



From the Director

by Jerry Wolgin, Director of the Office of Sustainable Development

This issue of *SD Developments* and the upcoming Fall issue focus on the recently approved strategic plan for the Africa Bureau's Office of Sustainable Development (SD). This is the first plan that SD has developed, and I think it is a clear and precise statement of who we are, what we do, and what difference it makes. As we will make clear in laying out this ambitious but realistic vision, everything SD does is with and through its partners and customers: SD would have no results without this partnership, and our partners' results would be less achievable without it.

Revolutionary changes are occurring in Africa, and USAID and SD will help shape those changes in a way that will make Africa more prosperous and more peaceful.

SD's strategy has three parts. First is "The Assistance Environment," where SD presents a development paradigm based on the notion that ideas matter most of all—that is, development occurs primarily in the human realm rather than the realm of infrastructure and machines; moreover an aid agency with a declining budget should make a virtue of necessity and focus its energies on the realm of ideas.

In "SD's Role & Relationships" SD explains its vision, operating style, and partnerships. This article should also provide answers to several questions often posed about SD by skeptics and critics.

Finally there is the actual plan, consisting of 10 strategic objectives, one strategic support objective, and one special objective. Details of the strategic objectives as well as "vision statements" of what SD hopes to have accomplished by 2003 in each of its objective areas are planned for the Fall 1997 issue of *SD Developments*.

I hope you find this issue of *SD Developments* readable and compelling, and that it will convey to you the sense of excitement and commitment that motivates SD. We believe that revolutionary changes are occurring in Africa and that USAID and SD will help shape those changes in a way that will make Africa more prosperous and more peaceful.

The Assistance Environment

SD's new development paradigm is based on the notion that "ideas matter" most of all

Thousands of textbooks and articles talk about development as if it were a matter of accumulating capital, or as a "bottom-up" or a "trickle-down" process. However, the essence of development is not the accumulation of roads and technology, but of skills and institutions—

The essence of development is not the accumulation of roads and technology, but of skills and institutions—human and social capital.

human and social capital. Development is a process through which people and the society to which they belong, through a transformation of their beliefs, their behavior, and the institutions they create, become more effective managers of their environment and of themselves. Developing societies become more able to wring from their environments food, shelter, clothing, leisure, and longer, healthier, and freer lives.

The Centrality of Human Capital

Many people have pointed out that when Ghana became independent in 1957 it had the same level of development as Korea. That may have been true in terms of per capita income, but it clearly was not true in terms of the stock of human capital, or the education, training, know-how, and health and nutrition that combine to make an individual effective in producing goods and services. All the literature about the "Asian miracle" points to the importance of investment in human capital that was behind the economic successes of the Asian tigers.

Research has also demonstrated that investments in basic education have high rates of return. That is because the building blocks of modernity are literacy and numeracy. Civilization is built on the ideas of the past. As civilization develops, the amount of information needed to be effective for increasingly more specialized roles increases. Specialization requires integration, and integration requires communication. Numeracy repre-

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SD's Role & Relationships, Scope & Responsibilities, & Approach to Influencing Development

Why should SD have a separate development program & what is the "value added" of SD's program?

SD is a descendant of the Office of Analysis, Research and Technical Support (ARTS) and the Office of New Initiatives (ONI), which in turn were descendants of the Africa Technical Office (TR) and the Africa Regional Programs Office. As USAID has contracted so has the technical function in the Africa Bureau.

ARTS provided analytic leadership to the USAID program in Africa, while ONI catalyzed new programs. Both offices managed regional projects that supported these initiatives as well as provided economies of scale in such areas as training and famine early warning. With the 1994 reorganization of USAID, most of the project management responsibilities were assumed by the Global Bureau. With the downsizing of 1996, SD's staff and program budget had contracted by about 50 percent from their 1994 ARTS and ONI levels.

