

IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERBUREAU "WORK GROUP" BRIEFING BOOK

Prepared for the "Work Group"
Conference on February 17, 1981

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

This one day interbureau conference has two objectives:

1. Identify the Evaluation Task Force recommendations that require further clarification or definition and make these recommendations "actionable"
2. For each "actionable" recommendation, identify the management level and unit(s) that will be responsible for implementing specific recommendations.

To facilitate the work group discussions, the following types of papers are included in this briefing book:

- Brief ISSUES AND DECISIONS sheets for each recommendation. (These are presented in a "logical" sequence, rather than in the order shown in the Task Force report.)
- Background materials -- copies of key documents you may wish to review.

Per the "draft implementation work plan", discussed on 1/27, the interbureau work group will function for only the length of time required to accomplish the two objectives listed above. Thus, if we complete our work on items (1) and (2) on 2/17, we will cease to exist as a work group at 5:00 that evening. If we do not, we will schedule such additional sessions as are necessary to complete these tasks.

Once the work group has accomplished its objectives, a second stage of implementation will begin. Its elements include:

1. Informing management levels and unit(s) of the implementation actions for which they are to be responsible;
2. Preparation of action plans by these levels/units, and implementation work against those plans, and
3. Monitoring and assessment of implementation, and preparation of progress reports and a final report, by PPC.

AGENDA

- o Review Conference Objectives
- o Agenda Comments, Questions, Modifications
- o Address Issues and Make Decisions

(The work group will proceed to examine each of the ISSUE AND DECISION sheets twice during the conference. The first time through we will attempt to answer the substantive questions. When the substantive questions are answered, we will start over to address the action assignment questions.)

The order in which recommendations will be addressed is proposed as:

- o INFORMATION NEEDS AND EVALUATIONS THAT MEET THESE NEEDS:
 - Recommendation 3
 - Recommendation 2
 - Recommendation 9
- o EVALUATION PLANNING
 - Recommendation 6
 - Recommendation 5
 - Recommendation 8
- o THE DISSEMINATION AND UTILIZATION OF EVALUATION FINDINGS:
 - Recommendation 7
 - Recommendation 4
- o EVALUATION TRAINING
 - Recommendation 10
- o ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EVALUATION CHANGES
 - Recommendation 11
 - Recommendation 1
 - Recommendation 12

SUPPLEMENTARY CONFERENCE NOTES

- o We will break for lunch at 1:00 p.m.
- o We will reconvene at 2:30 p.m. in Room 3886 N.S.
- o The BACKGROUND MATERIALS included for your convenience are:
 - Evaluation Task Force Report
 - Unsigned Version of the "Monday Group" Meeting Minutes
 - Summary of Mission Responses to the Evaluation Task Force Report
 - Responses to Individual Mission Cables (Completed to Date)
 - First Implementation Progress Report (with Draft Implementation Work Plan attached)

PPC/E/PES wishes to acknowledge the assistance it received from NE/DP/PAE in preparing this briefing book.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS

RECOMMENDATION 3 : The Task Force recommends that "all evaluation work should be responsive to clearly stated objectives," to meet specific information needs at the Mission, Bureau and Agency levels. To accomplish this evaluation users should be involved in evaluation design and evaluation scopes should define the evaluation's purpose and questions.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

o What is an appropriate process for identifying the "specific information needs" in Missions, Bureaus and at an overall Agency level?*

Note: The Task Force used an interview procedure which turned up a series of needs, but they were not highly specific. The needs they found were:

- Identification and design information (universally needed)
- Policy information (AID/W needed; Missions can use)
- Sector and Country Program information (universally needed)
- Evaluation performance and utilization of evaluation findings information (A/AID needed)
- Project redesign/management information (Missions needed)

o How would an "appropriate process" be institutionalized?

o Do we intend that the final "users" of evaluation "actively participate" in evaluation design, or simply specify their needs occasionally?

o Is there a difference between specifying information needs and formulating evaluation questions? Do we, as an Agency, know how to do each of these tasks, or is some sort of guidance on/training in formulating evaluation questions needed? By whom?

o What do we mean "scopes should state the purpose of an evaluation" -- that the evaluation should answer the questions posed, or what we intend to do with evaluation findings once we have them?

* This question is not an evaluation planning question, evaluation plans are the vehicle for conveying what we know about our information needs. The question asks about the process for figuring out what those needs are.

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 2 : The Task Force recommends that the Agency place greater emphasis on assessing impact, extracting lessons learned from its experiences, and on addressing issues of "policy making, program formulation, and project identification and design".

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters:

- o Are there any "standard issues" that repeatedly come up in "policy making, program formulation, and project identification and design" that can be identified and systematically incorporated into evaluations? If not, is there an appropriate process for identifying them annually, in project evaluation plans, in specific evaluation designs, etc.?
- o What kinds of "issues" come up or should be considered the province of different management levels -- missions, bureaus, etc.?
- o Is it reasonable to expect the management levels where "issues" come up to manage the evaluations that address these issues, or do different management levels need to support each other to ensure that all "issues" are addressed through evaluations?
- o Does this recommendation suggest that we need "policy evaluations" and/or "program evaluations" to supplement our "project evaluations"?
- o What do we mean by "lessons learned"? When is an evaluation finding a lesson and when isn't it? When we say "lessons learned" -- who (what levels) should learn these lessons? Are "lessons" simply statements, or do we intend that actions follow the designation of an evaluation finding as a "lesson"?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 9 : The Task Force recommends continuation of the Administrator's impact evaluations. They should be used as appropriate to meet specific information needs, and integrated into the Agency evaluation system through the planning processes.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o What kinds of information needs are best addressed by impact evaluations?
- o Are we being well served by our current ideas about what an "impact" evaluation is and the way we do them? Is the emphasis we now place on these (and the level of effort) appropriate for meeting the information needs these evaluations best serve?
- o Are we using the best approaches for identifying impact evaluation topics and projects?
- o Is the timing of our identification of topics and projects appropriate?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 6 : The Task Force recommends an expanded evaluation planning process in which key policy and program issues which must be addressed over a three to five year period are identified and incorporated into an evaluation plan that looks two years into the future, and is subject to annual review and revision.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o What is the basic process we should use to develop such plans? A "bottom-up" -- project to mission to bureau to Agency -- approach or something else?
- o What elements should these plans include?
- o To what degree and in what way are costs to be taken into account in these evaluation plans?
- o Should uniform plan formats be developed and used?
- o What level of effort/cost should go into these plans -- the first year, in subsequent (update) years?
- o What management levels should be involved in the review and approval of evaluation plans?
- o What would need to be considered in an "annual review and revision" process, and how might that process be carried out?
- o When should plans be developed? Should we set an annual date for production of an Agency plan, and work a schedule backward from that date -- or do something different?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 5 : The Task Force recommends abolishing rigid requirements for project evaluations at regular intervals or fixed times. Instead, it proposes that evaluations be carried out only on certain projects where the information to be derived seems particularly important and valuable. These evaluations should be comparable to what A.I.D. calls "special" and impact evaluations. Project and Mission managers should use evaluation techniques as needed to insure that project designs are sound and project events are occurring as planned, even though formal evaluations may not be scheduled/required as frequently.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o By what process will we decide which are the "certain projects" are that require evaluation?
- o Just what do we mean by "special" evaluation in practice. If evaluations are to be comparable to these, and impact evaluations, we need to define fairly clearly what is to be covered and the quality (precision/validity/reliability) of the answers we expect.
- o Are we sending project and mission managers adrift when it comes to non-formal evaluations? Will we help them? How, or by what process will we know whether they need help, when they need it, and what help is appropriate?
- o What specific actions are needed to abolish the requirements we want to drop?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 8 : The Task Force recommends that the practice of including evaluation sections in Project Papers be continued. Evaluation timing and budgets should be included in these sections.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o Evaluation sections in PPs are highly varied. What do we want these evaluation sections to contain?
- o How exact should evaluation schedules and budgets be in these sections?
- o Do we envision a process that says yes/no to the question: Is this a "good" PP evaluation section? What would that process be?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 7 : The Task Force recommends that efforts be made to ensure that evaluation information is effectively integrated into various planning, design, and approval processes. As needed, Agency guidance should be revised.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o What does the term "integrated into" mean to us?
- o Do we intend evaluation information to be "integrated into" policies and programs as well as projects?
- o What process do we envision for this "integration":
 - in projects?
 - in programs?
 - in policies?
 - at an identification stage?
 - during formal design?
 - with regard to approval?
- o What "carrots and sticks" will be needed to make this "integration" occur? Are they plausible/realistic, or just pipe dreams?
- o Without incentives, what are our realistic expectations? If they are low, what should we do?
- o What guidance needs to be considered -- only Handbook 3? bureau guidance? mission guidance?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 4 : The Task Force recommends improved synthesis and dissemination of evaluation findings. The Task Force further recommends that some form of evaluation summary report be retained, but modified to encourage substantive reporting, and DS/DIU should collect and process this information, issuing an annual abstract of completed evaluations.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

- o There is a difference between summarization and synthesis. When we boil down evaluations which do we do today? If we are summarizing rather than synthesizing, do we know how to do the latter? If not, where do we begin? Or are summaries good enough?
- o Do our evaluations produce the raw material needed to develop either good summaries or a synthesis? If not, will they in the future? What processes or system of evaluation checks and balances will ensure this?
- o When we speak of synthesis is our referent individual evaluations or are we expecting that A.I.D. will synthesize the findings of groups of evaluations? If so, by what process would we define the "groups" we wanted examined together?
- o What would a new "evaluation summary form" cover? Would all Agency evaluations use the same form? Impact evaluations too?
- o Does "substantive reporting" suggest that evaluation data be included or just findings, conclusions and recommendations?
- o Will DS/DIU do door-to-door collecting, or will we send evaluations to them? On paper we now do the latter. In practice we don't do it well.
- o Would DS/DIU keypunch information from the "evaluation summary report" as is, or abstract it? (There are some reasons to believe that better abstracts are produced by authors than by third parties.)
- o Some bureaus are now preparing evaluation abstracts or summaries, would these be included in DS/DIU's annual compilation? Instead of or in addition to DS/DIU abstracts?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 10 : The Task Force recommends a greater emphasis on evaluation's importance in A.I.D.'s training programs, specifically IDI courses and the Program Design and Evaluation course. A review of these courses should be undertaken that examines the degree to which the curriculum ensures that officers understand the role of evaluation in Agency processes, their role in the evaluation process, and basic evaluation techniques.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o What should be the "role" of Agency officers in the evaluation process?
- o What are the minimum set of "basic evaluation techniques" every A.I.D. officer should know about? Should they not only know of these techniques but also know how to apply them?
- o Should we limit our training resources to A.I.D. personnel? What would be the implications of such a decision?
- o Should we really change the IDI course, or just send all IDI's to an improved version of the PDE course instead?
- o What about other A.I.D. training courses -- orientation, etc. --- should these "teach" the Agency's views on evaluation, the role of Agency officers in evaluations, etc.?
- o If a better PDE took longer would staff attend? What length is tolerable?
- o Do we teach PDE often enough? Here? Overseas?
- o If training course attendees were given "tests" of some sort, we'd have a better idea of what they knew about evaluation -- and wouldn't have to wait till they had problems in the field to provide more help? Are grades or some form of ranking class performance an acceptable idea?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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RECOMMENDATION 11 : The Task Force recommends that the Agency take steps to eliminate constraints to the implementation of a more effective evaluation system (e.g., the implications of evaluation of project design may be more front-end work, offices such as DS/DIU may not be able to carry out the recommendations that involve them due to budget constraints, etc.) and review the implications of changes in the evaluation system for project monitoring.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o The Task Force identified illustrative constraints. How do we develop a full list?
- o What implications do budget, staff and contractor cut backs under the new administration have for the effort to implement the Evaluation Task Force recommendations?
- o What are our priorities? If we have to put some things on "hold", what goes first, second, etc.? (A rank ordering of the priority of the 12 recommendations is what is required here.)
- o What are the bureau level implications of the Task Force recommendations? Right now bureaus differ quite a bit in terms of the scale of their bureau evaluation effort (staff and what that staff can accomplish). Are some bureaus going to be able to act and others not? If so, what should we do for the constrained bureaus?
- o Just exactly what do we now see as the distinction between evaluation and monitoring? We need definitions of both and we need a way of thinking, and acting, in terms of what some of us are starting to call " the evaluative elements of monitoring that won't be part of our evaluation plans/ system if we proceed on the Task Force recommendations".
- o Given our definitions and expectations, what support do we owe to the "new style" monitoring we envision?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 1 : The Task Force recommends that the Administrator continue his personal involvement in evaluation, thereby reinforcing among senior managers a concern for the generation and use of evaluation material.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

o With a new Administrator, can we expect this recommendation to be taken up automatically, or are there things we need to do to help make it happen? What specifically do we want?

-- Do we want the Administrator to continue to hear oral reports of the impact evaluation findings?

-- Do we want the same treatment for selected bureau evaluations? (If yes, how would we nominate candidate evaluations for the Administrator to orally review?)

-- Do we want to recommend that the Administrator require evaluation support for project approval decisions he makes?

-- What else falls in this category?

o Are there other things that should be done to reinforce a concern for the generation and use of evaluation material:

-- by AAs

-- by review/approval committees

-- by office directors and division chiefs

-- by Mission Directors

If yes, what?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
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- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

RECOMMENDATION 12 : The Task Force recommends that Handbook 3 and other Agency guidance be made consistent with such changes as result from actions taken on Recommendations 1 - 11.

ISSUES AND DECISIONS:

A. Substantive Matters

- o Is Handbook 3 the only target, or at least the main target?
- o Handbook 3 will become "final" sometime next year, can we make their schedule?

B. Action Assignments

- o Is it necessary to designate a management level or unit(s) as being responsible for carrying out this recommendation?
- o What management levels or unit(s) should be responsible for implementing this recommendation?
- o Will the "action" management level or unit(s) need assistance?
- o What is the appropriate source of such assistance? What management level or unit(s) should provide this assistance to the "action" level or unit(s)?

BACKGROUND MATERIALS

EVALUATION TASK FORCE REPORT

19 NOV 1990

MEMORANDUM

TO: AA/AFR, Ms. Goler Butcher
AA/LAC, Mr. Edward Coy (Acting)
AA/DS, Mr. Sander Levin
AA/PDC, Mr. Calvin Raulerson
AA/ASIA, Mr. John H. Sullivan
AA/NE, Mr. Alfred White (Acting)

FROM: AA/PPC, Alexander Shakow 

SUBJECT: Report of the Administrator's Evaluation Task Force

Enclosed is a copy of the report of the Evaluation Task Force appointed by Mr. Bennet in June. Mr. Bennet has approved in principle the report's conclusions and recommendations.

The substance of the report will be among the items to be discussed at the Monday meeting on December 15. I am advised that further information on the agenda for the meeting will be sent to you.

At the request of ES, we are making arrangements with the Regional Bureaus to cable to the Missions the major findings of the report in summary form, so that Mission comments will be received and made available to you in time for the meeting.

Enclosure: A/S

4 NOV 1980

ACTION MEMORANDUM FOR THE ADMINISTRATOR

THRU: ES *pc*

FROM: Evaluation Task Force Members:

Ms. Nena Vreeland, PPC/E/PES, Chair *WV*
Ms. Judith Gilmore, PDC/PMS *ga*
Mr. George Hill, LAC/DP *go*
Mr. Irwin Levy, LAC/DR *is*
Mr. David Mandel, NE/PD *DM*
Mr. Robert Mitchell, NE/TECH *RM*
Ms. Barbara Pillsbury, ASIA/DP *BP*
Mr. Frederick Simmons, AA/PDC *FS*
Mr. Ferrino Spencer, AFR/CWA *FS*

SUBJECT: AGENCY EVALUATION SYSTEM

A.I.D.'s evaluation system should be modified to meet information needs for project design and for sector, program and policy development. Users of evaluative information in AID/W and the field should be closely involved in defining issues and questions to guide evaluation work, and all evaluation work should be designed to meet clearly specified needs of management and decision-makers. These needs should be coordinated annually in a two to three year Agency-wide evaluation plan. Evaluation findings should be summarized and disseminated on at least an annual basis.

