

EVALUATION REPORT
GENERAL PARTICIPANT TRAINING
Project No. 276-004

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I. SUMMARY

This is the first major evaluation of the General Participant Training Project. The evaluation includes analysis of responses to a survey questionnaire sent to nearly all of the 273 participants who had returned from training at the time the evaluation began.

Survey responses, as well as other evidence, indicate that the project has made a major contribution to improving understanding and friendly relations between Syria and the U.S. The evaluation also led to a finding that the project is producing a sizeable body of technicians and managers with increased capability to assist Syria's development.

Project effectiveness could be increased by intensifying efforts to assure that training programs are well matched to the participants' backgrounds and expectations and to Syria's priority development needs; continuing steps already undertaken to upgrade participants' English ability; and improving pre-departure orientation and U.S. backstopping.

A special program of long term post-graduate academic training launched in FY 1979 marked a return to the originally planned thrust of the project, but was intended to be additional to, not a substitute for, continuation of short-term technical training.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Following the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1974 after a seven-year hiatus, the U.S. and Syrian government undertook to increase areas of mutual cooperation between the two nations. These initiatives were taken in the context of overall U.S. objectives which sought to help Syria and other nations in the area follow a peaceful course toward working out their problems. U.S. economic assistance was intended both to assist Syrian development and to contribute to improved relations and mutual understanding between Syria and the U.S.

Discussions were held in Washington and Syria in the fall of 1974 regarding possible fields of cooperation. A technical team visited Syria and met with the Ministry of Economy, a number of technical ministries, and several field offices in an effort to determine what U.S. assistance would best meet Syria's development needs. This resulted in agreement on areas in which Syria could benefit from graduate-level training for Syrian students.

However, by the time the General Participant Training agreement was signed in February, 1975, the Syrian Government had decided, as a matter of policy, to emphasize short-term training for senior technical personnel and to defer graduate-level training. In early 1979, President Assad requested that, without reducing the short-term training program, AID provide graduate level training for 100 Syrians, mainly university instructors. (Since these participants are just beginning to depart, this aspect of the project is not treated in detail in this evaluation).

Although the majority of participants who go to the United States are funded under the General Participant Training Project, training plays an important role in our other projects as well. Examples include training for masters degrees in Teaching English as a Second Language under the English Language Training Project and for graduate degrees in Health Administration under the Development of Health Services Project. In addition, a large number of participants will go to the U.S. under several of our FY 1978 and 1979 projects which are just beginning implementation. These include the Technical Health Institute, Agricultural Education-Livestock Production, Remote Sensing and Land Classification/Soils Survey Projects. The dollar value of training under these and other projects funded in FY's 1978 and 1979 is approximately \$2.3 million.

One side effect of the long hiatus in relations between Syria and the United States was the reduced exposure to the English language that the Syrians ordinarily would have gained through travel and study. Consequently, USAID faced a considerable problem with its participant program because relatively few Syrians spoke and understood English well enough to go to the U.S. for training. USAID addressed this problem by providing some English training under the Technical Services and Feasibility Studies Project during 1976 and 1977 until establishment of the English Language Training Project which, since October 1977, has provided a language program for prospective participants under the supervision of Georgetown University.

Currently, nearly all participants, academic and non-academic, spend some time at the English Language Training Center before leaving for the U.S.

III. AID INPUTS :

Seven million, one hundred and eight thousand dollars (\$7,108,000) has been obligated for this project as shown below:

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Original Grant	2/27/75	\$1,000,000
Amendment No.1	2/27/76	1,250,000
Amendment No.2	5/5/77	800,000
Amendment No.3	8/28/77	183,000
Amendment No.4	3/29/78	850,000
Amendment No.5	1/24/79	850,000
Amendment No.6	8/30/79	<u>2,175,000</u>
TOTAL		\$7,108,000

In addition, Operating Expense (OE) funds have been used to maintain a Training Office staff of one American and three Syrian employees.

IV. PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION :

The purpose of the project is to provide training designed to help supply Syria with the skills required by the SARG and private institutions for use in the nation's development efforts.

GENERAL PARTICIPANT TRAINING DEPARTURES

	<u>FY 76</u>	<u>FY 77</u>	<u>FY 78</u>	<u>FY 79</u>	<u>Est.</u> <u>FY 80</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>NO.</u>	<u>X</u>
Education	-	21	3	1	20	45	10.8
Higher Education (excl. Ph D's) (combined education)	1 (1)	6 (27)	12 (15)	4 (5)	7 (27)	30 (75)	7.2 (18.0)
Transportation	-	25	1	6	23	55	13.1
Agriculture	14	8	8	18	4	52	12.3
Petroleum	8	11	5	5	7	36	8.6
Industry	9	7	6	4	4	30	7.2
Communications	4	17	3	2	1	27	6.5
Public Works	11	1	3	2	3	20	4.8
Electricity	6	7	3	2	2	20	4.8
Health	4	2	1	2	3	12	2.9
Other (15 ministries/ agencies)	21	14	23	15	18	91	21.8
SUB-Total	78	119	68	61	92	418	100.0
Ph D Program					57	57	
TOTAL	78	119	68	61	149	475	

The project agreement signed on February 27, 1975, provided an initial \$1,000,000 to (a) finance the costs of training Syrian participants in the United States at technical or other training facilities, private business organizations or governmental agencies in selected development fields; (b) finance the technical services of an AID training specialist to assist in setting up and administering policies and procedures for processing participant training; (c) finance English language training, when required, for Syrian participants and (d) finance limited commodities and international travel related to this training. The technical services elements (b and c) were not utilized, inasmuch as establishment and management of the training program were carried out using direct hire staff and English language training was provided first under the Technical Services/ Feasibility Studies Project (0001) and subsequently under a separate English Language Training Project (0002).

