



U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VOLUNTARY FOREIGN AID

PUBLIC MEETING

- October 1, 2003 -

SUMMARY REPORT

William S. Reese, ACVFA Chair, welcomed the committee members and participants, noting that the 30th anniversary of the Percy Amendment is a fitting time to look back over what has been accomplished, and assess what remains to be done, to ensure gender equality in development. Mr. Reese shared an excerpt from a letter addressed to the ACVFA from Sharon Percy Rockefeller:

"Throughout his life my father was a confirmed internationalist. He remains so to this day, seeing the uplifting of struggling peoples as a requirement for peace and prosperity of all nations. The enfranchisement and empowerment of women is essential to this effort."

PERCY AMENDMENT ANNIVERSARY SESSION

OPENING REMARKS: Julia Taft, Assistant Administrator and Director, United Nations Development Program, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery

Ms. Taft stated that when Senator Percy introduced the legislation in 1973, the idea that women are essential to promoting development seemed revolutionary. She noted, however, that it has taken a very long time to get this far, and there is still a very long road ahead.

She remarked that there is a very strong commitment to gender equality among the international community, undergirded by an active affirmation by women in the developing world to seek their own voices. Ms. Taft said that one of the most important baselines to acknowledge is that endemic poverty, inequality, low economic growth, high HIV/AIDS prevalence, and poor governance cannot be improved without empowering 50 percent of the world's population. She also reminded the audience that gender is not just about women; it is about women and men, and about equality. Regarding the UN agencies' and UNDP's gender integration activities, Ms. Taft used Iraq as the first example. She reported that the 14 sectoral needs assessments just carried out by the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund included gender and other cross-cutting issues as integrated themes.

Speaking about the current challenges for women, particularly in post-conflict environments, Ms. Taft pointed to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants as a critical issue. UNDP is trying to ensure that women qualify for benefits and reentry assistance under DDR programs, as well as working to include women in issues such as property rights, resettlement, micro-credit, education, and governance institutions.

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Ms. Taft encouraged participants to read "Women, War and Peace," by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (available at www.unifem.org). The report, based on interviews with women in conflict and post-conflict situations, addresses issues such as sexual exploitation, trafficking in women, representation in UN peacekeeping operations, and security.

Ms. Taft emphasized that the HIV/AIDS pandemic's disproportionate impact on women and girls must be addressed. The UN has engaged with other agencies to look at support for the twinning of government officials to increase capacity to address the issue effectively. A comprehensive approach must include treatment, education, and a rethinking of development. "If we lose this battle," she concluded, "then we have lost our humanity."

PANEL DISCUSSION

"GENDER INTEGRATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES"

Moderator: William S. Reese, ACVFA Chair

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis, Senior Advisor, Office of the Managing Director, World Bank Group

Success in development is critically dependent on gender equality.

Mr. Sfeir-Younis remarked that the development community has come a long way in recognizing that success in development is critically dependent on gender equality. He said that the World Bank is focusing on two important issues: scaling up development and improving performance in implementation.

Gender inequality continues to be persistent and pervasive. World Bank research has shown that equality of rights varies tremendously between countries, but it is clear that gender equality promotes economic growth and reduces poverty. He noted that there are gender equity issues in both developing and developed countries.

Mr. Sfeir-Younis outlined three principles of the World Bank strategy:

1. It is country-specific and country-led.
2. It examines how gender conditions become barriers to poverty eradication and economic growth.
3. It promotes a dialogue with women and all stakeholders.

Mr. Sfeir-Younis presented seven challenges for gender and development work at the World Bank:

1. Integrating gender assessment into the dialogue and country assistance strategy.
2. Developing new partnerships with civil society.
3. Integrating gender equity in countries' systems of strategies for economic work.
4. Changing the focus of lending operations toward non-traditional sectors, such as transportation, in which women play a critical role.
5. Building capacity to do the job.
6. Measuring progress toward gender equity.
7. Making gender assessment a reality in all client countries.

The World Bank strategy includes bringing the debate on gender equity into the early stages of policy and project planning. Mr. Sfeir-Younis concluded by saying that it will be impossible to attain the Millennium Development Goals without paying attention to gender equality. This will require a major revolution in values.

