AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Administrator's Evaluation Agenda: FY 1991-1993

January 1991

Center for Development Information and Evaluation
Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
OVERVIEW	2
PROGRAM AND POLICY ASSESSMENTS	3
OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ASSESSMENTS	6
DESK STUDIES	8
ANNEXES	
A: The Process for Setting the Administrator's Evaluation Agenda	10
B: The Process for Conducting CDIE Evaluations	13

INTRODUCTION

Management excellence and managing for results are central themes at A.I.D. As part of that effort, I have been working to establish a limited set of A.I.D. priorities, which will allow us to do somewhat fewer things, but to do them very well.

To achieve the best results possible from our development programs we must know what we are achieving, and the kinds of program strategies and activities that are most effective in differing country situations. That is why I have established an Administrator's Evaluation Agenda. It identifies strategic performance issues which will be rigorously evaluated to provide the information needed to effectively manage our Agency and its development programs. The Agenda is one element of a broader effort I have initiated to strengthen A.I.D.'s capacity to provide objective, comprehensive and credible assessments of its performance in achieving development results.

This document represents the first effort by my staff to implement my Evaluation Agenda. It briefly describes the planned evaluation assessments and studies to be conducted during Fiscal Years 1991, 1992 and 1993 by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). CDIE is A.I.D.'s central evaluation unit, located in the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination (PPC). The Agenda is set on a 3-year "rolling plan" basis, to be updated annually (or more frequently if necessary). This first effort identifies the topics which CDIE will initiate during FY 1991. The topics proposed in the Agenda for FY 1992/93 are a more partial and tentative listing, and subject to changes during future reviews of the continued relevance of the Agenda. (Annexes contain further elaboration of the processes by which the Agenda will be set each year and by which assessments will be designed and implemented.)

In order to make this process successful and relevant to the needs of A.I.D. management and Congress, a draft of the Agenda was reviewed by senior A.I.D. managers in Washington and the field as well as by key Congressional Committee and OMB staff. We have been pleased with the positive, thought-provoking responses that we have received. Where possible, we have integrated those responses into this revised version of the Agenda. This review helped us to narrow our Agenda to the highest priority topics, and to learn of new issues and ways to frame or focus the questions for each topic to enhance their relevance to our audiences.

This first Administrator's Evaluation Agenda is focused primarily on substantive evaluation studies: i.e., program and policy assessments, operations and management systems assessments, and desk studies that we will begin implementing in the coming months. I have asked CDIE to pursue a number of other key activities such as the development of an Agencywide program performance information and reporting system, the preparation of evaluation guidance, the revitalization of project completion reports, and evaluation system improvements. They will be covered in separate reports, papers, and briefings over the coming months. They may also be included within future evaluation agendas so that they too can benefit from wider review and comment.

Ronald W. Roskens
Administrator
Agency for International Development

OVERVIEW OF KEY SECTIONS OF THE PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Program And Policy Assessments: This section briefly describes a number of planned, field-based assessments focused on strategic program and policy issues. Each of these assessments typically begins with a desk study that reviews the existing literature and evaluation documentation and identifies key issues for fieldwork. A second phase involves undertaking a series of about 6 field investigations Agencywide, using a common scope of work to systematically focus on critical issues, and to gather and analyze comparative data on program performance, such as cost-effectiveness, impacts and sustainability. Evaluation teams of 3-4 members will spend 4-6 weeks at each country site. A final phase involves analyzing and synthesizing the findings concerning program performance across the series of case studies and drawing conclusions about which program and policy approaches work best and which fail in order to draw lessons for guiding future programming and policy directions. We estimate that an assessment will take 12-18 months to complete. During FY 1991-1993, CDIE plans to initiate (or continue if ongoing) the following major field-based program and policy assessments: (1) ***export promotion,*** (2) ***child survival,*** (3) ***population and family planning,*** (4) ***promotion of democracy,*** (5) ***counter-narcotics,*** (6) ***policy reform,*** (7) ***environmental programs,*** and (8) ***private sector initiatives.*** (Pages 3-5).

2. Operations And Management Systems Assessments: This section provides a brief discussion of the topics planned for the operations and management systems assessments. The assessments will analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of various Agencywide organizational and management systems, delivery systems, operational and regulatory procedures, etc., in order to recommend ways to improve our capacity to achieve development results. These assessments will typically take 4-5 months each to complete. During FY 1991-1993, CDIE plans to initiate the following operations and management systems assessments: (1) ***New Directions in Performance-Based Budgeting,*** (2) ***Alternative Models for A.I.D.'s In-Country Presence,*** (3) ***Getting A.I.D. Management to Focus on Results,*** (4) ***A.I.D.'s Use of Technical Assistance,*** (5) ***Organizational and Management Impediments to A.I.D.'s Private Sector Initiative,*** and (6) ***A Review of the Project Design Process.*** (Pages 6-7).