All AID training assistance, as well as that offered by most other donors, is channeled through the Syrian State Planning Commission (SPC), which must approve all nominations for such training abroad. Each ministry has a Training Officer who receives AID and other donor training program announcements through the SPC. The procedure for nominating a candidate is roughly as follows but may vary somewhat depending on the ministry and the type of training concerned:

1. Candidates are nominated by ministries to SPC.
2. The SPC reviews the nominations in terms of Syria's overall needs and training policies and decides whether to propose the candidate for training.
3. If the candidate is to be sent to the U.S., he or she is given an English test administered by USAID. Depending upon the results, the candidate will be nominated immediately to USAID or sent to the USAID/Syrian Government English Language Training Program.
4. When ^{the} candidate is in the final three months of language training, he or she is nominated to USAID for a specific training program.
5. The USAID Training Officer reviews the nomination and training proposal to assure that the training is appropriate and the candidate qualified.

The first trainees, a team of seven participants from various technical ministries, left for training on January 4, 1976. Three hundred and twenty six participants had been sent for training as of the date this evaluation began (October 1, 1979) and 273 had returned. One had completed training but had not returned.

V. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The impact of the project's contribution to Syria's development can not be measured directly. Conclusions can be drawn, however, on the basis of examination of the following factors:

- number of Syrians trained;
- relationship to development of the field in which training was provided;
- effectiveness of the training;
- use being made of the training;

To supplement information in USAID files and to probe the subjective elements of these factors, a survey of returned participants was conducted as part of the evaluation. (See Annex.).

Number Trained :

Approximately 475 participants were financed in FY 1975-1979 under the project. About 325 of these had departed for training when the evaluation began, and of these, 273 had returned. Excluding for the moment the 57 postgraduate academic participants whose training will not be completed for a number of years, the 418 technical personnel funded by the project to date represent about 0.5 percent of all non-military, professional level public sector employees.

Moreover, those sent for training abroad are, almost by definition, a select group. Since such training is generally much sought after, those who are chosen can be presumed to be wellregarded and hence exercise considerable influence, even in those cases where the basis for the high regard in which they are held may be political or family connections rather than technical qualifications.

Therefore, the number of people trained through the project seems to have reached a level at which there is at least the potential for significant impact on general development to take place if appropriate training is provided.

Fields Of Training :

The potential for affecting development is increased by concentration of training efforts, especially if that concentration is in sectors that play a key role in development.

The distribution of trainees according to the sponsoring ministry^{1/} is shown in the table on the following page.

The table shows that, although there has been wide dispersion of training opportunities throughout the government (with some 30 ministries or agencies benefitting) nearly 45 percent of the participants came from the education, transport, and agriculture sectors. (Inclusion of the Ph D candidates would increase the ratio to over half.)

The education and agriculture sectors are considered by AID to be crucial to development, but the importance enjoyed by the transport sector in the training program is less clearly related to development priorities, especially

1/ See footnotes on the next page

- 1/ Given the manner in which participant training records are maintained, this classification is the closest approximation to a sectoral breakdown that is possible without an impractical amount of case-by-case analysis. However, it gives a considerably less than accurate picture, since, for example, a number of people from the Ministries of Euphrates Dam (included in "Other") and Higher Education have received training in Agricultural fields. It should also be noted that, although the project allows for training required by "private institutions," development related organizations such as the Women's Union, the Peasants' Union, etc., which might be private in other countries, are, in Syria, semi-public in character and fall under the supervision of a governmental agency.

since nearly all such training was provided in the field of civil aviation.

Industrial sector training(including petroleum)is clearly important to development, particularly in view of the emphasis placed on this sector in Syria's Development Plan and the major role assigned by the Plan to the public sector in industrial expansion.

The low rate of participation (less than 3 percent) of the Health Ministry in the General Participant Training Program requires explanation. There has been no shortage of requests to finance residency programs for MD's, but USAID has steadfastly refused to accept these. At the same time, the deficiencies in the qualifications of Health Ministry personnel in areas that are of primary interest to AID are so widespread and fundamental that they need to be addressed on an in-country basis. (USAID has, in fact, initiated a project for local training of health personnel.) In addition, the amount of health sector participant training is understated here because some is being (and more will be) carried out under separate health projects.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING :

In assessing the value of the training provided, we are forced to rely on the judgment of the trainees. On the basis of the returned participants questionnaire,two-thirds of the responses to the question as to whether the training provided was as expected were affirmative (cf p.10 of the Annex) Those who expressed some dissatisfaction with their training program tended to find it too short and not technical enough. Expressions of disappointment with the brevity of training are open to a number of different interpretations, including the possibility that satisfaction with the experience generated the desire to extend it. The number who judged the training not technical enough is large enough to warrant increased attention to this issue in drawing up future individual training programs, but it is not possible to determine whether any past deficiencies in this respect may have reduced the potential development impact of the training.

Related to the question of the effectiveness of the training received is that of the difficulties experienced with the English language, since such difficulties could reduce the benefit from the training offered. Based on questionnaire responses, English appears to have been a problem for at least one-fifth of the trainees, although very few admitted it was a serious problem. However, some may have been reluctant to admit English problems, and it is possible that some of those who did not respond to the questionnaire (which was in English) were inhibited from doing so by their feelings of weakness in the language, especially if several years had elapsed since they had used it. Moreover, the questionnaire did not differentiate between problems with English in the training itself as opposed to problems the language posed in daily life. It is quite possible that a participant had no difficulty with the technical language used in his training course but, nevertheless, found himself totally unable to communicate with a Brooklyn cab driver.

USE MADE OF TRAINING :

Viewed first of all in terms of the potential for making use of the training received, questionnaire results indicate that at least two-thirds of the trainees are working in the jobs they held at the time they left for training (and to which the training presumably was related). Most of the remainder are still employed by the public sector and probably in jobs related to their training, although the latter point proved somewhat hard to establish on the basis of the job titles furnished by questionnaire respondents. In less than a dozen cases, including one participant who has refused to return to Syria, is there evidence that trainees are not presently able to put their training to work for Syrian development because they are out of the country, in jobs clearly unrelated to the training, unemployed, etc.

