

Perceived Conflicts in the AID/University Relationship

Since their earliest formal involvement in foreign assistance programs, universities have had a troubled relationship with the Agency for International Development (AID), prompting a number of evaluations of joint activities. A string of reviews conducted from the 1950s to the present reveal numerous and persistent problems in the AID/university partnership. A number of recent papers, seminars, workshops, meetings, and conferences by members of the university community, AID, the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD), the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), various foundations, and other organizations have probed these problems in greater depth.

HISTORICAL CONFLICTS

One of the earliest conflicts between AID and university officials surfaced in 1956. Dismayed by lack of support for institutional contracts abroad by top AID officials, and the perceived hostility of AID officials towards universities, the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities (forerunner to NASULGC) threatened to withdraw its member institutions from participation in AID programs. A meeting by the AID Administrator with a group of university presidents led to some changes, most focused on the operating level. For example, a "standard" contract format geared towards involving universities in AID projects was created. A task force on AID/University Relations was formed in 1963 to find ways to simplify contract procedures and to improve cooperative action by AID and the universities. AID and the universities took few actions on Task Force recommendations [27].

A 1968 NASULGC Task force recommended establishment of a new development assistance agency outside the aegis of the State Department to reduce conflict between development assistance and foreign policy objectives [7]. The proposed agency would support scientific and academic technical assistance, institution building, and international institution-to-institution relationships. The Task Force believed that an agency isolated from foreign policy crises would eliminate some of the conflicts troubling AID/university relations.

AID and NASULGC formed a Joint Committee that subsequently issued the following eight criteria for Optimizing the effectiveness of the AID/university relationship:

1. proper matching of universities with development assistance activities,
2. joint planning,
3. improved program evaluation and feedback,
4. flexible implementation authority,
5. effective management by the universities,
6. employment of qualified personnel,
7. strengthening of U.S. universities' ability to support development assistance activities, and
8. enhancement of host institutions' capacities to induce and sustain changes in the host country [7].

Other recommendations included developing long-term commitments from universities and broadening professional opportunities for university faculty under AID contracts. This study served as a foundation for the Title XII legislation in 1975.

Although U.S. universities had high expectations of Title XII, these were not met. The U.S. General Accounting Office's (GAO) 1981 evaluation concluded that AID and the universities had not yet forged an effective partnership. Blurred lines of authority within AID made implementation of projects difficult and caused numerous misunderstandings. University policies regarding promotion, tenure, and salaries were incompatible with fostering faculty participation in development assistance. Thus, GAO contended that U.S. universities commonly lack the capacity to make significant contributions to AID's development program [107]. The 1986 McPherson survey also revealed dissatisfaction with university performance and expressed concerns that BIFAD, the entity responsible for intermediating between AID and universities, acted more as an advocate for university involvement than as a mediator in the partnership [40].

Various AID officials and AID Mission directors expressed disillusionment with the Title XII program, and specifically with the limited competition for Title XII projects. A top AID official upon reading the responses of 39 Missions and 14

universities to the 1986 McPherson survey on Title XII commented:

My reading of the responses, frankly, leads to a conclusion that many USAID Mission directors and USAID staff are becoming somewhat disenchanted with Title XII universities due to weaknesses in past performance. This growing disenchantment is reflected by a growing reluctance to set aside projects for Title XII universities and a desire for more private sector-Title XII competition. There also appears to be some erosion of the previously held assumption that Title XIIs have a predominant capacity in agricultural research, technology transfer and institution-building activities. The universities, however, still feel they have predominant capability in these areas. . . .

The perceived weakness (of performance by universities) needs to be dealt with, and most Missions feel that they *can* be dealt with so that in the future they will feel more comfortable in choosing to work with a Title XII university. Most Missions recognize the marvelous resource base which exists in the U.S. university community and want to use Title XII. Performance has not, however, lived up to potential [14].

One university administrator commented:

A central problem which limits the effectiveness of Title XII progress is the inability of AID professionals in the field to accept and take advantage of the university's role. Suspicion has evolved in the system and too many stories of university inadequacy go unverified and uncontested [119].

