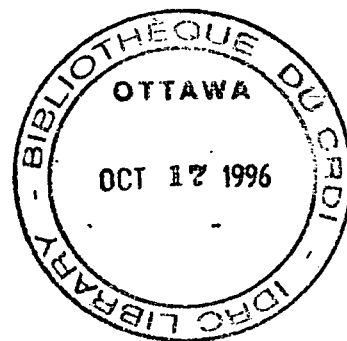# PROJECTIONS
FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION NETWORK
(IDIN)

An analysis of strategic options

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An IDRC-sponsored report

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PROJECTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION NETWORK (IDIN):
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Development Information Network (IDIN) is an inter-institutional co-operation arrangement.

IDIN's final objective is to stimulate the circulation of information flows among different institutions and associations interested in development research, training and communication located in various parts of the world.

The way in which IDIN has tackled its mission has so far been the construction of referral databases covering development research projects, institutional profiles and specialists records with information collected from many regions of the world. After regional databases have been built the existing information has been disseminated primarily through the publication and distribution of printed directories.

IDIN's sponsors have been ICCDA(*) and OECD/DC.

This co-operation project after completing a first three-year phase as an IDRC funded operation is at a cross-roads. The continuation of the project looks a bit puzzling. On the one hand, not all the expected results have been achieved after Phase I. The end-users and institutional authorities are a bit anxious to see impacts in terms of high quality information flows in support of intra-regional and inter-regional research and training efforts in the field of development studies and policies. On the other hand, an evaluation that is being undertaken by the consultant has so far identified promising results that suggest the convenience of implementing a second phase. Yet, the environment of the project and the internal context of the participant institutions have radically changed with respect to the situation prevailing when the project was started in 1988.

Where should IDIN go, if there is a Phase II? That is the question to be addressed.

(*)   ICCDA stands for the Inter-Regional Coordinating Committee of Development Associations. It gathers regional associations from Asia (ADIPA), Africa (CODESRIA), the Arab Countries (AICARDES), Europe (EADI), and Latin America (CLACSO) (see Annex 1 for a detailed list of acronyms)

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The elaboration of this document involved consultations with the different parties related with IDIN (**Annex 2** displays a detailed lists of persons contacted).

Each of these persons had diverse perceptions to contribute. Talks were held with chief executive officers of sponsoring development institutions, coordinators of development research, coordinators of IDIN operations, and information staff in order to unveil their perceptions. A few "outsiders" that were selected on their personal capacity were also consulted.

This document displays a collection of ideas and proposals for discussion. An effort has been made to generate a range of options for decision making. All the information the consultant possessed was grouped and organized to analyze each option.

The report primarily advocates for the following ideas:

i.   IDIN is a potentially crucial inter-regional space for promoting and enhancing the circulation of information within the development community (researchers, trainers and educators and communicators).

ii. Phase I has permitted to learn many lessons and to put in place many capabilities leading to reap the benefits of the investment made in a next three-year phase

iii. Changes and improvements need to be introduced during Phase II after the lessons learned during IDIN phase I and the radical changes that has affected the international environment within which the network has got to operate.

iii. IDIN should gradually move away from the present industrial-like, linear operation where development research in progress directories are produced and distributed, towards an aggressive and varied delivery of information services with contents more attractive and of higher value-added to development specialists working in association with ICCDA and its members.

iv. IDIN should take steps in order to initiate actions for planning a gradual transition towards an operation where income generation is allowed and where joint research-training-communication endeavors can become the natural space for future development information services.

The report has been divided in three main sections. Part one presents a strategic diagnosis of IDIN network carried out after Phase I- has been terminated. Part two, examines different strategic options that might guide IDIN evolution during an eventual second three-year Phase and beyond. Finally, Part three displays a group of conclusions and recommendations. These are proposed by the consultant, with the hope that they would enlighten the formulation of a project proposal for a second phase as entrusted by the network participants to the IDIN coordinator. Recommendations have been written in a highly detailed manner so as to facilitate the design of the proposal.

This report is exclusively devoted to the presentation of a **global view of IDIN**. Detailed analysis of **each individual** project component undertaken by each IDIN partner form part of the thorough evaluation now underway.

The present report has been elaborated with the spirit of offering an intellectual stimulus for further discussion. Probably other ideas and proposals might emerge during its analysis. It is believed that this "thinking jointly about the future" would be the most important output that IDIN community might engender, the report only being a catalyst to achieve this purpose.

INTRODUCTION

This document is related to a dream.

A dream conceived of by a group of development thinkers and practitioners in the early seventies: the sharing of experience, knowledge and information among the professional communities interested in development problems worldwide!

This dream was motivated by the perception that the international scenario constituted a complex whole. Development challenges facing any particular country or community were considered not only as endogenous questions but, on the contrary, as major problems of adequate insertion in and interaction within an international context. Development, in other words, increasingly required solutions contingent both upon decisions taken in the country or social conglomerate where they occurred and decisions taken elsewhere.

The term "community of development specialists" was coined and was thought to exist as an articulated whole gathering different component micro-cultures of development research-training-communication. This community had the mission of examining social, political, cultural and economic realities and advising those entrusted with power for changing these realities: politicians, administrators, managers and the general public. It was placed, both in the industrialized countries of the North and the less-industrialized countries of the South, in the centre and in the periphery, or in any other partition of the world resulting from different conceptions and measurements of development.

Development specialists, whichever their ideological and methodological approach, were primarily expected to generate new knowledge through research and analyze alternative policy proposals for change and improvement.

If a better mutual understanding between the various micro-cultures composing the development community could be achieved, then advancement could be expected in the context of another kind of understanding: the one existing among populations and their leaders.

It was hoped that a greater interchange of ideas between development specialists would eventually lead to a shared thinking on common problems and, probably, to compatible advise to leaders and groups of different societies, each adapted of course to their own realities.

As a result, an aspiration strongly felt in the seventies would become possible: a world less governed by power asymmetries, whichever they are defined; a world functioning as a space where a positive mix between co-operation and solidarity and healthy conflict and competition could become a reality.

Finally, a closer contact and interaction within the development community, so the dream went, could also transform the community in a group with a voice and with influence in world affairs.

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This dream inspired a group of pioneers to conduct a colossal effort of social engineering. Development scientist's associations were established in the different geographical regions of the world, the existing ones were strengthened and new fora were created for North-South, South-South and North-North interchanges in development thinking.

Among these efforts one deserves special consideration. In september 1976, a group of visionaries met in Sussex University, to set the grounds for a new space of international co-operation where development specialists interested in overcoming sharp development imbalances and alleviating the lives of large conglomerates of population immersed in the squalor, could meet and interchange their views.

This event convened development regional associations of Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Arab Countries, Europe and Latin America and also agencies and organizations that were strong players in the promotion of development.

At the end of that meeting, a new strange spaceship was floating in the space of international co-operation: The Inter-Regional Coordinating Committee of Development Associations (ICCDA).

ICCDA's infant stage evolved through a series of meetings and joint actions. The idea was not to create a formal organization; that would become sooner or later bureaucratic and frozen by the very mechanics of organizational survival.

The early meetings had to tackle basic questions such as: which institutions would be willing to establish co-operation links? In what fields? what were the topics that deserve greater attention? what kind of inter-institutional and inter-personal links should be established? etc. Expectedly, conflict arose in those meetings, because time was needed for the participants to know each other, and accept dissimilarities in their interests, approaches, convictions and cultures.

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A leading idea that was identified at the very early stages of ICCDA's evolution was the need to articulate the Committee's actions along three closely interrelated axis: **RESEARCH-TRAINING-COMMUNICATIONS.**

RESEARCH was central to ICCDA's mission. This mission, as was conceived by its founders, could be attained if the generation of new knowledge about development problems through RESEARCH, could be carried out both intra-regionally and inter-regionally. ICCDA, moreover, was particularly expected to cater for the needs of those areas where different worlds of development met and interact. The shift from a less provincial and less closed development thinking to a more open and comprehensive view of the world was supported.

Secondly, the transfer of knowledge on development through **TRAINING** of the human resources that are expected to take over future research efforts, policy elaboration and decision-making concerning development, was also seen as a key and major role of ICCDA. This transfer of knowledge, coupled with the transfer of compatible skills and attitudes to tackle development in a novel way was considered a challenge for the members of ICCDA. Training was to be offered in various modalities and levels.

Last but not least, ICCDA founders attached great importance to **COMMUNICATIONS.** Communications were understood in the widest sense as the processes allowing for the transfer, circulation and packaging-for-impact of the flows of knowledge, information, data, opinion, and ideas about what was going on and what was expected to go on in the future. This in order to keep the new research endeavors and new training efforts alive, up-to dated, and alert about changes in the international environment, and about successful or less fortunate experiences. Flows of information were expected to occur both within the development communities and between these, decision-makers and the general public.

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ICCDA sought, then, from the very beginning, a close articulation between research, training and communication activities. Yet, and probably because of the need to divide tasks and organize discussions among participants, an early separation of the three functions was adopted.

The "development-researchers", considered as the core group in ICCDA, would deal with the identification of researchable problems, paradigms and research methodologies. The "development trainers" were supposed to ponder on syllabuses, courses and teaching methodologies. The "development communicators", a much more loosely defined category, had to deal with circulation and storage of information flows.