PROBLEM: At a time when new demands have been placed on the AID evaluation system, that system is not meeting the Agency's needs. It is, therefore, necessary to revise AID's evaluation system.

DISCUSSION: On June 9, 1980, you appointed a task force to examine the Agency's evaluation system and the utilization of evaluation information, and asked it to address several specific questions in the course of its work (see attached memorandum). Task force members were chosen to ensure that all of the Agency's bureaus were represented. Among the officers assigned to the task force, a broad range of skills and experience in both

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field and Washington were included. In addition, John Sommer of your staff and Robert Berg, Associate Assistant Administrator for Evaluation, served in an ex officio capacity. Although there were some initial changes among the specific individuals assigned to the task force and the Development Support Bureau was represented only during the early stages, we believe the task force report reflects the views and concerns of project, program, evaluation and technical offices from both field and AID/W perspectives. However, given the importance of the subject, the changes recommended, and the absence of the Development Support Bureau member in the critical latter stages of report preparation, we recommend that the report be reviewed and commented on by the senior staff before you take final action.

Preliminary Considerations: Early in our discussions, we identified several underlying concerns which, in various ways, influenced our subsequent work. Most notably, these concerns encouraged us to interpret our mandate quite broadly. At the same time, we felt a strong pressure to complete our report as quickly as possible. This has resulted in a report which makes several major recommendations, with the details left to be worked out later.

The first concern which struck us was that, until the appointment of the task force, no official, internal Agency-wide review of the AID evaluation system had been undertaken since it was installed ten years ago. Many changes in AID policy, including the Congressional mandate for "new directions" programs, have occurred since then.

At the same time, the Agency is being asked by Congress to justify its programs on the basis of their demonstrated development impact. Congress is demanding that we not only evaluate our activities and disseminate the results, but also demonstrate through policy, program, and budget decisions that we are applying the results of evaluative studies. AID is not alone in this respect: other Federal agencies and departments have also been affected by the concern for evaluation in Congressional committees and the General Accounting Office. As a consequence, the Administrator is being asked for assurance and evidence that evaluation findings are being considered in decisions about policies and programs as well as in the design of new projects.

This is a tall order for a decentralized system that focuses on project management and, to some extent, project design information needs of field missions in keeping with a decentralized style of operation. AID's well-established evaluation system is dealing mostly with implementation concerns. Broader and more comprehensive information of use to policy makers and programmers in the field and especially in Washington has taken second place in the existing evaluation system. Only recently has evaluation work been required to lift its sights to meet the Agency's need for evaluative information at the program and policy level. The new series of "impact" evaluations was begun in part to meet this need, and their reception demonstrates a demand for information not being generated by the existing system.

A narrow focus on implementation questions hinders efforts to provide meaningful information to project designers and decision-makers. Useful information for program-level needs includes generalized lessons from cross-country comparisons and reviews of issues that cut across countries and functional areas. An ability to obtain this information depends largely on the scope of work of the evaluation--on what questions are addressed in the evaluation. Most evaluation reports under the present system, being concerned with questions about implementation, are essentially project status or project monitoring reports. Little advantage is taken of the opportunity to examine questions about the actual or probable effects of the project on beneficiaries, the use by beneficiaries of the goods, services, infrastructure, and institutional arrangements delivered through the project, and the ultimate consequences of this use. Evaluation reports emanating from the established system rarely look beyond the project to question its continued validity as part of a program effort or a development strategy. To use the terminology of the Logical Framework, evaluation reports tend to be more concerned with questions about "inputs" and "outputs" than with those about "purposes" and "goals". It is precisely the latter questions, however, that are of greatest interest to the development of the Agency's programs.

Another concern, and one which has been the subject of recent action, is the very large quantity of evaluations (on the order of 700) that have been scheduled yearly. Of these, barely half are reported as being done; despite Bureau monitoring, not all these are submitted to AID/W, and of those submitted, not all get entered into the Agency's automated information system maintained by DS/DIU for Agency-wide access. One reason for this "over-scheduling" appears to be a lingering perception of a discontinued requirement for an annual evaluation of all projects. In the guidance issued for preparation of the FY 80 and FY 81 evaluation schedules, Missions were discouraged from automatically scheduling annual evaluations and encouraged to time them in accordance with Mission management needs. There was some reduction in scheduled evaluations between FY 79 and FY 80. While all the FY 1981 schedules have not yet been received and collated, preliminary results suggest that guidance has had only a modest impact on the number of evaluations scheduled. At the same time, we also know that much relevant research not categorized as "evaluation" escapes systematic collection.

There was, finally, one major concern which emerged during our first meeting and which was discussed in one way or another in subsequent meetings. In some cases, major decisions about projects and programs have been made with little or no reference to evaluation findings, because of such factors as pressures to obligate funds, lack of knowledge about or experience in some areas, and the unavailability of information. It was clear to us at the outset that the production of high-quality evaluation information and the use of evaluation findings are in large part matters of incentive and conviction, and will not automatically result from a more effective system of collecting and disseminating information about our experience. A well-designed system should encourage both a stronger demand for evaluative information as well as improvements in its supply. In this regard, your own interest and leadership have been and will continue to be very important in placing evaluation work higher on the agenda of Agency managers.

Although you did not specify a deadline for the completion of our task, beyond the implications of any recommendations for shaping FY 81 evaluation schedules, two related considerations lent some urgency to our effort to prepare a report on what we believe to be the major issues requiring decision and action. The first is the revision of Handbook 3, and the second is the preparation of the AID Evaluation Handbook. These parallel efforts are already undergoing final revision. Both represent major efforts, which will influence procedures for several years. Handbook 3--the Agency's "bible" regarding project planning and implementation--contains basic guidance on monitoring and evaluation. For further detailed guidance, Handbook 3 make reference to the AID Evaluation Handbook, to be issued separately.

Operations of the Task Force: The Task Force held its first meeting on June 26, 1980, and met once a week thereafter, except for the month of August. After acquainting ourselves with the details of the present system and a sample of its products, as well as with alternative systems used in other US Federal agencies and international donor institutions, we decided that the most fruitful approach to the problem was to define more specifically what the Agency's needs are for evaluative information, and then to address the question of how these needs might best be met given limited resources. Accordingly, a program of interviews was developed, and a list of questions drawn up as a general guide for the interviews. The interviews were conducted in late July and August, and the results reported to the group in September. Altogether, just over 70 people representing a wide range of functions, disciplines, and responsibilities were interviewed by members of the task force. In addition to yourself, your deputy administrator and executive secretary, those interviewed included four assistant administrators and two deputy assistant administrators, thirteen office directors and six deputy directors, nine division chiefs, eight project officers, five desk officers, and a range of program and technical officers. In addition to interviews with a mission director and AID affairs officer, comments were received from ten field missions. The task force also had access to the preliminary results of structured interviews of 30 staff members undertaken for the PPC/E Studies Division--part of a sample for a study of the effects of the new series of impact evaluations--in which a number of questions were asked relevant to our work.

A work plan was developed that served to focus our attention on three areas: assessment of the current need for information and use of the evaluation system; analysis of the current evaluation system; and institutional constraints to evaluation. Based on the results of our interviews, background information and working papers provided through PPC/E staff support, and principally our own experience, our discussions during September and early October gradually centered on a set of problems that represented in our view the major constraints to a more effective evaluation system. These are reflected in our conclusions and recommendations. All documents, including interview reports and working papers, are on file in PPC/E/PES.

Given the nature of the problem, it was inevitable that we would uncover a wide range of issues, especially in the relationship between evaluation and other Agency processes, as well as a number of suggestions. Not all of these could be fully incorporated into this report. Some warrant more careful study, including the question of reporting the results of project monitoring; staffing requirements that might prove necessary to synthesize and improve the dissemination of information to users in the Agency; and various approaches to upgrading evaluation training. Some related efforts have recently been initiated in one or another bureau; among these are the steps taken in one bureau to require inclusion of short summaries, findings and lessons learned in all special and contracted evaluation reports; the establishment in another bureau of a formal evaluation review and feedback procedure; and the creation in a third bureau of a working group to specify issues and priorities for bureau evaluation work. We have selected those issues and suggestions that we see as having the greatest practical relevance in consolidating the gains we have made and in moving the Agency forward in the area of evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The potential benefits to be gained from an improvement in our ability to evaluate our activities and apply the results are substantial enough to warrant a concerted effort to make evaluation more central to the Agency's work. Such an effort, moreover, will tend to reinforce incentives throughout the Agency to perform high-quality and useful reviews of our activities. The effort required to make evaluation more central to our work, however, should not be underestimated. There are no easy trade-offs or shortcuts. We are fortunate in being able to build on very substantial earlier efforts that have provided the Agency with an established system and a fairly widespread understanding that evaluation is important in managing our endeavors. In this regard, the effort to make evaluation more central to our work involves more than meeting new needs for evaluative information. It also requires reaffirmation and continuation of these earlier efforts to provide an underlying basis for an evaluative perspective on our activities. In particular, the Logical Framework should receive continued emphasis as a design tool that also serves a) to establish the evaluability of a project or program and the initial criteria for evaluation; b) to provide signposts for implementation and monitoring; and c) to facilitate consideration of alternatives and the application of lessons learned from experience.

2. The needs of the Agency for specific kinds of evaluative information are too diverse to be met by a single type of evaluation focus. The Agency needs evaluation information to contribute to:

- a. formulating policy;
- b. developing sector and country programs;
- c. identifying, designing, and redesigning projects; and
- d. demonstrating that the Agency is responsibly managing its portfolio.

To the extent that the Agency continues to design and conduct its activities in the framework of discrete projects, our evaluation work should continue to recognize this project orientation. However, greater attention to analyzing project results within and among countries is necessary to increase the use of evaluation findings in program and policy development.

3. The existing AID institutional setting does not encourage the use of evaluation information in the process of decision-making. There are time constraints and the pressures to obligate funds within specific periods of time. The required information is often inadequate or inaccessible. But most critically, Agency procedures for policy formulation, program development, project identification, design, redesign and approval, and other review and decision-making processes do not require the use of evaluative information in either the documents prepared for decision makers or the resolution of issues that arise during the review process. No improvements in the existing evaluation system and no changes which diminish pressures and constraints will ensure that evaluative information is used, no matter how good and available, unless it is expected by those who make decisions and required in the Agency's formally prescribed procedures.

4. The established evaluation system fails to meet most evaluation information needs, particularly those at the program and policy level. The existing system was primarily designed to meet project management needs. Thus, most of the regular project evaluations focus on aspects of project implementation; the resulting reports have been used predominantly as monitoring instruments. In this setting, regular scheduling of project evaluations is necessary. While the current system provides substantially more information than is used in decision making, it is largely project specific. There are few resources to analyze or re-analyze the resulting data from a broader perspective in order to focus it on current problems and needs. In addition, much of the information needed for policy and program decisions is not generated by the current system because of its project specific and decentralized nature. Questions relevant to policy making, program formulation, and project design are not asked at all or are not asked in a manner which makes generalization possible. The so-called "special" evaluations and the recent impact evaluations have better succeeded in generating information on how AID has done and is doing.

5. Rigid evaluation scheduling requirements have frequently resulted in the production of information irrelevant to the specific information needs of project managers and decision-makers. Requirements for conducting an evaluation that are not tied to a specified need lead to evaluations no one wants and eventually to evaluations that are treated in a pro forma manner.

6. There is a need for the Agency to redefine what is meant by "evaluation" and "monitoring", to distinguish more carefully between these two functions, and to identify their overlapping requirements. In general, the Agency's evaluations need to emphasize much more strongly those purpose

and goal-level questions that will elicit information about the broader program implications of an activity such as its relationship to changing programs, development strategies, and other donor efforts, as well as its impact on targeted groups.

7. Rather than trying to create a uniform mold for all evaluations that would satisfy all potential users of evaluation information, information priorities need to be determined and clarified annually, through a realistic planning process. An annual evaluation planning process would establish criteria for Mission and Bureau plans, enable each level to determine its needs for information, lead to an annual Agency-wide plan that looks ahead two to three years, and provide for formal review and approval of plans, as well as for review and followup on reports submitted in accordance with the plan. Such a plan should also serve to integrate evaluation work more closely into other planning and programming/budgeting exercises.

8. A stronger effort is needed at all levels to plan evaluation work to meet the needs of managers and decision-makers at critical times; Missions and Bureaus need further encouragement to identify projects and issues requiring particular attention in the context of programs and entire portfolios. The use of evaluative information would be expanded if evaluation reports addressed clearly specified current needs and longer-range program planning requirements. Among suggested criteria for planning evaluations, including in-progress and ex-post evaluations, we identified the following: importance of an activity in terms of a country program and strategy; whether an activity is intended to be a pilot or experimental effort; whether a follow-on project is anticipated; the role of a project in the host country's development plan; the number of similar projects either in a given country or region or in the Agency's worldwide portfolio (whether it is one of several projects in a category to be studied to provide useful, generalizable information); whether an activity is of special interest because it may be replicated; whether it is a candidate for study of one or more cross-cutting issues; and whether monitoring indicates the desirability of mid-course corrections.

9. Not all projects in the Agency's portfolio necessarily require an evaluation during or after their "life". We agreed on this conclusion only after much soul-searching and the most heated debate during the course of our work. Dropping a requirement for evaluating every project at least once assumes that the Agency can rely on its project management and monitoring systems to ensure that we are systematically examining all our projects on a regular basis, thereby assuring management that projects are on track in terms of delivering inputs and generating outputs. It also assumes that project monitors are doing a good enough job to be able to have a feel for their project's chances of success in achieving its purpose. On balance, the task force concluded that it is better to distinguish evaluation more clearly from monitoring and improve both functions. We concluded this partly because even now projects escape critical review and mistakes go unrecorded. The evaluation system we propose will minimize the likelihood that a troubled project will escape attention because, during the process leading to an annual Agency plan, every project should be considered and the risk of not evaluating it explicitly weighed. We believe this risk is at least balanced by the more effective use of resources in the evaluation process. Currently assigned responsibilities ensure the provision of

guidance, procedures and oversight regarding both the monitoring and the evaluation functions. Steps are already being taken to improve project management, implementation, and monitoring, including revision of Handbook 3, development of a project manager implementation course, and issuance of project manager guidebooks.

10. The new series of impact evaluations indicates that an ex-post or in-process assessment of a broad sample of projects, addressing pre-determined issues and questions, can yield well-focused and highly useful information. The series represents a special activity that is not yet fully integrated into the regular evaluation system. The extent to which they can meet various information needs of the Agency, within their methodological and time limitations, will become clearer as the results are examined (an initial examination is underway in PPC). In general, a sampling approach, if integrated into an evaluation planning process, together with the development of scopes of work and methodologies targeted to meet specific information needs, can make an important contribution to the Agency's store of evaluation information.

11. The task force cannot be sure what effect the recommended changes in the evaluation system will have on evaluation costs, personnel, training, and other resources. Time and experience will be necessary to see how things work out. It does appear that an evaluation planning process and the overseeing of evaluation plan implementation will require the assignment of new tasks at the central, regional bureau, and Mission levels. It also appears that modifications in the evaluation system to make it more responsive to our information needs could result in a more efficient overall use of resources.