3. Desk Studies: This section provides a listing of topics for desk studies. Desk studies do not generally involve fieldwork, and are most often based on reviews of the evaluation and research literature and on key informant interviews. A desk study is typically conducted during a 3-4 month period by 1 or 2 professionals. Desk studies are often a first phase leading to full field-based assessments, but may also be undertaken for topics where extensive research and literature exists but needs to be synthesized, or where short turn-around requirements, or other constraints rule out large-scale, field-based assessments. (Pages 8-9).

Section 1

PROGRAM AND POLICY ASSESSMENTS

2a-

PROGRAM AND POLICY ASSESSMENTS:
(Major Field-based Efforts)

***1. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Export Promotion Programs:* (Ongoing study, complete in FY 1992).** Recent economic literature has made it clear that economies which are outward-oriented through robust trade, investment, and export systems have achieved better development results. A.I.D. has actively participated in promoting this outward-orientation in a number of countries worldwide and CDIE is completing an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of promotional programs in Latin America. The proposed assessment will examine programs in the Asia and Near East regions. The study will assess the extent to which promotion services, such as provision of information, have stimulated exports and investment in Asian and Near Eastern countries beyond what could be expected from a sound economic policy framework. Issues such as how to measure success, and what type of export promotion approaches work best, including types of intermediaries, will be examined. In addition, a complementary desk study will be undertaken to examine the literature on the effects of such programs on U.S. foreign investment and U.S. exports.

***2. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Child Survival Programs:* (Ongoing study, complete in FY 1992).** People everywhere are concerned that too many children in the developing world are sick and dying and that the prospects for long-term development will remain dim until the citizens of the future are healthier. For many years, A.I.D. has included child survival programs as a major program emphasis. The impact of these programs in reducing infant and child mortality and morbidity and in enhancing the system of national health care needs to be examined so that A.I.D. management can make wise programming decisions. Building on child survival assessments completed in Egypt, Indonesia, Nepal, and Morocco, this proposed assessment will continue in several additional countries in the Africa and Latin America regions to: (1) document the impact of A.I.D. child survival interventions in improving child health; (2) review the relevance of specific intervention approaches, (e.g., immunizations, diarrheal disease control, food aid/child feeding programs, etc.) to emerging child health problems and the effectiveness of alternative public and private implementing agencies, (e.g., government units, PVOs, NGOs, commercial firms, etc.); (3) identify contributions and lessons learned in developing host-country capacities to support and sustain child survival programs; and (4) identify an agenda of issues which A.I.D. and host countries need to address in improving future programming of child survival efforts.

***3. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Population and Family Planning Programs* (Ongoing study, complete in FY 1992).** A.I.D. has long been a major donor in assisting developing countries to develop and implement family planning programs and policies through a variety of public and private sector approaches. In spite of the fact that A.I.D.'s programs have been the subject of both wide support and controversy, they have never been systematically evaluated. A recent GAO report challenged the Agency to do just this. This proposed assessment will continue an evaluation of the effectiveness, sustainability, and demographic impact of

selected A.I.D. programs in population and family planning toward the goal of improving A.I.D.'s programming and policy decisions in this area. To the extent possible, the assessment will examine linkages between family planning and child survival programs and their objectives. The performance of alternative public and private sector implementation approaches will be assessed, including use of PVOs, NGOs, and commercial firms. The program in Kenya has already been evaluated by CDIE and the Philippines program is to be evaluated in the spring of 1991. Programs in four of the following seven countries will also be evaluated: Tunisia, Honduras, Pakistan, Indonesia, Mexico, Senegal and Peru. The role of the socio-economic environment will be considered in selecting countries and in framing the questions to be addressed.

***4. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Experience in Promoting Democracy:* (Ongoing study, complete in FY 1992).** With the recent democratization of Eastern Europe and Central America, A.I.D. is challenged to develop programs to assist these countries develop new executive, legislative, judicial, and civil structures and institutional processes. A.I.D. has in fact been long involved in the whole democratization movement and has considerable experience which can be assessed to better guide future decision-making. The assessment will evaluate the performance of A.I.D. and other donor programs in promoting democratic development, in order to provide guidance for programming. The assessment will focus on a range of topics relating to the promotion of democratic development, including the effectiveness of past approaches to decentralization, human rights, legal systems, the role of NGOs (labor unions, etc.), and civil-military relations. Desk studies on these topics are currently being completed, with selected field-assessments planned for FY91-1992.

5. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Counter-Narcotics Programs: (Initiate in FY 1991, complete in FY 1992).

The drug problem has become an international concern of increasing gravity. For the past two decades, several U.S. Government agencies have been involved in international counter-narcotics assistance efforts, including A.I.D. which has supported crop and income substitution and narcotics awareness and education programs in Asia and Latin American narcotics producing countries. This proposed assessment will evaluate these counter-narcotics efforts within the broad overall context of the international and regional narcotics (poppy and coca) production and trafficking problems and the interactions of A.I.D.'s program with other U.S. Government agency anti-narcotics activities. This will help A.I.D. to identify the country economic, institutional, political, and cultural conditions and the other agency programs that are necessary for a successful A.I.D. effort.

***6. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Policy Reform Programs:* (Ongoing study, complete in FY 1993).** Known as the "Decade of Structural Adjustment," the 1980's have illustrated the importance of a sound economic policy framework. During this time, A.I.D., in collaboration with other donors, turned to policy-based nonproject assistance as a means of supporting sectoral reforms in developing countries. Evidence is growing and needs to be confirmed regarding which policy reform approaches and techniques work best to foster sustainable, market-oriented development. The assessment will build on studies which CDIE has already undertaken of policy reform programs in Central America and the Caribbean and in Africa. Fieldwork in FY 1992 will focus on the effectiveness, developmental and equity impacts, and sustainability of policy reform programs primarily in Asian and Near Eastern countries, and analyze the programmatic and policy results of alterna-

tive approaches. Furthermore, it will examine the strengths and limitations of various forms of nonproject assistance (e.g., cash transfers, commodity import programs, food aid, etc.) for policy reform efforts. The assessment will build on a series of desk studies proposed for implementation in FY 1991 which will examine operational issues, equity effects, and impact measurement issues in policy reform programs.

7. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Environmental Programs: **(Initiate fieldwork in FY 1992, complete in FY 1993).** Since the 1980's, A.I.D. has significantly increased funding to design and implement projects to help developing countries incorporate natural resources and environmental management issues into development activities. The Agency's central objective, expressed in varous regional and Agencywide strategy and policy statements, is to encourage developing countries to manage their environment and natural resources in ways that, while conserving critical biological resources and ecological functions, would promote and sustain long-term economic growth. Projects sponsored cover four broad categories of natural resource and environmental management issues: (1) "green" issues--forestation, loss of wildlife habitats and biological resources and other environmental degradation caused by deforestation and ecologically harmful agricultural and rural development; (2) "blue" issues--wastage of and degradation of riverine, coastal and marine resources; (3) "brown" issues--energy demands and environmental pollution arising from industrial and urban development; and (4) "white" issues--policy and institutional aspects of issues in all three categories. As the Agency continues to increase funding for environment-related programs, it becomes critical to examine its experience in the past decade in dealing with these issues (as well as new integrated approaches and strategies being undertaken). This field-based assessment will evaluate the effectiveness of mechanisms used by A.I.D.'s central and regional bureaus to incorporate these environmental issues into the planning and project design process (including the environmental impact assessment process), and to assess the tangible results of major projects that have been implemented for some time (e.g., at least 3 years). A FY 1991 desk study will provide the framework for identifying specific issues to be examined in the assessment, as well as appropriate evaluation methodologies.

8. Assessment of A.I.D.'s Private Sector Initiatives: **(Initiate fieldwork in FY 1993).** A.I.D., as well as other donors, have supported developing countries as they turn to the private sector to deliver critical economic and social services. The degree to which these private sector approaches benefit the poor has been questioned by Congress and others, however. This proposed assessment will measure the overall performance of selected private sector interventions in benefitting the poor through creating jobs, generating income, and increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of markets in developing countries. The interventions to be examined might include, for example, nontraditional agribusiness, small business development, and financial market development. A series of desk studies in FY 1992 will assist in narrowing the focus to a few priority types of intervention approaches to be examined in the FY 1993 field assessments.

Section 2

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ASSESSMENTS

5a

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ASSESSMENTS:

Topics to be Initiated in FY 1991

1. New Directions in Performance-Based Budgeting: There have been increased pressures from Congress, OMB, and A.I.D. senior management in recent months to develop a more rational system for making budget allocation decisions based on country and program performance. How have the regional and central bureaus responded to date, and are we on the right track? The purpose of this assessment is to review and document the new processes and measures being put in place by the Bureaus for making performance-based budgeting decisions, to provide an assessment and critique of these systems, and to provide suggestions for how we might best proceed.

