officials should have more access to the findings of research, in part to appreciate the utility of social science research and the importance of supporting it. There was less agreement on the extent to which dissemination to technical personnel and missions needed improvement. Some participants were convinced that technical assistance has proved to be a successful means through which to disseminate the results of research at the mission level. The training of local practitioners and graduate students during the delivery of technical assistance was considered to be a particularly useful long-term strategy for dissemination of research findings. Others argued that practitioners face a lack of access to research, although they are increasingly able to inquire about the availability of particular types of information because of improved communications technology.

Recommendations:

13. AID should conduct an in-house survey to determine the needs of agency personnel and ascertain the usefulness of different types of research formats.
14. Researchers should give greater priority to converting research findings into focused guidelines for practitioners.
15. Several formats for presenting research are needed. These should be matched to the different types of users.
16. A final set of all research papers and reports generated by cooperative agreements should be distributed to libraries in the United States and host countries. Cost effective strategies should be followed; host country libraries should be presented with relevant material free of charge while others should pay for publications on a cost recovery basis.

17. Dissemination in host countries is best accomplished by training local researchers. More emphasis must be placed on institution building as a long term strategy.

C. Types of Dissemination: Formats and Mechanisms

There was considerable agreement that dissemination strategies must be explicit and must become standard aspects of cooperative agreement project requirements. The development of such strategies requires the cooperation of all parties to the cooperative agreements.

Recommendations:

18. Cooperative agreements should produce state-of-the-art papers and books at the conclusion of the project as a matter of course. These research outputs will serve the purpose of permanent dissemination to the broad university and professional audience and consolidate existing knowledge. These research outputs should be undertaken under the auspices of core funding.
19. News releases should be provided periodically, highlighting the accomplishments of the cooperative agreement projects and informing the general public of its activities. There was considerable debate on this suggestion.
 - Some participants felt that this strategy could taint the type of research undertaken. Others believed that the types of breakthroughs which may be newsworthy are rare in social science research for rural development. Another view was that a consideration for the newsworthiness of projects might in fact be an integral part of project selection criteria. It was suggested that this concern may be built into the project design from the outset.
20. It was agreed that a future meeting must be convened to systematize the various categories of audiences and formats for research dissemination.
21. Lists of publications, papers, and annotated notes must be provided to a central AID/Washington location that is known to mission field personnel.
22. A central publication paralleling the IBRD Staff Working Paper series should be developed by AID/Washington. The best papers produced by cooperators should be reprinted on a regular basis in a document with a unique logo.

23. Seminars, workshops, and other forms of oral dissemination are extremely effective. These types of dissemination channels should be expanded as part of the responsibilities of the cooperative agreements for disseminating new research results.
24. Consumer information networks are necessary for the effective use of any dissemination strategy. AID should provide target lists and research needs summaries for various types of users within the agency.
25. Translations of reports into local languages should be the norm. Local dissemination has proven to be an extremely effective long term strategy.
26. Information programs should be designed so that host country nationals become more aware of the cooperative agreements and become informed about the various sources of information available on rural development.
27. Bibliographic compilations related to the cooperator's research focus should be published regularly. These documents should receive wide circulation.
28. Electronic telecommunications are a possible mechanism for communication and dissemination. There was some disagreement about the extent to which telecommunications could serve as a successful dissemination tool. It was generally agreed that they are often more useful as a mechanism for inquiring about information.

III. HOW CAN MANAGEMENT OF THE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS BE IMPROVED?

The session on management issues began by recognizing that the cooperative agreement mechanism has improved the quantity and quality of communication between researchers and AID. The cooperative agreement projects have also begun to respond creatively to shrinking budgets and changing donor community needs. However, these adjustments have yet to be formalized in ways that are acceptable to all participants. There was general consensus that institutional innovations are necessary for the smooth functioning of cooperative agreements in the future.