12. Training opportunities offered by the Agency need to emphasize the central role evaluation plays in the decision making process. All officers need to receive basic training in evaluation which will permit them to carry out their roles in the evaluation process. Such training also needs to be incorporated into the IDI program and new employee orientation training.

13. Several constraints will handicap implementation of a more effective evaluation system. We identified the following constraints:

- a. There is a risk that the effort to apply more fully both evaluation findings and issues to the project development process would add further burdens in terms of information gathering and analysis, thereby lengthening the time between project conception and project approval. However, this burden would be substantially reduced by better planning to meet these information needs--many of which are foreseeable--and by more systematic efforts to disseminate this information to project designers and reviewers.
- b. AID is being accused by OMB and Congress of excessive spending for "studies" via direct contracts. Our recommendations, in calling for greater attention to such issues as measuring beneficiary impact as well as Congressional urging that evaluations be of high quality

and empirically sound, may result in continued use of contractors, but in a manner planned to relate their work more closely to Agency decision-making. AID will have to decide explicitly to defend our use of such contracts.

- c. Some offices may not have the necessary resources to assume tasks called for in our recommendations, notably training and information management. For example, DS/DIU currently operates under an operating expense budget constraint that may limit its capabilities to use the automated system to meet information dissemination needs for internal management purposes.
- d. We were unable to examine Agency experience regarding the willingness of host countries to agree to expenditures of project funds for evaluation. This is a possible, but not probable, constraint.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Leadership Interest

1. We recommend that you continue your personal involvement in the Agency evaluation process, thereby reinforcing among your senior managers a heightened concern for the generation and use of evaluation material. Your expectation that projects which you authorize will be solidly grounded in the Agency's evaluated experience will help set the tone for every officer with review and approval responsibilities. To continue your initiative, we recommend that this report be the subject of an early senior staff meeting and that implementation of its recommendations be reviewed during subsequent meetings.

New Information Needs

2. Agency evaluation efforts should give more attention to extracting lessons from what AID has done and is doing. Critical issues relevant to policy making, program formulation, and project identification and design should be addressed. Finally, through evaluative studies, the Agency should demonstrate the extent to which its activities are having an impact on the development process and the poor.

Purposes of Evaluation

3. All evaluation work should be responsive to clearly stated objectives. Evaluations should be undertaken on a Mission, Bureau, and Agency-wide basis to meet specific needs for the information they will generate. As a corollary, those who require and will make use of the information should be involved in the design of the evaluation. Scopes of work for evaluation should clearly define the purpose of and need for the evaluation; they should specify questions relating to the achievement of the purpose of the activity, and, as appropriate, impact on beneficiaries.

Information Management

4. Evaluation findings should be synthesized and disseminated in more useful ways, especially for use in the design and review process. PPC, in collaboration with regional and other central bureaus, should develop procedures to broaden the utilization of evaluative information. All evaluation results should be reported through an established procedure that ensures Agency-wide distribution. Some form of evaluation summary report is useful as a record-keeping device and should be retained, but modified to encourage reporting of substantive findings. At a minimum, all reports should include a two-page summary, major findings, recommendations, and lessons learned appropriate to the activity, similar to the one currently in use in impact evaluations. DS/DIU should modify its information management capabilities to collect and process this information, and should issue an annual abstract of completed evaluations.

Evaluation Planning

5. Any remaining rigid requirements for evaluating projects at fixed points in time or within fixed time periods should be eliminated. In the selection of activities for evaluation through a planning process, an evaluation need not be required for all projects. Moreover, the studies that are undertaken should, in effect, be comparable to the types of evaluation currently known as "special" and impact evaluations. The dropping of fixed, Agency-wide time requirements should not be interpreted as restricting the ability of a project manager or Mission to incorporate various evaluation techniques into project management and implementation, nor the Agency's ability to assure itself generally through an appropriately designed review that project events are occurring as planned.

6. The core of a revised evaluation system should be an expanded planning process which parallels the programming process in many respects. This process should begin with the early identification of key policy and program issues which the Mission, individual Bureaus, and the Agency wish to have addressed over a three to five year period. The process should culminate in an annual Agency evaluation plan that addresses information needs of Missions, Bureaus, and the Agency as a whole. The plan, at a minimum, should look two additional years into the future, subject to annual review and revision. Procedures for plan review should incorporate provisions for formal comment and approval to Bureaus and Missions; without this feedback, the process will become pro forma.

7. Parallel with modifications in the Agency's evaluation system, an effort should be initiated to review each decision-making process and its associated instructions (e.g., project approval process in Handbook 3, guidance for ABSs and CDSSs) to determine:

- a. the type of evaluation information the specific process needs;

- b. the present availability and future source of such information; and
- c. the changes in procedures/requirements needed to ensure that such information is effectively integrated into various planning, design, and approval processes.

8. As part of planning requirements, the practice of including evaluation sections in Project Papers should be continued. If the project designer and/or approver decide that the project should be evaluated during or after its life, the purpose of the evaluation should be described in detail and related to critical benchmarks in the life of the project, linkages to other projects, the sector, or other development activities, and project assumptions and linkages. Host country involvement should also be clearly described. The means of financing the evaluation should be set forth. The evaluation plans in the project papers for experimental, pilot or phased projects are especially important and should be scheduled early enough to ensure that the results are available for decisions regarding a subsequent investment.

Impact Evaluations

9. Impact evaluations should be continued. They should be used as appropriate to meet specific information needs, and integrated into the Agency evaluation system through the planning process.

Training

10. PPC should review training programs for IDIs and new hires as well as the existing Program Design and Evaluation course and recommend changes in curriculum to ensure that officers understand the role of evaluation in Agency processes, their role in the evaluation process, and basic evaluation techniques.

Constraints

11. The Agency should take steps to address the constraints in paragraph 13, Conclusions (p. 8 above). The implications for project monitoring must be reviewed in the context of on-going efforts to improve project implementation.

12. Handbook 3 and other guidance on evaluation should be made consistent with the above recommendations.

Action Recommendation

That the above conclusions and recommendations be approved in principal, and that PPC be directed to undertake the following tasks:
1) to work out (by January 1981), with the collaboration of regional and

central bureaus, a work plan to implement the recommendations of this report; and 2) to monitor the actions taken under this work plan and provide the Administrator with periodic reports on problems and achievements. Within one year of approval of this recommendation, PPC should prepare a report describing progress made in implementing the above recommendations, reviewing their implications, and identifying areas requiring further work as necessary to continue the process of strengthening the evaluation system.

APPROVED: *[Signature]*

DISAPPROVED: _____

DATE: *Nov 8*

Attachment: Memorandum

** with grant book + the table for a front cover, No 1*

UNSIGNED VERSION OF THE "MONDAY GROUP" MEETING MINUTES

MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE STAFF AND MISSION DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Evaluation

As part of the follow-up to the December 15, 1980, Assistant Administrators' meeting on evaluation, I want to record Joe Wheeler's and my understanding of the next steps to be taken in improving A.I.D.'s evaluation system and in setting evaluation priorities for the coming year.

1. The central focus of A.I.D. evaluation system improvements will be on the quality of evaluations and on the Agency's ability to systematically determine the impact of its projects and use that information to improve Agency policies, programs and projects.
2. Evaluative assessments of progress made by Missions during the life of a project (heretofore called "Regular Evaluations") are essentially Mission-level management tools, part of the overall scheme at the Mission-level for monitoring our projects and making improvements, as required, to ensure that project objectives are met. Because this type of evaluative assessment of progress is best planned, executed, analyzed and used at the Mission level, we are removing the central requirements to (a) include plans for such evaluative assessments in annual Mission evaluation plans and (b) submit Project Evaluation Summaries for these assessments to PPC/E or DS/DIU. We are not, however, suspending the existing requirement to identify whether such evaluative assessments of a project will be undertaken in Project Paper Evaluation Plans.
3. Each Project Paper should carefully identify the types of evaluation necessary for a particular activity, as well as note how the lessons of previous relevant evaluations are applicable to the proposed new project.
4. PPC will develop, by January 30, 1981, a draft version of an Agency-wide plan and budget estimate for evaluations in FY '81, to assure that agreed upon priority needs are being met. This plan will be circulated for bureau comments and issued in final form by PPC by February 15, 1981.

5. Each regional bureau should prepare for the February 1981 Congressional hearings a statement, as requested by the House Appropriations Committee, on how evaluations are being used to improve its projects and policies. This will be needed soon by PPC/E for an Administrator's statement requested by the EAC as part of opening testimony.

6. To improve staff members' incentives to take evaluation seriously, employee performance on evaluation work should be included in PERs.

7. Recommendations are invited (to PPC) for further improvement in evaluation feedback into policy and in raising personnel incentives with respect to evaluation.

8. During the next year, the following topics are to be given impact evaluation priority:

- a. Agricultural Credit
- b. Small-Scale Enterprise
- c. Housing
- d. Agricultural Planning-Education
- e. Area Development
- f. P. L. 480 Title I

9. Suggestions are invited (by February 15, 1981, to PPC) of priority cross-cutting issues that should be analyzed over the next year (e.g., spread effects, recurrent cost, impacts on women).

10. While individual bureaus are encouraged to conduct their own evaluations of project impact, we have determined that when PPC identifies bureau-initiated evaluations of project impact as having broader Agency implications, PPC may require its sign-off on the evaluation scope, budget and team personnel.

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.

Attachment: Conclusions of the Monday Group Meeting

A/AID:JSommer-AAA/PPC/E:RBerg-PPC/E/PES:MHageboeck:cl:1/14/81

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MONDAY GROUP MEETING

December 15, 1980

I. Impact Evaluations

A. Agency-wide Topics

It was agreed the following would be priorities for additional topics to be conducted and coordinated by PPC/E, similarly to the last round of topics:

- Agricultural Credit

- Small-Scale Enterprise Projects

- Housing Sector (to involve comparable projects, such as sites and services or structures, and stressing community development and how people, especially children, are affected by new housing).

- Agricultural Planning-Education (a combination of topics J and K as presented in Attachment A of the meeting agenda, stressing the relationships of production changes to institutional and technological interventions)

- Area Development Programs (being careful to try to match projects with similar development strategies to minimize the apples/oranges problem).

- Title I (recognizing that this will be done only if the above topics can also be done and that the stress would be on development-oriented Title I activities looking at both the macro and the micro implications of the whole range and assessing both positive and negative effects).

Among the topics on which it was decided not to have Agency-wide evaluation work the following was noted: The question of "Slow-Movers and Non-Starters" should be looked at through pipeline and management analysis to see if some sectors are particularly slow; Dry-land Agriculture will probably be looked at through a DSB technical project; and PVOs will be looked at as part of other topics. (Mr. Bennet suggested that this approach to PVOs be utilized for the next few years and that then a management assessment be done of PVO programs.)

(Due to a shortage of time there was no discussion of the cross-cutting issues contained in II of Attachment A of the meeting agenda--Alex Shakow's December 4 memo to the Executive Staff on Evaluation System and Plans. Written suggestions by the Executive Staff to PPC/E on cross-cutting issues of greatest interest would be welcome.)

B. Other Impact Evaluations

1. Title II. It was recognized that this is a topic of Agency-wide concern, as well, but that the study will be carried out by PDC and, at the direction of the Administrator, will be coordinated by PPC/E.

2. There was a general discussion on other impact evaluations, i.e., evaluations aimed at assessing impact which are not associated with ongoing projects or follow-on planning. (PPC/E will provide a more detailed definition of what is meant by A.I.D. impact evaluations for general guidance.) It was concluded that bureaus would present a clear listing of such proposed impact evaluations in their budgeted evaluation agenda (see below). PPC/E would then identify specific impact evaluations based on their size or implications beyond the case to be studied. For such specific cases PPC/E sign-off of the scope, budget and teams for these efforts would be required.

II. Changes to the Agency Evaluation System

A. Routine Evaluations

It was agreed that two evaluation system requirements should be suspended: (a) the requirement to identify "regular evaluations" of projects in annual Mission evaluation plans and (b) the requirement to submit copies of Project Evaluation Summaries (PESs) on "regular evaluations" to PPC/E and DS/DIU.

The Evaluation Task Force recommended, and the participants in the Monday Group meeting agreed, that "regular evaluations" undertaken during the life of a project to assess its progress are basically a Mission management tool. To the degree that such evaluative assessments of progress are appropriate for specific projects, it is expected that Missions will continue to identify them in Project Paper (PP) Evaluation Plans, conduct them, and use their results to improve projects. Henceforth, this type of evaluative assessment, when elected by Missions, will be considered to be an element of the overall scheme for monitoring a project, rather than as a formal evaluation of the overall performance, effectiveness and impact of an Agency project.

Bureaus were urged to review their monitoring practices and the monitoring systems of Missions in light of the above.

B. In-Depth Evaluations

It was noted that there will be an Agency-wide effort to increase the quality of in-depth evaluations.

The net result of the above steps will be to have fewer but, hopefully, better evaluations in A.I.D.

C. Planning for Evaluations

It was agreed that each Project Paper should include careful considerations of the type(s) of evaluation necessary for a particular activity. It was further agreed that the degree of risk or uncertainty on a project should be one of the major factors Missions consider in preparing evaluation plans. Where Agency experience indicates that there are important risks/uncertainties associated with a specific project, an evaluation plan which will provide adequate information for making mid-course corrections in the project design and for a thorough assessment of the project's performance, effectiveness and impact will be appropriate. Where Agency experience indicates that a project can be undertaken with great confidence in A.I.D.'s ability to implement the activity and achieve its stated objectives, minimal evaluative activities, or perhaps just monitoring of certain key factors, will be considered appropriate.

It was agreed that there will be an Agency-wide plan and budget for evaluations (recognizing, of course, that there is no need for this purpose to collect budget information for evaluations of on-going projects financed under their project agreements) to assure that there is an appropriate relationship between available resources and priorities for evaluation. FPC will work out the details of this over the coming weeks, sounding out bureaus, to arrive at a system for future Agency evaluation plans consistent with the approved Evaluation Task Force report. This is obviously a new area of activity and will be approached carefully.

D. Evaluation of Country Programs

It was noted that a number of country-level evaluations have been carried out or are in process under regional bureau sponsorship. FPC/E will arrange a meeting in approximately six months to review the methodological Lessons Learned from these exercises.

III. Other Topics

Due to a shortage of time, two topics were not discussed at length: the feedback of evaluation into policy and the question of heightening incentives for evaluation.

Regarding the issue of feedback into policy, it was noted that each regional bureau should be prepared in time for February hearings to state how it is utilizing evaluations to improve its projects and policies. This is at the specific request of the House Appropriations Committee and will be used as part of a written statement to be submitted by the Administrator in presenting the 1982 budget to the Committee.

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Regarding the question of incentives, the Administrator suggested that performance on evaluation work should be included in PERs.

Executive Staff were invited to comment to PFC on both the question of methods to enhance the feedback into policy and to raise the incentives for working in evaluation.

Clearance: AA/PFC:AShakow(draft)
A/AID:DBennet_____

SUMMARY OF MISSION RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION TASK FORCE REPORT

MISSION RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION TASK FORCE REPORT

Nena Vreeland
PPC/E/PES
January 1981

I. INTRODUCTION

PPC/E received responses from 45 AID field posts commenting on the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the intra-Agency Evaluation Task Force. Nineteen responses were received from Africa, seven from Asia, twelve from Latin America/Caribbean, and six from Near East. In addition, comments were received from USDEL/Paris.

The comments were based predominantly on a summary of the Task Force Report that had been cabled to the Missions in late November, 1980. Missions were subsequently queried as to any additional comments they might have, based on their reading of the full report which was pouched to the field within a few days of the summary cable; these final comments were to be sent to AID/W no later than January 15, 1981. One Mission submitted additional thoughts on the subject of evaluation; two indicated that they had not received a copy of the Report (since forwarded).