2. Alternative Models for A.I.D.'s In-Country Presence: Although A.I.D. has always felt that its resident missions offer a comparative advantage in providing development assistance, such assistance has in fact been provided through a variety of organizational mechanisms and a range of country presences. Given increasing budget constraints, a better understanding of alternative ways of organizing and providing development assistance is essential. The objective of this study will be to examine alternative models for maintaining in-country presence, models which keep the advantages of this presence, while at the same time taking into consideration the changing budget realities by, for example, further centralization or "regionalization" of certain functions, greater reliance on central project "buy-ins" or on PVOs/NGOs to implement programs, etc.

3. Getting A.I.D. Management to Focus on Results: It is clear from a number of recently commissioned management studies that there is growing concern over the lack of focus by A.I.D.'s management on achievement and measurement of development results. While there is consensus that this is a problem, the reasons behind the problem are often only vaguely understood. The evaluation initiative itself should facilitate the shift toward results-management. However, the various dimensions of the management system, personnel system, awards and career advancement incentives, operational procedures, budgetary process, data and information needs, organizational culture, etc., that cause the problem must be understood and modified as appropriate, in order to maximize the impact of the initiative. The purpose of this assessment will be to review causes of the problem and discuss potential solutions for further streamlining and focusing A.I.D. management on results. The approach of the study will be diagnostic, based on interviews with senior managers. Positive examples employed by Bureau and/or Mission management will be described.

Topics to be Initiated in FY 1992 and FY 1993

4. A.I.D.'s Use of Technical Assistance: It has become increasingly apparent that the style, level, and mode of technical assistance make a great deal of difference in terms of achieving institutional effectiveness and sustainable development results. Moreover, as countries modernize, the nature of the technical cooperation relation-

ship changes. A.I.D. needs to look at its own system of technical assistance to determine what approaches work well and what does not in different country contexts. The study will give attention to issues such as how contracting and procurement regulations and procedures affect technical assistance; contractor-direct-hire tradeoffs; limitations and strengths of various contracting organizations such as PVOs, NGOs, private (for profit) firms, universities, etc. The focus of this study will be to assess A.I.D.'s experience with various technical assistance modes, and to discuss issues and provide directions for the 1990s.

5. Organizational and Managerial Impediments to A.I.D.'s Private Sector Initiative: The organizational structure, processes, culture, and rules and regulations of A.I.D. have been established to facilitate a government-to-government, public sector orientation to development. As A.I.D. shifts more toward use of the private sector, both to deliver services and as an engine of growth, A.I.D. staff are finding that the existing management system and operational procedures do not facilitate the achievement of the private sector objective. This study will examine A.I.D.'s organizational and management systems from the perspective of A.I.D.'s objective of working through the private sector in recipient countries, to determine the extent to which management and procedural factors impede the realization of this objective, and to consider solutions.

6. Revolutionizing Project Design: A Review of the Project Design Process: Evidence has been accumulating over the years that A.I.D.'s approach to project design is not only expensive, but may not be very effective or sustainable. Studies argue that the design process should be less of a "blueprint" paper process dependent on outside contractors, and should take a more collaborative and flexible approach. Both the methodology used and the approach to the process itself are in need of reexamination, improvement and streamlining. The objective of this proposed assessment will be to review and critique the A.I.D. project design process, to assess the costs of process inefficiencies and delays, and to search for successful, alternative design approaches. The study will also address issues of host government participation in the design process, as well as collaboration with other donors.

Section 3

DESK STUDIES

7a

DESK STUDIES

TOPICS TO BE INITIATED IN FY 1991

1. Policy Reform Programs

Research will identify issues and areas for examination in the FY 1992 field assessment of policy reform programs. The desk reviews will focus on (a) operational issues in implementing policy reform programs, and the effectiveness of alternative approaches; (b) the equity and consumption effects of policy reform and effectiveness of "safety net" programs; (c) issues in measurement and attribution of policy reform impacts.

2. Environmental Programs

A desk study will synthesize A.I.D. and other donor experience with environmental and natural resource management projects, programs, and strategies; develop a framework for identifying specific issues to be examined in field-based assessments scheduled for FY 1992, and develop appropriate evaluation methodologies for the assessments. A related study will examine the effectiveness of A.I.D.'s process of environmental impact assessment of its projects and programs.