A. Procedures

Considerable controversy surrounded a discussion of the purpose and utility of work plans as a planning and evaluative mechanism. A number of participants stated that the increased emphasis on work plans has: (1) created time allocation and efficiency problems for researchers; (2) engendered counterproductive interference from bureaus and missions; and (3) held project directors responsible for things beyond their control. It was suggested that substantive feedback and final product evaluation are more useful as evaluative and monitoring devices.

Another group viewed the problem of work plans differently, arguing that they have provided a cost-effective mechanism for insuring accountability and evaluation. Consequently, they should be viewed as a necessary part of effective cooperative agreements and should be accepted as a matter of course. After discussion of these divergent views, a general consensus emerged that work plans should be preserved, but with some of the improvements suggested below.

Two other points were raised in the session. First, current institutional means for insuring researcher participation in project design were deemed to be inadequate.³ Second, it was noted that the university overhead funding structure did not provide incentives for entrepreneurial innovation within the cooperative agreement mechanism.

Recommendations

29. Work plans are necessary, but they must be simplified and standardized.
 - AID must communicate the requirements of the annual work plans and other contractual obligations clearly and explicitly.

- A firm schedule should be established for work plans. All parties must enforce adherence to the schedule.
- 30. Input budgeting is necessary, but evaluative processes must emphasize the quality of outputs and final products.
- 31. Piecemeal demands and sudden changes in contracts are disruptive and counterproductive. The terms of the agreements should be stable throughout the duration of the contract.
- 32. The recommendations listed above can only be successfully implemented within a context of close cooperation and mutual understanding of each others' needs and constraints.

B. Continuity and Consistency:

Many participants felt that frequent changes in AID personnel, regulations, and emphases have created confusion and have hindered the progress of research activities. It was noted that changes in contracting procedures have been particularly disruptive. Moreover, the dual responsibilities of technical assistance and research place considerable stress on management efficiency. Several participants argued that present management capabilities and procedures compromise research because funding is short term and its renewal is often uncertain. A second position was that long term commitments and flexibility are no longer possible under present funding constraints. The example of effective and efficient research in the physical sciences was cited as evidence that research quality and short term funding can be combined within the university context.

A related issue was the extent to which increased AID direction of research activities compromises the independence of universities. It was argued that individual researchers need flexibility to pursue an appropriate

research agenda. In addition, differences between the institutional arrangements and demands of AID and the universities often inhibit coherent research design.

Finally, there was consensus that institutional innovations that provide continuity and address the three issues discussed above should be undertaken in the context of preserving the dual emphasis on applied field assistance and knowledge building research.

Recommendations:

33. Technical assistance and research should be joined in five year general agreements.
 - Consulting firms can be used for some technical assistance functions; this enables the research focus to be maintained while fulfilling the obligation to provide more short term assistance. The overall objective of knowledge building can be met by adopting a selective approach to mission needs for technical assistance.
34. Innovative models for combining technical assistance and research within the university context should be explored.
 - The Harvard Institute for International Development and the joint career model used by the Department of Agriculture were suggested as possible options.
35. Long term funding possibilities should be explored in order to ameliorate the problem of continuity.
 - The establishment of endowments that receive partial funding from overhead costs was suggested.
 - Limiting the number of cooperative agreements to topics of high knowledge building priority and giving them increased funding support was also suggested.

11

ANNEX A

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More communication and collaboration among AID/Washington, missions, and cooperators should occur during the design of terms of reference for field research projects.
 - Early collaboration will facilitate the generation of research more directly relevant to mission concerns and promote better working relationships during the field work.
 - However, this process necessarily places demands on management efficiency and will require AID/Washington and missions to be able to specify clearly the research topics that are most relevant to their needs and to set priorities among them
 - AID must assist the cooperators to find field research opportunities by facilitating links between them and the missions. A central record of regional meetings of directors and rural development officers should be kept, noting the current concerns of practitioners.
 - Mission staff may be reluctant or unable to engage actively in policy dialogue with host country governments because of lack of expertise and contacts. This is an area in which the cooperative agreement projects can make significant contributions.
2. Innovative cost-saving mechanisms should be developed to lower applied research costs and assist missions in specifying research needs.
 - Host country social science institutes and local academics should be drawn upon to assist missions in refining research issues.
 - In some cases, rapid appraisal techniques should be used in cases where they may prove to be more cost effective than extensive base line studies.
3. Research contributing to the core focus of cooperative agreements is more likely to occur if "directive" rather than "reactive" research strategies are followed. This is more likely to occur when Recommendation 1 is followed.