Among those who are in a position to put their training to use, the extent to which it actually is utilized can be assessed only on the basis of judgements expressed by the trainees themselves - - not an entirely unbiased source. From questionnaire responses it appears that one-third of the trainees consider that they use their training regularly, and an additional 45 percent use it occasionally. Even after making some allowance for overstatement, this would seem to be a respectable utilization rate for any broad in-service training program.

No guidance was given in distinguishing between "regular" and "occasional" use of training, so not too much significance should be attributed to this rather fuzzy distinction. Still, in view of the comments of many trainees that training was not technical enough or not appropriate to Syrian conditions, it is possible that more attention to the suitability of training programs might produce a noticeable shift in training utilization from occasional to regular.

In summary, it is fair to say, on the basis of the evidence available, that the number of people trained, the selection of fields of training, the effectiveness of the training, and the use being made of it are all sufficient to support a conclusion that the project has contributed - - and will increasingly contribute -- to Syria's economic and social development.

Contribution to U.S./Syrian Relations :

Beyond the specific project purpose, the AID program as a whole has as one of its objectives the strengthening of relations between the U.S. and Syria. The General Participant Training Project is expected to play an important role in achieving that objective.

To assess success in this area, we have attempted to determine the extent to which participants' attitude toward the U.S. may have been affected (for better or for worse) as a result of their experience. Questions II.1-6 and IV.3 of the survey questionnaire (Annex Attachment) were intended, in part, to get at this question.

There is an underlying assumption that, if a participant had good or bad experiences with his training and life in the U.S., these experiences affected his attitude toward the U.S. However, it is not possible to assess how significant the effect may have been, and it was recognized that the validity of the answers would remain questionable. The costs and the risks of attempting to increase marginally their validity would have been high in comparison to the usefulness of the results.

The primary objective, therefore, was to locate specific factors that might have made a negative impression on participants in order that corrective action could be taken. In this respect, responses to the questionnaire produced the following results (some of which have already been mentioned):

- 17 % of participants were dissatisfied with changes made in their training programs;
- 25% found the training program too short;
- 26% found it not technical enough;
- 28% found it did not provide the training expected;
- at least 20% had some problems with English;
- 22% had problems with housing, nearly one-third of these rating the problems as serious;
- 17% had problems with transportation , one fourth of these serious;
- 23% had money problems;
- 12% had problems with AID/W support,

Suggestions for improvement of the program made in response to questions II.6. and IV.3 of the questionnaire indicated a need for more information before departure concerning details of the training program and life in the U.S. They also suggest that housing and transportation problems were, in the last analysis, derived from insufficient maintenance allowances. Other comments were diverse, without a clear pattern , and many were, in fact, contradictory.(See Annex for a sampling.)

Concern for uncovering areas where improvement is called for should not obscure the fact that the overall impression produced by a reading of questionnaire responses, as well as returned participant interviews and other contacts, is that the training experience has been, on balance a satisfying one in an overwhelmingly large percentage of cases. Reinforcing this impression is the strong support expressed for the program at all levels of the government and continuing demand which has produced a waiting list of candidates in contrast to the early days of the program, when considerable urging from USAID was required in order to generate enough nominations to utilize available funding. The suspicion and reticence that existed in many parts of the Syrian Government are largely a thing of the past, attesting to the success of the project in strengthening Syrian/U.S.relations.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. subject to the availability of funds,* continue non-academic participant training simultaneously with the newly launched post-graduate training program.

The evaluation indicates that the results of the short-term technical training provided during the past five years have been more than sufficient to warrant continuation of this training. There is no evidence that a saturation point, or even a point of diminishing returns, has been reached, and demand for such training is growing rather than declining. The decision, made at the time the academic training program was launched, to make this program additional to, rather than a substitute for, technical training has been confirmed as a correct decision.

- B. Reach agreement with the Syrian Government on a method of establishing and enforcing training priorities.

Until recently the amount of training funds was sufficient to take care of essentially all candidates who met minimum qualifications, but this is no longer true. It has become essential to assure that training opportunities are directed to fields of high developmental priority; that the candidates selected are those best able to benefit from the training, in terms of both their technical qualifications and their mastery of the English language; and that training programs closely match Syria's needs and the participants' backgrounds.

- C. Increase involvement of the participant in planning the program.

Once a candidate has been selected, the candidate, the ministry and USAID Training Officers and, if appropriate, USAID project officer, contractor or consultant should meet to discuss the training. This discussion should cover, as a minimum, what problems the training is intended to solve, what new skills must be learned, how the training is to be used, etc. The participant's experience, education and capacity to absorb the training should be considered. The amount of language training required and the timing and the length of the program should be discussed.

Such ^aprocess should ^{go} long way toward eliminating the dissatisfaction with their training some participants have expressed and should help to increase utilization of the training.

* In FY 1980 and possibly FY 1981, this availability is likely to be severely limited by the need to complete funding for the 100 Ph.D. candidates.

D. Improve pre-departure orientation.

Pre-Departure Orientation at present is limited to a review of the participants' Training Implementation Plan (TIP), when available, and to a brief discussion of administrative matters. This orientation should be broadened to include discussions of U.S. social customs, especially as they differ from Syrian customs, and living requirements, such as the renting of an apartment, using telephones, managing money, food, transportation, weather, clothing, etc. Guidance on what to cover should be taken from the survey responses and returned participant interviews.

The Pre-departure Orientation should be a group session held perhaps once each month and including all of the participants who are expected to leave during the following month. The program might be given by one or two locally hired Americans who prepare a program by reviewing the participants' files and tailoring information and materials to the participants involved. A supply of maps and other hand-out materials should be acquired for use in the orientation.

E. Upgrade participants' English.

Steps have already been taken to raise the requirements for completion of the ELTC program. This should continue until there is assurance that the participants have enough English to function well in the U.S., and there should be closer adherence than in the past to the rule that participants not depart before meeting language requirements. Efforts should also be made to avoid the long time lag between completion of language training and departure that has often occurred in the past.