3. Capital Projects

A capital projects facility is a key feature of the new Agency Initiative on Trade and Business Development. The initiative emphasizes the importance of incorporating "lessons learned" from previous A.I.D. experience in this area. In the 1950s and 1960s foreign aid focused heavily on capital infrastructure projects (e.g., irrigation, roads, ports). This study will examine A.I.D.'s experience with major support for capital infrastructure projects, including an examination of the economic, institutional and social benefits and drawbacks of such an approach.

TOPICS TO BE INITIATED IN FY 1992 AND FY 1993

4. Agricultural Research and Extension

The desk study will review A.I.D. and other donor experience with agricultural research and extension programs, including alternative approaches of transferring research results to farmers.

5. Private Sector Development

A series of desk studies will focus on issues and intervention areas for examination in the FY 1993 field assessment. This will include an examination and synthesis of the existing evaluation literature on topics such as A.I.D. and other donor experience with the development of financial markets, free

trade zones, foreign investment, nontraditional agribusiness, microenterprises, and privatization. Another desk study will examine the literature on the effects of A.I.D.'s export promotion programs on U.S. foreign investment and U.S. exports, examining how programs may be structured to promote mutual benefits for both the U.S. and the host country's economies.

6. Policy-based Educational Reform

This study will review A.I.D. and other donor experience with sectoral assistance efforts designed to help developing countries improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their educational systems.

7. Participant Training

Participant training continues to be a major A.I.D. effort. Comprehensive, empirically-based assessments of development impact continue to be an elusive goal, however. This desk study will review A.I.D. and other donor work in this area, including evaluations of major A.I.D.-financed training efforts in Latin America and Africa, in order to develop conclusions on developmental impact as well as improved evaluation methodology. This review could lead to selected field investigations in FY 1993.

8. Inter-Actions Among Family Development Interventions

Based on the outcome of the field assessments of child survival and family planning (see Section 1), a review will be undertaken of the feasibility of conducting an evaluation research study in FY 1993 of the inter-actions between health, education, family planning, and nutrition interventions at the family level. Recent research suggests these inter-actions and their sequencing are important and could have significant implications for A.I.D. programming in this area.

ANNEX A

THE PROCESS FOR SETTING THE ADMINISTRATOR'S EVALUATION AGENDA

9a

THE PROCESS FOR SETTING THE ADMINISTRATOR'S EVALUATION AGENDA

Targeting Appropriate Topics for the Agenda: Potential topics for evaluations are vast, covering the broad range of the Agency's diverse program portfolio activities. For example, there are currently over 50 categories of development activities that the Agency is funding, covering more than 2,000 active interventions in over 80 countries. In addition, there are many crosscutting concerns, such as policy, operational procedures, and management systems issues that could be topics for CDIE assessments.

Given this diversity in potential topics and issues, it is essential that the central evaluation agenda be carefully chosen to reflect topics of greatest interest to A.I.D.'s top management and to other important clients (users) of the evaluations' findings, such as Congress and OMB. Evaluation findings are of the most use when they answer specific questions and issues of these audiences. Evaluations will be demand-driven and designed to produce relevant ideas and approaches that will be of use in the design of future projects and programs. The Agenda-setting process will strive to elicit direct responses from key clients regarding selection of topics.

Setting the Agenda: The Administrator will take the visible lead in setting the evaluation agenda. In brief, the process is as follows. Throughout the year, the staff of PPC/CDIE will be responsible, within their broad areas of expertise, for identifying topics of potential interest and use to key clients or audiences. Staff will base their recommendations upon feedback which they have obtained from A.I.D./Washington Bureaus, Missions, and outside interest groups to assure that topics are responsive to their concerns. There will also be a formal, once-a-year soliciting of suggestions for topics by the Administrator to key groups inside and outside the Agency. This will result in an annual *Administrator's Evaluation Agenda*, issued by the Administrator in September as a 3-year "rolling" annual plan. The agenda may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary, at the Administrator's Quarterly Evaluation Briefings.

Defining the Role of CDIE Staff: The evaluation staff of CDIE, working together with the development information staff, will have the ongoing responsibility for identifying and generating potential topics for the agenda.

They will follow, on a continuing basis, emerging developments, issues and trends within their broad areas of expertise that may influence the agenda topic selections, changes in focus, or deletions. In other words, the evaluation staff will be responsible for following "factors" that will influence the relevance of agenda topics, such as changes in issues surfaced by ongoing evaluations, new Agency initiatives and priorities, legislative changes, shifting program approaches or innovative technologies, trends in developing country economies or environments, etc.