GAO reevaluated the Title XII program in 1989 and found a significant decline in university involvement in development assistance activities. The report attributed the decline to budget decreases in AID's agricultural development account, decreasing emphasis on institution-building, increased AID emphasis on private sector initiatives, and a reluctance on the part of certain AID officials to designate projects as Title XII.

RECURRENT CONFLICTS

Among the AID/university conflicts are some that recur largely due to differences in development assistance philosophy between the two types of organizations, and differences in organizational structure and goals (see also app. E). These include: conflicts between humanitarian development assistance objectives and political foreign policy objectives, shifting AID policies and priorities, difficul-

ties in communication, mismatched personnel goals and systems, and conflicting personnel timeframes. In addition, the growing AID preference for open contract competition is giving rise to new conflicts between AID and universities with which it has historically worked. Few of these conflicts are likely to be resolved without substantial revision of organizational policies and structures.

Subordination of Development Assistance Objectives to Foreign Policy Objectives

Although universities successfully maintained an apolitical stance in their initial forays into development assistance, formal collaboration with the U.S. Government inevitably politicized the nature of their work. U.S. development assistance is inherently political: although humanitarian motives spurred the creation of the Point Four Program in 1949, strong political antecedents as well as powerful economic objectives were also involved.

Blurring of boundaries between U.S. development assistance programs and U.S. foreign policy initiatives and objectives is a persistent problem from the university perspective.

Probably no issue more profoundly affects the AID/university collaboration than that posed by the juxtaposition of political sponsorship, on the one hand, and the tradition of academic institutional independence, on the other. American universities have historically resisted domination by the publics they serve. The marked increase in the interdependence between government and the universities during the last decade in particular has not deadened the sensitivity of the academic community to the problem of political control [35].

In 1989, the House Foreign Affairs Committee sponsored the International Cooperation Act of 1989 that proposed repealing Title XII and establishing a university-oriented development assistance organization separate from the State Department [3]. The presumption was that this autonomy would shelter the development assistance program from foreign policy, would provide a stronger role for the universities in the areas of research, extension, and education, and could involve all related disciplinary programs in the universities. Programmatic and budget management authority would be given to the Center for programs in all centrally funded areas; the Center also would have had authority to oversee programs developed and funded by AID's country Missions.

The International Cooperation Act of 1989, however, was not passed. Under the current restructuring, AID and the newly established Center for University Cooperation in Development remain under the aegis of the Department of State.

Shifting AID Policy

From universities' perspectives, numerous shifts in AID policy have also hindered university performance in overseas development. AID has changed its priorities over the years, sometimes deeming university activities to be outside the realm of their current area of interest. Universities have had difficulty identifying AID priorities and understanding apparent contradictions in AID policy. Universities dislike shifting their own activities in the direction of changing AID policies and often find it difficult to do so.

Substantial decreases in government funding for development activities has forced AID to identify and focus on specific priority areas. Proliferation of unranked objectives and congressional earmarks for specific development assistance programs, geographical regions, and types of development assistance organizations reduces long-term consistency and has forced AID to use resources on mandates that may not be relevant in specific cases or whose goals may not be clear [1 10]. The lack of consistency and clarity of objectives has reduced Congress' ability to maintain and mod@ the direction of U.S. assistance, and also limits the monies allocated to U.S. universities.

AID has placed great emphasis on two priorities: policy dialogue and reform and private sector development. Universities have not participated actively in these two areas. The few universities that have participated in AID-supported policy work have tended to be nonland-grant institutions. Further, the focus on private sector development has redirected assistance from host country public institutions, such as national agricultural research systems, with which universities have worked in the past, to private organizations, with which universities have not traditionally worked. In addition, AID has interpreted private sector development to mean

an increased focus on the provision of assistance through private organizations, such as private firms and private voluntary organizations.