What SD Does

SD sees its primary function as being "a watchman on the wall." In biblical times watchmen patrolled the walls of the city looking out on the surrounding countryside for danger or for information of impending change such as the arrival of messengers. As a watchman SD continually examines the African landscape seeking new information about possible danger or opportunity. For example, in 1992 SD realized that Missions had sharply reduced funding for agricultural research; and in 1993 SD noticed that immunization levels in many African countries were falling.

But the metaphor of a watchman suggests a too passive role, because SD is also the king's necromancer, who reads the entrails and the portents, seeking to learn what the past tells about the future. SD is also the king's counselor. When an opportunity or danger presents itself, SD advises the

Africa Bureau's senior managers on a course of action to respond to the new situation. Finally, SD is the king's emissary, who is dispatched to the king's representatives in farflung outposts to inform his lieutenants of changes in plan and policy as well as to the courts of other princes to form new alliances.

As a watchman SD continually examines the African landscape seeking new information of danger or of opportunity.

Thus, as a watchman SD watches the African development landscape seeking to understand the dynamics of change, both positive and negative, with particular emphasis on what is happening to the USAID program in Africa; as a necromancer SD conducts research and analysis (in cooperation with its agents in the field, a network of African researchers and U.S. partners) to understand more deeply development issues; as a counselor SD develops new strategies for the Bureau's managers to respond to the evolving development environment; and as an emissary, SD takes new strategies to the missions, African partners, and to other donors, seeking to convince them of the efficacy of the new ideas it has developed.

SD's Customers

SD sees its ultimate customers as Africa's citizens, and their interests are forefront. SD's direct customers are those who will transform its new and better ideas into activities that will serve these ultimate customers. There is a hierarchy among SD's customers—at the top are African governments, followed by African institutions, donors, Missions, and finally USAID's Washington offices.

SD's Partners

SD does nothing alone. In this sense many customers such as Missions are also SD's partners because their actions provide development services to the ultimate customers. In addition SD has a series of partners who work more directly with it to produce ideas or transfer them into actions:

n U.S. Collaborators: firms, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that implement analytic activities

n African Collaborators: researchers, research institutions, and NGOs to whom SD turns to to implement activities (helping achieve a basic objective of increasing African policy-analytic capacity)

n USAID's Global Bureau: Global Bureau staff serve as members of SD's strategic objective teams; SD accesses most of its U.S. collaborators through the Global Bureau

n The Regional Offices: SD serves as a mechanism for Regional Offices to fund technical staff and to jointly implement analytic work

SD's Comparative Strengths

SD is Africa-centered. SD staff are Africanists first and technical experts second. Development requires an understanding of the development context—the historical, cultural, political, institutional, and economic milieu, which are locally-specific.

SD is committed to African-driven development, and has established important and deep relationships with the key indigenous institutions as well as the critical individuals who are in the forefront of intellectual change in Africa. SD is, therefore, well-placed to catalyze these institutions into agents