Steps the staff of CDIE will take regularly and systematically to identify and formulate topics for the agenda include the following:

- *SCANNING* documents and information sources, for example:
  - ***Policy and programming documents:*** reviewing senior management reports; statements and messages on Agency strategic objectives, new initiatives, policies, core program areas
  - ***Budget documents***: analyzing program and policy priorities by assessing funding flows
  - ***Legislative initiatives***: reviewing new legislation and congressional committee reports indicating Congress's emerging concerns with foreign aid
  - ***Evaluation documents***: perusing issues emerging from Mission evaluations and those of ongoing and recently completed evaluations led by CDIE and operating bureaus
  - ***Development literature:*** studying development journals and literature on foreign assistance to identify emerging issues and development trends likely to influence A.I.D.
  - ***Information requests from field Missions and A.I.D./W:*** scanning frequently requested topics and issues directed to CDIE's Research and Reference Service
  - ***Evaluation and research agendas and studies of other development organizations:*** reviewing topics being considered by other donors, World Bank, research institutes, major foundations, etc.
- *NETWORKING* by maintaining regular contacts both within and outside of A.I.D., especially with intended client groups or audiences of the CDIE evaluations, and informally soliciting topic/issue ideas from these groups:
  - A.I.D. senior management, professional and technical staff
  - Congressional committee staff
  - OMB, GAO, other Federal Agencies
  - special interest groups, PVOs, NGOs
  - other donors
  - professional groups
  - host country leaders

Criteria for Selection of Topics:

Numerous criteria will have to be considered, weighed, and balanced in the selection of topics for the agenda. Some of these include:

- ***Relevance:*** What is the direct relevance of the topic to the interests, goals, priorities, and initiatives of senior management and other key clients?
- ***Utilization: How will the evaluation influence*** strategic decisions about program investments and policy priorities?
- ***Operational importance:*** What is the operational importance of the program in terms of current and near-term flows of funding?
- ***Evaluability/feasibility:*** Is there reasonable program experience and data

available on which to base an analytically rigorous assessment?

- ***Filling gaps in knowledge:*** Do topics and issues adequately address gaps in knowledge? Will they build progressively on earlier efforts?

- ***Staff capacity and capability:*** Do topics fall within broad areas of evaluation staff or contractor expertise and are adequate resources available to complete required level of effort?

- ***Timeliness:*** Can assessments be completed within the timeframes required to meet decision needs?

- ***Balance/coverage:*** Does the agenda reflect reasonable coverage or balance among broad program areas of the portfolio, and coverage of various regions? Is the agenda balanced in terms of some short-term desk studies, some rapid field assessments, and some more rigorous, long-term efforts? Also, does it reflect balance between focusing on new, innovative program initiatives and core programs with a historical record of experience?

ANNEX B

THE PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING CDIE EVALUATIONS

Ba

THE PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING CDIE EVALUATIONS

The substantially strengthened central evaluation office, located within PPC's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), will have an agenda focused on topics and issues personally approved by the Administrator and reflecting the interests and priorities of A.I.D. senior officials, Congress and OMB. CDIE will report key evaluation findings directly back to the Administrator and other top officials through short reports and personal briefings. Emphasis is being placed upon undertaking objective and independent assessments, free from potential bias and vested interests. Evaluation methods will be strengthened through use of more rigorous research, data collection, and analysis techniques that yield convincing, objective findings.

CDIE's evaluations will focus on assessing the relative performance and effectiveness of alternative project, program and policy strategies and on operational and management systems approaches to achieving key Agency objectives. These assessments will be designed to inform the Agency's strategic planning and budgeting processes so that development assistance resources can be concentrated upon the most effective interventions. In addition, the evaluation work will be geared to informing and influencing the formation of Agency policy and program guidance statements, and project design and implementation guidelines. The evaluation studies will also serve to inform external audiences, such as Congress, OMB, the development community and the U.S. public about the performance and impacts of A.I.D.'s major programs.

I. Focusing The Evaluations

While the specific focus and scope of work of individual assessments or evaluations will vary according to the program or issue under investigation, in general the studies might be focused on several levels of analysis:

At The Operational and Management Systems Level: These assessments will focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of alternative organizational and management systems, delivery systems, operational and regulatory procedures (e.g., assessing alternative organizational approaches to streamlining mission size; evaluating technical assistance modes, etc.)

At The Intervention Level: Evaluations of individual projects or nonproject assistance efforts will focus on results achieved; that is, on assessing the effectiveness of specific interventions in reaching target beneficiaries with services, technologies, policy reforms, etc., and their developmental impacts and sustainability. Where feasible, they will also assess efficiency; that is, assess the effectiveness and impacts of interventions in relation to their costs. Factors influencing performance/non-performance will also generally be analyzed.