The other two "pillars" 'institutional development (including human resource development), and technology research, development, and transfer—include activities more suited to university capabilities, but have not received as much attention. Personnel training, institution building, and technology development nonetheless are cited commonly as major AID accomplishments. For example, the World Bank recently identified the United States as the only donor playing an effective role in building African agricultural scientific manpower [39]. And yet, Agency commitment to these two pillars does not appear as strong as AID documents suggest. For example, support for human resource development and educational system development constitute a small part of AID's ARDN-type work (see table 2-2 in ch. 2). Although concern has been focused on Sub-Saharan Africa where the lack of trained personnel and functional institutions is seen as especially detrimental to development [21], AID's Plan for Supporting Agricultural Research and Faculties of Agriculture in Africa remains underfunded, especially for the faculties of agriculture [89].

Obligations for technology development declined about \$40 million between 1986 and 1988, and technology development as a percentage of ARDN-type obligations fell about 2 percent [76]. Opportunities may exist to increase funding of this work. For example, the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau has concluded that its nontraditional, export-led strategy will require research and technology development or adaptation; the Asia and Near East Bureau is stressing increased cereal grain production in low-income countries; and the Africa Bureau has had a plan for agricultural research since 1985 (see app. C). Obligations for technology transfer have been increasing in all regions, although in some cases, such as nontraditional crops in Latin America and the Caribbean, AID may not be turning to U.S. universities for this work.

¹These figures are calculated without the inclusion of the U.S. core contribution to the International Agricultural Research Centers, the majority of which could be classified under technology development. Core obligations for the centers dropped over \$6 million during this period (about 13.5 percent of the contribution of 1986, the peak year).

Communication Constraints

Universities have centralized collegiate bureaucracies that commonly conflict with AID's decentralized, hierarchical bureaucracy. AID's decentralized structure places a great deal of control in the hands of Mission directors—too much, according to some university participants in joint projects. Misunderstandings and poor communication between university personnel and AID Mission directors are common, and little opportunity exists for face-to-face discussion, nor are there other mechanisms to broach this long-acknowledged gap between university personnel and Mission directors. One university participant commented:

The pattern of decentralization at USAID has been likened to an octopus with each tentacle having its own power. The decisions and actions by country Missions and Mission directors vary so that it is becoming extremely difficult and nonrewarding for universities to be involved in international development contracts [120].

Conversely, university bureaucracies may hinder Mission directors in AID/university transactions. For example, some universities may resist allocating control of AID/university contracts to their representatives in LDCs; instead, universities prefer, or may be obligated by law, to manage contracts from their U.S. campuses. Remoteness of decisionmakers from development assistance activities can slow organizational and decisionmaking processes.

Convicting Personnel Systems

Another barrier to successful AID/university collaborations is conflicts inherent in AID's and universities' personnel systems. AID project staff turnover and misplacement of technical experts may hinder achievement of project goals [111]. Conversely, university staff turnover, tenure obligations, and dearth of financial support or professional rewards deters some faculty from participation in development assistance programs.

Rapid turnover of AID staff, particularly of Mission directors, has led to discontinuity in AID programs. New AID personnel entering an ongoing project also may have different project goals and expectations than their predecessors. For one university project, there were over a 36-month period 'two Agricultural Development Officers and seven project managers, each wishing to put his or her imprint on the project outcome' [118]. Moreover, project

managers may be junior AID employees with little technical expertise or training to support participation in the projects that they manage [2].

Frequent turnover also may hinder university staff effectiveness in development assistance programs. Some in AID contend that about the time that university personnel are becoming effective, they are rotated back home and another faculty member comes into begin a 'learning process.' On the other hand, universities contend that while personnel may inevitably change, there is continuity of leadership, understanding and commitment to the project through stable university structure [119].

Some AID employees assert that universities do not contain sufficient numbers of adequately trained and interested staff to just@ favoring universities in AID contracts. The perceived lack of U.S. university commitment to international development is evidenced, it is argued, by:

- inadequate integration of international programs in university departments,
- dearth of support for faculty and student research in foreign countries and with international organizations,
- inadequate university investment in development assistance initiatives,
- inability of university staff to commit to long-term projects, and
- deficient university capabilities in areas integral to international development work [cf: 25].