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While the first two groups were apparently able to work in spite of quite a few ideological battles, the "communication group", for reasons that would deserve further investigation, did not initially achieved the same progress.

The development specialists that participated in the Communications group were certainly able to perceive the implications of research, training and policy making procedures advocated by ICCDA in terms of needed information flows. They were the ones expected to determine the quality, quantity, intention, frequency, contents and direction of these flows. Similarly they were not expected to be aware of concepts, methods and tools belonging to the realm of information sciences and technologies. Yet, gradually, the work of the group was handed over to a group of experts that have the specialization in managing and making these flows possible: documentalists, archivists, librarians, terminologists, computer and telecommunication specialists, journalists, and so on.

Judging from existing reports, ICCDA's research and training groups maintained their original functional profile but encountered difficulties in reaching co-operation. The clash between different paradigms and perceptions of development problems did not take long to emerge. Apart from interchanging views at meetings, progresses reached in the formulation and execution of joint inter-regional research and/or training efforts were not dramatic.

The communications area lead by information specialists was, on the contrary, able to produce more concrete results. It was perhaps thought that "public recorded information collection, storage and dissemination" was not only useful but provided a more "neutral" or "value-free" ground for cooperation. An energetic and well motivated group of information specialists emerged and began to gather during ICCDA meetings. The group began to undertake the task of organizing information related to development activities in the context of ICCDA. Registers on institutional profiles, specialists, research in progress and bibliographies were constructed.
Most data collection efforts to build new or enhance existing registers was undertaken with enthusiasm and mystics, stretching out existing resources in the institutions. However, this pace was gradually exhausted and the urgent need of external resources was perceived as a must for making the whole exercise feasible.

By that time, unfortunately, the autonomy of operation of the information specialists group from the group of development specialists devoted to examine research and training co-operation opportunities, in spite of a few exceptions, had already made substantial progress.

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In this state of affairs, ICCDA approached IDRC, for financial support. The executive secretaries of the regional associations supported the idea. Their existing information staff, needless to say, were eager to have an opportunity to become full participants and partners in the development game and put their professional capacities to its limit.

ICCDA enjoyed from its beginnings the assistance of OECD Development Center which offers a meeting place, diplomatic and co-operation promotion experience and contacts with the development communities in different parts of the world. OECD/DC had also initiated the systematic elaboration of registers concerning the activities of development institutions worldwide. As OECD was committed to back ICCDA's permanent objectives, it was also prepared to sponsor the presentation of a proposal to IDRC.

A personality symbolizing the goodwill and the numerous capacities embodied in OECD's Development Centre was **Mr. Giulio FOSSI**, Head of the Department of External Co-operation.

On the other hand, fund raising was highly favored by unique features of the donor agency that was approached: The International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Many favorable conditions existed in IDRC by that time. Among these: A grass-root philosophy for stimulating indigenous thinking, research, policy and action in developing countries to solve their critical survival problems; A sharp receptiveness of the importance of these problems; a clear policy to create development information systems under the framework of DEVSIS, an international information system for the development sciences; and a favorable budgetary situation

IDRC's Information Sciences Division, was by then becoming a world leader in information transfer systems based on original thought, experiences, motivation, and the cohesive action of a group of high standard experts: really a unique case among international donor agencies. All these capacities can be symbolized in two persons that were key in the launching of IDIN: the late **Ms. Pauline OSTWICH** and **Ms. Martha STONE**.

If ICCDA's creation was a colossal enterprise, the formulation and approval of a project to support the information transfer activities in the context of ICCDA, was not less remarkable as a milestone of diplomacy, negotiation, compromise, generosity and clear orientation towards the development cause.

A grant for a project to set-up IDIN, the International Development Information Network, framed under the ICCDA umbrella, was approved in 1988. A module to undertake information transfer work was loosely attached to ICCDA spaceship. And it was flying. Almost a miracle!

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What happened during IDIN Phase I?

For those who have not been involved in the project information is provided now, in a nutshell.

IDIN consisted of five separated projects based in the different regional development-related associations. Three of the associations (ADIPA, CLACSO,CODESRIA) developed since early 1988 similar projects basically devoted to create compatible databases inspired in the norms and standards provided by the documentation section of OECD/DC, dependency that acted as the technical focal point for the network.

With a few months of delay a pilot project was started by EADI, the european association, through a technical group belonging to IVO Institute at University of Tilburg in the Netherlands. The project was an experiment for testing the feasibility of integrating ongoing development research projects databases already existing in quite a few countries in Europe, taking into account the common norms and standards adopted by IDIN.

Also, with delay with respect to the other older regional institutions, the association of development institutions for the Arab countries, AICARDES, started a project to create the basic information infrastructures concerning projects, institutions and specialists databases.

In this three-year period OECD's Development Centre has been fundamental for the emergence and functioning of IDIN. As the technical focal point of the network it has fulfilled many crucial activities during Phase I like:

> The development of standards for database construction;
> The creation of normalized segments of regional databases;
> The publication and distribution of regional directories on development research;
> The training of technical people;
> The funding of IDIN meetings, totally or partially.

Beyond technical grounds it has also contributed to IDIN in areas where diplomacy and fine politics were required. Lobbying, promotion, contacts, sponsorship and organization of IDIN meetings have fall within the scope of its work.

The network has attempted the coordination of inter-regional actions through yearly meetings held in different european countries that hosted EADI research-training-communications meetings.

The overall coordination of the project has been in charge of a rotating secretariat, exercised alternatively by one of the regional associations. This secretariat has in general stayed in charge for the period mediating between EADI meetings.

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In late 1990, IDRC Information Sciences Division suggested IDIN coordinator, function by CLACSO by that time, to contracting an independent evaluation to be undertaken before the design of a proposal for IDIN Phase II was prepared. Terms of reference for the consultancy mission were then agreed upon.

In early february 1991, IDRC got in touch with the consultant responsible for this report.

The consultant prepared the mission in CLACSO headquarters and visited four of the five regional associations (ADIPA could not be included due to scheduling problems). It also visited OECD/DC and IDRC headquarters in Ottawa.

During the visits interviews were entertained with a guideline of topics normally known to the interviewees. This guideline was used as a suggested set of areas of interest and was utilized with great flexibility during the talks. This technique allowed each person to freely express his/her feelings, concerns and visions about the future. The coincidence of opinions obtained was quite remarkable.

A first draft of this report was prepared in the city of La Plata in Argentina and a methodological report to undertake the thorough evaluation based on the measurement of projects effects was prepared in collaboration with CLACSO staff.

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I. STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF IDIN

1. STRATEGIC DIAGNOSIS

This chapter contains anticipated results of an IDIN Phase I evaluation exercise.

Due to time constraints of both the consultant and the participants, the full evaluation exercise commissioned by the donor had to be faced in two steps:

Step a.   Preliminary evaluation based on field inspection, talks and a bird's eye view of existing IDIN documents

Step b.   Thorough evaluation founded on a system of indicators to assess impact

This paper was prepared with the information generated by the preliminary evaluation. The thorough evaluation is now underway and its results can only be envisioned for a later date.

It is expected, however, that the thorough evaluation will confirm the statements that has been put forward after the preliminary evaluation. In this sense, the statements presented here have a tentative character and can be considered as hypotheses for further testing and clarification.

The evaluation, is an ex-post evaluation, that is, a look back in terms of what was accomplished and where were the problems encountered and the lessons learned from july 1988 until today.

This look into the past, however imperfect and subjective might be, has led to an early first impression enabling to capture a first global feeling about the present situation of IDIN. This chapter thus presents a sketch, and not a precise picture, of the main impacts achieved thanks to IDIN Phase I and the major problems encountered.

The ex-post evaluation exercise is necessarily linked with a projection exercise. The projection exercise for IDIN requires to change the look into another direction. While in an ex-post evaluation the gaze is directed towards the past, a projection exercise requires to look forward and into the future.

Moreover, a projection implies a recognition of the potentialities and limitations associated with the present situation after IDIN Phase I has been completed. It further involves imagining different hypothetical scenarios that would be reached in the long run and after the phases of IDIN project had been accomplished.

In turn, advantages and disadvantages of the scenarios need to be thoroughly investigated before a strategic decision as regards the future is taken by IDIN partners.

In order to carry out this investigation, forces that would be in motion both at the time when actions undertaken to approach each scenario (project period) and when the scenario has been achieved and IDIN can start its regular functioning (operation period), would be examined.

The present projection exercise has been undertaken through the following methodology:

    a.   Carry out an strategic diagnostic analysis
    b.   Conceive a set of alternative scenarios
    c.   Assess the pros and cons of adopting courses of action leading to each of the scenarios

In order to ascertain and evaluate the present situation where IDIN found itself a strategic diagnosis needs to be undertaken.

A strategic diagnosis has been carried out through the use of a conventional strategic planning technique: the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). The technique is helpful for discovering the factors exerting a major influence in the chances for IDIN's reaching a desirable futuro scenario.

These factors include, in the first place, the strengths and the weaknesses internal both to the individual institutions participating in IDIN and to the inter-institutional information interchange and coordination mechanisms that have been set-up. Changes in the position of IDIN to come closer to a desirable scenario can be constructed utilizing the existing strengths and avoiding or neutralizing the weaknesses existing in and among IDIN partners.