F. Assure that maintenance allowance levels keep up with actual living costs.

A comparison of the pattern of participant complaints about housing and transportation shows that such complaints nearly disappear for a period after maintenance rates are increased. This indicates that money is at the root of most such complaints and underlines the importance of timely adjustments of allowances in this time of rapid inflation. Moreover, if for any reason adjustments are delayed, it becomes increasingly important that selection of the location and other elements of the training program take into careful consideration the financial hardship that may be imposed on the participant.

G. Improve Stateside backstopping.

Improvements in the mission pre-departure orientation program need to be complemented by better backstopping from OIT and/or contract organization in the U.S. A whole range of problems such as inappropriate placement, delayed maintenance checks, training institutions that have not been notified of participant arrivals, improper travel booking, etc. can not be resolved by USAID/Damascus.

OIT or a contractor should have regular direct contact with each participant while in training. An exit interview should be required before departure from the U.S. and a copy of the written report provided to USAID/Damascus.

More use should be made, too, of the National Council for Community Services for International Visitors (COSERV) and other organizations devoted to assisting foreign visitors to the U.S. Greater efforts should be made to put Syrian participants into contact with American Arabic speaking families, preferably of Syrian origin.

Americans who have lived in the Middle East should also be encouraged to meet with Syrian participants.

Participants programmed for part of their time at universities should be made aware of the existence and role of the Foreign Student Advisor. The advisor, through the National Association for Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA), should be informed of the social, religious and other cultural differences between Arab and other participants in the U.S. NAFSA members should be encouraged to maintain closer contacts with AID concerning the problems of the Arabic speakers in the U.S.

H. A more formalized returned participant follow-up program should be instituted.

At present an effort is made to interview all participants soon after their return, and, at least once a year, training certificates are distributed, usually by the Ambassador, at a reception hosted by the Mission Director and attended by senior Syrian Government officials in addition to the participants. A returned participant directory has also been compiled, but, for staffing reasons, updating tends to be sporadic, usually carried out by temporary summer employees. The follow-up survey conducted as part of this evaluation was the first systematic attempt to establish contact with returned participants following receipt of their certificates. It should form the basis of a continuing follow-up effort.

Such a follow-up program might include correspondence courses (in which many returned participants expressed interest); English refresher courses; and special programs arranged at USICA.

RETURNED PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

As an input to the project evaluation, USAID conducted a survey of all returned participants. A two-part questionnaire was developed in the USAID Training Office. (See Attachment.) Answers to the first 20 questions provide primarily statistical information about the returnees. These were compiled by three American analysts working with the files of the 274 individuals whose training was completed or terminated as of October 1, 1979.

The second portion of the questionnaire consisted of 14 questions relating to the participants' experiences. This part of the questionnaire was sent to 270 of the 274 trainees. No questionnaires were sent to two persons who returned early because of severe emotional difficulties; one who was studying outside of Syria; and one who is married in the U.S. and is trying to legalize his stay there.

Because of the Syrian Government's desire to have all business conducted through official channels, USAID did not try to get in touch with each returned participant directly. Instead, the questionnaires were delivered to the Directors of Training in each ministry for distribution to the returned participants. The importance of the evaluation and the mechanics of the questionnaire were explained. Directors of Training were given an opportunity to ask questions concerning any aspect of the evaluation and were promised a copy of the final report. The Directors of Training were generally quite receptive to the project.

Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter in English from the USAID Director and one in Arabic from the Assistant Minister in the Syrian State Planning Commission. Participants were asked to return the questionnaire to their Training Officers or, if they wished, directly to the AID office. As an incentive, each participant who returned a questionnaire was given an American Heritage Atlas or a Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

December 10 was set as a deadline for counting returns; those received after that date are not included in this evaluation. As of the cutoff date, 145 of the 270 questionnaires sent out had been received, a return rate of 54 percent. This rate is not bad considering the political sensitivities at the time of the Survey (November - December 1979). Also, because of these sensitivities, ministries with low return rates were not pressured for additional responses, nor was it possible to make individual contacts with those participants who had chosen not to reply.

Not all questions were answered in part two of every questionnaire. A few participants returned the papers with little more than their address and request for a dictionary or an atlas. Others provided thoughtful answers in separate ^{letters} or in the space provided. Syrians are very polite people, and it can be assumed that some did not respond because they were reluctant to mention problems. By the same token, when a problem is pointed out by several, we can probably assume that it was more common than the statistics may indicate.

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If one were to attempt a description of the typical returned participant, it would sound something like this: He is a male from Damascus, between 30 and 39 years of age, university educated and married. His spouse did not accompany him on his program in the U.S. He has probably had some previous training outside of Syria, most likely in a western country but probably not the U.S. At the time of his AID training, his work was largely managerial, though he may have been either a professional or technical person by training.

His English language proficiency, as tested by the AID-approved American Language Institute of Georgetown University (ALIGU) test, was usually at the level required for non-academic training, and he probably had no further language training in the United States. He did not use an interpreter during his visit. His training was often 4-6 months long with an almost equal chance that it was 1-3 months. It was most likely to have been in the field of agriculture, industry and mining, or transportation, and was primarily observation or on-the-job training. He probably trained alone rather with a group and was almost certain to have finished his program successfully before returning to Syria to serve his government the required three months for every month of training.

Such a person is, of course, a composite of all returnees. The following table shows in more detail the data on the 274 participants covered by the first part of the questionnaire.