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Emmy Simmons, Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, USAID

Ms. Simmons remarked that USAID's approach to gender integration has changed a lot since the Percy Amendment was passed in 1973. Women were largely invisible in the data sets at the time. As a result, there was a lot of attention paid to documenting the roles of women, trying to understand what to many seemed obvious.

Initially, there was a focus on projects that addressed women's non-reproductive roles. Today, projects are only one, and often not the most important, approach. More attention is being paid to policy reforms. USAID is committed to building alliances involving a variety of non-governmental partners, civil society, and the private sector. Sector-wide programs are also gaining currency. Direct budget support programs are another approach that can enable donors to engage in a policy dialogue about gender issues from the beginning.

Ms. Simmons outlined three lessons learned from USAID's experience:

1. There is a need to focus on the broad policy and institutional context, as well as on specific activities.
2. It is important to listen to and work with women's organizations in partner countries.
3. Addressing gender issues has to be everybody's business.

USAID's Gender Plan of Action calls on all staff to build gender approaches into all programming. The Women in Development office provides technical assistance to USAID staff and funds gender training for NGO partners. In summary, Ms. Simmons stated

that it is time to develop a new USAID gender strategy that better reflects the current development challenges and assistance environment.

Phil Evans, Senior Social Development Advisor, UK Mission to the UN and Chair, Network for Gender Equality, Development Assistance Committee, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Mr. Evans remarked that the 20th century has seen the greatest progress in history in women's voice, in the empowerment of women, and in progress with respect to their role in society. That has occurred alongside the greatest leap forward in improving social conditions and tackling poverty at a global level.

The Gender-Related Development Index developed by the UNDP found that significant progress had been made over time, but it also found that no society treats its women as well as its men. Gender equality does not seem to depend on the income level of a society.

Mr. Evans discussed the findings of a study done by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in collaboration with the Gender Network. *"In general, the quality of gender analysis in evaluations is inadequate for agencies to assess differences in benefits between women and men, and their relationship to overall development outcomes."* He remarked that these are very disappointing results after several decades of focused efforts in this area. The study identified a number of key methodological problems, including insufficient attention to results and scant use of gender sensitive indicators. Gender was too often used as a synonym for women. Mr. Evans pointed out that successful strategies included broad-based ownership, shared vision, strong stakeholder involvement, long-term commitments, and accountability.

Gender issues must be put at the center of key instruments and results frameworks.

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Mr. Evans outlined four challenges:

1. Develop better tools to understand gender inequalities and turn that understanding into better programming.
2. Put gender issues in the center of key instruments and results frameworks.
3. Have better accountability.
4. Recognize the essential value of gender equality.

Mr. Evans remarked that leadership and political will remain absolutely fundamental. Civil society organizations play a critical role in giving voice to women, and amplifying that voice in the process of policymaking and development assistance.

Ann Claxton, Director, International Program Development, World Vision/US

For World Vision gender integration is a matter of both justice and development effectiveness. World Vision has tried different approaches to increasing the participation of women, starting with a project approach, and later mainstreaming gender sensitivity throughout the organization. World Vision now realizes the need to combine these approaches and add a dimension of organizational culture transformation and accountability.

Over the past five years, World Vision has begun a process to improve organizational culture, accountability, and capacity both internally and externally. World Vision has strengthened its Office of Gender and Development and created a network with a focal point in every office of the organization. The Organizational Diversity Project is working to analyze and strengthen policies and practices at every level of the organization. For accountability, World Vision has a number of tools, including a peer review process and a Gender Self-Assessment.

Ms. Claxton had three main recommendations:

1. Build gender understanding and sensitivity throughout the organization.
2. Provide gender analysis training for staff.
3. Build in accountability measures for staff performance.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Andrew Natsios, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Natsios focused his remarks on Iraq and Afghanistan. He said that while there are security problems, there are good things happening in both countries. Using a PowerPoint presentation (www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/acvfa/natsios20031001.pdf), Mr. Natsios gave an overview of the progress of reconstruction.

- Prevented a food crisis.
- Sent a large Disaster Assistance Response Team to assess conditions and fine-tune USAID strategy.
- Put some 55,000 Iraqis to work
- Set up Mission headquarters in Baghdad and offices in other cities.
- Issued 45 grants and contracts to American NGOs, private firms, and UN agencies in less than five months.