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Overview of the SD Strategy

12 objectives aim to increase African capacity to sustainably manage development

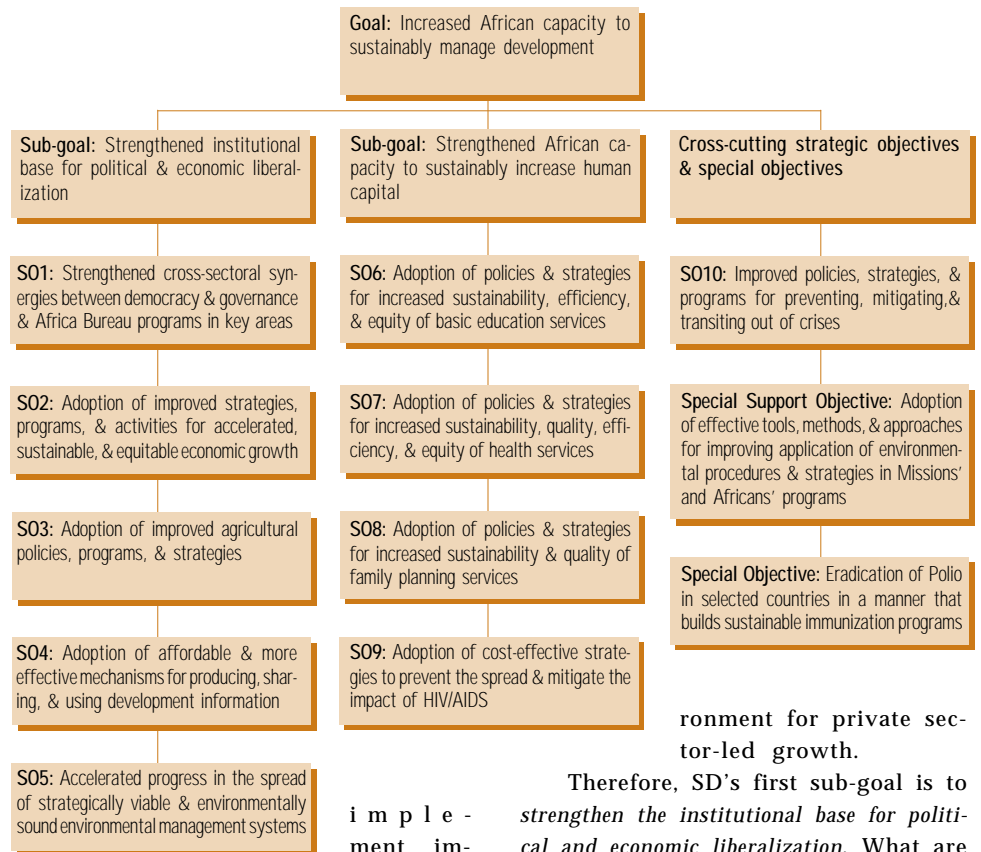
SD's strategy covers every aspect of USAID's programs in Africa. However, while quite broad, its strategy is limited by the fact that SD does not (with rare exceptions) directly implement development programs. SD accomplishes its objectives by transforming analysis and research into policy and program changes.

In general each strategic objective has two intermediate results, or IRs. The first one will be what SD thinks are the important areas of inquiry, the "whats," or what in the past was called the "analytical agenda." This will be a selective list that reflects SD's comparative advantage. But SD will not pretend that there is a causal logic between this set of choices and the strategic objective outcome. Indeed, the strategic objectives are much more like "catalogs" than causally-linked objective trees. The second IR will comprise what SD intends to do to improve the enabling environment for sustained policy improvement. Once again, this will be a selective, non-causal list reflecting what SD believes is important as well as the office's limited role.

Goals and Sub-Goals

Over the five-year period covered by this strategy Africa will be changing, becoming more peaceful, more stable, freer, more connected to the global economy, more independent, more decentralized, and less poor. The basis for long-term change lies in strengthening the development institutions of a society, increasing the stock of human capital, and developing effective policies, strategies, and programs to implement the vision of its leaders. SD is well placed to have a positive impact on these institutions, human capacities, and strategies.

Fundamentally, SD's development goal is to transfer the responsibility for development in Africa to Africans and their institutions by strengthening the capacity of Africans to design and



development policies, programs, and strategies. In essence SD seeks to put real meaning into the phrase "sustainable development" by putting much greater emphasis on the word "sustainable."

Goal: Increase African Capacity to Sustainably Manage Development

One of the key challenges African countries will face is in the development of governance institutions. The nature of the relationships between state and citizen, public and private sector, and the center and the periphery is evolving rapidly. There are dozens of new institutional experiments taking place today on the continent. Out of this ferment will come the institutional forms that shape the future. These institutions must be able to provide political stability, public sector accountability, and an enabling envi-

ronment for private sector-led growth.

Therefore, SD's first sub-goal is to *strengthen the institutional base for political and economic liberalization*. What are these institutions? Effective governments, efficient markets, and vibrant civil society organizations. Included under this sub-goal are strategic objectives linked to USAID's goals in economic growth, democracy, and the environment.

Sustainable development also depends on an increase in the stock of human capital. Therefore, SD's second sub-goal is to *strengthen African capacity to sustainably increase human capital*. This sub-goal includes strategic objectives in health, population, and education, and is linked to USAID's goals in economic growth and health and population.