	<u>SEX DISTRIBUTION</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
<u>SEX</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	
Male	244	89.0
Female	30	11.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	274	100.0

	<u>AGE DISTRIBUTION</u>	
Under 20	-0-	-0-
20-29	21	7.1
30-39	145	52.9
40-49	99	36.1
50-59	8	2.9
Over 60	-0-	-0-
No Information	1	0.4
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	274	100.0

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Syrian participants, not surprisingly for an Arab country, were predominantly male (89 percent). While 53 percent of the participants were in the 30-39 year age group, another 36 percent were between 40 and 49. Thus, a full 89 percent were between 30 and 49 with only 11 percent in the under 30 and over 50 category.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Some 73 percent (200) of the participants listed Damascus as their home address at the time of departure. Thirty persons (11 percent) were from Aleppo, 11 (4 percent) from Homs, 5 each from Hama and Raqqa, 7 from Lattakia, and 16 came from 12 other towns in Syria.

Eight (8) of the participants indicated that they were born in Palestine and one in Jordan. All of these are currently residing in Syria.

EDUCATION

(Highest Level at Time of Departure)

9 Years or Less	- 0 -	0.0
12 Years (Secondary)	4	1.4
14 Years (Technical)	23	8.4
16 Years (University)	176	64.2
17 Years (Grad. Dip.)	41	15.0
18 Years (Medical or other Professional Degree)	29	10.6
No Info.	1	.4
<hr/>		
TOTAL	274	100.00

As the above figures show, 90 percent of the participants had university training. Sixty-five (65) percent had earned the Bachelor's Degree and 25 percent held the Bachelor's plus an advanced qualification such as a graduate diploma, MD or Ph.D. degree. The remaining 10 percent had secondary or technical school diplomas and certificates.

Although the participants, for the most part, are well educated or trained, they appear to represent a fair cross-section of Syrian society. The Syrian Government for many years has made special efforts to enable young people from all classes to attend the universities, and it is obvious, in talking to groups of returned participants, that they come from families representing considerable differences in income, employment and social position.

MARITAL STATUS

(At Time of Departure)

<u>Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Married	217	79.2
Single	56	20.4
Unknown	1	.4
<hr/>		
TOTAL	274	100.00

ACCOMPANIED BY FAMILY MEMBERS

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	56	20.4
No	218	79.6
<hr/>		
TOTAL	274	100.00

The above figures may not be completely accurate. Though a participant is required to get USAID clearance to take a spouse or child to the U.S., there may have been cases in which travel was done without USAID being informed. Similarly, there may have been cases in which spouses with official approval did not go.

Only one trainee whose family (wife and child) accompanied him encountered problems, and these were related to health. None of those whose dependents accompanied was among the group who reported financial problems (which will be discussed later) since they were all aware that all expenses resulting from the dependents' U.S. visit would have to be borne by them.

One female trainee took her husband. The others who accompanied were wives and children. Several enjoyed the opportunity for fairly extensive travel during their stay in the U.S.

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PREVIOUS TRAINING ABROAD

Yes		187	68.2 %
	U.S.	(43)	
	Other Western		
	Countries	(139)	
	Eastern Countries	(54)	
No		87	31.8 %

As shown on the chart, more than two-thirds of those who went to the U.S. under this program had already had some study abroad. Because some had studied in more than one country, the percentages add up to more than 100. Previous study ranged from brief seminars to full degree programs.

OCCUPATION AT TIME OF DEPARTURE

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Professional	60
Managerial	187
Technical	83

No percentages are given here since a number of the participants fell into two categories. Thus, an engineer in charge of an electrical distribution center could be considered both technical and managerial. A doctor with administrative duties in a hospital could also be listed twice.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

	<u>Number</u>
ELTC	13
Pre-ELTC Programs in Syria	25
Additional Language Training in U.S. (ALIGU)	66

ALIGU SCORES

<u>Level</u> ^{1/}	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
40-49	3	1.1
50-59	15	5.5
60-69	44	16.0
70-79	63	23.0
80-89	55	20.1
90-100	38	13.9
Test Waived	24	8.7
Interpreter Used (Teams)	32	11.7
TOTAL	274	100.00

Some brief explanation is needed here. The English Language Training Center(ELTC), operated in Damascus by the Georgetown University under contract to AID , opened in the fall of 1977. Relatively few of its graduates had had time to complete their programs in the U.S. and return by the time of this evaluation. In the year before the ELTC opened, 25 persons received some English training in a less formalized program in Syria. Some of the participants who had studied in the pre-ELTC program also were among the 66 who received additional language training at Georgetown in the early years of the program.

The English language facility of those who went to the U.S.generally met the requirement for non-academic training as measured by the ALIGU test. Two-thirds fell into this category. Only 11 percent of the participants used translators and all of them were members of teams that traveled together for group programs.

STARTING DATES OF TRAINING

The following chart shows the years in which training began:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1976	92	33.6
1977	107	39.1
1978	62	22.6
1979 (Partial Year)	13	4.7
TOTAL	274	100.00

1/ Average of ALIGU Listening and Usage Scores.

DURATION OF TRAINING

<u>Months</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1-3	110	40.1
4-6	121	44.2
7-12	41	14.9
13 or More	1	.4
Failed to Return	1	.4
<hr/>		
TOTAL	274	100.00

FIELD OF TRAINING

Industry/Mining	72	26.3
Agriculture	63	23.0
Transportation	40	14.6
Education	30	10.9
Public Administration	29	10.6
Health	13	4.7
Labor	6	2.2
Social Welfare/Housing	4	1.5
Miscellaneous	17	6.2
<hr/>		
TOTAL	274	100.00

A glance at the chart shows that more than a fourth of all trainees were in the fields of industry/mining, and nearly as many were in agriculture.

KIND OF TRAINING

	<u>Number</u>
Academic	26
Non-Academic (5-6 Months)	28
Observation/OJT	165
Seminar/Short Course	91

Categorizing a participant's training was not always a simple matter since many participants' programs included two or more of the kinds of programming mentioned above. Thus, they may have attended a university course as an auditor or credit student as well as having a period of on-the-job training and observation with a company or government agency. Others participated in short courses or seminars especially set up for them and also did direct observation of work in their specialties. Thus, the figures shown are an approximation of the nature of the training rather than a precise description of something almost impossible to quantify.