USAID projects center in heavily populated areas around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. There have been many accomplishments related to rebuilding infrastructure, including the repair of Umm Qasr port, the restoration of electricity, repair and restoration of

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water and sanitation services, rehabilitation of waste-pumping stations, completion of repairs at Baghdad International Airport, and the beginning of restoration of telephone and communications systems. A large contract for agriculture will be awarded in the near future, and USAID will soon announce a program of grants to American universities and colleges for two-way exchanges and other activities.

USAID-supported programs in local governance have accomplished the following:

- Helped establish more than 200 neighborhood advisory councils.
- Awarded over 830 Rapid Response Grants, worth \$40 million, to foster participation in local governance and civil society.
- Provided more than 40 "ministries in a box."
- Organized 74 community associations.

Regarding progress in other sectors, Mr. Natsios reported that 1500 schools were rehabilitated. One and a half million secondary school supply kits and 5.5 million new textbooks were distributed. In health, USAID funded 4.2 million vaccinations, as well as programs in oral rehydration, health education, and nurse training. Bechtel Corporation is currently working on renovation of health clinics.

Turning to Afghanistan, Mr. Natsios described six USAID objectives:

1. Reconstructing the economy with a focus on agriculture and infrastructure.
2. Creating the conditions for private investment.
3. Improving the lives of average Afghans through the provision of basic public services.

4. Reconstituting the basic institutions of national government.
5. Promoting democracy and peace.
6. Contributing to full citizen participation in the new Afghanistan.

In terms of accomplishments, Mr. Natsios said that, first, a major famine was avoided. In education, USAID produced 25 million textbooks and rebuilt 203 schools. Another 1,000 schools are scheduled for renovation. A vegetable oil distribution program was implemented to increase the school attendance of girls. Mr. Natsios said that 121 health clinics have been rebuilt and another 400 clinics are scheduled for rebuilding.

The first stage of the Kabul to Kandahar road project will be completed in December. The road will have a powerful effect on tying the country together, reducing regionalism, improving access to health care, and encouraging commerce. There are approximately 785 projects, either completed or underway in Afghanistan. Mr. Natsios concluded by saying that there is a very good story to tell the American people about what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan over a very short period of time.

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In response to a question about incentives for private sector investment in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mr. Natsios replied that USAID is insisting that its contractors give as much work as possible to local companies. USAID is also helping to build the infrastructure for trade and investment.

In answer to a question about gender strategies at USAID, Mr. Natsios replied that gender is no longer an appendage to programs; it must be integrated into all sectors.

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A participant asked Mr. Natsios to address the issue of security in Afghanistan. Mr. Natsios said that there is serious discussion about extending the NATO umbrella outside of Kabul. U.S. military patrols have increased in response to the upswing in violence.

An ACVFA member asked Mr. Natsios to discuss Sudan and the Kurdish areas of Iraq. Mr. Natsios replied that USAID has been doing extensive planning for assistance to Sudan should a peace agreement come about. There are some projects in the Kurdish area of Iraq, but that area is not high on the priority list for rebuilding because the infrastructure there was not destroyed.

"IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION: PROGRESS TO DATE"

Ross Wherry, Senior Reconstruction Advisor, Economic Governance Team Leader, USAID

Mr. Wherry stated that a contingency plan for reconstruction in Iraq was developed before the war began. The ability to start reconstruction and relief at the same time provided a significant benefit.

The participation of indigenous NGOs is tremendously important in the reconstruction process. The assistance program in Iraq is now in 16 of the 18 governances. Many people are working in very insecure situations. Mr. Wherry commented that there are very high expectations about U.S. accomplishments, but there must be a balance between the speed of reconstruction and doing the job in a sustainable manner.

It is critical that the Iraqi people understand how they are benefiting from the reconstruction efforts. The message needs to come from the media, NGOs, local governments, and professional organizations. USAID needs to do a better job on this kind of communication.

Mr. Wherry said that more than 90 percent of the reconstruction money in Iraq has gone to the for-profit sector. Emphasizing the importance of working with the UN, he noted that about \$200 million was granted to various UN agencies, including UNICEF, WHO, the World Food Programme, and UNESCO. USAID recently awarded \$11.5 million to American universities, the first major grants to the university community in the last fifteen years.