At The Program Level: Comparative studies at the program level will assess the relative performance, impact, efficiency, and sustainability of a series of interventions aimed at a common strategic objective, comparing them across various country contexts

or across alternative project approaches, and drawing lessons for programming decisions about what approaches work best under what conditions.

At The Policy Level: Policy assessments will focus on evaluating the extent to which Agency policies have been implemented in interventions (e.g., use of cost-recovery mechanisms, market interest rates, etc.) and their results/impacts. They will also focus on achievement of cross-cutting policy goals; that is on the extent to which cross-cutting policy issues or objectives have been achieved by interventions (e.g., the achievement of women in development or environmental protection goals)

At The Country Level: Country program assessments will focus on A.I.D.'s historical performance and contributions to the development process in selected priority countries.

II. Designing And Conducting The Evaluations

CDIE will employ a range of methods for conducting evaluations, from rigorous, and long-term evaluation research in a few high priority sectors, to more rapid appraisal techniques for studies that require quicker turn-around time or lower budget. In all studies, however, emphasis will be placed on undertaking systematic approaches and documenting data collection and analysis techniques that support the findings. Also, priority will be placed on undertaking actual field investigations where possible. Producing convincing findings also depends on the quality and objectivity of the evaluation teams. The office's own highly qualified and independent core of evaluators will lead and comprise most of the teams, supplemented where necessary by contractors or other A.I.D. staff with special technical expertise. For all team members, efforts will be made to avoid situations of possible vested interests or bias in evaluation outcomes. In special cases, whole studies might be contracted out, in instances where in-house technical expertise is lacking or where long-term or intensive data collection efforts are required. The process, standards, and methods for conducting evaluation studies will be well documented in manuals, and steps will be closely managed and reviewed by CDIE management.

The general steps that will be followed in conducting evaluation studies include the following:

1. Pre-Design Work: Once a topic for an evaluation study has been approved for the agenda, it will be assigned to a staff member or a team by office management. The first step, taking no more than a week, will be preparation of a short 3-4 page concepts paper that confirms understanding about the purpose, focus, issues, audience, and intended use of the evaluation findings; that is, why it is being conducted, how it is expected to be used and by whom. The concepts paper should then be circulated and approved by PPC management, by whomever requested the evaluation study, and other interested parties, before proceeding to the next step.

2. Study Design: After reaching consensus on the concepts paper, the next step is developing a detailed design. The design will specify all aspects of the proposed approach, including for example (a) objectives, focus, scope, and conceptual framework of the study, (b) specific issues and questions to be addressed, (c) plans for data collection and analysis, (d) expected products, (e) staffing plan (numbers, skills, sources), (f) schedule, and (g) budget. The design stage will decide on the basic approach and scope of the study; for example, whether it will rely only on an A.I.D./W document review and interviews, or will include fieldwork (and selec-

tion of interventions and countries to include in fieldwork), and whether it will rely on use of secondary data sources, rapid appraisal techniques, and/or quantitative surveys. These decisions in turn will depend on the parameters of given timeframe and costs, versus needs for study validity and rigor.

3. Data Collection and Analysis:

Regardless of whether the study is based on fieldwork or on a desk review, or whether the data collection is based on document reviews, analysis of secondary data, or primary data collection using quantitative or qualitative techniques, much can be done to make the approach taken more systematic, comparative, and empirically-based. In general, the office will stress, where feasible, more fieldwork, greater reliance on first-hand primary data collection, and more rigorous statistical methods (enabling comparative assessments of program performance, cost-effectiveness, rate-of-return and impact indicators across intervention approaches, country contexts, etc.). Some of the different data collection and analysis methods that the office will use include the following:

- document reviews, using established synthesis techniques to extract and analyze findings and lessons from existing Mission project evaluation reports.

- secondary analysis of existing statistical databases, project records and files, employing a logical framework approach that convincingly links data on intervention outputs to available data on their effective use by the target population and to progressively "higher" levels of performance and impact indicators.

- primary data collection using qualitative and quantitative "rapid appraisal" techniques: (a) key informant interviews, (b) focus group and community interviews, (c) site observation techniques, and (d) mini-surveys.

- primary data collection using more elaborate and rigorous impact evaluation research designs and sample surveys, possibly to be undertaken periodically over the lifetime of the interventions being assessed.