The following summary and interpretation of Mission comments regarding key aspects of the Task Force Report, as well as the conclusions reached by PPC/E on the implications for future implementation of the Task Force recommendations as approved by the Administrator on November 6, are based on the responses received as of January 16.

II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

A review of all the Mission comments supports the following general observations:

. With very few exceptions, Missions were unaware of the work of the Task Force, and were asked to respond to a summary cable which attempted to encapsulate in two pages a twelve-page report which was itself a pithy consensus regarding future directions of the Agency's evaluation work. The Task Force addressed the question of "where should we be going" rather than the specific details of "how do we get there". In spite of the short notice and the general nature of the Report, Mission responses indicated an immediate awareness of some of the issues raised in the Task Force Report; they reflected considerable thought and practical insight regarding the role of evaluation in the Agency; and they offered, directly or indirectly, a number of useful suggestions. If the comments can be relied upon as an indicator of the extent to which an "evaluative perspective" has been instilled into staff work, we find substantial justification for the very high status AID enjoys among all Federal agencies in its evaluation efforts. As one Mission stated: "Despite this lack of guidance (delay in issuance of revised handbook on evaluation) and the resulting confusion about evaluation policies and procedures in AID, the Agency is regarded by many other donors as being one of the foremost practitioners of this management skill".

• An overwhelming majority of Missions concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force Report. Yet, as might be expected given Mission familiarity with an evaluation system that has heretofore focused on reviewing implementation progress of specific projects, a number of Missions expressed both doubt and confusion as to the feasibility, relevance and practical approaches of broadening the scope of evaluation to address issues related to policy, program development and, particularly, the transferability of lessons learned from one country context to another. Essentially, the Missions are asking not only for better guidance (as described below), but an Agency statement as to what we as an Agency see (in a very epistemological sense) as being the potential scope and limitations of the information we can gain from an evaluation system.

• Mission comments reflected a concern that important changes in the Agency's evaluation system might be made without attention to and feedback from Mission requirements. It is obvious that PPC/E must clarify the point that, although the Administrator approved the recommendations in the Task Force Report, the implementation of these recommendations through subsequent actions and changes is a process that will take place over the coming year -- at least -- and one that will seek reaction from Missions before final decisions are set "in concrete".

• As far as the field is concerned, AID/W has been remiss in not providing the Missions with both general and specific guidance as to the practical conduct of evaluations -- as distinct from much clearer guidance as to overall requirements for and annual scheduling of evaluation work. Missions find themselves with insufficient guidance and support in applying existing (much less future) evaluation requirements to the very wide range of development activities that are represented in most Mission portfolios. The recommendations of the Task Force have served to bring this fairly long-standing problem to a head.

III. OVERALL MISSION RESPONSE TO TASK FORCE REPORT

Mission responses were categorized as to their overall reaction to the Task Force Report, expressed in one of three ways: strong endorsement, general agreement, and negative response. The results were as follows:

Strong endorsement:	6
General agreement:	30
Negative response:	8

A. Strong Endorsement: Six responses (a seventh was the response from USDEL/Paris) were placed in this category by virtue of their unequivocal support for the Task Force Report. The Missions took the opportunity to relate their experience to several points made in the Report. Among the comments made were the following:

- evaluations which address questions about the Mission's overall program are considered useful in that they support Mission programming decisions and strategy development;
- the exercise involved in a "formal" scheduling and reporting of "regular" evaluations had very marginal value -- Mission and host country were already aware of the kinds of problems reported in regular evaluations;
- regular evaluation reports were usually simply descriptions of events that had occurred at the input-output levels of the project.

B. General Agreement: This category, representing a strong tendency of support for the Task Force Report, included two groups of responses. The first expressed overall and sometimes strong concurrence, but were placed in this category because the Missions voiced concern as to how the recommendations would be implemented or, more specifically, some doubt as to whether a revised evaluation system could be made to operate without adding new bureaucratic burdens and rigidities on the Missions. Also included in this first group were a few responses which implied general agreement because the Missions claimed they were already following the Task Force recommendations, as well as one response confined to some neutral observations on Mission experience.

The second group of responses similarly expressed overall concurrence, but with the same qualification -- namely, the continued importance of evaluation in project implementation/management and related monitoring. Ten Missions felt that "evaluation" should continue to be used as a major tool in the everyday implementation of projects, which was seen as a major task of Mission staff. Two Missions noted that the use of evaluation as a monitoring tool need not require a formal "evaluation report" to AID/W. Among the points made in this group of responses were:

- the use of "regular" evaluations to sustain internal Mission management discipline;

- the value of regular evaluation in periodic and constructive consultations with host country officials and intermediary implementing agents (e.g., PVOs, PASAs, contractors);
- the use of regular evaluation exercises to contribute to an upgrading of host country management skills.

C. Negative Response: While none of the Missions in this category disagreed with all the Task Force recommendations, they shared a view that the present evaluation system does not require much if any alteration, and/or that the suggested improvements would be of very marginal value to the Mission and the Agency as a whole. The following views were expressed:

- Development problems/processes tend to be so localized, disparate and culture-specific that, first, few evaluation findings are capable of being synthesized for wider transfer except at a very high level (hence useless or cost-wasteful) of abstraction or generalization; and, second, few findings of evaluations conducted in other countries (except perhaps within the same geographical region) are likely to be applicable to the particular local circumstances faced by a Mission.
- The principal, if not the only, focus of evaluation should, therefore, be on project implementation and should involve participation of host country staffs assigned to the project.
- Evaluations should and would continue to be undertaken by the Mission within some type of time schedule (e.g., annually, every 18-24 months).

IV. SPECIFIC ISSUES

Several comments and suggestions were put forward in the Mission responses, either independently or in answer to a set of questions posed in the cabled summary of the Task Force Report. These are grouped below.

A. Effect on Mission Resources: The cable summarizing the Task Force Report asked Missions to consider the possible impact on staff and resources of doing fewer but more "in-depth" evaluations. Twenty-eight Missions commented on this issue, although in varying degrees of detail. With the exception of a few very small Missions which already rely heavily on regional or AID/W TDY support for all evaluation work, most responses indicated that a shift to "in-depth" evaluations would generate little or no net burden on staff, and could result in a more effective use of both Mission and host country personnel in higher-quality evaluation work. Three Missions indicated the probability of an added burden while, conversely, two saw the possibility of freeing some staff time to apply to implementation work. Of somewhat greater concern to several Missions were the budget implications of a shift to "in-depth" evaluations for which funding might not have been set aside in a project. It was apparent from a number of responses that Missions were assuming that funds and external support would be available from sources outside the Mission, as necessary.

B. Evaluation Planning: One of the key recommendations of the Evaluation Task Force was the establishment of a planning process that would look ahead to determine needs for evaluative information and undertake evaluation studies to meet those needs. Thirty-one Missions referred to this question. Nineteen supported the concept of such a planning process. Six gave qualified support while expressing their concern that the planning process be kept simple -- i.e., it should not impose too complex or burdensome centralized requirements on Mission staffs. One Mission was generally negative, anticipating that such burdens would be inevitable. Four Missions were opposed, either because it was felt that such a planning process would be no more realistic than the present annual schedules, or because the Mission believed that the plan would merely reflect centrally-conceived rather than Mission-relevant needs. Finally, one Mission, while noting some possible benefits, was unable to determine the utility of such a plan to the Mission.

Possible approaches to a planning process were described. Nine Missions suggested linking evaluation planning more closely to the cycles already in place in AID, particularly the preparation/revision of the CDSS. Examples of this linkage were: (1) the use of the CDSS to identify program issues requiring evaluation; (2) the use of evaluation results to influence or justify changes in development strategy and programs; and (3) a framework for determining priorities in Mission evaluation work. Evaluation planning was also seen as having the potential for identifying future evaluation funding requirements, either through specific project budgets or through non-project (PD&S) funds, both being reflected in Annual Budget Submissions. One Mission called attention to host country development planning "cycles" as being important inputs to an overall evaluation plan.

C. Multi-Project (Sector/Program) Evaluation: Nineteen Missions responded to the possibility of evaluating groups of projects or applying common substantive queries across projects. With three exceptions, the responses were either positive or expressed initial interest in such an approach. The exceptions noted that the approach was unlikely to be feasible or productive given: (1) the disparate nature of the Mission's program; (2) the difficulty in organizing all relevant host-country participants; and (3) cultural characteristics which handicapped or discouraged mutual discussions of a critical nature between host country participants involved in different projects.

D. Use and Availability of Evaluative Information: Missions were asked to consider the Task Force conclusion that the Agency's procedures have not required the use of evaluative information at various decision stages, and the recommendation that such procedures be established. Those Missions commenting on this issue stated that they did attempt to utilize available information. Most suggested that the problem was mainly one of the unavailability of such information to the Mission, and urged that the imposition of new utilization requirements follow rather than precede concerted AID/W efforts to synthesize and disseminate information. Such improvements as periodic (e.g., annual) publication of abstracts and the use of one or two-page summaries of evaluation reports were welcomed.

E. Host Country Role in Evaluation: Seven Missions independently called attention to the fact that the Task Force Report did not adequately discuss the matter of host country participation in evaluation, and saw this as a serious omission. Host country participation was seen as important and, therefore, a factor in the design of AID's evaluation system.

F. "Impact" Evaluations: Fifteen Missions made some reference to the new series of impact evaluations. All but three (which tended to discount their relevance to Mission needs in terms of either substance or timing) saw the impact evaluations as generally useful or as valuable additions to the evaluation work of the Agency. Four Missions expressed concern that the scheduling of the centrally managed series be handled in a way that took account of possible burdens on Mission and host country staffs, previous Mission evaluation work, and the stage of the project being evaluated for impact. One Mission suggested the possibility that increasingly "in-depth" Mission evaluations might eventually obviate the need for the centrally-managed series. Two Missions felt that all evaluations of an ex-post nature or those focusing on impact or "lessons learned" should be an AID/W responsibility, while two Missions believed that various levels in the Agency should plan, schedule, and finance the types of evaluations deemed necessary to meet their respective information needs.

G. Objectivity in Evaluation Work: Unsolicited views were expressed in six Mission responses that bear on the question of objectivity in Agency evaluation work, although this issue was not featured in the Task Force Report as such. The following points were made:

- evaluation teams or team leaders should be insulated from daily Mission concerns or from a personal or organizational interest in the project being evaluated (this view, of course, contrasts sharply with the view that the most useful type of evaluation process was one which deeply involved Mission and host country personnel).
- Non-AID (e.g., contracted) evaluators are more "objective".
- Contracted evaluators are not necessarily useful in that they tend to focus on the "easy" input-output questions.
- The impact evaluations indicate that it is possible to transcend the usual desire to report success and disguise failure.
- An independent AID/W evaluation function is necessary.

V. CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A. "Evaluation" and "Monitoring":

In all, almost half (18) of the Missions responding to the Task Force Report believed that evaluation must continue to play a role in the monitoring of project implementation, and in the implementation process itself. (Two Missions used the specific term "formative evaluation"; one referred to "micro-evaluation"). Further clarification of the following issues should, therefore, be made early in the agenda for implementing the recommendations of the Task Force:

- . Distinction and overlap between evaluation and monitoring (and, perhaps, audit); and
- . The use of various formative evaluation techniques in the design of monitoring and implementation systems (some Mission responses described monitoring systems that might be considered as possible models).

This clarification will be necessary to:

- Establish a common understanding between and within AID/W, Missions and host countries as to the focus and analytical characteristics of evaluation; and
- Establish ground rules for what should be included in an "evaluation plan".

It might be recalled that, in recommending that evaluation address a broader range of questions than those customarily considered in almost all the evaluation work undertaken heretofore, the Task Force did not recommend "taking the evaluation out of monitoring". The Task Force concluded that both functions require improvement. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Agency has not taken full advantage of (nor trained project managers in) the range of "formative" evaluation techniques available to managers. Further development of these techniques could yield two advantages: it would continue to support periodic consultations with host country personnel and implementing agents, of a more or less formal kind; and it might help ease the adversary role currently played by an "evaluator/monitor". It might also assist in identifying data requirements of a Mission management information system to support both monitoring and eventual evaluation.

The above implies that:

- In addition to implementing recommendations related solely to evaluation, a parallel effort should be made to address the role of evaluation in monitoring.
- Missions should be informed that we appreciate their concern that periodic structured reviews of project progress should continue to be made and to serve as a framework for consultations with host country and implementing agency personnel; that formative evaluation techniques lend themselves to such reviews and are encouraged; that we appreciate the impossibility of ever neatly separating the monitoring and evaluation functions, but that we are seeking a shift in emphasis in evaluation to meet information needs through both Mission and AID/W evaluation work.

B. Evaluation Planning: The clear message from the Missions is to keep the planning process simple and straightforward. Linking the evaluation plan to existing and familiar planning exercises (e.g., CDSS, ABS) should be explored as one model. Those Missions concerned with the possibility that evaluation planning would reflect only central AID/W concerns should be reminded that the planning process envisioned by the Task Force would incorporate Mission information needs, although Missions would be encouraged to focus their evaluation questions on issues related to Mission program development. Implementation of the Task Force recommendations should consider designing examples of planning models which could be used by Missions.

C. Information Availability and Utilization: AID/W, Congress and good program planning itself all require the utilization of evaluation results in future program development. The current revision of Handbook 3 has incorporated new requirements for utilizing evaluation findings in the development of PIDs and PPs. A similar requirement for the preparation of the CDSS/SPSS is not fully developed. Given Mission concern over the unavailability of evaluative information, the establishment of any new requirements for utilization should also consider the types of information that these requirements may involve, gaps in existing information, and improvements in disseminating information to Missions in a usable form.

D. Evaluation Research Designs/Methodologies: With all its faults, the present evaluation system, including training in the use of the logical framework, has provided a standard approach to both summative evaluation and progress benchmarks for monitoring. Mission responses indicated that what has been missing is guidance that enables a Mission to select research designs of varying rigor (and cost) that will generate reasonably reliable information on which to base certain decisions. As Missions expand the scope of their evaluations to obtain better information related to program-level decisions, this lack will probably be more acutely felt. Implementation of the Task Force recommendations should consider how this deficiency might best be handled.

E. Evaluation Funding: While there is no necessary relationship between a shift to more "in-depth" evaluation and increased costs of evaluation, it is clear that increased demands by certain types of evaluation may be placed on PD&S funds. Implementation should consider options available for funding various kinds of evaluation from project budgets and PD&S sources.

RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL MISSION CABLES

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UNCLAS BUJUMBURA 3330

AIDAC

E. O. 12065: N/A
SUBJECT: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: STATE 312123

- Burundi*
1. AAO RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR QUALITY IN EVALUATION DESIGN AND AGREES WITH RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN TASK FORCE REPORT. IN PARTICULAR, WE BELIEVE THAT RIGID EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS AT FIXED POINTS IN TIME SHOULD BE ELIMINATED AND THAT FREQUENCY OF EVALUATION SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY MANAGEMENT NEED.
 2. AID PROGRAM IN BURUNDI IS RELATIVELY NEW. FIRST THREE BILATERAL PROJECTS WERE SIGNED IN 1980 AND TWO ADDITIONAL PROJECTS ARE SCHEDULED FOR 1981. IN EACH PROJECT, PLANS FOR EVALUATION WERE MADE AT PROJECT DESIGN STAGE, RATIONALE SPELLED OUT AND FUNDING BUDGETED.
 3. EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY: PEAT I (AIP) WAS TIMED EARLY SO TO ENSURE RESULTS WERE MADE AVAILABLE FOR DECIDING ON WHETHER TO CONTINUE WITH SECOND PHASE. RECOMMENDATIONS/ADJUSTMENT RESULTING FROM PROJECT EVALUATION PROVIDED A YARDSTICK AGAINST WHICH FUTURE OBJECTIVES WERE MEASURED AND WERE FULLY INCORPORATED INTO PEAT II. VALUABLE LESSONS WERE LEARNED FROM THIS PILOT ACTIVITY WHICH WERE INCORPORATED INTO DESIGN OF PEAT II PROJECT.
 4. AAO FAVORS CONDUCTING OVERALL FEWER EVALUATIONS, BUT THOSE TO BE UNDERTAKEN SHOULD BE MORE INDEPTH. FOR REASONS CITED PARA 2, AAO DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT STAFF NOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON EVALUATED EXPERIENCE TO SUPPORT PROGRAMMING AND DESIGN NEEDS. AAG WILL REPLY ON AID/W, REDSO/EA AND/OR CONTRACT PERSONNEL TO SUPPLY THIS SERVICE. COOK

UNCLASSIFIED

memorandum

DATE: February 5, 1981

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland *NK*
THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck *M.*
SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Bujumbura 3330,
15 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Burundi, Terry Lambacher
AID Affairs Officer

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the report of the intra-Agency Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the Task Force Report is enclosed for your information. You will note that there was substantial Mission support for the recommendations of the Task Force, along with some significant qualifications.

The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and we are now beginning the task of implementing these recommendations. A working group representing the bureaus has been formed, and intends to move fairly quickly to reach actionable decisions. We will keep you informed as to our progress; and you can expect to have your views solicited on specific actions.

Although it would be premature to anticipate detailed modifications that may be made in the present evaluation system, we think it is fair to say that these will not be sweeping changes. Neither the Task Force nor most Missions expressed basic dissatisfaction with the present system. Clearly, whatever modifications are made would have to take account of the needs of small or new Missions, and their reliance on external resources to support program development needs.

If you have any further thoughts on the report or the enclosed paper, we hope you will let us know.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles



Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

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ACTION AID-35

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AID/W FOR AFR/PD/E AND PPC/E

FIELD EXPERIENCE. IN THIS MISSION, THE EVALUATION FINDINGS OF THE DONOR AND AID-SUPPORTED THABA BOSIU PROJECT WERE USED EXTENSIVELY IN DEVELOPING AID'S LAND CONSERVATION AND RANGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WHICH BEGAN LAST FISCAL YEAR AND WHICH COMPRISES ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF A.I.D. ASSISTANCE IN LESOTHO. IN DESIGNING AGRICULTURAL PLANNING PROJECT, ONE OF KEY INPUTS WAS EVALUATION OF THE LESOTHO AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ANALYSIS PROJECT AND SOME STUDIES PRODUCED BY THAT PROJECT. SIMPLY PUT, WE AGREE THAT ONCE WASHINGTON HAS EFFECTIVE SYSTEM TO REVIEW AND DISSEMINATE EVALUATION REPORTS THAT IS TRULY INTEGRATED WITH OTHER MAJOR ELEMENTS OF AID'S PROGRAMMING PROCESS SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER USE CAN BE MADE OF EVALUATION INFORMATION.

3. HOPE AID/W FINDS ABOVE COMMENTS USEFUL. IN ADDITION TO TASK FORCE REPORT, USAID/MASERU WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING MORE INFORMATION ON FUTURE WORK OF TASK FORCE SPECIFICALLY AS IT RELATES TO NEXT STEPS FOLLOWING DECEMBER .5 MEETING OF ADMINISTRATOR WITH AA'S CLINGERMAN

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 03320

AIDAC

AID/W FOR AFR/PD/E AND PPC/E

E.O. 12865 NA
SUBJECT: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: STATE 312123

1. MISSION PLEASED TO PROVIDE COMMENTS ON SUMMARY OF EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS. HOWEVER, GIVEN OBVIOUS IMPORTANCE OF ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND NEED FOR AID TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE IN THIS REGARD, MISSION IS PERPLEXED BY URGENCY ATTACHED TO DECEMBER 15 MEETING OF ADMINISTRATOR WITH AA'S. SINCE THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN UNDERWAY IN AID/W SINCE JUNE 1, UNLESS DECEMBER 15 HAS SOME VERY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT IS NOT MENTIONED IN REFTEL, IT SEEMS THIS EFFORT WOULD BENEFIT SUBSTANTIALLY FROM CONSIDERED FIELD COMMENTS BASED ON ACTUAL TASK FORCE REPORT AND NOT A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS CONTAINED REFTEL. SURELY THE PROCESS WOULD NOT BE ENDANGERED BUT COULD PROFIT BY WAITING SHORT TIME LONGER TO INSURE FIELD INPUTS FOR A BALANCED PRESENTATION.

2. WITH ABOVE IN MIND, USAID/MASERU OFFERS FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A. AGENCY EVALUATION PLANNING PROCESS - WITHOUT BENEFIT OF FULL REPORT OF TASK FORCE, MISSION DOES NOT CLEARLY UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED. IF TASK FORCE IS SUGGESTING THAT AGENCY EVALUATION PLANNING WILL BE CENTRALLY COORDINATED AND AGENCY-WIDE SYSTEM ESTABLISHED FOR STAFFING EVALUATION TEAMS, REVIEWING EVALUATION REPORTS, DISSEMINATING EVALUATION FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED, AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW EVALUATION RESULTS CAN BEST BE INCORPORATED INTO PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, THEN MISSION FULLY SUPPORTS THIS CONCEPT. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE THIS IS MAJOR PROBLEM WITH CURRENT EVALUATION PROCESS. THERE APPEARS TO BE NO AGENCY MECHANISM FOR SYSTEMATICALLY RESPONDING TO EVALUATION REPORTS. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT FOR CENTRAL EVALUATION PLANNING PROCESS TO MAKE A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION, STRONG REGIONAL BUREAU EVALUATION SYSTEM MUST EXIST FROM WHICH CENTRAL EFFORTS, WHICH OFTEN ARE FAR REMOVED FROM FIELD CONCERNS, CAN BENEFIT. IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT PROPERLY ADDRESSED, A CENTRAL EVALUATION PLANNING SYSTEM WILL HAVE LIMITED SUCCESS AT BEST.

B. SCOPE OF EVALUATIONS - USAID/MASERU AGREES THAT SOME EVALUATIONS SHOULD HAVE BROADER FOCUS AND EXAMINE IN GREATER DETAIL POLICY ISSUES AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, AND THIS MISSION'S EVALUATION EFFORTS HAVE THIS VERY MUCH IN MIND. HOWEVER, IT IS OUR OPINION THAT A KEY FUNCTION OF EVALUATION IS ALSO TO SERVE PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION NEEDS AND THIS MUST NOT BE OVERLOOKED. IN ADDITION TO GENERATING INFORMATION THAT WILL BE USEFUL IN PROPOSING POLICY OPTIONS, PROJECT IDENTIFICATION, DESIGN

OR RE-DESIGN AND FUTURE PROGRAM DIRECTIONS, PROJECT EVALUATION REMAINS THE MISSION'S INDISPENSABLE TOOL IN MEASURING PROGRESS AND SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING STATED PROJECT OBJECTIVES AT THE PURPOSE AND GOAL LEVELS.

C. MORE IN-DEPTH EVALUATIONS - WE BELIEVE THAT ADOPTION OF A POLICY THAT SEEKS TO DO FEWER BUT BETTER EVALUATIONS WILL SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF AGENCY EVALUATION SYSTEM. THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE PRESENT OVERALL SYSTEM IS RELATED IN PART TO THE INABILITY OF THE AGENCY TO SUBSTANTIVELY PROCESS THE LARGE NUMBER OF EVALUATION DOCUMENTS - MANY OF WHICH ARE OF QUESTIONABLE UTILITY - THAT IT NOW RECEIVES. IT HAS BEEN THE FIRM POLICY OF THIS MISSION TO CALL FOR EVALUATIONS TO MEET MANAGEMENT NEEDS AND TO BE IN A STRONG POSITION TO PLAN THE USE OF EVALUATIVE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO IT, INCLUDING MISSION PERSONNEL. AS APPROPRIATE, MISSION WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT FLEXIBILITY IN COORDINATING PROJECT, SUB-SECTOR PROGRAM AND SECTOR PROGRAM EVALUATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH MISSION LONG-TERM PLANNING EXERCISES, E.G., COSS PREPARATION, AND LONG TERM PROJECTIONS AND DESIGN WORK ON A PROJECT OR PROGRAM BASIS.

D. USE OF EVALUATIVE INFORMATION IN PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGN - THIS MISSION, AND PROBABLY MANY OTHERS, HAS USED EVALUATION FINDINGS IN PROJECT DESIGN AND IN DETERMINING FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF MISSION PROGRAMS. SOMETIMES ATTEMPTS TO APPLY LESSONS LEARNED HAVE RESULTED IN DESIGN THAT HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO CRITICISM WITHIN THE REVIEW PROCESS, PERHAPS BECAUSE AID/W ITSELF IS NOT ALWAYS READY TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND PROFIT FROM HARD-GAINED

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memorandum

DATE: February 5, 1981

REPLY TO:
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland
THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck
SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Maseru 3320,
4 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Lesotho, Frank Correl
Director

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the summary report of the Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and an intra-Agency working group has started the task of implementing them. We will certainly keep you informed as to their progress.

The Task Force report was one of several evaluation items discussed at the meeting on December 15; hence our request for your reaction to the summary report by that date. Among the other items was the selection of priority topics for impact evaluation, reflecting Agency-wide information needs. Information on this will be sent separately.

The enclosed paper addresses some of the issues you raised, particularly those in paragraph B regarding project-specific information needs. It seems likely that input-output level reviews will essentially become part of monitoring and would not require an "evaluation" report to AID/W (a specific evaluation of implementation constraints in a Mission or Agency-wide would, of course, be a separate matter). Measurement of achievement at the purpose level has been fairly rare to date, and evaluation of a project in terms of its contribution to a development strategy or the continued validity of its underlying development assumptions has been even rarer. The scope of evaluation work will hopefully shift toward these latter purpose-goal questions.



Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

If you have any additional thoughts on the report or the enclosed paper, we hope you will let us know.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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AIDAC

FOR HENRY MILES, AFR/OP AND PPC/E

E. G. 12865: N/A
SUBJECT: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS - MISSION
COMMENTS

REF: STATE 312123

USAID/LIBERIA SUPPORTS EVALUATION TASK FORCE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CAPACITY OF PRESENT EVALUATION SYSTEM. OUR SPECIFIC COMMENTS PER REFTEL, ITEM 7, A-0, ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. EVALUATION CONSISTS OF TWO ELEMENTS: ON-GOING AND PERIODIC. IDEALLY, THIS PROCESS SHOULD BE LINKED TO BOTH PERFORMANCE, IN TERMS OF PROGRESS BEING ACHIEVED TOWARD OBJECTIVES ON THE BASIS OF AN MBO APPROACH (PROJECT DISCIPLINE), AS WELL AS TO FURTHER FUNDING OF INCREMENTALLY-FUNDED PROJECTS (DONOR LEVERAGE).

THE ASSISTANCE RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION AND THE CONTRACTOR/PASA SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO DO PERIODIC REPORTING ON ANNUAL BASIS. MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE REPORTING DOCUMENT SHOULD BE A BRIEF NARRATIVE REPORT ON SIGNIFICANT PROJECT RELATED ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS TOWARD OBJECTIVES; AND A FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF THE EXPENDITURE OF GRANT FUNDS. THE PROJECT MONITOR SHOULD MAKE SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS AND MAKE THIS A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT AS PART OF A PERMANENT PROJECT RECORD. THIS ANNUAL REPORTING WILL PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION FOR BOTH DONOR AND GRANTEE.

THE ANNUAL REPORTING EXERCISE COULD COINCIDE WITH ANNUAL REPORTING ACTIVITIES WITH WHICH MOST PUBLIC AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE TO COMPLY IN ANY CASE, SO THAT IT WOULD NOT ADD SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE WORKLOAD.

ASSISTANCE RECIPIENT ORGANIZATIONS, AS WELL AS CONTRACTORS/PASAS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO BE CANDID. A LACK OF HONEST REPORTING OFTEN RESULTS IN UNSATISFACTORY PROJECTS WHERE RECIPIENT ORGANIZATIONS AND CONTRACTORS/PASAS COVER UP FAULTS OR PROBLEMS FOR FEAR OF LOSING THE ASSISTANCE OR THE CONTRACT.

MISSION CONCURS THAT EVALUATION NEEDS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS, AND THAT EVALUATIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE AT SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES IN A PROJECT, PREDETERMINED AND COORDINATED DURING AND THROUGH THE PLANNING PROCESS RATHER THAN ON A CALENDAR BASIS.

B. IF EVALUATION PROVISIONS ARE BUILT INTO GRANTS WITH FUNDING BUDGETED OUT OF THE GRANT THE ISSUE OF AFFECT-

ING MISSION RESOURCES REMAINS LIMITED TO AFFECTING MISSION STAFF AND LOGISTICS. WITH AN ANNUAL REPORTING/MONITORING SYSTEM IN PLACE, THE NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS COULD BE CUT DOWN AND LIMITED TO THOSE PROJECTS WHICH HAVE ACHIEVED/SHOULD HAVE ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES IN PROGRESS TOWARD OBJECTIVES. IT WOULD FURTHER HELP TO HAVE A PERSON AS EVALUATION QUOTE TEAM LEADER UNQUOTE WHO HAS NO PERSONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL INTEREST IN THE PROJECT (NON-AID, NON-CONTRACTOR/PASA, NON-HOST COUNTRY). SOME EVALUATIONS ARE MARRED BY QUOTE ORGANIZATIONAL PROTECTIONISM UNQUOTE.

C. MISSION UNABLE TO COMMENT ON THIS ISSUE AT THIS TIME. WE WILL BE DISCUSSING A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING GROUPS OF PROJECTS/PROGRAMS WITH MINISTRY OF PLANNING NEXT WEEK AND WILL THEN INFORM YOU.

D. THE MISSION IS DEFICIENT IN THE AMOUNT OF EVALUATIVE INFORMATION ON PAST PROJECTS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY REGRETTABLE BECAUSE AID HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN LIBERIA SINCE 1946. AS A RESULT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, PROJECT FILES ARE PERIODICALLY SENT TO THE U.S. FOR QUOTE PROPER DISPOSAL UNQUOTE. THESE FILES OFTEN CONTAIN VITAL PROJECT EVALUATION MATERIALS, WHICH ARE THEN LOST AS PART OF THE MISSION'S MEMORY BANK. WE ARE TRYING TO COMPENSATE FOR THIS BY CARRYING OUT IMPACT STUDIES OF PAST PROJECTS. ALTHOUGH AGENCY PROCEDURES HAVE NOT REQUIRED OR SUPPORTED THE USE OF EVALUATION INFORMATION IN POLICY FORMULATION, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECT DESIGN, THIS MISSION IS USING WHATEVER EVALUATIVE DATA THAT ARE AVAILABLE LOCALLY FOR EXACTLY THOSE PURPOSES.

IF ONE MAKES IT YET ANOTHER QUOTE REQUIREMENT UNQUOTE IT BECOMES A FURTHER RED TAPE ITEM. MISSIONS SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF USING EVALUATION MATERIAL OF PAST EXPERIENCE IN CURRENT/FUTURE

Liberia

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AIDAC
PROGRAMMING DECISIONS. SMITH

memorandum

DATE: February 3, 1981

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland *mv*
THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly HageboeckSUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Monrovia
10499, 8 December 1980)TO: USAID/Liberia, Raymond Garufi
Director

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the report of the Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and an intra-Agency working group has started on the task of implementing them. We will keep you informed as to their progress.