In closing, Mr. Wherry stated that USAID is carefully examining how to bring the non-profit community further into the process. There is recognition that NGOs have specific strengths that the government and the for-profit sector do not have.

There must be a balance between the speed of reconstruction and doing the job in a sustainable manner.

A participant asked for clarification on the differences between contracting authority in Iraq and Washington, D.C. Mr. Wherry replied that there is now a regular USAID mission in Baghdad that is managing the contracts that were initiated in Washington to get the reconstruction process up and running. These awards are subject to standard federal acquisition requirements. The Office of Transition Initiatives in Washington makes quick-response, short-term awards usually of \$50,000 or less with fewer competitive requirements.

A participant inquired how education and related community organizations are addressed under the supplemental funding bill. Mr. Wherry responded that in the supplemental appropriations bill, less than \$1 billion is slated for a variety of governance, social, and economic development activities. He said that many people believe that there should be more money for basic services, including education.

An ACVFA member commented that unless Iraqis see tangible improvements in their lives fairly quickly, it will be more difficult to conduct effective elections in

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the spring. He emphasized that it is critical to create gainful employment as soon as possible. Mr. Wherry said that USAID has tried to employ Iraqis whenever possible. It is a highly skilled society, with many well-trained professionals. A participant noted that Bechtel Corporation is subcontracting with local engineering firms that are hiring Iraqis to do the work. The vast majority of the money is going into the Iraqi economy, not returning to the U.S. in the form of subcontracts to U.S. firms.

PANEL DISCUSSION

"POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING OUR WORK IN POST-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS"

Ray Salvatore Jennings, Senior Fellow, U.S. Institute of Peace

Mr. Jennings shared his perspective from being in the field in conflict environments in Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Mr. Jennings remarked that in post-conflict situations the normal rules of development do not seem to apply. He suggested that this can be compared to is Newtonian physics at work in a quantum environment.

Many development organizations, including USAID, have embraced principles akin to Newtonian physics, such as linearity, sequentialism, compartmentalization of knowledge, separation between the observer and the observed, and static ideas about social change. The lens of quantum physics introduces the idea that change is constant, features are interrelated, and small influences can produce large outcomes.

Mr. Jennings remarked that organizations are designed around certain principles, which make their responses somewhat predictable. For instance, it is not often that USAID and its partners build into their strategy an

awareness of their own operational impact. In addition to incorporating this concept, Mr. Jennings' suggestions for aid agencies included several small steps that could be adopted immediately:

- Begin political transition activity on day one, not after relief is provided and the security environment is consolidated. USAID should consider a "start" team including members from all offices, as well as civil-military affairs officers, along with the regular technical experts that go out with the DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team). He noted that there was a joint OTI-DART team for Iraq, which was a good start.
- Consolidate the variety of response offices within USAID into a single post-conflict response unit, including transition experts in OTI and response technicians in the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).
- Examine how USAID and NGOs may exacerbate conflict in their operations, looking closely at hiring practices and procedures for working with local entities. It is necessary to minimize the distortion impact of the aid community. The methods used to implement programs have an impact on the program itself, which is not often recognized.
- Provide cultural awareness and post-conflict training for field staff.

Elizabeth Kvitashvili, Acting Director, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID

Ms. Kvitashvili discussed her experiences working with USAID in Afghanistan over the past year and a half. Both the U.S. and the international community's efforts in Afghanistan have entailed careful, selective,

Aid agencies must look at how their operations may exacerbate conflict.

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and incremental delivery of aid that has improved the daily lives of millions of Afghans. She said there is a risk of losing those gains if the security situation is not addressed.

Lessons learned from Afghanistan reconstruction include:

- Local government and members of civil society must be convinced that the U.S. is not going to abandon them. The delivery of rapid, targeted assistance and the enhancement of a secure environment help to build confidence.
- The capacity of national governments to deliver assistance must be demonstrated.
- Reaching out to active civil society groups and other local groups helps local inhabitants realize a more participatory role and gain ownership of the reconstruction process.
- Support for programs that matter to the local populations must take priority. Meeting immediate humanitarian objectives can be dovetailed into planning for the next stages of development.
- Agencies must ensure the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons to a secure environment and provide sufficient wherewithal to restart their lives.
- Kick-starting basic economic activity is critical to the improvement of livelihood and food security.
- Donors must ensure the restoration of local security for protection of person and property.
- There is value in setting realistic expectations about accomplishments.