In the second place, moving towards a desirable scenario requires manoeuvreing in an environment characterized by positive and negative elements. The positive elements have been called opportunities. The negative ones, the threats. Changes in the position of IDIN should avoid or neutralize the threats while taking maximum advantage of the opportunities.

In the remainder of the chapter strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are examined in this order, under the light of information gathered during interviews and existing project documents.

2. STRENGTHS OF IDIN

IDIN's future evolution and operation will be possible provided they are based on existing STRENGTHS like the capabilities and will of the participating people, the tools, resources, ideas, contacts that can be mobilized for these purposes, etc.. All these are assets for the future initiatives of the network.

What can be considered to be the main strengths over which the future of a IDIN could be constructed ? This is the question to be explored in this chapter.

2.1 Values on which IDIN is inspired

One of IDIN's biggest assets is the set of values of international co-operation and solidarity which the network shares with ICCDA.

These values, in my opinion, continue to be relevant and valid both as one of the perspectives to perceive development and as an approach towards the evolution of the disciplines, methodologies and communities observing, analyzing and prescribing developmental policies and changes.

Among these values the following could be mentioned, inter alia:

    a.   Respect for the diversity of cultures and perceptions of
          the world,
    b.   Democratization of the access to developmental knowledge,
    c.   Stimulation of a dialogue between world regions,
    d.   Intellectual freedom of development scientists, etc.

Many institutions of different nature located outside the framework of ICCDA share these values. As such they may be considered as natural allies of ICCDA and of IDIN, and as actors with influence where support could be sought.

2.2 ICCDA leaders

ICCDA leaders, past or still active, are actors that can be brought into the decision process affecting IDIN's future evolution.

A group of these leaders participated in the creation of ICCDA and/or in the negotiations leading to the approval of the IDRC grant for IDIN Phase I.

Since it is believed that they are convinced about the desirability
for supporting co-operative efforts in the field of "communication"
between development institutions, they can become key elements in
the conception and implementation of a successful Phase II of the
project.

Their inspiration, prestige and access to many circles of influence
can determine the success of future negotiations. Their guidance
and advise should then be sought when designing the contents and
objectives for IDIN Phase II.

2.3   Cohesive group of information leaders

A major asset for the future activities of IDIN is the group of
information specialists that have been getting together under the
framework of ICCDA meetings.

In my opinion, they conform, irrespective of individual and
cultural differences, a cohesive group where co-operation values
are shared. They are respectful of the others' identities and are
interested and committed to work for making IDIN viable.

The group's relative stability and permanence over time is another
strength to be accounted for. This has allowed, inter alia: an
embodiment of knowledge about the history of the project; the
sharing of many common views; and the accumulation of experiences
in the context of personal networking environments.

The group's identity was created and maintained mainly through a
regular meeting procedure.

Gatherings held in Geneva, Bergen and Ljubljana, taking advantage
of EADI Meetings, the european regional association of development
institutions, created a sense of team work oriented towards a
common task.

Admittedly, the "meeting procedure" to build contacts and
originating personal links was rather costly, since it involved the
mobilization of distantly placed people. But, in the context of a
first phase of an ambitious international project, these
expenditures can be considered an investment leading to benefits
to be reaped in the future.

The meetings were instrumental in the following areas:

a. <u>Mutual Knowledge of Partners</u>: The mutual knowledge and acceptance of the different needs, possibilities and cultures of each participant required a rather extended period of contacts. To build a multi-cultural network is far from being a mechanic process, but on the contrary, is a complex process of adjustment of conducts and values.

b. <u>Problem-solving</u>: common operational problems of the IDIN project appeared during Phase I. These would probably not have been solved by means other than consultations at the meetings taking into account the existing restricted access to telephone utilization and other telecommunication means.

c. <u>Face-to-Face Interchange of experiences</u>: the meetings created "captive audiences" that could be approached for consultations and assistance, possibility that did seldom exist when each of the IDIN participants had to return to his/her own working environment.

d. <u>Social Control Mechanism</u> : participants were placed in a social interaction were the group controlled or provided suggestions to the activities of each participant. This function was particularly crucial in a situation where, deliberately, an a unique influential network leader was not put in place.

If IDIN Phase I should not have existed, the information group already operating before 1988, date of initiation of IDIN Phase I, would have probably not progressed that far.

2.4 Networking experience accumulated

The group of people that have so far been involved at various levels in the project (chief executives, project coordinators, technical personnel) have gained experience in participating in international co-operative endeavors and have learned, many for the first time, the "business" of international relations.

They know the other actors; are conscious about environmental constraints; and have an articulated judgement about their own strengths and capabilities. They have also accumulated technical experience important for an eventual Phase II (see **Annex 3**)

3. WEAKNESSES OF IDIN

IDIN Project (Phase I), as any other development project, has led to a situation at the end of its first stage that exhibits a few weaknesses.

These WEAKNESSES are manifested through deficiencies, lacks, voids and, in general, by aspects or areas where an acceptable standard has not yet been achieved. The task in these areas is thus not yet completed.

Weaker points are important to be recognized, not as a source of destructive criticism, but on the contrary they should be identified in their incapacity to be supportive of further growth of the network. As such they should either be overcame or, if they have to stay there for some time, they should be avoided or neutralized.

3.1 Lack of "corporate" image

It is a fact that IDIN is very little known as a "brand " name. This applies broadly speaking to the whole of the international development community and to the information community not directly linked with the regional associations and OECD/DC.

A list of possible contributing factors is displayed below:

a.   **IDIN activities and products are not clearly perceived by chief executives of IDIN partner institutions.**

> One of the problems that had to be faced by the coordinators of IDIN project components in the regional associations and OECD/DC was the tension existing between activities framed under IDIN and information activities undertaken regularly by these institutions outside the scope of IDIN. In many cases the two groups of activities were carried out in the same facilities, with the same equipment and by the same people.

> This might be partly due to insufficient internal project promotion activities and partly due to the way IDIN is organized within each partner institution. As a consequence it probably results quite difficult for executives ascertaining the boundaries existing between the project activities and the regular information activities of the institution.

b. Chief executives of IDIN partners have kept a distance with the institutional implications of IDIN

With a few exceptions that confirm the rule, chief executives have fully delegated responsibility in the respective technical coordinators. As a result they have not paid to much attention to IDIN in the institutional planning of future activities. A "let it be" policy appears to have been present in many cases.

c. Chief Executives have not being "gained" for the project

There appears to have been little provision in the project for specially catering for the needs of these influential communities. I have the feeling that a few executives have not yet been "gained" for the project because of this very reason: not receiving a special attention to their information needs as researchers and as executives. Particularly, no steps have been taken to ensure that they can actively participate in the circuit of elaboration of products and services required by current research and training. If something has been done it does not appear to have been sufficient. My impression is that they have ended in a situation where they do not expect to much from their own IDIN institutional component since they have been told that the project mission implies an "out of boundaries" operation for producing general purpose databases, acquiring technical information skills, and in some cases training other centers.

d. Researchers linked with IDIN partner institutions are not fully aware of the existence of IDIN.

A policy applied by most IDIN components was to keep promotion of products and services at a minimum level. It was thought better to concentrate efforts during Phase I in solving the technical problems in order to ensure the basic information flows, leaving interaction with users for a later stage. It has also have to be recognized that an excessive promotion would have in all likelihood been counterproductive in view of the scarce resources available to respond to newly created needs.

A few development researchers-trainers appeared to be aware of the existence of OECD published directories. Yet a minimum number realized that in this last three years, these directories have been produced under the co-operation umbrella of an inter-regional project called IDIN.

e. **Potential recipients of IDIN products have a mixed attitude towards them.**

Different circuits and situations of development research-training-communications should be distinguished when assessing the acceptability of IDIN products. A dichotomy could be thought of: "information rich" development specialists; "information poor" development specialists". As it could be expected these groups have reacted differently to IDIN products. While the information rich have not shown signs of being particularly impressed by the usefulness and quality of offered information products, the information poor showed a high recognition for receiving a contribution that did not existed before. Unfortunately, the "information poor" normally have less influence and less possibilities to buy the information products than the information rich ones.

Summing up, IDIN as an acronym is not known at all outside the information community that has participated in it and still has got to built his own "corporate image". This circumstance is unfavorable for IDIN further evolution, since it is hard to engage support for an effort that is not clearly perceived or understood by the research-training decision-makers and the practitioners.

3.2 Overall Administration of the project

Scarce resources for international ventures, and lack of sustainability of many institutions, have created a widespread philosophy that is invoked whenever a new co-operative effort is formulated. This philosophy can be synthesized in the following statements:

Only **existing** institutions should be used to support and run the show, irrespective of the compatibility between its mission and corporate culture and the mission and corporate culture of the co-operative effort.

No formal secretariat, nor committees or coordination mechanisms are advocated.

Power is to be thinly distributed among many and light operational structures are to be enforced.

There is of course an element of truth in these arguments. Particularly when one regards the numerous institutional arrangements adopted for international co-operation endeavors that have transformed themselves into heavy bureaucracies.