Finally, SD is including one cross-cutting strategic objective dealing with the many crisis situations African countries face, one strategic support objective in environmental management, and one special objective in the health and immunization area.

SD's Role & Relationships, Scope & Responsibilities

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of effective change by strengthening their capacity and increasing their ability to network with each other.

And *SD is a small enough office to work synergistically*, to bring together its experiences in local management and local associations to inform its work.

SD'S Comparative Weaknesses

Just as SD brings strengths to its partnerships, it depends on its partners for the strengths they provide.

- n SD does not possess the vast specialized resources of the Global Bureau, nor is it well-placed to bring to bear on Africa lessons the Agency has learned in its work in other parts of the world.
- n SD is not as nimble nor as well-placed as the Regional Offices to respond quickly to Mission requests for technical assistance.
- n SD does not implement development projects or provide services to governments and organizations.
- n SD's technical strengths are not equal across all areas of development.

What is the Value Added of SD's Work?

SD functions like a ship's trimtab. On large ships, the water resistance is so great that it is difficult to turn the rudder. Therefore, at the base of each rudder is a smaller rudder, or trimtab. The helmsman turns the wheel, which turns the trimtab, which acts as a rudder for the rudder, turning it and steering the ship. If development investments or programs are a ship, the ship goes in the right direction (toward the harbor of sustainable development) if the policies and strategies (the rudder) point it in that direction. SD acts as a trimtab by helping to move policies and strategies in the right direction.

Of course SD is not involved in all development programs in Africa, or even all of USAID's development programs in Africa. The existing stock of capital in sub-Saharan Africa, public and private, is about \$1 trillion, and SD is involved in programs that affect about .5 percent of that capital, or \$5 billion. If SD, by improving the use of these resources, adds one percentage point to the rate of return, its \$40 million annual investment will achieve a rate of return of more than 100 per-

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cent, which is higher than most USAID investments.

For example, SD and the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa has been working with a group of East African researchers examining transport costs in East Africa. This group went beyond analysis and worked with the fledgling East African Community to implement changes in transport policy that have led to savings of \$12 million per year. In economic terms, the value of this activity exceeds SD's annual budget, while this activity consumed less than one percent of SD's resources.

How SD Does its Work

SD commissioned a study on how policies are changed. The author, Robert Porter, concluded that change rarely results from a linear process of generating research, laying out policy options, choosing between alternatives, and evaluating the implementation of the selected option. Rather, he said, change occurs through a process of

interactions among three streams of activity: defining the problem, suggesting solutions, and obtaining political consensus to take action. When the three streams converge, a "window of opportunity" is presented to the vigilant proponent of reform.

Advocacy plays an important role in helping these streams converge. Indeed, policy champions are often necessary to put a problem on the agenda, bring solutions to the attention of decisionmakers, and galvanize political consensus. Advocacy implies a more dynamic approach to the presentation of information than simply dropping off a new publication. In order to make a difference, information need to be disseminated, and champions, using this information, must make the case for change with those who can influence policies and their implementation.

Finally, Porter concluded that information is often more acceptable, and thus more useful for advocacy, when it is produced internally and not imported from the outside.

This perspective has led SD to a variety of strategies to achieve policy change. First, SD develops its policy agenda in concert with its partners, many of whom are African institutions and analysts most likely to be the reform advocates. Second, SD's analysis is done in partnership with these same entities, giving them a stake in the outcome and strengthening their long-term capacity for policy analysis and advocacy. Finally, by making policy change the objective, SD's focus goes beyond generating and disseminating useful information. SD's partners know that the purpose is to bring more effective ideas to the design of policies, programs, and strategies, but the ideas are useless if they are not adopted.

Over the years, SD and its predecessors developed a model for doing business that proceeds through the following phases:

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sents skills in a different type of language—a language that is foundational for commerce and scientific development. SD views literacy as the ability to manipulate quality, and numeracy as the ability to manipulate quantity. In the world of producing food, shelter, and other useful things, advanced quantitative skills are the transmission mechanisms for progress.