Your description of the two elements of evaluation is clearly in general accordance with the conclusions of the Task Force that some distinction should be made between evaluation and monitoring, and that both functions be improved. It is possible that a monitoring system which incorporates elements known as "formative evaluation" would encourage greater candor on the part of implementing agencies and contractors/PASAs, and replace possible adversary relationships with more constructive ones. Evaluation work itself could allow for participation by teams or team leaders who have less of a personal or organizational interest in the project or program being evaluated.

We sympathize with the Mission's difficulty in keeping a "memory" of evaluative and other materials on older projects. Some Missions have attempted to compensate for this by periodically preparing short histories or summaries of their activities, but there does not appear to be a standard approach as to what should be included in these. In future years, the central Agency memory in DS/DIU will help overcome this deficiency, but it is doubtful that their coverage will ever extend pre-1974.

If you have additional thoughts on the report or the enclosed paper, we hope you will share them with us.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles



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FOR: PPC/E

E. O. 12065: N/A
SUBJECT: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: STATE 312123

1. MISSION IN AGREEMENT WITH GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF TASK FORCE. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT EFFORTS TO STRUCTURE EVALUATIONS TO BETTER ASSURE THAT THEIR RESULTS ARE USEFUL TO HOST COUNTRY AND AGENCY. UNFORTUNATELY, SUMMARY CABLE MAKES NO MENTION OF HOST COUNTRY INVOLVEMENT IN EVALUATION PROCESS NOR DOES IT PROVIDE INDICATION OF HOW TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED. MISSION HAS NOT YET RECEIVED TASK FORCE REPORT BUT WE HOPE IT TREATS IN DETAIL HOW THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

2. COMMENTS BELOW ARE KEYED TO REFTEL, PARA 7.

A. IF THE EVALUATION PLANNING PROCESS BEGINS WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES, CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS AT MISSION-LEVEL BY MISSION STAFF WITH HOST COUNTRY OFFICIALS, THEN THE RESULTING AGENCY-WIDE EVALUATION PLAN WHICH ALSO INCLUDES BUREAU AND AGENCY INPUTS SHOULD SERVICE THE MISSION'S AND HOST COUNTRY EVALUATION NEEDS.

B. IF FEWER BUT MORE IN-DEPTH EVALUATIONS ARE DESIGNED TO ADDRESS MISSION/HOST COUNTRY NEEDS, THEN THE EFFECT ON MISSION RESOURCES SHOULD BE POSITIVE, E. G., A MORE PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING OF THOSE FEW BUT IMPORTANT AREAS TO BE EVALUATED WILL BE MORE USEFUL TO MISSIONS AND HOST COUNTRY THAN THE RESULTS OBTAINED FROM MANY BUT MORE SUPERFICIAL EVALUATIONS. IN THIS REGARD WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP EVALUATION TEAMS SMALL AND, TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE, COMPOSED OF AGENCY AND HOST COUNTRY PERSONNEL RATHER THAN CONTRACTORS. THIS WILL ASSURE THE FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE GAINED FROM CARRYING OUT EVALUATIONS WILL ACCRUE TO THE AGENCY AND HOST COUNTRY.

C. MISSION FORESEES MANY OPPORTUNITIES AT PROGRAM SECTOR AND PROJECT LEVEL FOR JOINT USAID/HOST COUNTRY EVALUATIONS WHICH FOCUS ON SHARED CONCERNS. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT INCREASING HOST COUNTRY INVOLVEMENT IN OUR EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND SERIOUSLY DOUBT THE USEFULNESS OF EVALUATIONS THAT DO NOT HAVE HOST COUNTRY INVOLVEMENT FROM THE OUTSET.

D. MISSION ALWAYS HAS NEED FOR ADDITIONAL GOOD EVALUATION INFORMATION IN ITS PROGRAM AND DESIGN PROCESS. AID/W EFFORTS TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO MISSIONS EVALUATION RESULTS ARE APPRECIATED. THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE CONTINUED AND IMPROVED UPON.
HORAN

Cameroon

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memorandum

DATE: February 3, 1981

REPLY TO
ATTN OF:

PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland *NV*

THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck *MH*

SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Yaounde 7968,
11 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Cameroon, Ronald Levin
Director

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the report of the intra-Agency Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the Task Force Report is enclosed for your information. There was substantial field support, along with some significant qualifications. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and we are beginning the task of implementing these recommendations. A working group representing the bureau has been formed, and we will keep you informed as to its progress.

Although it would be premature to anticipate the detailed decisions of the working group, we think it is fair to say that host country involvement in evaluation at the program level, as well as at the more customary project level, will be encouraged. Such involvement would not only support host country, first-hand experience -- as you pointed out -- but also further the likelihood that any needed changes would be agreed to by all parties. We might, however, distinguish between this kind of evaluation work and those exercises represented by the current series of "impact" evaluations, a purpose of which is to obtain information from a cross-country sample for Agency-wide information needs.

As to efforts to improve upon AID/W ability to make all evaluation findings available to Missions, we are hopeful that some fairly immediate action can be taken. For example, a requirement for the evaluator (or the evaluation report) to provide a two-page descriptive and analytical summary would facilitate the process of synthesizing findings in AID/W, and would enable such services as DS/DIU to disseminate information in a more useful form. We also plan an annual, indexed collection of evaluation report abstracts.



Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

Your comments have already proved useful in highlighting certain issues for the working group. We hope you will send us any additional thoughts you may have on the report or the enclosed paper.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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FOR PPC/E AND AFR/DP/E

E.O. 12065: N/A
SUBJ: AGENCY EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: ;
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C. THIS BRINGS US TO THE THIRD PROBLEM, THE INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM. THE AGENCY CAN TAKE PRIDE IN THE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS IT HAS MADE TO IMPROVE THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF ITS ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, FROM OUR FILED PERSPECTIVE, THE RESULTS OF THESE EFFORTS HAVE, TO SAY THE LEAST, BEEN MIXED. THE FATE OF THE P-BAR AND THE THREE-TIERED DESIGN SYSTEM ARE NOTABLE. THERE IS A COMMON THREAD WHICH RUNS THROUGH THESE EXPERIENCES, THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY INADEQUATE STAFF (IN TERMS OF EXPERIENCE AND ACTUAL NUMBERS) AND TRAINING RESOURCES. (INDEED, PERHAPS THE MOST GLARING EXAMPLE OF THE INADEQUACY OF OUR EVALUATION SYSTEM IS THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOT PROVIDED THE AGENCY AND CONGRESS WITH A CLEAR AND COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF OUR IMPLEMENTATION/MANAGEMENT PROBLEM.) IN THIS CONTEXT, WE FIND A BIT DISCONCERTING THE STATEMENT IN PARA 4J, REFTEL, THAT THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN DETERMINED. WE BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL THAT A THOROUGH ANALYSIS BE UNDERTAKEN OF THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF STAFF TIME AND TRAINING REQUIRED) OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE THEY ARE ACCEPTED. WE WONDER IF TASK FORCE STUDIED WHY THERE HAVE BEEN SHORTFALLS IN RESOURCES IN PAST.

3. WE AGREE THAT IMPACT EVALUATIONS SHOULD BE CONTINUED AND INTEGRATED INTO AN EVALUATION PLAN. WE WOULD ALSO SUGGEST THAT SPECIAL TREATMENT BE GIVEN TO THE SAMPLE OF EX-POST IMPACT EVALUATION. BECAUSE OF THE PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE BEING PLACED ON THEM BY THE AGENCY AND CONGRESS, WE BELIEVE SPECIAL CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO INSURE THAT ADEQUATE BASELINE AND FOLLOW-ON DATA IS OBTAINED TO ENABLE ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. THUS THE SAMPLE OF PROJECTS WOULD HAVE TO BE IDENTIFIED AT THE PID STAGE AND ADEQUATE FUNDS PROVIDED FOR A THOROUGH BASELINE STUDY AS WELL AS FOR IN-PROGRESS AND EX-POST IMPACT STUDIES.

4. WE DO NOT SEE THE NEED FOR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE USE OF EVALUATION INFORMATION IN PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGN. AS INDICATED ABOVE THE PRIMARY PROBLEM AT PRESENT IS THE LACK OF AVAILABILITY OF EVALUATION INFORMATION IN A SYNTHESIZED FORM. IF THE INFORMATION IS MADE READILY AVAILABLE, EVALUATORS CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAKE APPROPRIATE USE OF IT. FURTHER, INCREASINGLY MISSIONS ARE ENGAGING IN A REDESIGNING OF FOLLOW-ON ACTIVITY UNDER EXISTING PROJECTS. IN THESE CASES, EVALUATIONS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE REDESIGN PROCESS. IN THIS MISSION RESPONSIBILITY FOR DESIGN AND EVALUATION IS LOCATED IN THE SAME OFFICE THUS PROVIDING FURTHER LINKAGE OF THE TWO.

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FOR PPC/E AND AFR/DP/E

E.O. 12865: N/A

SUBJ: AGENCY EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: AI STATE 312123

1. PLEASED ADMINISTRATOR WISHES USAID COMMENTS BEFORE MEETING WITH AAS. HOWEVER, SUMMARY CABLE RAISE QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE ANSWERED IN TASK FORCE REPORT. VERY DIFFICULT THEREFORE TO BE SURE CURRENT RESPONSE IS ADEQUATE FOR ADMINISTRATOR'S PURPOSE. QUESTION WHETHER REVIEW IS SO URGENT THAT USAID COULD NOT BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON REPORT ITSELF.

2. USAID/BAHAKO AGREES WITH TASK FORCE THAT EVALUATION FINDINGS ARE NOT BEING ADEQUATELY CONSIDERED IN PROGRAMMING AND DESIGN EFFORTS. WE AGREE ALSO IN PRINCIPLE WITH PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED PARA SA RNTL, PROVIDED AS WE UNDERSTAND IT THEY ARE AIMED AT IMPROVING THE PRESENT DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM. WE ARE TROUBLED BY IMPLICATIONS ON PARA 3B AND 4E. IT APPEARS TASK FORCE BELIEVES EVALUATIONS WHICH SERVE ON-GOING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (INCLUDING IN-COURSE REDESIGNS THAT MAY FLOW FROM "REGULAR" AND "SPECIAL" EVALUATIONS) EITHER ARE NOT IMPORTANT OR SHOULD BE RE-DEFINED AS PART OF MONITORING BECAUSE THEY ARE OF LIMITED VALUE TO "PROGRAMMING AND POLICY NEEDS". OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT AGENCY IS BEGINNING TO EMPHASIZE NECESSITY OF GIVING HIGHER PRIORITY TO IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION, RECOGNIZING THAT A BETTER ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS IS ESSENTIAL TO THE DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING PROCESS. WE BELIEVE HIGHEST PRIORITY OF AGENCY-WIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM SHOULD BE TO SERVE THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF IMPLEMENTATION FIRST, AND THEN PROGRAMMING AND PROJECT DESIGN PROCESSES. FURTHER, PRIORITY SHOULD BE PLACED ON NEED AT THE MISSION LEVEL. SINCE THIS HEART OF THE AGENCY-WIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM, WEAKNESSES AT THIS LEVEL ARE PROJECTED THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM. THE PRESENT SYSTEM DOES NOT ADEQUATELY MEET MISSION-LEVEL NEEDS; WE BELIEVE THIS IS WHERE THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE MISSION ON THE GEOGRAPHIC BUREAUS AND PPC EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SHOULD BE. IN THIS REGARD, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THREE MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS REQUIRING ACTION.

A. THE FIRST IS THE INADEQUACY OF PROJECT-LEVEL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION/REPORTING SYSTEMS. THIS NOT ONLY REDUCES THE QUALITY OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT/IMPLEMENTATION BUT EVALUATION AND THEREFOR DESIGN AS WELL. THAT IS, LACKING ACCESS TO RELIABLE AND APPROPRIATELY RECORDED MANAGEMENT INFORMATION, EVALUATORS ARE FORCED TO COLLECT THEIR OWN MANAGEMENT INFORMATION, RELYING ON THE MEMORY AND PERCEPTIONS OF PROJECT PERSONNEL. THIS NOT ONLY CAN BE MISLEADING, BUT FORCES TEAMS TO SPEND LIMITED TIME ON INPUT LEVEL DETAIL WHICH INHIBITS REFLECTION ON THE OUTPUT AND PURPOSE LEVEL ACHIEVEMENTS.

B. THE SECOND PROBLEM INVOLVES THE LACK OF COORDINATION OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND FORMAT AT THE MISSION ON BUREAU AND AGENCY LEVELS. AT PRESENT, EACH EVALUATION IS TREATED INDEPENDENTLY, EACH IS PLANNED SEPARATELY, EACH HAS ITS OWN SCOPE OF WORK, NORMALLY EACH INVOLVES A DIFFERENT TEAM, EACH IS ASKING DIFFERENT QUESTIONS OR SIMILAR QUESTIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS, AND EACH IS REPORTING INFORMATION COLLECTED IN A DIFFERENT STYLE. THUS, THE BODY OF INFORMATION DEVELOPED UNDER EACH PROJECT EVALUATION VARIES CONSIDERABLY. THIS VARIATION MAKES IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO SYNTHESIZE THIS INFORMATION INTO AN EASY-TO-USE FORM. IT IS THEREFORE DIFFICULT FOR MISSIONS, AND AS A RESULT THE BUREAU AND THE AGENCY, TO ADEQUATELY INCORPORATE THIS INFORMATION INTO THE PROGRAMMING AND PROJECT DESIGN DECISIONS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT EVALUATIONS MUST BE TAILORED TO THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF EACH PROJECT. AT THE SAME TIME WE BELIEVE THERE ARE SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION WHICH EACH MISSION, EACH BUREAU AND THE AGENCY REQUIRES. THIS INFORMATION HAS TO BE AVAILABLE IN A SYNTHESIZED FORM WHICH PERMITS COMPATIBLE ANALYSIS ACROSS PROJECTS. THIS REQUIRES THAT EVALUATION PLANNING, PROCEDURES AND FORMAT BE STANDARDIZED TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE AT EACH LEVEL. THE PES FORMAT DOES NOT ACHIEVE THIS. WE BELIEVE THAT AS LONG AS DECENTRALIZED NATURE OF SYSTEM IS MAINTAINED, PLANNING PROCESS OUTLINED RNTL IS SOUND AND OFFERS AND OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE SOME STANDARDIZATION. FYI, THIS MISSION BEGAN EFFORTS TO STANDARDIZE EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND FORMAT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. SINCE THEN OUR PRIMARY FOCUS HAS BEEN ON DEVELOPING A STANDARDIZED OVER-ALL SCOPE OF WORK AND SUPPORTING QUESTIONNAIRES WHICH ADDRESS IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS FACING THE MISSION. WE PLAN TO USE RESULTS OF THE COSS EXERCISE AND THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN THE MISSION TO HELP US BETTER IDENTIFY PROGRAMMING AND POLICY-MAKING AND PROJECT PROJECT DESIGN ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS. WE ALSO PLAN TO HOLD A REVIEW ON THE RESULTS OF THE MISSION'S EVALUATIONS NEXT FALL IN PREPARATION FOR FUTURE COSS EXERCISES. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE ACHIEVED LIMITED ENCOURAGING RESULTS (E.G., THE PREPARATION OF SCOPES OF WORK IS EASIER), WE WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT THIS PROCESS IS BOTH COMPLEX AND TIME CONSUMING. DUE TO THE SEVERE PRESSURES ON OUR LIMITED STAFF, PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOW. THUS TO COMPLETE THIS PROCESS WE WILL LIKELY NEED PERIODIC SHORT-TERM CONSULTANT.