However, in our view, these arguments "en vogue" are sometimes pushed a bit too far.

The results achieved in terms of IDIN's coordination were certainly influenced by the described philosophy.

The rotating secretariat system adopted in ICCDA was replicated in the IDIN project. This meant that one regional association had to be in charge of IDIN coordination during, in my opinion, a rather short period of time.

Moreover, it was thought possible that its participation had to be ensured within existing institutional resources or by recurring to project funds initially allocated to specific regional technical tasks. No provision was made for covering expenses that would arise if inter-regional coordination was going to become an active component.

Also, IDIN overall coordination has operated, in my view, through an unclear definition of functions between a rotating coordinating role performed by an information officer of one of the regional associations secretariats and the OECD/DC technical focal point.

My impression is that there were no regular plans for joint lobbying, joint fund-raising and other promotion activities that would have been required to build up a "corporate image" and a "living space" for IDIN.

Nor it has been possible, given communication problems, to continuously monitor the progresses and setbacks of the different components of the project, certainly not with the spirit of control, but with the intention of providing an external help when it might have been necessary. This help could have had the role of solving certain technical matters but could have primarily helped in creating better bridges of communication between the information components and the rest of their own organizations.

Coordinators in charge have so far been unable to visit other IDIN participants. This lack of physical contact has added up to the existing weak habit to communicate experiences to others and the lack of operational communications links within the network.

In general, there are no complaints about the way IDIN coordinators have performed. The newsletter and the preparation of IDIN meetings agendas have been in place. It was very difficult to expect more from them considering that their function was assigned a low profile by IDIN participants. Moreover, its exercise has been always understood as a service that is provided to the rest of the project community within existing resources, that is, with sacrifice and adding a burden on existing over-stressed human resources!

As a result of this a global perception of how the project is going and where it should go, exists nowhere in the network.

OECD technical focal point knows part of the picture, the IDIN rotating coordinator is aware of other part, and the donor is in possession of other segments through the administrative reports and projects visits undertaken by program officers. Nowhere, however, in the context of IDIN, an instance has existed where all these substantive (as opposed to accounting) views could be compared, consolidated and distributed to the whole.

In a sense, although it might be a bit harsh to say it, IDIN project is an operational body with brilliant brains distributed in the various parts of the body but with little global capability of looking at the whole picture. The personal capacities exist to do this job. What is lacking so far are the mechanisms to allow these capacities to exercise this global function.

If overall administration of the project is going to remain as it is, this would constitute a major weakness to be accounted for.

3.3 IDIN's under-budgeted operations assimilated by IDIN partners organizational cultures

IDIN has been an effort built on what already existed in the participant organizations.

Before IDIN started, some sort of documentation and information transfer activities related to development research and training already existed in all regional associations and the OECD/DC, the technical focal point. A few associations, for example, had small libraries for handling documentation produced by the Secretariat and/or by member institutions. The OECD/DC had been inventorying development sources, preparing publications and disseminating information through the Liaison Bulletin.

The seed money contributed by IDRC, covered part of the costs of new activities. However, the project, in many cases, ADDED to the already existing work, the tasks of IDIN phase I.

This situation, as I understood it, was not fully coupled with the allocation of new resources by the participant organizations. On the contrary, in a few cases, the staff was diminished and funds cuts took place.

Since the money received was catalytic and was never expected to fund the full operation of IDIN, a tension for sharing common resources between IDIN and regular information transfer activities of the participant organizations did exist.

In the case of OECD/DC, for example, the questions of training, standardization, technical developments and reception and editing of external segments of databases was ADDED to the existing centralized processing and publishing of development institutions inventories.

On the whole, it does not seem adventurous to state that IDIN has been an under-budgeted exercise. The fact that the so far the project has been based on over-stretched human resources, and that, apparently, this situation has begun to be considered "normal" is certainly a weakness to be recognized at this stage.

3.4 Difficulties in ensuring an even development of the component databases

In IDIN Phase I there existed the aspiration of creating conditions for the assembling of a global data base.

It was learned that this was an almost impossible exercise because of the following factors.

a. Different levels of institutional development, and varying regional circumstances, perceptions and needs did not permitted to synchronize data collection and input into databases. Existing component databases are a set of heterogenous surveys applied to kaleidoscopic aspects of development in different periods of time. This renders intra-regional comparisons to be an aspiration for the moment.

b. It was difficult to ensure an even transfer of IDIN technologies to the participants. This created limits to the technical quality of databases produced by the participant institutions. (see **Annex 3**)

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The basic hypothesis that a global high-quality database is feasible in the context of a co-operative non-profit international endeavor has yet to be proven.

4. OPPORTUNITIES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In the next two sections the look will directed towards the environment where IDIN has got to dwell.

The environment surrounding IDIN network offers OPPORTUNITIES for growth and consolidation of IDIN activities. These opportunities express themselves in various ways:

* Spaces where IDIN has not yet operated that offer prospects for expansion;
* Potentially existing resources not fully tapped by IDIN;
* Potential new partners that can create complementary substantive, technical and political support for IDIN.

All these are areas of opportunity where IDIN can move in the future, during a second Phase of the project and beyond.

4.1 Unexplored "research-training-communications environments"

There is an important group of "information and co-operation markets" that IDIN partners might want to explore. Many are already known to them. Also some past attempts, not all successful, have been made to take advantages of those markets. The problem has been, in my view, that these activities have primarily been "goodwill" activities not necessarily built in as part of the budget of IDIN project.

Three extremely interesting spaces for co-operation will be examined here. These are:

North-South development studies and policies co-operation spaces

South-South development studies and policies co-operation spaces

Opening of operational relations with large countries so far absent in IDIN

North-South co-operation in the field of development studies and policies takes place in many ways.

In the information sector there could be many areas for co-operation such as: information resources interchange, information services agreements, use of communications channels, sharing of training opportunities, etc.

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Three mechanisms seem worthwhile examining:

> Bilateral associations between Third world regional associations and EADI
> Links with South-oriented academia from the North
> Links with North-oriented academia from the South

Joint activities between EADI and the regional associations from the South is an alternative that has already been explored through the simultaneous holding of EADI and IDIN meetings. These contacts have permitted a number of useful interchanges. However, the role of EADI as a regional association operating in an environment where information and information technologies industries are highly developed, has not been fully exploited. This suggest the convenience of building in IDIN project itself, formal interchanges with EADI.

Personal networks between academia of the North and their former graduates and attached research fellows from the South, offer another area for co-operation. These networks, operating like an "old boys club" are very active channels for interchanging information about development research and policies in the various regions. Particularly important here is the category made of South-oriented centers of the North specialized in the monitoring of development problems of regions and countries of the South. These are places that actively participate in information collection, organization and dissemination exercises. Joint ventures, or interchange of information resources can be of mutual advantage for IDIN partners and for these centers.

As an example, I could mention that I met, by mere chance, a member of the Canadian Association for African studies. Many Canadian academics with solid reputation and contacts in Africa belong to this non-profit private organization. Also former African students graduated in Canadian academic institutions or research african fellows participate there. This particular association publishes an extremely well prepared newsletter, in terms of coverage and real up-to date information. I had the feeling, beyond my ignorance about the quality, orientation, and contents of african studies and of information that this association circulates, that these type of linkages may be usefully explored by the regional associations constituting ICCDA and IDIN. The exposure of members of this kind of association to field work in specific Third World regions made them probably more amenable to become partners with regional development associations of the South.

Finally, there are indications that a new category of South-based centers might emerge in the future. These centers would fulfill the role of monitoring development processes taking place in the North.

Both EADI, old boys clubs and specialized North-based or
South-based cross-monitoring centers of development processes are
immersed and governed by a community of specialized, motivated and
inter and intra-regionally well connected people. They are
frequently in touch through regular newsletters, conferences and
private communications. These communities of specialists can
certainly become an attractive potential "market" for IDIN
products and services.

South-South development research and training co-operation are
spaces that the information area may take advantage of.

Inter-regional co-operation, particularly South-South co-operation,
was one of "les idées-force" of the establishment of ICCDA and
subsequently of IDIN.

The pioneering co-operative research venture between CODESRIA and
CLACSO on Food Security is a type of event that would be a natural
market for IDIN inter-regional information products.

ICCDA meetings are also an opportunity not only to present IDIN
products but, more importantly, to prepare information and
communication agendas for future international co-operation.
These agendas having a substantive rather than technological
nature, refer to informative contents, sources and recipients of
information flows concerning development issues. The agenda would
usefully be prepared through the joint work and consultation
between executives, researchers, trainers and communication and
information transfer specialists.

Finally, to ensure the participation larger countries such as
Canada,China, India, The USA and the USSR is a major pending issue.

Although admittedly, it has not been possible to stimulate these
relations perhaps due to the mutual resistances, it is also true
that development communities in these countries, in the present
and foreseeable international order, can no longer be left out of
ICCDA's activities and consequently of IDIN activities.

There are many government-independent mechanisms operating in these
countries that may usefully be invited to share experience with
the regional associations.

Finally, IDIN coordination mechanisms should incorporate the
operation of alert mechanisms about future inter-regional meetings,
taking place in institutions like OECD, the World Bank and academic
centers of the North or the South. There, IDIN should prepare its
participation in advance in order to be present in the discussion
where information flows needed for facilitating solutions to
development problems are considered.