Institutions

Institutions are the building blocks societies use to organize themselves to achieve social aims. Many institutions such as the family, the church, and the village are ubiquitous, but their particular forms are specific to a certain time and place. Developing societies face serious tension between traditional and modern institutions. Nowhere is this more true than in Africa where a series of Western institutions have been imposed on traditional institutions—mostly by outsiders. As a result “the last 25 years have been a period of endless and sometimes shameless experimentation in Africa,” according to Goran Hyden in a report written for the World Bank.

While experimentation is likely to continue, it will become more home-grown rather than externally-driven. For example, over 30 African governments are engaging in ambitious decentralization programs, motivated by the recognition of the need to reduce ethnic and regional tensions, the fact that centralized government has been ineffective in providing social services, and the need to make government more accountable by moving responsibility for many services to local levels. In addition, the shift from authoritarian to democratic government has spawned many different constitutional forms, the long-term efficacy of which remain untested.

In the economic realm, the changes

are more certain. The fall of the communist model of economic organization, and the triumph (for good or ill) of market-based systems seems irreversible. The institutions necessary for markets to work—laws that protect private property, a judicial system that enforces contracts, and a government that manages its economy effectively and provides critical infrastructure—

Over the next few years African governments and donors alike will spend a great deal of time watching these experiments, sharing experiences, and learning more about what works and why.

are rapidly being put in place. Profit-maximizing firms (including small-holder farms) are not foreign to the African landscape, nor are markets in which prices are set by scarcity.

Both donors and African governments are now much more humble about the institutional underpinnings of development. In Hyden’s words, development models have shifted from “comprehensive planning to local self-governance,” from “reliance on external to reliance on internal inputs,” from “transformation to incrementalism,” from “government to the NGO and private sectors,” from “perfectibility to fallibility,” from “optimality to redundancy,” and from “blueprint to greenhouse.” The point is that no one knows exactly what will work in a given social and historical environment. Over the next few years African governments and donors alike will spend a great deal of time watching these experiments, sharing experiences, and learning more about what works and why.

Strategies

If public policy matters (and anyone examining the recent histories of developing countries would be hard

put to argue otherwise), then what matters most of all is the framework within which those policies are developed. Particularly important are the strategic concepts of vision and image.

Vision: The first generation of African leaders did not lack vision. Kwame Nkrumah championed pan-Africanism; Julius Nyerere *Ujamaa* (familyhood), Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee* (pull together), Leopold Senghor, of *Negritude*. Sekou Touré’s guiding aphorism was “Seek ye first the political kingdom.” All of these men had broad, compelling visions. They knew that their first task was to create states out of many nations, and they used the vision of a new society built on a combination of both new and old values. The problems they faced arose not so much out of faulty vision, but out of faulty images.

Image: Kenneth Boulding defines an “image” as an organizing framework through which one selects and adds meaning to facts and observations. For example, astronomers until the time of Copernicus believed that the earth was the center of the universe. The more they observed the movements of the heavenly bodies, however, the more difficult it was to put new observations into that “image” or paradigm. Finally, the new, heliocentric image became accepted and observations of the heavenly bodies fit into it.

Images of social organization are as important as those of the physical world. For most of Africa’s founding leaders the predominant social “image” was state socialism, or the belief in the perfectibility of man through the development of public policy. It viewed the state as the agent of modernization and social transformation and viewed capitalism with distrust. African socialism made a virtue out of necessity (lack of an indigenous capitalist class), and became the model out of which

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the first generation of African leaders and their Western advisors, including the donor community, developed the public policies that, over the next three decades would lead to economic stagnation.

As the image of African socialism has been discredited, leaders such as Eritrea's President Isaias and Uganda's President Museveni are defining a new image. This image is strongly outward-oriented, with private investment seen as increasingly supplanting foreign assistance, and the role of the state viewed as creating an environment in which private enterprise can tap Africa's creative energies to generate and accelerate sustainable economic growth.