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UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 BAHAKO 8161

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C. THIS BRINGS US TO THE THIRD PROBLEM, THE INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM. THE AGENCY CAN TAKE PRIDE IN THE CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS IT HAS MADE TO IMPROVE THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF ITS ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, FROM OUR FILED PERSPECTIVE, THE RESULTS OF THESE EFFORTS HAVE, TO SAY THE LEAST, BEEN MIXED. THE FATE OF THE P-BAR AND THE THREE-TIERED DESIGN SYSTEM ARE NOTABLE. THERE IS A COMMON THREAT WHICH RUNS THROUGH THESE EXPERIENCES, THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY INADEQUATE STAFF (IN TERMS OF EXPERIENCE AND ACTUAL NUMBERS) AND TRAINING RESOURCES. (INDEED, PERHAPS THE MOST GLARING EXAMPLE OF THE INADEQUACY OF OUR EVALUATION SYSTEM IS THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOT PROVIDED THE AGENCY AND CONGRESS WITH A CLEAR AND COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF OUR IMPLEMENTATION/MANAGEMENT PROBLEM.) IN THIS CONTEXT, WE FIND A BIT DISCONCERTING THE STATEMENT IN PARA 4J, REFTEL, THAT THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN DETERMINED. WE BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL THAT A THOROUGH ANALYSIS BE UNDERTAKEN OF THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF STAFF TIME AND TRAINING REQUIRED) OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE THEY ARE ACCEPTED. WE WONDER IF TASK FORCE STUDIED WHY THERE HAVE BEEN SHORTFALLS IN RESOURCES IN PAST.

3. WE AGREE THAT IMPACT EVALUATIONS SHOULD BE CONTINUED AND INTEGRATED INTO AN EVALUATION PLAN. WE WOULD ALSO SUGGEST THAT SPECIAL TREATMENT BE GIVEN TO THE SAMPLE OF EX-POST IMPACT EVALUATION. BECAUSE OF THE PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE BEING PLACED ON THEM BY THE AGENCY AND CONGRESS, WE BELIEVE SPECIAL CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO INSURE THAT ADEQUATE BASELINE AND FOLLOW-ON DATA IS OBTAINED TO ENABLE ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. THUS THE SAMPLE OF PROJECTS WOULD HAVE TO BE IDENTIFIED AT THE PID STAGE AND ADEQUATE FUNDS PROVIDED FOR A THOROUGH BASELINE STUDY AS WELL AS FOR IN-PROGRESS AND EX-POST IMPACT STUDIES.

4. WE DO NOT SEE THE NEED FOR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE USE OF EVALUATION INFORMATION IN PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGN. AS INDICATED ABOVE THE PRIMARY PROBLEM AT PRESENT IS THE LACK OF AVAILABILITY OF EVALUATION INFORMATION IN A SYNTHESIZED FORM. IF THE INFORMATION IS MADE READILY AVAILABLE, EVALUATORS CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAKE APPROPRIATE USE OF IT. FURTHER, INCREASINGLY MISSIONS ARE ENGAGING IN A REDESIGNING OF FOLLOW-ON ACTIVITY UNDER EXISTING PROJECTS. IN THESE CASES, EVALUATIONS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE REDESIGN PROCESS. IN THIS MISSION RESPONSIBILITY FOR DESIGN AND EVALUATION IS LOCATED IN THE SAME OFFICE THUS PROVIDING FURTHER LINKAGE OF THE TWO.

HOLLOWAY

MESSAGE DELAYED

UNCLASSIFIED

72

memorandum

DATE: February 3, 1981

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland *11*
THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck *11*
SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Bamako 8161,
12 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Mali, David Wilson
Director

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the summary report of the Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and an intra-Agency working group has started on the task of implementing them. We will certainly keep you informed as to their progress.

The Task Force Report was one of several evaluation items discussed during the meeting between the Administrator and AAs on December 15; hence our request for your reactions to the summary report by that date. Among the other items on the agenda was the selection of priority topics for impact evaluation. Information on this will be sent separately.

Although it would be premature to anticipate the detailed decisions of the working group, we would like to respond informally to some of the points made in your cable. First, the Task Force assumed that the bulk of the evaluation information in the Agency would continue to be generated by the present decentralized system, and would continue to reflect the fact that the Agency undertakes its development activities principally through projects. What the Task Force did conclude, however, was that evaluation reports were telling us very little about the effectiveness and effects of our activities, or whether our assumptions about a project continued to be valid. The Task Force felt that we should attempt to define more clearly what our information needs are and to include in an evaluation those questions that are likely to elicit this information.

This brings us to your emphasis on the evaluation of implementation problems, and on the role of evaluation in serving the needs of



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5010-112

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implementation first, and other needs second. Perhaps what we have here is a semantic difficulty. At any rate, the Task Force did not place a low priority on implementation, nor on monitoring/information systems designed to assist project managers to track implementation. What the Task Force recommended was that evaluations be undertaken to meet specified needs for evaluative information, and that the present evaluation system be modified to achieve this end. If the Mission ascertains that its priority information need at any given time has to do with implementation problems, then the Mission's evaluation plan would indicate the type of information it needed and the kinds of questions it would ask to obtain this information. Certainly, implementation is a worthy topic for evaluation. Just as the overall design of a project, or its development hypothesis, can be unrealistic, so may project implementation plans be unrealistic. In either case, monitoring would reveal the existence of a problem. The manager could call for an evaluation, which might help clarify the problem and suggest solutions; or alternatively, the manager could call in a management consultant or a "trouble-shooter" to recommend solutions. The existence of a problem does not necessarily require an evaluation. Rather, it is the nature of the information desired that determines whether an evaluation is appropriate.

We assume that implementation will not be the sole focus of the Mission's evaluation work. In this regard, your plans (as described in paragraph 2B) to use the results of the CDSS and other exercises to help identify program, policy and project design issues which need to be addressed through evaluation are very encouraging. Such an approach seems to be a useful way of identifying the Mission's information needs sufficiently in advance to be reflected in the project paper evaluation plan as well as current scopes of work; there will, of course, always be some ad hoc requirements for evaluation that cannot be foreseen.

We continue to believe that evaluation (including an evaluation of implementation/management experience) can be properly distinguished from monitoring. We recognize that there are overlaps between the two functions. Both are management tools, and the log frame is useful to both. Certain evaluation techniques are particularly suited to monitoring, or can be made part and parcel of the activities through which a project is implemented. Perhaps the single most important overlap is the one regarding management information, which you have convincingly discussed in this and your earlier cable (Ref. Bamako 4673, 30 July 1980). We agree that both monitoring and evaluation are seriously handicapped by the lack of baseline and follow-on data, and that special efforts are needed to identify the key variables early in the design stage and to set aside funds in the project for data collection.

Your concern over constraints imposed by staff and training limitations is understandable and we agree that it was unfortunate that the Task Force did not pin down the resource implications of its recommendations. The Task Force tended to believe that the rigorous, summative, in-depth evaluation, well-supplied with data, implied by our present evaluation guidance (but rarely done in actual practice!) was simply not affordable for every project. Accordingly, the system would have to be modified to permit a more selective approach as well as a wider range of evaluation research designs. Beyond that, since the Task Force did not detail the specific actions needed to implement its recommendations, it was unable to measure precise costs or trade-offs.

We are hopeful that some action can be taken fairly quickly to improve dissemination of evaluation results (e.g., better summaries, indexed abstracts). The main problem, as you indicated, is the difficulty of synthesizing information from very disparate evaluation reports. As we identify our information needs, we will be in a better position to specify sets of questions that should be considered for various categories of information and to redesign a reporting format. In the meantime, we would be grateful if you could send us examples of the standardized evaluation formats and scope of work mentioned in your cable.

If you have additional thoughts on the report or the enclosed paper, we hope you will share them with us. Your comments have already been useful in highlighting certain issues for the working group.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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AIDAC

WASHDC FOR PPC/E AND AFR/DP

NAIROBI FOR REDSO/EA

E.P. 12865: N/A

SUBJ: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: STATE 312123

1. AAAO COMMENTS ALONG LINES PARA SEVEN REFTEL FOLLOW:
A. AGREE RIGID SCHEDULING SHOULD BE ELIMINATED.
EVALUATION OF PILOT AND PHASED PROJECT (TRANCHE FUNDED)
BE UNDERTAKEN AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE. IN SOME CASES, DJIBOUTI
IN PARTICULAR, MIGHT BE IN OPPOSITE SITUATION WHERE
FORCED INTO PROGRAMMING ADDITIONAL FUNDS PRIOR TO HAVING
RESULTS FROM/EVALUATION OF INITIAL PHASE.

B. MISSION RESOURCES AS WELL AS HOST COUNTRY'S WOULD BE
STRAINED CONSIDERABLY BY IN DEPTH AS OPPOSED TO ROUTINE
EVALUATION SINCE LATTER USUALLY DOES ENTAIL (BASED UPON
MY EXPERIENCE IN OTHER MISSIONS) CURSORY UPDATING AND
OFTENTIMES NON-OBJECTIVE REVIEW OF A PROJECT.

C. IN TERMS OF GROUPING PROJECTS FOR COMMON EVALUATION RE
ECONOMIC IMPACT, ATTAINMENT OF PROJECT SPECIFIC AND
SECTOR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, THIS DIFFICULT TASK UNLESS ALL
PROJECTS HAVE BEEN CONSOLIDATED IN A COUNTRY PROGRAM LOG FRAME
MATRIX, IDEALLY WITHIN COSS. ALTHOUGH THIS ATTEMPT WAS MADE I
RECENT DJIBOUTI COSS, DESPARATE ACTIVITIES AND THIS HOST
COUNTRY'S TOTAL LACK OF CONCEPTION FOR SECTOR PLANNING WOULD
IN FINAL ANALYSIS MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO APPLY
COMMON AND SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS HERE

D. TO DATE DJIBOUTI HAS CONDUCTED NO EVALUATIONS SINCE PROGRAM/
PROJECTS ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN. TO EXTENT POSSIBLE AAAO AND
REDSO/EA WILL INCLUDE EVALUATIVE INFO IN ANY
SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES HERE, HOWEVER PER PARA 4 B REFTEL, INSTITUTIONAL

SETTING, PARTICULARLY PROGRAMMING/OBLIGATING REQUIREMENTS,
MAY PRECLUDE EVALUATIVE INFO BEING FULLY INCORPORATED INTO
PROJECT DESIGN EFFORTS.

1) IN PAST AS EVALUATION OFFICER IN OTHER MISSIONS, I URGED
GREATER NEED FOR OBJECTIVE EVALUATION SO THIS OF COURSE
WOULD REQUIRE THAT EVALUATION OFFICE BE OUTSIDE BUREAUS AND
REPORTING TO THE AAO DIRECTLY.

TO FURTHER INSURE INDEPENDENCE, CREDIBILITY OF MAJOR
IN DEPTH EVALUATIONS THEY SHOULD FREQUENTLY BE CONTRACTED
OUT AS WELL.

2) IN ADDITION RATHER THAN MISSION DIRECTOR CHOOSING THE
TIME AND PLACE FOR EVALUATIONS IT SHOULD BE DONE BY
THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT ALONG LINES OF GAO.

3) IN MY OPINION IF THERE IS ANYTHING TO LEARN FROM PAST EVALUATIONS/

EXPERIENCE, IT IS TO BE REALISTIC IN TERMS OF FUTURE
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULING. THIS IS MOST OFTEN
DISMISSED HOWEVER, IN EFFORT TO GET A PROJECT APPROVED, KEEP
WITHIN FUNDING LIMITS AS WELL AS FIVE YEAR LOP.
NORTH

Unrecovered

Djibouti

UNCLASSIFIED

memorandum

DATE: February 3, 1981

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland

THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck

SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Djibouti 3114,
25 November 1980)

TO: USAID/Djibouti, Ellsworth Amundson
AID Affairs Officer (Acting)

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the report of the intra-Agency Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the Task Force Report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and a representative working group has begun the task of implementing the recommendations. We will keep you informed as to their progress.

Although it would be premature to anticipate the detailed decisions of the working group, we would like to say that we appreciate the problems you mentioned regarding the difficulty of addressing program-level issues (particularly for small or new Missions with fairly disparate projects), the burden on the Mission implied by more in-depth evaluation work, the timing of evaluation prior to decisions regarding follow-on projects in the face of pressures to program/obligate, and the independence (credibility) of evaluators.

These matters were discussed (some only briefly) during the meetings of the Task Force. Overall, it is fair to say that the first three of these problems represent the kind of concerns that would best be handled during the steps leading to an Agency Evaluation Plan. In this process, a Mission would have the opportunity to identify its short-range (1-3 year) evaluative information needs and alert both regional offices and AID/W to the external resources that would be required to meet these needs. It is expected that needs would differ between, for example, large or long-established Missions and newer ones. The problem of scheduling an evaluation



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early enough so that the findings can be used in making decisions about follow-on or tranche-funded projects was one which the Task Force highlighted. Follow-ons to phased or pilot projects are characteristic of most Mission portfolios, and, of course, reflect the very long-term efforts required by development. We intend to put together some suggestions as to the kind of interim evaluation questions and research designs that would increase our confidence in making such decisions, knowing full well that these decisions will usually be made under pressure to obligate before the full effects of a previous project can be measured. This is also an area in which the results from other Missions might prove to be useful, and we hope that improvements in our planning of evaluation work will more systematically join the "supply" of information to the present and foreseeable "demand" for information.

Your point regarding the need for more objective evaluation, and the independence and credibility of evaluators, is one that is likely to remain with us for as long as the Agency involves itself in the task of development. On the one hand, there are tremendous benefits to be gained from deeply involving all project participants -- AID officers, host country, intermediary implementing agents, and beneficiaries -- in project evaluation; on the other hand, as you and others have pointed out, an appraisal of the effectiveness and effects of a project or program is more honestly obtained from evaluators who are not immediately involved or committed to a course of action, and who can bring to the appraisal a broader perspective and a fresh sense of alternative approaches. Again without pre-judging the actions of the working group, we are hopeful that the Agency's evaluation system will establish a place for both approaches.

Heretofore, most of the evaluation work of the Agency has tended to emphasize the former approach, even though a great deal more could be done to exploit the value of this particular approach. The current series of "impact" evaluations is the closest approximation to the latter approach yet attempted by the Agency. As a footnote to your concern regarding objectivity, we add that some Mission comments as well as AID/W reviews of contracted evaluations suggest that the recourse to contractors does not, by itself, ensure the objectivity, independence, credibility, and usefulness of the resulting report. The results are only as good as the questions raised by the Mission and the form of the answer as defined by the Mission as relevant to its needs, with both clearly set out in the scope of work. It is a rare contractor indeed whose work will go beyond the easy or more obvious questions, unless the Mission so requires.