4.2 <u>Unexplored non-traditional sources of income for information projects</u>.

To ensure sustainability of IDIN, the search for complementary channels for funding would be needed.

At the inter-regional and global IDIN level the following not mutually exclusive options can be considered:

Explore the interest of new donors that have recently arrived into the international market for co-operative project's funds

Create regular mechanisms to incorporate information-components to cover the costs of these activities whenever inter-regional or global development research and development training projects are formulated

Identify areas where it can be profitable to attempt income earning ventures. This is becoming common practice in information activities and forms part of a world trend pointing out at a stronger information industry.

The mentioned options can also be interesting for intra-regional projects. However, fund-raising efforts based on these options will or will not be undertaken depending on the priorities and strategies of institutional development each regional association expects to achieve.

4.3 <u>Unexplored concepts and technologies for the remote organization and execution of action: tele-working</u>

Tele-working, seems to be the word for the present and the future. Working at a distance, group-ware, co-operative ventures carried out between partners that do not necessarily have to gather physically in the same time and place to undertake joint work are here to stay. These concepts and modalities cannot be expected to replace the face-to-face communication. However, their importance is inevitably expected to grow at the expense of face-to-face communications.

Telecommunications is still a costly and not easily accessible technology for many countries and regions of the South. Monopoly conditions existing in telephone and packet switching networks, low quality of telephone lines, lack of expertise for operating E-mail systems and exploit related services are few hindrances for speeding up a process of adoption of a social technology that is already rampant in the countries of the North.

However, international telecommunication infrastructures and services offer some lower costs opportunities like the under-utilization of many telecommunication channels; the solidarian and co-operative character of certain organizations in the academic and NGO world of the North, etc. All these factors can be of help for facilitating and making the access to these technologies affordable.

Assuming that these problems will be gradually overcame, and that ICCDA members, information components included, would have less and less restricted or controlled access to remote communication channels, a wide range of opportunities could be opened for ICCDA and IDIN. Just to mention a few possibilities for IDIN:

Tele-working with the development specialists community by undertaking joint research-information projects

Tele-informing the development community by building an infrastructure of information services that would become available for ICCDA's development specialists doing tele-researching and tele-training,

Tele-training of Idin components leading to further decentralization at the sub-regional and regional levels, and keeping control of the effects of personnel rotation.

Tele-coordinating IDIN project technical matters, gradually reducing the frequency, although not totally eliminating, international face-to face meetings between IDIN partners.

Tele-experimenting with new intellectual and physical information technologies in the context of IDIN, etc.

4.4 Unexplored existing information resources

There seems to exist an unexplored range of possibilities for enlarging, at a marginal cost, the size and richness of information resources managed by IDIN by accessing other existing complementary databases.

Some non-commercial databases can be obtained at very small or at no costs. The rest plus some of the commercial ones can perhaps be accessible by barter kind of arrangements.

Whichever the acquisition strategy adopted, conversion and installation costs would be involved. Also bigger computer capacity would be needed for storage purposes. These costs, however, would be much lower than the ones that would be present should efforts to increase the present coverage of IDIN databases by direct data collection and processing are attempted.

The benefit would clearly be the offering to the development community of larger maps of information resources where integrated pictures to be obtained either for particular subjects or geographical sections became possible.

In the case of IDIN, and particularly with regards to its most distinct contribution, the research in progress data base, the following complementary, related or overlapped databases exist in the non-commercial and in the semi-commercial and commercial sector. This list is certainly non exhaustive and is presented only with the idea of illustrating the type of environmental analysis that could be later carried out.

Non-commercial data bases:

UN funded development projects databases:
UNDP Register, ACCIS Register, Regional Economic Commissions Registers, FAO, ILO, etc.

Donor agents funded databases:
IDRIS Database, Databases of individual donor's not participating in IDRIS, for example US Aid, European Economic Community, etc.

Databases of intra-regional and inter-regional associations not participating in ICCDA

National registers of project funded by the national councils for Science and Technology

Semi-commercial and Commercial data bases:

British Library Research in Progress Register,Canadian Research in Progress Databases,.. USA National Council for Social Science Research, USA Library of Congress.

ISI Social Science and Humanities Research and Researchers, based on Current Contents of periodicals

5.   THREATS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment surrounding IDIN network may also act as a deterrent for its growth or as a factor undermining its viability. Environmental influences are called THREATS because their occurrence is potential and in some cases they can be avoided or neutralized.

Threats are expressed in various ways:

> Loss of institutional sponsorship spaces where IDIN has already been operating;
> Loss of clientele because of competitors;
> Loss of clientele because of non anticipated changes in the behavior of clients
> Resources vital to IDIN that may become exhausted or be oriented in other directions

IDIN should be cautious about these unfavorable factors before moving to a second Phase of the project and beyond.

5.1   Internal adjustment and restructuring of Regional Associations

ICCDA's survival and growth, and accordingly IDIN's, are directly linked with the strength of its component regional associations.

A thorough examination of the evolution and future prospects of each association is an exercise that would fall far beyond the scope of this document. Yet it is a fact that intra-regional cooperation has moved, on the whole, rather slowly.

Economic and political instability, international conflicts, etc.have not permitted a substantial consolidation of the tasks these associations are expected to carry out. Budgetary constraints have not permitted to count on regular membership contributions.

The world is swept by a privatization mood. Darwinistic competition and the survival of the fittest will determine the evaporation of many weaker research centers and the concentration of research-training-communication capacities in a few larger entities located in the metropolis. How will all this affect the regional associations is an open question. Possibly they could become financially solvent to be able to cater only for the needs of a few. What would happen then to emergence and survival of the smaller and younger centers?

I do hope that regional association may become stronger in the long run after the process of adjustment has been completed. Yet, there

is a short and medium run period that looks rather worrying.

5.2 ICCDA's Future

This is a threat that has been present during the life of IDIN and, probably, will continue to be there for some time.

ICCDA is a fragile inter-institutional arrangement. In spite of being well inspired, the Committee is essentially positioned vis-a-vis many forces opposing the association belief in the multiplicity of perceptions and values that govern modern development sciences, and its effort to change power asymmetries in North-South relationships.

World events and trends have contributed to create gulfs within regions of the South. Also, North-South relations together with difficult periods of the component regional associations have not favored ICCDA's expansion and consolidation.

It is obvious that the bigger the hindrances for inter-regional co-operation among development scientists communities, the greatest the difficulties in keeping ICCDA as a cohesive group.
Yet, to identify and describe each of these forces and to anticipate their future behavior is also a task that falls far beyond the scope of this work.

By looking at reports of ICCDA meetings, an impression emerge. What started with great vigour in Sussex in 1976, and continued in this mood in Bogotá in 1976 and Kuala Lumpur in 1983, appears now to be a rather passive arrangement that seems to require revival.

The rotating secretariat mechanism that has been in place, has implied the over-burdening of an executive secretary of a regional association. This situation is expected to deter the promotion of ICCDA's activities.

The future of ICCDA is uncertain as it is the future of other international associations in the development sciences.

5.3 Restrictions at OECD/DC

During my visit to OECD/DC I detected three areas of concern that, if they become critical, could seriously undermine the Center's active participation in IDIN.

The first one, is the staff situation in the External Co-operation Division. The existing regular staff, a quite reduced version of what it was in the past, is necessarily stretched over many activities. Even more, an important part of the work load absorbed by Paris has been possible by voluntary work and by contracting

people on a short term basis. There is always the danger of future cuts of personnel following the trend affecting most international organizations. How could this situation affect IDIN Phase II?

A second area of concern, was a certain feeling of uneasiness at the executive level about the role of OECD/DC in IDIN, and particularly about the need to re-examine the production of segments of a global database and their indefinite publication and distribution. The chief executive officer of the organization has decided on implementing the policy of discontinuing the publication of directories beyond december 1992. What would happen with the publication of directories from 1993 onwards?

The third one, relates to the information sector itself inside the OECD/DC. The Center is in a process of re-structuring and integrating its efforts towards a well articulated development research output (Bradford, 1991). In order to make this feasible, it can be anticipated that a re-examination of existing information infrastructures in the Center will be needed.
How would this restructuring affect the actual tasks of the library, the computer centre and the documentation group, this latter almost fully devoted to IDIN?

5.4 Personal electronic networking as threat to formal referral information services.

Electronic Academic Networks (like BITNET, EARN, INTERNET,..) might be expected to become increasingly accessible to the development communities participating under the ICCDA framework. This anyway is or will soon be the case for many EADI members and members located in a few countries of the South.

The opportunities that academic networking may open can also bring about threats to IDIN as a network for disseminating information on development research-training-communication.

A possible effect would be, in a part of the community participating in the academic network, to rely heavily on knowledgeable people for the acquisition of information on research projects, and data on specialists and institutions. This is true for punctual, specific, information.

Although and up-to-date and comprehensive historical database like the one supported by IDIN will continue to be useful to satisfy demands for mapping development research and training, the satisfaction of punctual demands may be diverted to colleagues participating in electronic academic networks.

This would mean an at least a temporary weakening of support for IDIN activities.