Obligations associated with the tenure system and the general lack of rewards and incentives for university personnel working in the international development field discourage university staff from becoming involved in development assistance activities. University faculty may focus on subjects that lead to generation of publications and other forms of peer or public recognition to achieve tenure. Much of the research needed in LDCs is of an applied nature and may not appeal to university researchers, or be more readily conducted by nonuniversity organizations. Thus, university personnel participating in AID-funded projects overseas may be older faculty members with secured tenure that may not be up-to-date with current scientific or technological advances, or young faculty members with little experience. Further, difficulties in finding replacements for faculty sent overseas potentially lead university administrators to discourage faculty

wishing to participate in development assistance work.

Adverse reactions by the primary constituents of land-grant universities-farmers and other agriculturalists-also may induce some university faculty to avoid work in international development assistance. Farmers are generally characterized as perceiving international agricultural development activities as a threat: by stimulating production in LDCs, they promote competition for markets [60] (figure 3-1).

An argument commonly used to convince U.S. farmers to support the land-grant universities' participation in international development work is that returns will directly benefit American society and U.S. farmers (box 3-A). This argument fails to completely convince agricultural audiences, largely because the rewards of overseas work tend to be unpredictable and do not solely benefit the farmers of the individual State supporting the development assistance activity. Even State legislators prepared to accept the reverse technology transfer argument may find it "more convenient to let another State pay the bills" [38]. A general belief exists among many U.S. agriculturalists that State funding should be devoted to domestic or State-related programs, whereas Federal funding may be allocated for international purposes [58].

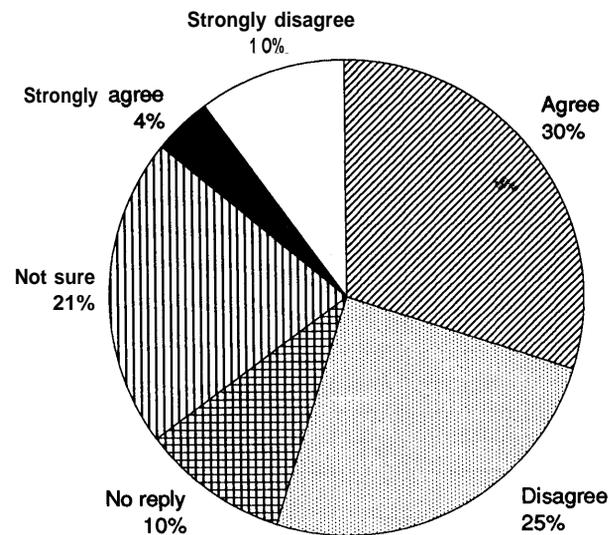
Conflicting Development Assistance Timeframes

Historically AID has aimed at short-term solutions to development problems and universities have preferred long-term involvement, with ensuing conflict. Congressional pressure accounts for much of AID's emphasis on short-term results, as does AID's reward system [111].

Whereas university personnel arrange their schedules in terms of the academic year, AID personnel have a much more flexible but less predictable calendar. AID projects are subject to delays, and university personnel may not have the freedom to coordinate their schedules with a revised project schedule.

Conversely, universities bring stability to international activities. Unlike many private firms, which are subject to fluctuations of the economy, and PVOs (particularly smaller ones), which are vulnerable to abrupt changes in funding and constituent

Figure 3-1-U.S. Farmer Views on Whether the United States Should Assist Developing Countries Increase Their Agricultural Productivity and Trade Potential



^aBased on 21-State composite.

SOURCE: H.D. Guither et al., "U.S. Farmers' Preferences for Agricultural and Food Policy in the 1990s," North Central Regional Extension Publication 361, North Central Regional Research Publication 321, Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 787, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, November 1989.

support, universities largely are organizations with long histories and reasonably assured futures. Once established, relationships and collaboration between U.S. faculty and LDC colleagues can endure despite periods of strained political relations between countries. Mechanisms such as the tenure process, often seen as interfering with university involvement in development assistance activities, can also be viewed as a force contributing to long-term continuity of faculty. As a result, the objectives and overall philosophy of a university tend to remain consistent over long periods of time, promoting concomitant consistency in the quality and objectives of the work university personnel perform.