Visions and images, however, must be translated into effective action. Governments must learn to do things like control expenditures, raise taxes, develop infrastructure, privatize public enterprises, regulate financial markets, manage exchange rates, make strategic public investments, provide public services efficiently, and develop effective legal and judiciary systems. It is in these myriad details of making societies work that governments succeed or fail.

The Assistance Environment

In recent years African countries have adopted programs of economic reform and made substantial progress in moving from authoritarian to democratic forms of governance. But even deeper, more fundamental changes are taking place in Africa. These subterranean changes are sometimes more difficult to see than the surface changes, but they are infinitely more important, for they determine how life is lived in the one million African villages, towns, and cities. These include:

n Education. The number of literate Africans has increased exponentially: in 30 years adult literacy rates have increased from 25 to 65 percent. Even more rapid has been the increase in trained and highly educated manpower. For example, in 1961 the number of African agricultural scientists was fewer than 100; by 1991 there were more than 8000.

For the first time in a hundred years, African farmers and entrepreneurs can go about their business without the heavy hand of government limiting their ability to choose freely.

n Economic Freedom. In the past 15 years the state in much of African life has withered away. Agricultural marketing boards, police blockades, and state control of access to critical inputs such as foreign exchange have largely disappeared.

n Self-Reliance. Africans are increasingly taking on for themselves the roles that the colonial powers and then independent African states performed so poorly, especially in education, natural resource management, and health. African governments are increasingly decentralizing their functions to local authorities. At the same time, private associations of farmers, traders, parents, and other concerned citizens are exploding on the African landscape.

n Institutional Reform. Throughout Africa development institutions are reforming or going under. Some need only to be buried, but rising from the ashes of these organizations are new, more responsive, more financially sustainable devel-

opment organizations, both public and private. This area is the battleground where the development wars are being fought.

n Self-Confidence. Most important, Africa is at last emerging from a colonialism of the spirit. Africans are laying aside the attitude that the development crisis was caused by the neocolonialist plots and are instead taking responsibility for their actions. The result is a more mature relationship between donors and African governments, a partnership rather than a dependence.

The Changing Assistance Environment

Fortunately these changes are taking place at the same time that fundamental changes are taking place in the assistance environment. From 1980 to 1994, development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa increased by 5.3 percent per year. In 1994 this assistance averaged \$31 per capita, or 12 percent of GDP (excluding South Africa). Those days are over. Since 1994 donor assistance to Africa began to decline precipitously. However, declines in aid, if managed effectively, can be salutary.

High aid levels create dependency: they move responsibility for problem solving from the aid recipient to the donor; they decapitate government by creating donor-dependent project management units; and they lead to exchange-rate appreciation, skewing incentives away from the potentially dynamic export sector. However, precipitous declines in assistance create problems for the recipient economy, and it would be far better to maintain real levels but declining shares of GDP. For example, real GDP growth of 6 percent per year for 10 years, coupled with constant aid levels, would reduce assistance as a share of GDP from 12 to 3.7 percent over 20 years.

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The Changing Global Economy

It is no secret that the world economy is undergoing rapid globalization. Increasingly American investors are investing in foreign stock markets and growth funds, even in Africa. The information age has linked buyers, investors, producers, sellers—virtually everyone—into one giant marketplace. While some fear that Africa is being left behind, the reality is more reassuring. During 1995 and 1996, African exports grew by a healthy nine percent annually. Telecommunication companies can be found in every corner of Africa looking for new markets. In 1997 the Corporate Council for Africa held a meeting on private investment that was attended by over 20 chief executives from large American firms as well as over 30 African ministers. In this environment private investment will increasingly take the place of foreign assistance as a source of capital. This will take time, however. More important, indigenous investment must become the main source of capital.

Development Roles in a World of Shrinking Resources

If indeed development is largely the process of building and strengthening human organizations and institutions, USAID should now seize what it has been forced to accept due to its declining resources. Its role must center around the development, dissemination, and advocacy of “better ideas.”