II. THREE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR IDIN: PROS AND CONS

The scenarios are:

Development Intelligence mechanism: a state where closer and articulated links between RESEARCH-TRAINING-COMMUNICATION development communities is achieved. Major efforts towards the generation of high-value-added information products and services expressly required by the development community are generated in working situations where development researchers and trainers will be full participants instead of mere dependent and passive agents in the information transfer game.

Database producer: IDIN will be transformed in ah strong player of commercially oriented information industry and, as such, would be capable of producing and marketing high quality information resources supporting referral services on development activities. The trust is towards sustainability of database production by means of income generation activities undertaken in a competitive market.

Hyper-networker: is an intermediate scenario still dominated by the information-communication community. There IDIN will be positioned as a co-operative non-profit venture emphasizing aggressive, varied and solid referral services based on a much enlarged base of information resources to cater for a wider set of the needs of the development community. Relevance, speed and high quality support will be achieved through the interaction of IDIN with other networks providing evaluated information on development activities and new networks that can be utilized to disseminate an enlarged information base.

The scenarios will be schematically examined according to two mayor characteristics:

Distinct traits that give the character to each scenario

Major needs that the implementation of the scenario implies

Pros and Cons that can be associated with the adoption of each of scenario.

The information provided on each scenario is indicative and by no means pretends to be exhaustive. It has to be considered more as a methodology to work with rather than as an elaborated information for decision-making.

6. DEVELOPMENT INTELLIGENCE MECHANISM

Development intelligence is the capability for generating and applying knowledge for solving development problems. Is the decisive tool for socially concerted actions, and organizational survival, adaptation to environmental changes, growth and diversification

Development intelligence is an old concern of development communities. It provides with a new optic, a new wide-angle perspective, helpful to group existing tasks that normally operate separately, such as: strategic thinking, adequate monitoring of the environment, prediction of behavior of different actors, conception of trends and future scenarios, measurement and understanding of development phenomena, design of policies, projects and actions and their implementation, transfer of knowledge and experiences to others, etc.

Development problems could be solved if individual intelligence, group intelligence, organizational intelligence and social intelligence at large exist and is applied to specific problems in a particular society. (Dedijer, Jequier, 1987).

The individual intelligence capabilities no doubt exist both in the South and the North. Yet, the countries of the North have in general been more successful in establishing and put to work group, organizational and social development intelligence capabilities. They have discovered that by bringing together the required expertise into multi-discipline, multi-actor environments and by monitoring the whole process from problem identification to solution implementation, development problems can be solved.

In the South there is, on the whole, the required expertise for undertaking separate parts of the development intelligence process. What seems to be lacking there is the capability of putting together and mobilizing these expertise to reach common goals.

This concept has immediate implications for the projection of IDIN. It mainly implies returning to ICCDA's basic tenet about the need for integrating the research-training and communication circuits existing within development communities with the circuits linking development communities to decision-makers and other social actors.

6.1 <u>Distinct traits that give character to the scenario</u>

Access to a wide range of information resources on development activities required (this scenario is built on scenario 8 hyper-networking)

Fully Integrated ICCDA's operation (research-training-communication) in relation to intra-regional and inter-regional development problems

Generation of development intelligence projects to tackle inter-regional and intra-regional development actions;
IDIN products and services generated within specific substantive research-training-communication projects and actions within ICCDA

Development Research-training-communications community connected to commonly shared network of electronic services Information access, document delivery services; requests, referral consultation, value-added information services available to users through the network

Use of the network and access to services charged directly to researchers or to projects accounts. Scaled charging systems for higher value-added products according to level of complexity

6.2 <u>Major needs</u>

Investment required to put in place:

Hardware and software for a regular operation of electronic mail, electronic conference and regular operation of electronic information services (database searching, document delivery, etc) accessible to regional secretariats, OECD/DC and selected sub-regional centers.

Major technical assistance and training effort directed to executives; research coordinators, training coordinators and information officers to ensure:

Full and optimal utilization of telecommunication services; Planned tele-working controlled experiments and simulations for habit creation and learning; Installation of IDIN and complementary databases within a network environment; Preparation of promotional information, methodologies and charging policies.

6.3 Arguments in favor and against of choosing the scenario

PROS :

Recovery of ICCDA original philosophy for integrating RESEARCH-TRAINING-COMMUNICATION

Higher quality and competitiveness of ICCDA's sponsored efforts

Possibility of generating and using pertinent and needed information products and services.

Enhanced integrated work between researchers-trainers-communicators.

Greater facilities for quick intergroup communication and interaction

Highly transparent and active information market available to researchers and trainers

Knowledge of current research and training work available to information workers will permit anticipation of future demands for information products and services.

Possibility of given sense and making use of the myriad of existing development databases within and outside the scope of IDIN

Traditional information products marketing and "user education" programs replaced by joint learning within interdisciplinary intelligence groups.

CONS :

Fear of loosing professional privacy and territories through interdisciplinary team work

Danger of excessive telecommunication costs

Potential for loosing face-to-face human interactions

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7.   GLOBAL DATABASE PRODUCER

Assuming that it has been proven that IDIN is an effective
arrangement to accomplish the task of generating a high quality
database or , alternatively, that IDIN could subcontract the job
to an efficient enterprise, this scenario places IDIN as a player
in the international information industry.

7.1 Distinct traits that give character to the scenario

0% error, higher quality information factory.

Positioning of IDIN of database in international on-line
and/or cd/rom markets through commercial distributors

Efforts sustainable in the long run due to increased
capacity for income generation. Income generation would
cover the costs presently funded by the donor.

7.2 Major needs

High quality marketing study and business plan entrusted to
information industry consultant

Large additional external injection of financial resources
to ensure:

Selection of technical participants according to the
application of a high international standard of performance;
Earnings of participants directly linked to up-to-
datedness, full compatibility and error free nature of each
records contributed; Subcontracting of information work to
free-lancers

7.3 Arguments in favor and against of choosing the scenario

PROS :

For those who can afford it, accessibility to a high quality, error-free, comprehensive and up-to-date set of global databases concerning the situation of the development communities

Database maintenance and updating becomes a sustainable effort

Potential source of income for ICCDA's partners

Strengthening of a market of free-lance information specialists linked with the development communities.

CONS :

"Information poor" development specialists condemned to low quality research and training because of price-barrier to access to relevant development information.

Substantive relations and interchanges would take place primarily between those who can have access to the global databases in commercial terms.

Present institutional framework of IDIN not sufficiently strong to make the network becoming a strong player in information industry

Single product endeavor would not be enough to attract demands from the development research and training community

Under-utilization of other existing information resources

8. HYPER-NETWORKER

In this scenario IDIN would achieve an active operation of an enlarged and enriched set of inter-institutional links that may be established with other networks, other institutions and other information services. This implies to look aggressively outward in order to find allies that can be relevant information sources or circuits where market niches for intermediate value-added referral products can be identified exist.

The incorporation of akin institutions of larger countries and the signing of agreements for creating stable linkages would be a typical action that IDIN can carry out, for a stronger insertion in the international scene.

8.1   Distinct traits that give character to the scenario

Intense exploitation of existing information infrastructure on development communities activities

Regular and frequent dissemination of information extracted from multiple relevant sources in various formats and media to development researchers and trainers.

Close articulation with development-related networks existing both in the North and in the South

8.2   Major needs

A study will increase knowledge about:

Market availability of existing complementary databases; conversion costs involved in reformatting existing complementary databases to a common standard capable of being manipulated with a unique set of software packages including microisis and hypertext; formats of acquisition and interchange contracts

Acquisition of existing international and national databases on a regular basis (UN system; IDRIS; British Library,..)

Acquisition of intra-regional and inter-regional databases from various development associations existing both in the South and in the North, on a regular basis

Software acquisition and adaptation for integrating and repackaging data existing in different databases

Regional Associations and OECD hardware /software capabilities upgraded

8.3 Arguments in favor and against of choosing the scenario

PROS:

Access, at a reduced marginal cost, of information resources created elsewhere.

Substantially enlarged base of information resources

Intellectual Upgrade of information services and products produced by IDIN

More frequent and varied services offered to the users

More effective use of existing qualified human resources shifting from tedious editing and databases creation towards the generation of intermediate value-added information services

Resources presently allocated to publishing and distributing directories can be moved to fund tele-informing services for the rapid dissemination of information (fax, E-mail)

Upgrade of hardware/software configuration leading to greater product generation capabilities

Maintenance of existing standard tools (formats, thesaurus) and enlargement of methodological tools to other retrieval and information display tools

Highly satisfied users willingly to support IDIN developments in the future

CONS:

Full compatibility and integrability of data weakened.

Full database comprehensiveness would not be ensured (geographic, thematic, institutional)

IDIN partners might want to analyze the presented options and elaborate other scenarios.

It would be also possible for them to combine traits of more that one of the scenarios that imply a continuation of IDIN endeavor.

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In view of the need by IDIN partners to formulate a proposal for Phase II, a set of conclusions and recommendations has been prepared and included in the next section. They naturally involve the attachment of values and the influence of personal appreciation from the consultant. It is hoped, however, that they would enlightened the complex inter-organizational decision-making process that will have to be set in motion.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering that:

a. A preliminary evaluation has been undertaken based
    on visits to IDIN partner institutions and analysis
    of existing reports and other documents

b. A full quantitative evaluation of IDIN Phase I is
    underway but results are not yet available in terms of
    compatible data and indicators

c. The eminent preparation, by IDIN coordinator in
    consultation with IDIN partners, of a revised project
    proposal for IDIN Phase II.