AID Preference for Open Contract Competition

AID personnel tend to prefer open competition for projects, which may promote selection of the most competent available contractor for a given project. Private firms are playing a growing role in the AID development assistance program. Some believe that

Box 3-A—Building a Domestic Agricultural Constituency for International Agricultural Development

University involvement in foreign agricultural assistance has been plagued by strained relations between land-grant universities and U.S. agricultural interest groups. Farmers may oppose agricultural assistance as a result of more general critical attitudes towards foreign affairs and, in particular, foreign aid. Surveys comparing the attitudes of farmers to those of the general public on foreign aid have found that U.S. farmers: 1) felt more strongly that economic aid to other nations hurts the U.S. economy, 2) felt the U.S. should restrict imports from Third World countries until the U.S. trade deficit is lowered (83 percent v. 60 percent), and 3) were less supportive of opening U.S. markets to assist developing countries (17 percent v. 32 percent).

Moreover, some U.S. farmers together with producer organizations and their representatives in the U.S. Government, perceive the participation of the land-grants and other public agricultural research organizations in development assistance programs as contrary to the interests of U.S. agriculture. Opponents argue that production-oriented agricultural aid operates as a subsidy that unfairly strengthens their international competitors, assisting developing countries to produce and export larger volumes of commodities at a lower cost than they could without U.S. aid. Critical U.S. farmers argue that publicly owned technical resources, which farmers themselves help support through taxes, should not be used to their own economic detriment.

In response to these criticisms, U.S. universities and the broader development assistance community have developed several lines of reasoning to convince farmers of the merits of land-grant involvement in development assistance abroad, and its benefits to U.S. agriculture. The primary argument for continued aid is based on the expansion of markets for U.S. agricultural products resulting from increasing Third World incomes. In the long run, growth in the agricultural sector of lesser developed countries (LDCs) stimulates aggregate agricultural imports into those countries. This somewhat paradoxical effect occurs because Third World farmers' disposable income grows faster than indigenous agricultural production. In particular, as incomes rise, LDC farmers buy more meat and dairy products, but do not generally produce enough feed to satisfy these changing tastes. Producers of feedgrains and soybean meal, among which the United States is the largest, would tend to benefit from the increased foreign demand.

Despite historical evidence supporting this argument, it is no longer universally applicable. Patterns of economic development vary from developing country to developing country: U.S. commodity producers are not all affected the same way by Third World economic growth. High national debts also have tended to negate much of the value to U.S. farmers of foreign agricultural development: debtor countries are forced to spend their added income on debt repayment rather than additional imports. Nonetheless, this argument, when propounded by individuals whom farmers trust, has been moderately effective in building constituencies for land-grant university foreign assistance programs in some States.

Other arguments for aid include:

- * Increasing LDC consumption of even competitive commodities will potentially increase demand for U.S. production, especially if U.S. products have higher quality.
- U.S. scientists participating in foreign agricultural assistance, and particularly international agricultural research, can incorporate research results into ongoing U.S. research programs. Research results can then be transferred to U.S. farmers for use in domestic production.
- Research may focus on improving pest control, nutrient management, or storage practices, potentially reducing U.S. production costs.
- Access to LDC germplasm can improve cultivars available to U.S. farmers through breeding programs for characteristics such as drought tolerance or virus resistance.
- International research may provide faculty and students with a global perspective, beneficial in an increasingly interdependent 'world, and can contribute to the land-grant university's reputation and subsequent ability to attract high-quality personnel.

Land-grant universities have undertaken a variety of programs to counter opposition and strengthen support for their development assistance programs. A crucial element in all of these constituency-building programs seems to be the trust that farmers have in the expertise of land-grant faculty and staff, and their social identification with these land-grant personnel. Because extension personnel work most closely with U.S. farmers, they may be a particularly valuable asset in university attempts to build constituencies for agricultural development assistance programs.

Box 3-A--Continued

While long-standing personal relationships between land-grant experts and farmers may be the most effective means to communicate the benefits of land-grant development assistance programs, land-grant universities have also employed more formal means to gain farmer support for international programs. Most land-grant Title XII offices publish newsletters on the universities' agricultural assistance programs, highlighting the benefits of these programs for farmers of a State or region. The University of Illinois' *International Agriculture Update* is perhaps the most ambitious of these newsletters. In addition, faculty working on AID grants often hold field days, during which farmers can examine research projects intended to assist developing countries, ask questions, and air concerns about the projects.