If you have any further thoughts on the Task Force Report (the Mission

should have received the full 12-page report) or on the enclosed paper, we hope you will share them with us.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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Gambia

AIDAC

FOR AFR/EVALUATION OFFICER PPC/E
SUBJ: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS
REF: STATE 312123

1. WE ARE A NEW MISSION AND ONLY BEGINNING TO FEEL THE NEED FOR PROJECT EVALUATION. WE CONCUR FULLY WITH PARA 5 A REFTEL PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO THE NEED FOR BUILDING IN EVALUATION PLANS AT THE PROJECT DESIGN/APPROVAL STAGE WITH SUFFICIENT FUNDS BUDGETED TO COVER COSTS. ACTUAL TIMING AND CONTENT OF PROPOSED EVALUATIONS SHOULD REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT AS PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESSES. REQUIREMENTS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE REVIEWED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY AND EVALUATIONS SCHEDULED BY THE MISSION WITH THE HELP OF AID/W AND REDSOJS IF APPROPRIATE.
2. AID REP IS IN FAVOR OF FEWER BUT MORE IN-DEPTH EVALUATIONS AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 5 B. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE OF MATTERS DESCRIBED PARAS 5 C AND D, FROM OUR MORE MICRO-SCOPIC VIEWPOINT, OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS OUR MAJOR CONCERN WILL REMAIN FOCUSED ON EVALUATING THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPECIFIC PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND INPUT AND OUTPUT TARGETS ARE BEING ACHIEVED. WE WILL BE CONCERNED MORE WITH THE LESSONS LEARNED APPROACH TO ASSIST US IN AVOIDING REPETITION OF MISTAKES IN FUTURE PLANNING AND DESIGN AS WELL AS TO GUIDE US IN RESHAPING THE DESIGN OF EXISTING PROJECTS TO THE EXTENT EVALUATION FINDINGS SO INDICATE TO THE EXTENT THE APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY CAN BE STANDARDIZED TO PERMIT BROADER ANALYSIS FOR REPLICATION ELSEWHERE SO MUCH THE BETTER.
3. RE PARA 7 D REFTEL, AID REP SUSPECTS THAT SUFFICIENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON EVALUATED EXPERIENCE IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER IN VIRTUALLY ALL AREAS IN WHICH WE HAVE PROJECTS OR ARE CONTEMPLATING NEW ACTIVITIES IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, THIS INFORMATION IS NOT AS ACCESSIBLE AS IT MIGHT BE, DUE PARTLY TO OUR LACK OF STAFF TO DEVOTE TO INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL. FOR EXAMPLEN WE ARE PLANNING TO DEVELOP A NEW PROJECT IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE. WHILE A PLETHORA OF MATERIAL IS AVAILABLE TO US TO ASSIST IN DEVELOPING A SECTORAL STRATEGY AND DESIGNING A PROJECT, E. G. VARIOUS WHO STUDIES, REDSO AND SOPS PAPERS, WE ARE NOT IN POSSESSION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION ON EVALUATED EXPERIENCE IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROJECTS WHICH, IF AVAILABLE, WOULD ASSIST US GREATLY IN OUR ANALYTICAL AND DESIGN EFFORTS. PIPER

UNCLASSIFIED

DATE: February 3, 1981

memorandum

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: PPC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland
THRU: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck
SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Banjul 3086,
14 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Gambia, Thomas Moser
AID Representative

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the report of the intra-Agency Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the Task Force Report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and a representative working group has started on the task of implementing the recommendations. We will keep you informed as to their progress.

Recognizing your position as a new Mission, we are encouraged by your interest in considering "standard" approaches and methods that would enable your evaluation work — as feasible and appropriate — to contribute to an information base for broader analysis and use. Essentially, a more "standard" approach consists of an attempt to address certain key questions about a project or program, and to concentrate evaluation work on these questions, the questions themselves having been framed to meet anticipated information needs by various "users" in the Agency. We are hoping to achieve this kind of relationship between the "supply" of and "demand" for information by some improvements in our planning to meet the demand for evaluative information at all levels in the Agency. It is possible that one or more Missions may be asked to consider some special aspect of a project during an evaluation so as to contribute to our Agency-wide knowledge, and to determine what additional resources would be required to do so within an appropriate methodological range.

Your comments regarding the inaccessibility of evaluation results are very well taken. Our initial review of the information



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5010-112

management capabilities in AID indicates that the problems -- as usual! -- derive mostly from that critical stage in information transfer where raw information is somehow "translated" into terms useful to the person who needs the information. This problem will have to be addressed from several points -- better definition of information requirements, more tailoring to specific audiences by the evaluator, expanded but better focused capacity in the automated information systems of DS/DIU. At a minimum, it is probable that we will require from evaluators (or evaluation reports) both summarized information and analyzed answers to specific questions regarding project results, key project elements, and "lessons learned" as to such matters as development strategy, institutional requirements, resource availability, anticipated or actual impact, host country participation/understanding, and suggestions for the design of similar projects. If we are able to organize the information into these and other categories, a Mission will be better able to obtain information most relevant to its needs.

If you have any further thoughts regarding the Task Force Report, or the enclosed paper, we hope you will share them with us.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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PAGE 01
ACTION AID-35

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7246

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 05125

ADM AID

E. O. 12065: N/A
SUBJECT: EVALUATION TASK FORCE FINDINGS

REF: STATE 312123

1. REGRET DELAY IN RESPONSE BUT HOPE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS WILL BE OF SOME USE: WHILE USAID HAS NOT YET RECEIVED TASK FORCE REPORT MENTIONED REFTEL, COMMENTS BELOW PREPARED ON BASIS OF REFTEL SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS.

2. TAKING EVALUATIONS OUT OF A REQUIRED SCHEDULING MODE APPEARS TO BE SENSIBLE APPROACH AS EVALUATIONS ARE USEFUL WHEN THEY ARE NEEDED AND NOT MERELY A PAPER EXERCISE. WHILE REFTEL DISTINGUISHES EVALUATION FROM THE ROLE OF PROJECT MONITORING, THERE IS STILL A NEED FOR EVALUATION TO PROVIDE MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE FOR ON-GOING ACTIVITIES AND WHILE THIS NEED MAY BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE BROADER FOCUS OF EVALUATION AS ADDRESSED IN REFTEL, IT REPRESENTS A TOOL THAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER USED THAN IT CURRENTLY IS. IN THIS RESPECT, MORE SPECIFIC REVIEW OF EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PLANNING DONE AT THE PROJECT DESIGN REVIEW AND AUTHORIZATION STAGE COULD FOCUS NECESSARY ATTENTION ON EVALUATION AS A MORE USEFUL TOOL. PERHAPS THERE SHOULD ALSO BE A REQUIREMENT THAT PROJECT PROPOSALS REVIEW OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE. FOR MISSION PROJECTS THIS IS FEASIBLE, BUT FOR ANY REVIEW BEYOND THE MISSION A FAR BETTER INFORMATION SYSTEM THAN THAT WHICH PRESENTLY EXISTS WOULD HAVE TO BE DEVELOPED BEFORE THIS WOULD BE PRACTICAL.

3. GROUPS OF PROJECTS COULD BE EVALUATED TOGETHER, BUT THERE MUST BE SOME LINKAGE TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR THIS, WHETHER IT IS SECTORAL LINKAGES, REGIONAL LINKS, OR OTHER COMMON CRITERIA. SCHRAGER

Maintenance

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32

memorandum

DATE: February 5, 1981

REPLY TO: PFC/E/PES, Nena Vreeland
ATTN OF: PFC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck
THRU: PFC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck
SUBJECT: Evaluation Task Force Findings (Ref. Nouakchott 5125,
17 December 1980)

TO: USAID/Mauritania, John Hoskins
Director

We appreciate the Mission's comments on the summary report of the Evaluation Task Force. A paper summarizing field responses to the report is enclosed for your information. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the Administrator, and an intra-Agency working group has started on the task of implementing them. We will keep you informed as to their progress.

You will note from the enclosed paper that your support for the use of evaluation in the management of on-going activities was shared by others. We would add that the Task Force did not discourage the use of evaluation techniques (e.g., using the log-frame as a means of measuring project progress) as a management tool. What the Task Force did recommend was a shift in our evaluation work to address certain issues and questions so as to meet specific information needs, and to organize our evaluation work so that we can get a better sense of the kind of information we can expect from in-depth evaluations undertaken by Missions and AID/W.

The revision of Handbook 3 requires a review of experience in the early design stages. The other side of this coin, as you point out, is a requirement that Missions have access to this information. We will be working to improve the information system of the Agency, as well as the quality of information it processes.

Again, thank you for your comments. If you have any additional thoughts on the report or on the enclosed paper, we hope you will let us know.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles



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management capabilities in AID indicates that the problems -- as usual! -- derive mostly from that critical stage in information transfer where raw information is somehow "translated" into terms useful to the person who needs the information. This problem will have to be addressed from several points -- better definition of information requirements, more tailoring to specific audiences by the evaluator, expanded but better focused capacity in the automated information systems of DS/DIU. At a minimum, it is probable that we will require from evaluators (or evaluation reports) both summarized information and analyzed answers to specific questions regarding project results, key project elements, and "lessons learned" as to such matters as development strategy, institutional requirements, resource availability, anticipated or actual impact, host country participation/understanding, and suggestions for the design of similar projects. If we are able to organize the information into these and other categories, a Mission will be better able to obtain information most relevant to its needs.

If you have any further thoughts regarding the Task Force Report, or the enclosed paper, we hope you will share them with us.

Attachment: a/s

cc: AFR/DP, Henry Miles

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FIRST IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Implementation Work Plan

Representatives from the regional and central bureaus met with PPC on January 27, 1981, to review and modify a draft implementation work plan. A copy of the draft work plan reviewed in this session is attached.

1. The first portion of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the status of the minutes of the Administrator's "Monday Group" meeting of 12/15/80. These minutes, which had not yet been signed, were a matter of concern to those who attended. The fact that the minutes are not signed was viewed as an impediment to progress in implementing the Evaluation Task Force's recommendations. In addition, Missions are anxious to receive information concerning the results of the 12/15/80 meeting.

2. A consensus was reached during the meeting of 1/27/81 concerning a work plan for implementing the Evaluation Task Force recommendations. The decisions taken during that meeting were:

To adopt a two-stage approach for implementing the Task Force recommendations.

In Stage I, regional and central bureau representatives will review each of the Task Force recommendations and take such steps as are deemed necessary to make those recommendations actionable. In Stage II, the Task Force recommendations (as clarified by Stage I) will be implemented.

To shorten the time period allocated to Stage I in the draft work plan.

The time period will be shortened by setting aside one day in February for an intensive session that will address as many Stage I issues as possible, and identify those recommendations that can be acted upon immediately. PPC/E will arrange a date and location for this session. At the close of the session, decisions will be made concerning the additional work required to complete Stage I. The remaining work will be scheduled for rapid completion. PPC estimates that this change will mean that Stage I will conclude during March, rather than on the May date discussed in the draft work plan.

To concentrate the implementation effort on evaluation issues.

The draft work plan reviewed on the 27th suggested that evaluation and monitoring implications of the Evaluation Task Force Report be examined and acted upon simultaneously. It was the sense of the meeting that if a work plan included monitoring issues, delays would be experienced in implementing recommendations on evaluation. Thus, while there were no major objections to having a work group concerned with monitoring operate on a parallel time schedule, the participants decided that their effort should be limited to evaluation (i.e., if a monitoring work group were formed it would need to be created independently and take responsibility for its own schedule and productivity).

3. Summary of Mission Responses to the Task Force Report

PFC/E completed this summary on 1/29/81. A copy has been forwarded for your attention. Copies are being distributed to each Bureau and will be pouched to all the Missions.

Attachment: A/S

Clearances:

ASTIA/DP:RHalligan _____ Date _____
AFR/DP:EMiles _____ Date _____
LAC/DP:BGoldstein _____ Date _____
NE/DP:RRhoda _____ Date _____
DS/PO:FCampbell _____ Date _____
PDC/FFP:CWeiskirch _____ Date _____

PFC/E/PES:MHageboeck;sta - 1/30/81:20226

NOTE: The original and the copy initialed by the bureaus was sent to the Acting Administrator along with a note concerning the frequency of future progress reports -- every other month.

ROUGH DRAFT OF A WORKPLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING
THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION TASK FORCE

A. SUMMARY

This "rough draft" of a workplan for implementing the recommendations of the Evaluation Task Force assumes:

1. Implementation will proceed in two stages. During Stage I each recommendation will be examined to determine whether it is "actionable," (i.e., whether the tasks that must be completed are clearly stated and whether the locus of responsibility for carrying out implementation tasks has been clearly identified). In Stage II, those responsible for carrying out specific (and clearly defined) implementation tasks will commence their work.

2. A "workgroup" comprised of bureau representatives and individuals with needed expertise will be set up and charged with carrying out the Stage I implementation actions.

3. The "workgroup" will operate in two segments during some portions of Stage I in order to fully consider the implications of the Task Force recommendations on (a) evaluation and (b) the "evaluative"/"feedback" aspects of monitoring.

4. PPC/E/PES will be responsible for organizing and coordinating the two stage effort. PPC/E/PES staff will serve as "staff" to the "workgroup," participate in it, prepare progress reports for the Administrator, draft the formal report on implementation of the Task Force recommendations, and prepare a final version of the Implementation Report by December 6, 1981.

B. STAGE I

1. Task:

Review all Task Force conclusions and recommendations. Determine which are immediately actionable and which require additional clarification or decisions. Make such clarifications/decisions as required and identify the "action office(s)" that are to carry out each of the specific implementation tasks.

2. "Workgroup" Composition:

The optimum composition would include (a) the evaluation officers for each bureau and evaluation officers for specific programs, e.g., PVC, P.L. 480, HIG, etc., (b) PPC/E/PES and

at least one representative from PPC/E/S, (c) a representative from PPC/PDPR/PDI, (d) a representative from PM/TD, a representative from DS/DIU/DI, and two to four individuals from around the Agency who have supplementary experience in the area of monitoring, e.g., Graham Kerr, David Mandel. The optimum size for the workgroup--given the idea of parallel workgroup segments--is between 12 and 20 people. Assuming that travel will take some of the participants out of town during the work period, it seems advisable to over-recruit, i.e., approximately 20 people.

3. "Workgroup" Operation:

The "workgroup" will require (a) an overall Director and (b) Chairmen who manage the two segments. Rather than burden the bureaus with the responsibility for papers, schedules, etc., it is recommended that these positions be assigned to PPC staff. Specifically:

- Director: AAA/PPC/E, Robert J. Berg
- Evaluation Segment Chairman: PPC/E/PES, Molly Hageboeck
- Monitoring Segment Chairman: PPC/PDPR/PDI, Frank Kenefick

4. Stage I Schedule

- February 27, 1981: Initial session of the "workgroup" to review objectives, agenda, schedule and refine the distinction between monitoring and evaluation.
- Early March : "Workgroup" segments on evaluation and monitoring address first series of tasks on their parallel agendas.
- o/a March 15 : Joint "workgroup" session examines progress, overlaps and interrelationships in the work to date.
- Late March/
Mid-May : "Workgroup" segments address remaining agenda items.
- o/a May 15 : Joint "workgroup" session examines progress, modified products, advises PPC/E/PES staff concerning form and focus of a report PPC/E/PES will prepare on "workgroup" action recommendations regarding implementation.

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5. Diagram of the Stage I Plan:

Figure 1, attached, displays the way in which the "work-group" might proceed in joint and split sessions to address topics in a "logical" order. The "logical" order suggested for the work proceeds from definitions (which must come before other agenda items)* to such items as planning, and finally to training (which can only be derived from a clear picture of what we will be doing in evaluation and monitoring in the future).

C. STAGE II

1. Task:

Implement the specific actions required to put into effect the recommendations of the Evaluation Task Force, per the detailed guidelines developed during Stage I.

2. Implementing Responsibility:

Bureaus and specific offices, following the Stage I guidance.

Coordination, monitoring and reporting responsibilities remain with PPC/E/PES.

3. Stage II Schedule:

Bureau and office implementation "action plans": by 8/15/81.

Draft report on implementation (PPC/E/PES) : by 10/15/81

Bureau/office review of draft and additions to the draft of bureau/office accomplishments to date/other implementation steps under way : by 11/15/8

Final version of the Implementation Report ready : by 11/31/8

*Since the definitions of and distinctions between such key program and project terms as management, monitoring, evaluation and audit must be considered together, before the "workgroup" begins to refine definitions in the narrower area of monitoring-evaluation, an interbureau discussion which will address the broader problem of definitions is scheduled to precede the first session of the Task Force implementation "workgroup."