The following conclusions and recommendations are formulated:

11. CONCLUSIONS

1. IDIN Phase I was a worthwhile investment in that it helped to set up basic information infrastructures in the regional associations composing ICCDA and contributed to the maintenance of active links among these associations in the sphere of information transfer.

    The physical outputs expected from the project -regional and global ongoing research projects directories- are not, at this stage, the most important aspects to be looked at when evaluating IDIN Phase I. Rather the side effects such as intra and inter-regional linkage creation, group identity formation and technical upgrading of existing information operations are the impacts to be searched for.

2. IDIN is now entering a period that is expected to be complex for most development research-training institutes, for the regional associations where they are grouped and, as a consequence of this, for ICCDA. IDIN will have to dwell in a new international economic order where competition and the survival of the fittest will predominate. This order will have an impact in many development institutes, will change research priorities and will redefine areas where co-operation is desirable and feasible.

    In this context, IDIN must restate its mission. It will no longer be enough for the network to present a face to the world as a global database producer while at the same time knowing that the feasibility of achieving such a global product is still to be proven. Rather, time looks ripe to find out whether this product could not be elaborated more effectively, cheaply and with a highest quality through a subcontract with an independent firm. A co-operative network uniquely devoted to achieve this product seems in fact a too limited, costly, extended and uncertain adventure.
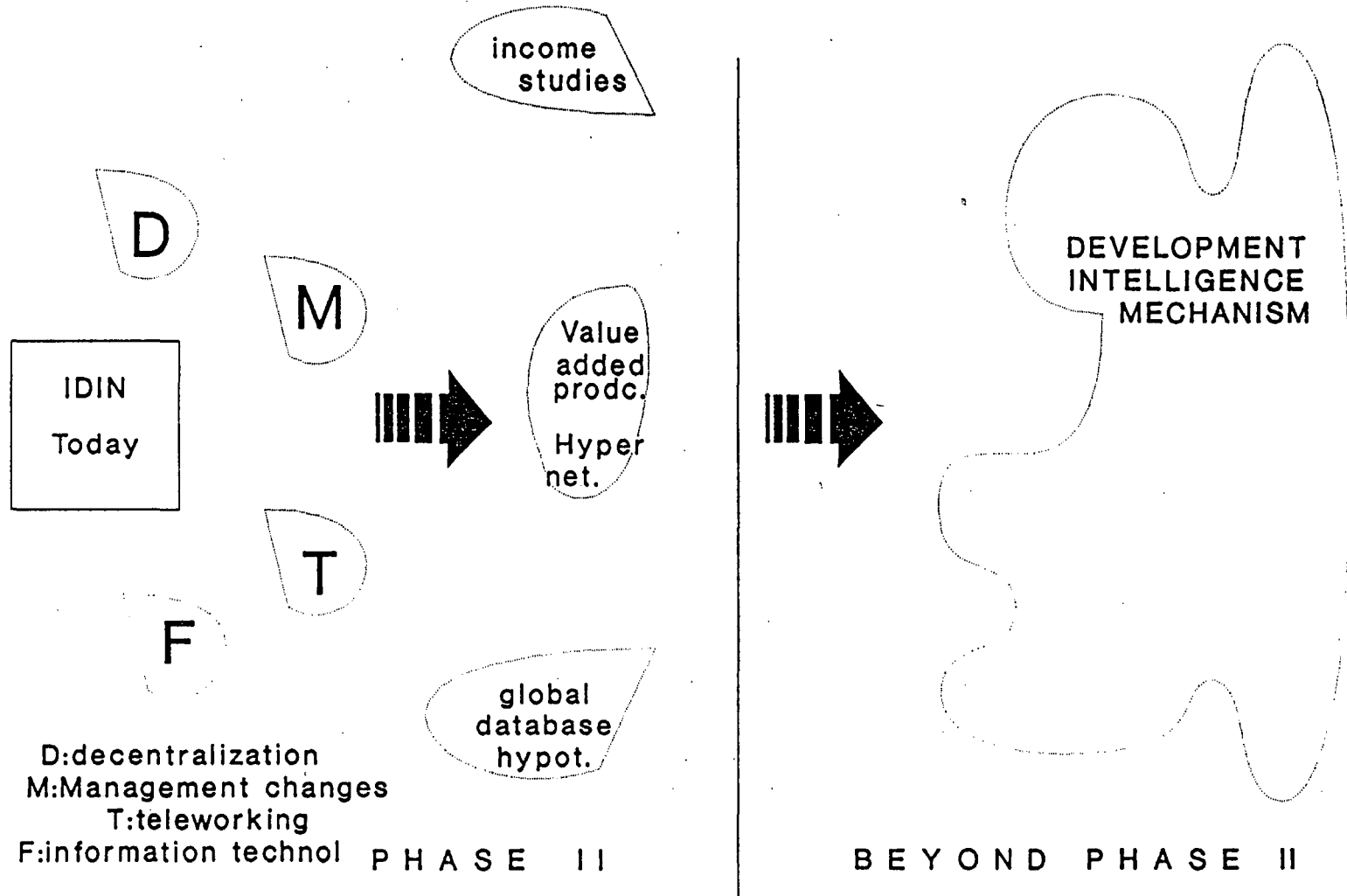
3. In my opinion, IDIN's mission can be redefined taking into account other aspects or side effects that go far beyond the production of a global database. IDIN's mission has to be found in the social need for a fuller articulation of the development research-training-communication circuits. An agent that can be catalytic in creating conditions for that articulation to come into being would thus be highly justified. The original tenet of ICCDA could in this way be recovered through IDIN.

4. Development research and training will need, by the end of the century, revised and probably brand new intra-regional and inter-regional links. If these links are made explicit, the development researchers-trainers can be in a position, if they are stimulated to do so, to define, invent and experiment with new types of information products and services and to participate in joint teams with information-communications specialists. If this is achieved, IDIN will not be anymore in the position of periodically having to justify its existence. On the contrary, its major strength will reside in that the network will be satisfying an important need of those who are sponsoring it and will be irreplaceable in doing so.

5. We then advocate to re-orient the network towards aa future scenario characterizing IDIN as a **Development Intelligence Mechanism**. There, the work of the network will be no longer the gathering and accumulation of primary data but will be predominantly oriented towards the systematization of available data in view of specific needs of development research and training. Imagination and creativity for conceiving new information products and circuits will come from integrated teams. No longer information products will have to "marketed" to researchers and trainers.

6. Yet, it cannot be expected that IDIN can reach a state of development intelligence mechanism in the period of three years. The achievement of this is complicated by the fact that change involved is primarily a cultural change requiring long maturation time, irrespective of the money it can be allocated for it. Both the culture of development research-trainers and development information-communication officers will need to be transformed. Moreover, regional micro-cultures will probably require different strategies to accomplish the task.

7. Strategically then, the core of a proposal for Phase II should consist in implementing steps leading to a position closer to the scenario of development intelligence. These steps will, on the one hand, redefine the production strategy of the network by offering new higher value-added types of information products and services, while closing the cycle of production of traditional printed directories. They will also include the organization of experiments to test the social feasibility of integrating research-training-communication tasks. Finally, an operation style will be sought where IDIN can interact intensively with other networks and major, so far absent, countries to gain access to relevant development-related information. At the same time this operation style will facilitate the discovery of potential market niches where new information products can be destined. This operational style constitutes the intermediate scenario that has been

called "hyper-networking".

8. In parallel, two other associated strategic moves should be attempted. The first, investigates and experiments with income generating procedures based on the commercialization of new types of information products and services. This quest should be done under the framework of IDIN values, one of this values being the importance to cater to the needs of information poor development research-training-communications centres. The delivery of information products and services should then make a distinction between information-poor and information rich clienteles.

9. The other associated move will be to test the hypothesis of the feasibility of building a high quality global database through a controlled, synchronic, inter-regional, experiment while at the same time a market study for the global database is undertaken. This exercise will led to answer two questions: Does the global database have a market? ;Is IDIN the best institutional arrangement conducive to produce such global database?.

10. Phase II should also incorporate some tactical moves. These are based on the lessons learned during Phase I. Better management practices, revised decentralization methodology, enhanced technological infrastructures, tele-working operations, could also be attempted.

11. The strategic and tactical moves are described in the attached graph and are detailed in the recommendations that follow.

A STRATEGY FOR IDIN PHASE II

income
studies

D

M

IDIN
Today

Value
added
prodc.

Hyper
net.

T

F

global
database
hypot.