4. Sustained research activity in a single geographic area is desirable. It is more conducive to high quality research and allows cooperators to avoid the complexities of recruiting and funding diverse sets of research personnel with specialized disciplinary and language skills.
5. Project evaluations promote knowledge building and core cooperative agreement objectives when they are focused on understanding important processes of rural development as these are relevant to the project. Evaluations undertaken with the intention of post-hoc justification of the project do not make such contributions.
6. The pattern of inquiry should be reflected in the source of funding support.
 - Research addressing mission-identified problems should result in the generation of "context of discovery" working hypotheses and can be most effectively funded primarily by the missions.
 - More rigorous knowledge building research conducted in the "context of justification" should begin with a carefully selected set of broader hypotheses for comparative study. This research should yield generalizable results and policy relevant conclusions. Such efforts are most appropriately funded primarily by AID/Washington.
 - The implementation of these suggestions requires a clear and timely definition of research interests and mission priorities within AID. For their part, academics must have a clear appreciation of important gaps in existing knowledge that need to be addressed through cooperative agreement research. They also need to have the experience to recognize when an applied research task has potential to contribute to filling gaps in existing knowledge.
7. Research designs should include explicit statements that justify the research strategies followed.
 - The rationale for the selection of specific methodological approaches must be explained and the limitations of data and methods must be discussed. Where appropriate, the utility of alternative methodologies or different data sets should be spelled out.
 - In cases where questionnaires or other survey tools are used, sampling techniques, the operationalization of key concepts, and the representativeness of the population must be discussed. Questionnaires should be appended to the body of the research report.

- Clear distinctions must be made between the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of both the research design and the final product. The primary assumptions informing policy prescriptions based on the research findings should be clearly stated.
8. Mechanisms to ensure a high standard of research quality should be adopted. There was considerable debate regarding the most effective way of implementing this general recommendation.
- One suggestion was that a committee for research standards should be convened. Half the membership should be drawn from academic institutions not involved in the cooperative agreements; half of the members should be AID officials. The purpose of the committee would be to assist project managers in resolving the methodological tensions and constraints faced by researchers serving both their core objectives and mission needs. This group would also discuss the possibility of providing formal guidelines for standardizing the quality of scholarship in the cooperative agreements. Supporters of this suggestion indicated that such a committee would fill the needs of the cooperative agreements and relieve AID officials of undue strain in monitoring research.
 - Others argued against such a committee, stating that methodological choices are the primary prerogative and responsibility of cooperative agreement contractors and that the diversity of design and methodologies prohibit such standardization.
9. The extent of methodological description should be commensurate with the type of report to be produced and the audience to which it is directed. For example, final project reports should include the most detailed discussion, while reports designed for senior AID officials should include only a brief indication of methodological questions to alert these readers to the basis on which particular recommendations are made.
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11. Primary responsibility for synthesis and dissemination of research products should rest with the cooperators.
- Explicit strategies for dissemination should be included in the design of the cooperative agreements and in specific research projects for missions.
 - AID should play a supportive role at all stages of the process, providing lists of mission and bureau personnel to be reached.