Can we document the value of better ideas? Between 1985 and 1994, African economies went into free-fall. Per capita incomes in 27 out of 48 coun-

tries declined, and for the continent as a whole, per capita income declined by nearly two percent per year. By 1986, many of these economies were as poor as they were when they achieved independence. What happened? Did capital flows decrease? No. During this period Africa borrowed over \$100 billion, thus creating the debt that has bedeviled these economies ever since.

How did \$200 billion of foreign aid pour into Africa without making a dent in living standards? Why, despite this investment, were African roads, schools, health systems, and infrastructure weaker and more dilapidated in 1986 than they were in 1976? Perhaps

How did \$200 billion of foreign aid pour into Africa without making a dent in living standards? Why, despite this investment, were African roads, schools, health systems, and infrastructure weaker and more dilapidated in 1986 than they were in 1976? Perhaps it was the investments themselves.

it was the investments themselves, e.g., a steel mill in Nigeria that has never made a profit; the largest shoe factory in the world in Tanzania that has never produced a pair of shoes; and a fertilizer plant in Somalia that spends \$1.25 to produce \$1.00 worth of fertilizer.

These examples are only part of the story; the other part is a set of policies that enrich the rich, impoverish the poor, and destroy creativity. Policies like those in Zambia and Zimbabwe that forced farmers to sell maize to large urban mills that retransported

the meal back to the rural areas. Policies like those in Ghana that resulted in one parastatal marketing employee for every three farmers. Policies like those in Ghana that so overvalued the currency that the few who could obtain fertilizer at a highly subsidized price would sell it in Burkina Faso for foreign exchange and return to Ghana with the empty bag to sell it on the black market for more than they paid for the fertilizer.

These bad policies wasted billions of dollars. But good policies can make every dollar invested more effective, raising productivity and growth. The catalytic role we are suggesting for

USAID has two important aspects: the development and transfer of new and improved development “ideas”; and the strengthening of a sustainable capacity within Africa of producing these better ideas on the continent. SD’s strategic plan lays out how it intends to do both.

Input from Customers

SD does not plan to do it alone, however. SD has always brought customers into the program design and implementation process. In its 1996 survey of its customers, SD collected information on the quality, timeliness, and relevance of its “products,” gathered feedback from USAID field missions, engaged virtually all Africa Bureau offices, and queried the Special Program of Assistance for Africa, a coordinating consortium of 21 bilateral and multilateral donors. In developing this strategy, strategic objective teams involved a broad array of partners and customers. As a result of these discussions SD has received a great deal of feedback, much of which is incorporated into the final plan.

SD's Role and Relationships

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Work with partners to develop a series of important, policy-related areas of inquiry. For example, in the early 1990s SD became concerned that immunization rates in Africa were declining. This led SD to do a quick study, calling on USAID Missions for information to confirm that observation. The analytical question was what had happened to lead to this decline.

Undertake analysis using African researchers to the extent possible. SD worked with Missions, the Global Bureau, and UNICEF to understand what had happened. The most important proximate cause was a decline in donor funding to UNICEF for vaccines.

Convert that analysis into policy-relevant ideas. Outcomes of the analysis that emphasized more attention to sustainability and country ownership were highlighted in the World Health Organizations' (WHO) Africa regional strategy, which was supported by USAID and endorsed by the African regional and subregional organizations.

Disseminate the ideas broadly and advocate their adoption with all partners. Participation in subregional and regional meetings on immunization with countries and major funding agencies has permitted advocacy for issues of the development of indicators of sustainability, including improved budgeting and analysis of needs.

Use SD's strategic support to embed the ideas in USAID and other programs. USAID grants to UNICEF and WHO incorporated sustainability and country ownership and were incorporated into immunization programs in 20 countries.

Evaluate and modify. In 1997 a review by major partners and country nationals will be conducted of the USAID grants to UNICEF country programs for the Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI). These reviews will assess the progress made in reaching the objectives of sustainability and will identify future needs and directions to ensure a sustainable EPI.

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