

THE USAID EVALUATION AGENDA FOR 1998-1999

The Evaluation Agenda is a two year plan of the Agency's central program evaluations and studies, which are carried out by the Agency's evaluation office in PPC/CDIE. These evaluations focus on "extracting cross-cutting lessons from operational unit experiences and determining the need for modifications to the Agency's strategic framework". Equally as important, these broad evaluations also provide guidance to senior managers and operating units in strategic planning and designing program approaches.

The evaluations examine:

1. Issues related to the effectiveness of Agency program strategies;
2. Issues related to the effectiveness of strategies commonly or experimentally used;
3. Unexpected, positive or negative consequences or impacts from various programs or activities, and;
4. High-priority or "state of the art" issues.

Completed CDIE Evaluations

In 1997, CDIE/POA completed three major series of impact studies: development food aid, democracy and local governance and, elections in post-conflict societies. It completed smaller, operational studies on graduation of developing countries away from U.S. aid and a study of USAID management reengineering.

Ongoing Evaluations

Ongoing evaluations focus on several key themes -- a continuation of studies in post-conflict countries, girl's education, emergency assistance, capital markets and enterprise funds, democracy, cross-sectoral linkages, and an assessment of the state of poverty worldwide.

New Evaluation and Studies

- **Urban and Industrial Pollution.** This assessment has already been initiated by a desk survey of USAID's activities to reduce urban and industrial pollution. The intent of the study is to look at several variables that contribute to the effectiveness of these programs- appropriate economic policies, strong institutions, education, awareness and technologies. The output should provide guidance as to the most effective interventions in this area, tradeoffs and, cost-benefit of each.
- **Maternal Morbidity Rates.** Each year, nearly 600,000 women, 99% of them in developing countries, lose their lives to preventable causes during pregnancy and childbirth. Despite overall improvements in health status, maternal mortality levels in developing countries remain 15 to 20 percent higher than in developed countries. Indeed maternal mortality is the health indicator with the greatest disparity between the developed and developing world. The study will review AID's experience in this area, attempting to target those strategies and interventions that have had the most impact. Broad region based country studies will be undertaken as well as primary research to attempt to establish clear linkages between results and interventions.
- **USAID and Durable Partnerships.** USAID's targeting of over 30 countries for phase-out of USAID presence in the next ten years makes this study of AID experience in developing partnerships between private institutions in the United States and developing countries especially relevant. The purpose is to determine what impact these partnerships have had on USAID development objectives in-country and, whether they benefitted the host country and institutions. USAID has had a lengthy and active history in forming partnerships between U.S. academic institutions, hospitals and health organizations, private business, agricultural research institutes and U.S. environmental groups. The study will also look at what role these partnerships might play in a graduation or transition strategy. The purpose of the study is to provide senior managers an analysis of the utility, and strengths and weaknesses of "partnering" and the situations under which they are most useful. Field work is expected to begin in the fall of 1998.
- **Post Conflict Societies: The Role of Women's Organizations.** To complete its ongoing series on reconstruction of post-conflict societies, PPC/CDIE will undertake a comparative study of women's organizations and the role

they play after a civil conflict. More specifically, the study will analyze the experience of USAID and other bilateral and multilateral organizations in creating, strengthening and supporting womens' organizations to promote economic development and facilitate the democratization process in post-conflict societies. The study's objective is to help USAID to further refine and reformulate its strategies, approaches and programs for rebuilding war-torn societies. Only in recent years have these organizations been identified as a major factor in peace-building efforts. The study will focus on four categories of organizations: (a) self-help economic associations,(b) grassroots, social\humanitarian assistance organizations,(c) women's advocacy groups, and (d)umbrella women organizations. This study will be coordinated closely with the G/WID Office who will participate in the study. The intent of the study is to provide an understanding of strategies and programmatic approaches that can be used to support womens' groups to play a more dynamic role in post-conflict transformation.

- **Financial Services for the Poor.** USAID provides assistance in a variety of ways to extend financial services to poorer households designed to assist the Agency in achieving greater "access to economic opportunity for the rural and urban poor expanded and made more equitable". This study will examine, from the point of view of the poor household, the relative importance of various types of financial services and their contribution to raising the household's standard of living. It will examine approaches used within AID programs to foster the provision of these services; either through direct provision of the service or through institutions. Finally, the objective of the study is to identify the more efficient types of activities or interventions to expand financial services.
- **IQC Management.** This proposal grew out of increasing reliance by the Agency on Indefinite Quantity Contracts. Given stringent contracting requirements, these mechanisms are used widely throughout AID as a means to facilitate contracting. These contracts enable missions and other operating units to procure services of major contractors in support of their strategic objectives without competing each separate procurement action. USAID's central offices create IQCs in order to help them achieve global or agency-wide results. Because of this dual purpose, there are frequent difficulties in the use of IQCs. Control over the contractors by the task manager, financial accountability, incompatibility between the IQC's scope and country requirements and ceiling problems.
- **The State of Agency Evaluations.** One of the major efforts this year has been to analyze the state of evaluation in the Agency. As in any learning organization, a key tenet of our ability to adapt to a changing environment is to examine our experience and learn from it. In this case, the recent reforms in the Agency and revised Agency guidelines for evaluation contained in the Agency's Directives appear to have impacted negatively on the frequency and use of evaluation. Although the requirement exists on paper, there is no centralized source for acquisition of major evaluations or studies that the Agency produces. CDIE will conduct an analysis of the state of evaluation in the agency, review the Agency's Directives guidance and make suggestions for revisions in Agency policy and guidance where needed.

Dissemination and Marketing of Evaluation Findings

One of the key objectives in the past year has been to more widely disseminate and use evaluation findings. CDIE is organizing to provide better outreach for such findings. The Center has held small workshops, presented at Agency sector reviews, undertaken a major international conference and does an annual CDIE Summer Seminar to develop a better understanding of its work. These forums have provided an excellent opportunity for the studies to be challenged and discussed. In addition, CDIE/POA has broadened its products to reach target audiences. For example, based on our country impact study of USAID assistance to strengthen legislatures, CDIE has produced a programming guide for Missions to use in developing legislative strengthening programs. A similar guide will be prepared following the synthesis of the Girl's Education Evaluation. This year, CDIE is also working closely with the PPC Senior Policy Group to assure that evaluation findings are translated into policy. For example, a currently proposed Education Policy will incorporate findings from the almost completed Girls' Education Evaluation. These mechanisms will be expanded in 1998 to include closer linkages with Global and Geographic Bureau evaluation offices and more joint evaluations.

Contacts

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