Of the 274 participants, 222 or 81 percent, trained alone. Fifty-two persons were included in five separate teams ranging in size from 15 to 3. It was these teams (12 persons in water resources, 6 from the Ministry of Communications, 7 in a high-level delegation from the Ministry of the Euphrates Dam, and 7 connected with an agricultural assessments project) which used interpreters during their time in the U.S. Two other groups (15 English teachers in one, 5 English inspectors in the other) went as teams but required no assistance.

Almost all programs (91 percent) were successfully completed. Included in the 261 who were considered to have completed their programs successfully are three who terminated somewhat early because of personal, family, or medical problems. At least one of these finished her program by correspondence.

Of the seven who were considered not to have completed their programs successfully, one terminated early because of acute dissatisfaction resulting from the fact that he was overqualified for his program. A new program is being worked for him for a future date.

Another had a most successful program in the U.S. but, after marrying an American citizen, has not returned to Syria. American immigration officials are currently involved in court action in the case.

Three participants suffered from severe emotional problems and had to leave the U.S. without completing their programs. In at least one of these cases, the problems were precipitated by family difficulties in Syria which placed tremendous pressures on the participant. Medical problems, unrelated to U.S. study, caused another unsuccessful program. The other participant who had to end the program early had completed nearly two-thirds of the work when family and job responsibilities required immediate return to Syria.

One participant has had two separate successful programs, one in 1976 and one in 1978.

Up to this point in the survey, we ^{have} dealt with information obtained from the USAID files. The remainder of the report will deal with the 145 responses from the trainees. Relatively little of this information can be shown in

in tabular form, because many of the questions were open-ended.

Although USAID tried to find out how many of the returned participants were still in the jobs they held when they left for training and how many had been promoted or moved to new positions, the results were not clear. To all appearances, about two-thirds are still in the same jobs and the remainder are in different positions, largely within the government. The most notable example of advancement is one participant who was appointed a Minister. Only nine cases were identified where returned participants were no longer working in government positions. Two were studying abroad, one in the U.S. at his own expense and one in Paris; two were working in Saudi Arabia; two had gone into private business; one was unemployed; and the forms of two were returned by their former ministries with a notation that the whereabouts of the participants was not known. Although some of the unreturned forms may represent persons who can not be reached by the ministries that sponsored their training, we believe, on the basis of the Syrian Movement's candidness in acknowledging some such cases, that there are not likely to be many others that we have not been told about.

TRAINING PROGRAM INFORMATION

The questions in this area do not lend themselves to percentage tabulation since the participants were able to check more than one category. It is notable that nearly two-thirds reported no substantial changes in their program.

<u>Observation</u>	<u>Number</u>
No substantial changes *	92
Departure delayed by USAID	8
Departure delayed by Syrian Government	8
Field of training changed	11
Training made more academic	24
Training made more on-the-job	38
Training changed to a degree program	5
Training lengthened	7
Training shortened	30
Place for training changed	16

In all, ⁷⁰ participants indicated some sort of change in their program; 13 said they were advised of the change before leaving Syria; 26 after they arrived in the U.S. but before they began training; and 31 after they had begun their programs.

* Some respondents marked this box but also indicated changes were made, presumably considering them to be not substantial.

While 49 of the participants whose programs were changed were satisfied, 21 were not. Their criticism fell into the following general categories:

1. Participants often learned about changes too late to make alternate arrangements for travel, housing, family matters, etc. One said he received his program more than a month after his training had begun; another that "it was a piecemeal program put together week-by-week, leaving me not knowing where I will be next week;" another that he and other trainees "arrived in Washington, D.C., and did not know where we were going or what our program was."

2. Changes sometimes eliminated specialized aspects of the training which were the individual's reason for participating in the program, left out portions that were applicable to Syria, made the program inappropriate to the candidates' jobs or resulted in a program that was not what had been planned before departure.

3. The changes resulted in problems such as: "I found the trip to Puerto Rico difficult"; "The training during the first eight weeks was undergraduate lectures in the principles of economics without practical use in assessing the agricultural sector in Syria;" "The training could have been done in one place" rather than several.

The following table gives participants' opinions about their programs. Multiple replies were permitted

OPINIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Well arranged	102
Not well arranged	34
Too long	5
Too short	37
About right length	86
Too Technical	8
Not technical enough	38
About right level	74
Provided the expected training	83
Did not provide expected training	40
Provided part of expected training	3

The questionnaire provided a number of choices for listing problem areas and left space for comments. The following table summarizes the replies of those who said they had problems.

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PERCEIVED PROBLEMS

<u>Area</u>	<u>Serious</u>	<u>Some</u>
English Ability		
understanding	0	27
speaking	1	30
writing	2	29
Relations with Americans	0	8
Health	0	10
Housing	9	24
Transportation	6	19
Money	7	41
USAID/SYRIA support	1	2
AID/W support	2	16
Others		
weather	1	0
Money delayed one month	0	1
Lonely	1	0

As shown above, English in one form or another was a problem for about one-fifth of the students. There was no question on reading English in the survey, though probably about the same number who had a problem with understanding, writing, and speaking found some difficulty with reading. Participants are assailed with written materials from the moment they arrive in the U.S.

From checking composite ALIGU scores of those participants who noted some problems in English, we can safely assume that more participants had some language problems than actually admitted to having them. Language problems are no surprise in the case of the two individuals whose composite ALIGU scores came to 46 and 39. Similarly, the 9 with combined ALIGU scores in the 60's were well below the current AID/W standards for non-academic programs. On the other hand, at least six with scores over 80, which put them well above the required level, noted problems. USAID was not able to discern any pattern among those who listed language problems which would set them apart from those who did not.

Writing was listed by 31 persons as a problem. At present, writing is not formally taught in the ELTC program nor was it covered in the pre-ELTC programs. The quality of the written replies to our questionnaire and the number which contained no detailed replies probably indicates that there is limited fluency with written English.

Relations with Americans were cited as problems by eight individuals, but they did not clarify their complaints. It would be unrealistic to expect that every visitor to the U.S. would find everyone congenial in a culture so different from his own.