Meeting immediate humanitarian objectives can be dovetailed into planning for the next stages of development.

- It is critical to show results within three to six months. Long-range time frames in post-conflict situations kill initiative and dampen hope.

Ms. Kvitashvili said that the first priority in Afghanistan is the establishment of a nation that is inhospitable to international terrorism. Other U.S. government objectives include establishing a self-governing country that is at peace with its neighbors, able to provide its own security, and has the capacity to carry out peaceful political change.

Ms. Kvitashvili remarked that there are three ongoing, concurrent types of reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan -- humanitarian, transitional, and long-term. Although the programs differ in focus, they are complementary and work very well together. A major USAID accomplishment was averting famine. This year food will have to be delivered to far fewer people than last year, a success owed to a better harvest, rains, and a rebirth in the agricultural economy.

Based on the Afghanistan experience, Ms. Kvitashvili presented three prerequisites for success in post-conflict situations:

1. Security in the countryside.
2. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.
3. Adequate level of funding for the reconstruction process.

Ronald Johnson, Senior Vice President, International Development Group, RTI International

RTI is involved in local governance programs in 16 of the 18 governances in Iraq. The repressive nature of the prior regime and lack of attention to basic needs resulted in a system in which basic services at the local level simply were not functioning.

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The premise behind the RTI program is to develop political processes and political institutions at the local level that will enable citizens to hold local governments accountable for delivering basic services and responding to citizens' needs and priorities.

The program is also intended to strengthen civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations at the local level, to enable them to perform those acts of holding government accountable.

Mr. Johnson outlined the characteristics of a local governance program:

1. Promotes a pluralistic society, which creates conditions for public debate.
2. Provides a framework for the emergence of leadership.
3. Provides a way to try representative institutions and processes on a small scale.
4. Strengthens the effectiveness of "technocrats" or service department officials.

These characteristics are beginning to come about in Iraqi communities. Mr. Johnson remarked that people in Iraq had very low expectations about government, and many viewed government only as an engine of repression. Iraqi citizens can now see, in very tangible ways, that government can be a force for positive results. They now have the opportunity to influence local priorities and outcomes. The key message about what is happening in Iraq at the local level is that Iraqis are speaking out and taking greater responsibility for making decisions.

Judith Hermanson, Vice President, CHF International

Based on CHF's experience in Iraq, Ms. Hermanson emphasized that any reconstruction strategy should include the community level. Reconstruction is a set of activities that must take place simultaneously at all levels of society.

Though the methodology used by CHF in the Community Action Program has been used in other places, it has been adapted to the particular circumstances in Iraq. She remarked that in order for a program to be effective it must achieve tangible results rapidly and cost effectively. Community ownership and control are very important. The Community Action Program has implemented 57 projects in 90 days, and has generated a significant amount of local employment. Seventy-seven community associations have been formed and 2,247 people have been trained. CHF has a multinational staff of 200 people, eight of whom are expatriates. CHF maintains strict security protocols, but does not wall itself off from the community.

Ms. Hermanson suggested integrating an economic development component into community action programs from the start. Delivery of services by the community can be a way of creating local economic activity, as well as of solidifying these fledgling organizations. Strengthening these organizations is also an investment in democracy and stability. Effective reconstruction requires broad-based, grass roots support from communities experienced in democratic processes and hopeful for the future. In closing, Ms. Hermanson urged reconstruction program designers to pay explicit attention to the community level, not just the local level.

Any reconstruction strategy should include the community level, not just the local level.

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A participant inquired about the participation of women in reconstruction programs. Ms. Kvitashvili remarked that USAID has taken the issue of women's rights very seriously. The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council was created over a year ago and meets regularly both in Afghanistan and the United States. In addition, USAID received earmarked funds for women's programs, although the preference is to integrate gender in all programs. George Folsom, ACVFA member, added that IRI has women's leadership identification and training programs for political candidates in many countries, including Iraq. Mr. Johnson commented that Iraqi women are a highly educated segment of the population.