Most land-grant universities receive some funds from State- and National-level producers organizations for commodity-specific research. Use of these funds commonly is determined by committees composed of land-grant personnel and members of the commodity association's research committees. Faculty involved with international programs periodically use these committee meetings to inform farmers about the programs and to answer questions.

The principal organizations representing land-grant faculty active in agricultural development assistance programs--the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the Association of International Agriculture and Rural Development (previously the Association of U.S. University Directors of International Agricultural Programs)--have produced educational materials intended to educate farmers and other traditional land-grant constituencies about the value of their work for U.S. agriculture. For example, the latter institution recently published a brochure that clearly explains how "technical assistance to developing countries expands the world markets in which U.S. agriculture must compete" [5]. Since at least the mid-1980s, when farmer opposition to publicly funded agricultural research and technical assistance for development reached its peak, land-grant experts also have used the annual meetings of these two organizations to discuss ways to build support within the farm community for development assistance programs.

Some universities have indirectly used AID's Biden-Pell program, begun in 1982 for educating the U.S. public about development assistance. Biden-Pell monies are intended for the use of private voluntary organizations (PVOs), but some of these PVOs have worked with universities to educate farmers about developing countries and development assistance programs. Little formal evaluation of Biden-Pell educational projects has been undertaken by AID, and it is difficult to ascertain the impact of the program in the farm community. However, AID and internationally oriented agricultural experts in land-grant schools generally believe that the program has helped alleviate opposition to foreign agricultural assistance.

The Biden-Pell program that was perhaps most closely associated with the universities was conducted by the Consortium for International Cooperation in Higher Education (CICHE) during the mid-1980s. The creation of CICHE was inspired by NASULGC personnel and was "designed to mobilize the resources of the Cooperative Extension Service (housed on land-grant campuses) to enhance citizen understanding of . . . the stake of the U.S. in international development." CICHE, in cooperation with Extension personnel in four states (Georgia, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Utah), produced a variety of educational materials, primarily focusing on the benefits to the United States of agricultural assistance. These materials were then distributed to internationally oriented extension leaders throughout the country.

Another way the Cooperative Extension Service has built constituencies for land-grant development assistance programs is through a farmer-to-farmer assistance program. Funds for the program, obtained through the "P.L. 480" food aid program, also were intended for use by PVOs. However, the international office of USDA's Extension Service (the Federal arm of the Cooperative Extension Service) is attempting to obtain authority to disburse some of the farmer-to-farmer funds to State extension services. Part of the office's intent is to employ U.S. farmers returning from short-term consultancies in developing countries, together with internationally oriented extension personnel, to convey to other U.S. farmers the value of agricultural development assistance for LDC farmers and U.S. agriculture.

SOURCE: Based on Robert C. Stowe, "U.S. Universities and Constituency Building Development Assistance," contractor report prepared for the Office of Technology Assessment, August 1989.

AID's current emphasis on the private sector undermines the Title XII program because private consulting firms operate under competitive, but less restrictive, regulations and may use university personnel to staff projects [119]. Others fear that private consulting firms operated by ex-AID staff will receive an unfair advantage in contract competition deriving from previous personal connections [2].

AID preference for private firm contracts may reflect dissatisfaction with university performance in private sector development activities, or may indicate recognition that private firms are more suited for participation in private sector development activities than universities. AID personnel have encountered various difficulties managing university contracts. Among the complaints lodged

by Missions: universities tend to be less cost-conscious and university personnel tend to be less familiar and have less experience working with AID than private sector firms. Universities are also perceived as being less responsive to AID project needs [4,52].

Continuity of many U.S. university/LDC institution relationships probably will not be sustained (i.e., continue when AID financing is no longer forthcoming), however, without AID resources [51]. Thus, AID is supporting an Institutional Linkage program based on encouragement of noncontractual linkages between U.S. universities and LDC institutions, and of collaboration between universities and the private sector.