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Housing and transportation posed ^{problems} for about a fifth of the respondents. Both of these matters will be dealt with in more detail later since they were often mentioned in suggestions for improvement in the training program.

Money, both the amount of per diem and the difficulty in cashing government checks, as well as the generally high cost of living in the U.S., was a problem for nearly one-third of the participants, particularly in the early years. Money problems, housing and transportation problems are closely related.

AID support in Damascus brought few complaints. This finding should be treated with some caution, however, because of the respondents' desire to please the people with whom they dealt and, in many cases, hope to deal again. Two respondents reported serious problems related to AID Washington support, and 16 others reported some problems with this support.

If a single theme emerges from the participant comments, it is that they wanted to know more about their programs before leaving for the U.S. They wanted to know where they would be in the U.S.; the nature of their program, e.g., seminar, on-the-job, observation or academic training; at what institution it would be given and how long various portions would be. Almost a third of the respondents expressed this wish in direct form, others indirectly through other comments or suggestions.

More than 10 percent said they felt the need for more orientation in American culture, customs, history, geography, social behaviour and, in general, how to relate to their host country. Syrian customs of hospitality, for example, are far different from those in the States, and lonely participants may, in some instances, have been disconcerted by what they viewed as abruptness.

Almost as many participants wanted more information on housing and living conditions in the areas where they would be staying. Housing, both in terms of cost and convenience, was clearly a serious problem for many, and they would have liked to know more about low-cost alternatives to expensive hotels. Several complained that they were booked into hotels that cost more than their daily allowance.

Closely related to housing is the fact that many wished they had known more about the cost of living and how the per diem system worked. Syrian students who have studied in eastern countries, particularly, are accustomed to kind of total care (everything paid for, everything planned, no freedom to make choices) which may have made it difficult to cope with the relative flexibility and freedom of the AID program with which they were faced in the U.S.

Just under 10 percent wished they had known more about the weather where they were going to study. Syrian winters are relatively mild compared with those in the northern U.S. Washington's January - April weather brought a vigorous complaint from one participant about his daily 30-minute walk to school.

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While only a few said they wanted more language instruction before they left Syria, the fact that at least a fifth of the participants admitted to some problems with English indicates that more English instruction is needed.

USE OF TRAINING

The table below shows how the respondents viewed their use of their training:

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Regularly	48	33.1
Occasionally	66	45.3
Rarely	15	11.3
Never	5	3.4
Not now, but expect to	5	3.4
No answer	5	3.4
<hr/>		
TOTAL	145	100.00

Use of the training, as described by some participants, was generally in day-to-day work such as the maintenance of instruments, soils analysis, making technical improvements, using American techniques in fruit cultivation, insect control, chemical analysis, planning new overhaul schedules for aircraft, etc.

A few were more specific: One woman participant said that she applies her training in working on the "role of women and youth in agricultural extension." "I make the daily reading in the RADAR station exactly as I learnt in Lansing airport," commented a participant from the Transportation Ministry. One participant said he used his training to negotiate with foreigners, "mixing reason with eloquency to convince the other partner." Clearly, the uses are as varied as the training, and the above examples were pulled out of a number of comments.

About 44 percent of the participants joined a professional society. A few who did not do so (or did not know about the opportunity) expressed the desire to join now! Some 85 percent of those who joined are currently receiving their journals.

Asked whether they would like to continue studying through correspondence courses, fully 86 percent said they would like to do so if arrangements could be made.

Suggestions for program improvements duplicate, in some cases, answers to the earlier question about what participants would have liked to know before going to the U.S. Again, leading the list, was a frequently expressed desire for a program outline/^{given} to the participant in Damascus. At least four participants

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suggested that the time in a given place should be lengthened, several suggesting that this would be a financial benefit. One said programs should be at least one year long, another called for full degree-level work. Several participants whose programs involved a lot of travel and who therefore had to spend much of their time in search of housing suggested that they should live in university housing.

A number of participants said that they would have liked to live with families "so we can mix with American families and learn a lot" though one such suggestion was also made as a way of keeping hotel costs down. On the other hand, one said that living with a host family during holiday season was a "waste of time."

Many respondents used this portion of the questionnaire to voice their feelings that more language training was needed, with suggestions for a one month language course in American idioms, an intensive course in scientific language or even separation of foreign students from Americans.

More technical information was called for by at least three persons, who generally referred to their own individual fields of experience. On the other hand, other participants noted that because some programs are for students of several nationalities, emphasis should be on basic theory rather than technical application.

In contrast, there were also requests for more practical experience of a workshop nature including visits to pilot projects and case studies. Calling for something between the two was a suggestion that candidates should have "theoretical practical courses in the light of American methods and procedures under an American expert." At least one person wanted to see academic courses added to his practical work in water resources. Several suggested that courses be divided into two distinct parts: theoretical and practical, with the theoretical presented before the practical. In this vein came a proposal from an Agriculture Ministry participant that there be an opportunity to discuss problems with American farmers, along with more field experience.

Related to practicality was the question of whether training applied to Syria. A TESL teacher said the program should have less stress on small classes, language labs and tapes. For an agriculturalist, it was a matter of training where soils and climates are similar to those in Syria, while a man from communications called for a specialist who could "answer our questions about the problems we may meet in the future in our country."

There were several suggestions that more attention needed to be paid to the previous preparation and experience of the participants-particularly those highly qualified individuals who found themselves in elementary level programs. One man in his 40's complained that "we were dealt as young students." It was probably this group that came up with the suggestion that far more stringent standards should be used in the selection of participants for training programs.

Trainees found the lack of a cheap, convenient national transportation system in the U.S. difficult and costly. Several commented on the problem of being in isolated university towns.



More financial assistance was the plea of a number, and one said the " salary" should be increased so a participant could travel on his own rather than on preplanned tours. Cashing government checks was a frequently mentioned problem for Syrians without drivers' licenses, credit cards, or other easily recognized identification materials. The situation was frustrating and frequently embarrassing.