A participant suggested embedding development experts in military teams in conflict situations. Ms. Kvitashvili remarked that in Afghanistan there are Provincial Reconstruction Teams, led by the U.S. and Coalition military that combine security and reconstruction, and work with counterparts from the government, NGOs and the UN. This approach may be applicable to other countries. Mr. Jennings added that it is important that civilian workers and the military try to understand one another and work together.

"UPDATE: THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE ACCOUNT AND MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION"

**Patrick Cronin, Assistant Administrator,
Bureau for Policy And Program Coordination,
USAID**

Mr. Cronin said that the global poverty and inequality in the world is unacceptable. Unless something is done about it, the next generation will face even bigger problems. Today, the U.S. is clearly focused on high-security issues, but it is important to see beyond

this to long-term development. He remarked that the MCA is central to bringing together a bipartisan consensus for more effective development assistance.

The Administration has boldly put forward a doubling of development assistance over an eight-year period. These resources are critical; however, money is a necessary but insufficient ingredient to bring about development. There is a need for better policy coherence on the part of the U.S. and the international community, as well as for good governance and political will in partner countries.

Mr. Cronin presented three guiding principles for the MCA that can be distilled from the Interagency Working Group's efforts to embed the President's vision into the MCC's operations:

1. Poverty reduction and economic growth as the ultimate goal.
2. Two-way partnership with countries in which there is political commitment.
3. Transparency, accountability, and objective measurement of programs.

Mr. Cronin outlined some of the MCA operational processes. After country selection and notification, the country would appoint an interlocutor to be its representative and the MCC would dispatch someone to the country. There would be country analyses, and a country coordinating group would be established. The next step would be to identify the strategic overarching goal of the MCA grant, which would become a framework for a request for proposals. A contract or agreement would then go to the MCC board for approval. There would be an enormous focus on monitoring and evaluation throughout the process.

Mr. Cronin commented that the Interagency Working Group focused on trying to create an organization that is extraordinarily streamlined with maximum policy coherence.

The MCA is central to bringing together a bipartisan consensus for more effective development assistance.

In response to a question about the MCA legislation, Mr. Cronin replied that the authorization, the appropriation, and possibly both, could happen before Congress recesses in November. He said that everyone wants to see the MCA work, but the difficulty is in ironing out the details.

"UPDATE: THE EMERGENCY PLAN FOR HIV/AIDS RELIEF"

**Anne Peterson, Assistant Administrator,
Bureau for Global Health, USAID**

Ms. Peterson remarked that a lot has happened in the past year with regard to the HIV/AIDS efforts, the most important of which is the \$15 billion Presidential Initiative focused on 14 countries. She said that the legislation's authorizing language establishes a Department of State office of a Global AIDS Coordinator. The House and Senate versions of the legislation differ; it is not yet clear how the differences will be resolved.

Ms. Peterson commented that USAID bilateral programs are expanding very rapidly. The regional programs are reaching into some non-presence countries, and the Commodity Promotion Fund has been very successful. She said that USAID is pursuing many new partners and is expanding care and non-anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. The ARV treatment started last year in three countries in three different kinds of programs. One is public sector with the government; one is a group of NGOs; the third one is linked to a Global Fund proposal. The aim is to learn as many lessons as possible about how to do AIDS treatment in different settings.

An ACVFA member asked how the President's HIV/AIDS Initiative will be coordinated at the country level. Ms. Peterson said there will be an overarching strategy in each country that will most likely be coordinated by the ambassador and/or the USAID mission director. An ACVFA member pointed out the importance of nutrition in HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention. Ms. Peterson agreed that non-ARV treatment such as nutrition, safe drinking water, and tuberculosis treatment, are important because they can extend life.

A participant expressed concern that treatment programs are not reaching women equitably. Ms. Peterson replied that USAID is trying to ensure equity. There are explicit programs for women, as well as integrated efforts that address gender vulnerabilities.

**Mark Your Calendars
Next ACVFA Meeting
February 25, 2004
National Press Club
529 14th Street, NW, 13th Floor
Washington, DC**

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