How convincing the evaluation results are also will depend on the perceptions people hold of the quality and independence of the evaluation team of researchers selected. Therefore, these evaluation teams will be led and composed of highly qualified and trained staff--largely in-house--who are independent of the potential vested interests of specific programs, Missions, or offices being evaluated. Freedom from possible biases or perception of bias will also be a factor in selection of contractors or direct-hire from other offices to participate on teams. Quality of evaluations are also inevitably and directly affected by the length of time allotted to the evaluation task, especially the field-work portion. Therefore, rapid appraisal fieldwork approaches will involve a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks in the field as well as pre-team fieldwork by research assistants in some cases. With authority delegated from the Administrator's office, the office will select appropriate sites and interventions to assess, based on objective criteria that will include looking at failures as well as successes.

4. Reporting Findings and Follow-up on Utilization:

The findings of evaluations will be reported directly to the A.I.D. Administrator and other Agency top officials in two different ways: via short written reports and personal briefings. Products from the evaluation studies will include multiple, targeted reports. The basic format will be a relatively brief, crisp report (15-20 pages with an executive summary, using desk top publishing and graphics capabili-

ties) written for A.I.D.'s top managers, and summarized in a one-page Senior Manager's Bulletin. Other reports will be targeted for other audiences, such as operational or program management staff, Congress and OMB. Publications growing out of the evaluation studies will be broadly available and distributed to the development community, other donor agencies, academia, and the general public. Short 8-page summaries called Evaluation Highlights and a quarterly A.I.D. Evaluation Newsletter will be broadly disseminated to help advertize and market the evaluation findings. Staff will be encouraged to write articles for professional journals as another mechanism for broad dissemination of findings within the development community and general public.

In addition to the written products, the office will place a high priority upon holding effective oral briefings and presentations, especially for busy top managers, and utilizing state-of-the-art audio-visual and graphic techniques. Small, personal briefings are a very useful way to convey evaluation findings and provide a forum for face-to-face discussions among evaluators and senior managers. In addition, workshops and conferences for larger groups of professionals and technicians will help to disseminate findings.

To facilitate and speed this process of reporting and disseminating findings, the office will require adequate access to advanced technology, especially personal computers and software with capacities for word processing, desk top publishing, color graphics, image projections, statistical survey processing and analyses, mailing lists, etc.

The final step in the process will be following up on the utilization of the evaluations' findings by Agency management, and striving to institutionalize this feedback process. The CDIE director and staff will actively participate in Agency program planning and policy meetings and review critical documents to ensure that evaluation findings are being incorporated into future Agency policy guidance, project designs, program strategies and budget allocation decisions. CDIE will develop a system for monitoring how evaluation findings are used; e.g., determining the programmatic, policy and management changes that were influenced by evaluations.

III. Ensuring Quality Control

Maintaining quality control over the whole study design, implementation, and reporting process will be essential to producing credible evaluation findings. This will be accomplished in several ways. First, the office will develop and apply a rigorous set of standards for its evaluation studies, borrowed in part from the recommendations of the American Evaluation Association, the OECD/DAC Expert Group on Evaluation, and other Federal Government standards. Second, manuals will be developed to guide the staff systematically through the evaluation process and to establish the indicators and methods to be used. A major aspect of quality control will be to maintain a reflective eye on the methodologies employed by CDIE. A continuous dialog with outside experts will be held regarding whether the approaches to the assessments are affording the most independent, reliable information; whether the evaluation methods and styles proposed by CDIE are in accord with international developments in evaluation; and whether the approaches are providing meaningful support to management decision-making. Third, a study design or scope of work will be rigorously reviewed by CDIE and PPC management and by an external committee of evaluation and sectoral specialists before the study is implemented. Fourth, the findings of studies will be documented in technical (unpublished but

readily available) working papers that will contain details on the data sources, methods and analyses that were undertaken to support the findings and conclusions.

Furthermore, all draft reports for publication will be carefully reviewed, first by the CDIE office management, and then by technical or program experts (both within the Agency and external specialists). These reviews will pay special attention to ensuring the report's operational usefulness, its internal consistency and organization, its technical and methodological soundness, that the findings and conclusions are supported by data and analyses, and that it is well written and understandable to its intended audiences. While review and comments by various stakeholders (e.g., the missions, technical offices, etc.) on the draft evaluations are desirable, the process must clearly be set up to preclude the potential for "censorship" of controversial, negative findings. That is, the independence of the process must be protected so that top officials can get "unfiltered" assessments. Both objectives will be met by permitting dissenting views or opinions of missions, offices, etc., to be added to the evaluation report as short annexes, without changing the team's original conclusions. In cases where reports are destined for publication and broad public dissemination, the reports will undergo a formal editing and formatting process before printing.