Following are some comments and complaints made only once or twice in the request for suggestions for practical improvements. They are worthy of consideration by those who plan programs and work with Syrian participants:

- * More contact is needed between AID/W and participants.
- * Improve the quality of lectures.
- * More time for individual library work on matters of concern to participants.
- * Give participants a technical test before departure (to be sure they are prepared for the level of work to be done).
- * Choose more suitable, sympathetic, and active sponsors.
- * Put participants in contact with Syrian-Americans. Participants should not be put with other Arab speakers so as to improve their English.
- * Improving contact between AID and industries providing training.
- * Washington training office should be more helpful in advising participants about professional associations.
- * Travel claims should be paid more quickly.
- * Allow trainees to participate more actively in work, where possible rather than merely observe.
- * Provide brochures, magazines, and literature so that former participants can keep up with professional developments.
- * Balance technical and academic aspects of program better.
- * Give refresher courses in Syria, possibly with visiting lectures.
- * Include a tourism program.
- * Have a weekly evaluation between participant and his course coordinator, considering relevance of topics and quality of materials.
- * Avoid duplication of information where courses are offered the same student in several different places.
- * Make courses less American oriented.

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- * Establish formal greeting procedures for all participants. At least two health trainees said they arrived at hospitals designated for their training to discover that no one expected them or had any idea of what their programs were to be.
- * Provide a road map or U.S. map with time zones, telephone area codes, driving distances, etc.

After this lengthy recital of suggestions for improvement, it is worth noting that a number of respondents gratuitously commented with such things as:

" Because my program was very well arranged, I have no remarks;" "The people at National Bureau of Standards tried to make my stay useful and comfortable as far as possible;" and " the orientation in Washington was very useful;" " The volunteers who helped us in New York were of great help;" " Our supervisor was very kind and understandable;"

In working with the (145) returned questionnaires , the analysts found that most suggestions were made in a thoughtful and constructive manner. A few participants did have poor programs, but, on the whole, most valued their experiences in the United States. Several have already asked for additional study under this or some other program and many, in conversation with Americans, have talked enthusiastically of their experiences in terms of professional training which will be helpful to their country and which they found personally rewarding.

USAID/SARG
RETURNED PARTICIPANTS QUESTIONNAIRE

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name: _____ PIO/P No. _____
2. Address: _____
3. Position when selected for training:
- Job Title: _____
- Department: _____
- Ministry: _____
- City: _____

I. CONTINUED

(INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM USAID FILES)

5. Sex: () Male () Female
6. Age at beginning of training:
- () - 20 () 40 - 49
- () 20 - 29 () 50 - 59
- () 30 - 39 () 60 +
7. Highest level of education at time of departure:
- () 6 Years - Primary
- () 9 Years - Preparatory
- () 12 Years - Secondary
- () 14 Years - Technical
- () 16 Years - University
- () 17 Years - Graduate Diploma
- () 18 Years - Medical Degree
8. Marital status at beginning of training:
- () Single () Married
9. Did spouse accompany during training:
- () Yes () No
10. Previous training abroad:
- () Yes () No
- () U. S.
- () Code 941
- () Other

USAID/SARG

RETURNED PARTICIPANTS QUESTIONNAIRE

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name: _____ PIO/P No. _____
2. Address: _____
3. Position at Time of Selection for Training:
Job Title: _____
Department: _____
Ministry: _____
City: _____
4. Current Position:
Job Title: _____
Department: _____
Ministry: _____
City: _____
Office Phone: _____

II. TRAINING PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. After my AID training program was established, changes were made in the following ways:
- () No substantial changes were made.
 - () My departure was delayed by USAID.
 - () My departure was delayed by my government.
 - () The subject or field of training was changed.
 - () The training was made more academic.
 - () The training was made more on-the-job.
 - () The training was changed to a degree program.
 - () The training was lengthened.
 - () The training was shortened.
 - () The place where the training was to be given was changed.

2. If there were any changes in my training program, I learned about them:

- before my departure from Syria.
- after my arrival in the U. S. or other country of training but before the training began.
- after the training had begun.

3. If there were any changes in my training program:

- I was satisfied with all the changes.
- I was not satisfied with some of the changes for the following reasons:

4. In my opinion, my program was:

- well arranged.
- not well arranged.

- too long.
- too short.
- about right.

- too technical.
- not technical enough.
- about right.

- provided the training I expected.
- did not provide the training I expected.

5. I encountered, or did not encounter, problems as indicated in the areas listed below:

	SERIOUS PROBLEMS	SOME PROBLEMS	NO PROBLEMS
English Ability:			
Understanding	()	()	()
Speaking	()	()	()
Writing	()	()	()
Relations with Americans	()	()	()
Health	()	()	()
Housing	()	()	()
Transportation	()	()	()
Money (Per diem, etc.)	()	()	()
USAID Support (While in Damascus)	()	()	()
AID/W Support (While in Washington & U.S.)	()	()	()
Other (Describe below)	()	()	()

6. Before I left for training, I wish I had been given more information about:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

III. TRAINING UTILIZATION INFORMATION

1. Since returning from training, I use my new knowledge:

- () Regularly
- () Occasionally
- () Rarely
- () Never

2. Some of the more important ways in which I use my training are outlined below:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

IV. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Before leaving the U. S.:

() I joined the Professional Society mentioned below:

() I am receiving my journal.

() I am not receiving my journal.

() I did not join a Professional Society.

2. Now that I am back:

() I would like to continue studying through correspondence courses in my field.

() I am not interested in further study through correspondence courses.

3. Some of the ways in which I think the participant program could be improved are listed below:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

4. Given a choice, I would prefer to receive:

() A Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

() An American Heritage Atlas

5. I live:

() In Damascus and can pick it up at USAID.

() Outside of Damascus and would like it sent to me:

() At my Ministry.

() At the following address: _____