- AID should participate in designing various formats for dissemination that would best serve the needs of various audiences. It is the responsibility of AID to contribute to the knowledge of cooperators concerning the consumers of research. It should provide links between researchers and mission personnel that facilitate the effective communication of research findings.
12. Funding for dissemination should be provided as a distinct budget line item in the cooperative agreement and mission project contract. It was suggested that mission funds should be used for dissemination in the field; universities should fund dissemination to the broad academic community; and core funding should be used for state-of-the-art papers and monograph publications.
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 17. Dissemination in host countries is best accomplished by training local researchers. More emphasis must be placed on institution building as a long term strategy.
 18. Cooperative agreements should produce state-of-the-art papers and books at the conclusion of the project as a matter of course. These research outputs will serve the purpose of permanent dissemination to the broad university and professional audience and consolidate existing knowledge. These research outputs should be undertaken under the auspices of core funding.
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 - Some participants felt that this strategy could taint the type of research undertaken. Others believed that the types of

breakthroughs which may be newsworthy are rare in social science research for rural development. Another view was that a consideration for the newsworthiness of projects might in fact be an integral part of project selection criteria. It was suggested that this concern may be built into the project design from the outset.

20. It was agreed that a future meeting must be convened to systematize the various categories of audiences and formats for research dissemination.
21. Lists of publications, papers, and annotated notes must be provided to a central AID/Washington location that is known to mission field personnel.
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28. Electronic telecommunications are a possible mechanism for communication and dissemination. There was some disagreement about the extent to which telecommunications could serve as a successful dissemination tool. It was generally agreed that they are often more useful as a mechanism for inquiring about information.
29. Work plans are necessary, but they must be simplified and standardized.

- AID must communicate the requirements of the annual work plans and other contractual obligations clearly and explicitly.
 - A firm schedule should be established for work plans. All parties must enforce adherence to the schedule.
30. Input budgeting is necessary, but evaluative processes must emphasize the quality of outputs and final products.
31. Piecemeal demands and sudden changes in contracts are disruptive and counterproductive. The terms of the agreements should be stable throughout the duration of the contract.
32. The recommendations listed above can only be successfully implemented within a context of close cooperation and mutual understanding of each others' needs and constraints.
33. Technical assistance and research should be joined in five year general agreements.
- Consulting firms can be used for some technical assistance functions; this enables the research focus to be maintained while fulfilling the obligation to provide more short term assistance. The overall objective of knowledge building can be met by adopting a selective approach to mission needs for technical assistance.
34. Innovative models for combining technical assistance and research within the university context should be explored.
- The Harvard Institute for International Development and the joint career model used by the Department of Agriculture were suggested as possible options.
35. Long term funding possibilities should be explored in order to ameliorate the problem of continuity.
- The establishment of endowments that receive partial funding from overhead costs was suggested.
 - Limiting the number of cooperative agreements to topics of high knowledge building priority and giving them increased funding support was also suggested.

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2:30 - 5:30 Session III: How Can Research Best Be Disseminated to
Serve the Needs of Practitioners?

2:30 - 3:15 Panel
Introduction & Summary of the Problem
- Grindle, HIID

Perspectives & Suggestions
- Liedholm, MSU

Perspectives & Suggestions
- Barton, AID

3:15 - 3:30 Coffee

3:30 - 5:00 Discussion

Friday, December 7

9:00 - 10:00 Session IV: Management Issues and Cooperative Agreements

9:00 - 9:30 Panel
Introduction and Summary of the Problem
- O'Donnell, AID

Perspectives and Suggestions
- Brown, LTC

Perspectives and Suggestions
- Chetwynd, AID

9:30 - 10:00 Discussion

10:00 - 10:15 Coffee

10:15 - 12:30 Session V: Wrap Up Discussion - Consolidation of the
Group's Suggestions for
Improvements in Cooperative
Agreement Operations

12:30 Lunch

ANNEX C

PARTICIPANTS

MEETING ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Washington, D.C.

December 6-7, 1984

USAID

Donald Anderson
David Atwood
Clifford Barton
Eric Chetwynd
Kenneth Kornher
Robert McClusky
Richard Meyers
Norman Nicholson
John O'Donnell
Christopher Russell
David Sprague
Kenneth Swanberg
Ruth Zagorin

Representatives of Cooperative
Agreement Projects

Dale Adams, Ohio State University
Marion Brown, Land Tenure Center
Carl Liedholm, Michigan State
University
Michael Weber, Michigan State
University
Louise White, for NASPAA-DPMC

HIID

John Cohen
Merilee Grindle
John Thomas
Donald Warwick