DEVELOPMENT
INTELLIGENCE
MECHANISM

D:decentralization
M:Management changes
T:teleworking
F:information technol

P H A S E   I I

B E Y O N D   P H A S E   I I

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12. RECOMMENDATIONS

RE-1   <u>Production: New supply of content-specific intra-regional or inter-regional based, intermediate value-added information products</u>

Taking into account that:

a. Simple lists of projects, institutional profiles and researchers are of limited use due to their low value-added nature as information products.

b. Research managers and researchers in general would highly appreciate receiving, according to the consultations held, other products based on the listings and on other types of information but with a higher value added attached. For example, "research-maps" could be built according to specific topics, sectors or geographical zones. Indication of whether research is local, is applicable to other regions or has built-in inter-regional components will be useful indications.

c. Maps of funds allocation by donor is also a basic tool for development research planning.

d. Other desirable products could contain an overall analysis of the maps and will include related graphs and data tabulations.

e. Since data collection efforts are expected to continue being limited to a few institutions it is essential that maps are built on IDIN databases <u>plus</u> other related databases such as IDRIS, UNDP, ACCIS, and those of national research councils of major countries.

It is recommended that:

Intermediate value-added information products such as research maps and donor research policies maps are prepared on the basis of an enlarged infrastructure of information resources

RE-2.   **Production: Closing of Cycle of publication and
distribution of printed regional directories**

Taking into account that:

a. It has not been possible to prove that printed
directories are a cost-effective useful way of
disseminating information on development institutions in
view of the production delays and miscellaneous quality
of information contained there

b. Association executives and senior researchers where
important support can be expected to come from are
precisely the ones less enthusiastic with these products

c. The advisability of reserving the first year of Phase II
to comply with already made compromises between OECD/DC
and some of the regional associations and of avoiding new
further commitments after that year so that OECD/DC and
regional associations can have the possibility of
participating in the testing of the feasibility of the
global co-operative production of a database.

It is recommended.:

**The gradual termination of the production cycle of
printed directories of the kind that were published
during IDIN Phase I and even before.**

RE-3. <u>**Production: Design of new information products and services within integrated research-training and information-communication groups.**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. Relevance of information products and services will be higher if they are designed by development researchers-trainers with the help of information-communication specialists

b. Some experiences exist where development research-training- communications have acted as an integrated whole and where information products have been generated as an intrinsic part of the research and training functions

c. Different micro-cultures of research-training-communications in the development sciences can be expected to exist in the various regions and subregions of the world presently participating in IDIN

d. Experiences to be successful would require the identification of areas that are of high priority to development research and training

It is recommended that:

Experiments are designed in the different regions and subregions of IDIN so that knowledge can be accumulated on the best strategies to create integrated development research-training-communications teams.

RE-4.   **Production: Improving IDIN's partners knowledge of the trends expected in the development sciences in the nineties**

Taking into account that:

a. Complexity of changes occurring in the international scene makes it very unadvisable to extrapolate past trends in development research, training and communications

b. Identification of broad trends and winds of change concerning development research-training communications is an exercise that has not been carried out systematically within ICCDA in the recent years

c. IDIN management at the regional and inter-regional level will be highly facilitated if future trends affecting development-related activities are identified

It is recommended that:

To undertake an organized interchange of ideas (state of the art paper, international seminar,etc) leading to an identification of major trends expected to influence development research-training and communications efforts in the nineties.

RE-5.   **Production: Enhanced base of information resources**

Taking into account that:

a. IDIN databases, as most databases, are not sufficient to satisfy a wide range of requirements.

b. Information services exclusively based on IDIN databases will be partial and limited by definition.

c. Information, complementary or akin to the one contained in IDIN databases, do exist in a large number of non-commercial and para commercial environments such as the United Nations agencies (ACCIS, UNDP, TCDC Unit, UNESCO,..), governments of industrialized countries (British Library, US Library of Congress,) donor agencies(IDRIS), etc

d. Efforts to acquire complementary databases will involve undertaking actions such as: Identification of existing databases; Evaluation of database qualities and associated cost/benefits ratios; Selection of databases that will regularly be incorporated as part of IDIN resources; Signature of agreements of acquisition or interchange of databases; Regular conversion of databases into appropriate formats; Regular distribution of segments of interest to IDIN partners.

It is recommended that:

A systematic effort be carried out to acquire complementary databases that are useful to enlarge the scope and impact of IDIN referral and information services.

RE-6. <u>**Production: Access to commercial databases through a**</u>
<u>**special agreement with IDRC Library**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. Another form of enlarging the data accessible to IDIN
partners is through the on-line consultation of databases
or the access to databases existing in CD-rom.

b. It would not be realistic to expect that IDIN partners
could be active in this game mainly because of the high
costs involved and the existing lack of expertise within
IDIN in terms of using remote databases.

c. IDRC library has accumulated considerable expertise in
providing referral services through accessing online
facilities. The consultant tested these services and was
impressed by the high quality of guidance received.

d. A special component associating IDRC Library and IDIN
partners located in the South would be highly cost-
effective. This would consist in a controlled experiment
for assessing the cost and quality of different databases
in terms of a clearly defined profile of development
research and training needs, regionally and inter-
regionally wise.

It is recommended that:

A special agreement be negotiated between IDIN and IDRC
library in order to run an experiment for accessing
commercial databases.

RE-7. **Production: strategies for network expansion towards so far absent countries**

Taking into account that:

a. Countries such as Canada, China, India, the USA, the USSR are so far absent from IDIN operations.

b. A significant number of national development institutions, associations and centres of excellence where strong development research, training and communication activities exist in these countries

c. The increment of IDIN information resources with information related to the activities of these institutions may expectedly increase the attractiveness of IDIN information products.

d. Incorporation of new partners should follow a pre-defined strategy. In cases where a national focal point cannot be identified, special agreements should be sought by regional associations with centers of excellence in development studies and policies in these countries. Should this be politically unfeasible, OECD would be explicitly encouraged by other IDIN partners to carry out bilateral negotiations.

It is recommended that:

Strategies and funding for expanding the geographic coverage to large and potentially information-rich countries should be made explicit in the proposal for Phase II.

RE-8.   **Production: Exploring possibilities for income generation**

Taking into account that:

a. Sustainability of IDIN will increasingly become a central concern to all partners.

b. The question of what would happen should IDRC is unable to continue supporting the project has to receive consideration and satisfactory answers should be sought.

c. Income generation will necessarily involve the selling of all or part of IDIN information products and services.

d. Yet, this is a question that require a study on existing and potential information markets and of the estimated willingness to pay by the consumers.

It is recommended that:

A specific project component be budgeted to cover the services of an international consultant linked with the commercial component of information industry, to analyze marketing strategies and income generation sources.

RE-9.   <u>**Production: Controlled experiment to test the feasibility hypothesis for building a global database**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. The adopted initial strategy of assembling a global database did not quite succeeded during Phase I because:

> Data of different level of quality flowed from the regional associations to the technical focal point of IDIN (OECD/DC); Different time strata were covered by the data, even inside a particular region, rendering the building of an acceptable quality global data base almost an impossible task; Subject scope of surveyed development institutions was too broad and encyclopedic and determined a data collection and processing burden impossible to handle by IDIN partners.

b. The feasibility of building the global encyclopedic database should be examined once a controlled experiment among IDIN partners has been undertaken. This will consist in producing a specifically defined database that will comply with the following requirements:

> Data should completely cover the chosen thematic segment

> Data coming from all regions should be collected at the same time and cover a same time span

> The database will be an information resource integrating existing research projects, institutional profiles and participant researchers, all of them described with IDIN referral format.

> Resulting information product should be rapidly elaborated and widely disseminated to users both in printed version or diskettes with attached microisis simplified version (online search and predefined printing capabilities modules active)

> A quick user reaction survey should be undertaken to determine whether the inter-regional joint synchronic effort was worthwhile.

c. This experience should be considered definite in the testing of the global database feasibility hypothesis.

d. If results achieved are positive a feasibility study for the global database should be undertaken in the context of income generation activities. The cost and timeliness of producing a global database through a co-operative should be compared with that of sub-contracting a private firm experienced in global surveys.

It is recommended that:

An experiment be undertaken to test the feasibility hypothesis. The experiment will consist in IDIN partners jointly generating, during Phase II, a high quality global database <u>covering only a specific segment</u> of development issues selected according to ICCDA's priorities.

RE-10   <u>Organization: strategies   for   further   network decentralization</u>

Taking into account that:

a. Phase I attained an uneven decentralization state among the different regions.

b. In regions where decentralization was more intense, a rather comprehensive geographical coverage was attempted in view that potential national and/or sub-regional partners were not known in advance.

c. The incorporation of each additional institution implies a high cost. Too many new entrants will mean thinly spreading scarce available resources.

d. A advisability of implementing a selective action converging at a substantially reduced number of focal points with already proven capability to take over the responsibilities decentralization.

e. A decentralization strategy should take into account a pre-defined set of priorities. In decreasing order this could be:

Strong sub-regional development institutions already leading a sub-regional institutional research and training network

Strong national development institutions capable of assuming the role of national focal point because they are already leading a national development research and training network

Strong development research and training national centers of excellence

It is recommended that:

New participants in IDIN actually covered regions be carefully, selectively and consistently added to IDIN framework on the basis of an explicit set of priorities Investments involving weaker centers should be explicitly avoided during Phase II so as to ensure better quality and robust information output at the end of the Phase. If this is achieved, IDIN is expected to reach a better position for covering the weaker points, at a later stage.

RE-11.   <u>**Organization: Tele-working everywhere**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. Tele-working is one megatrend, expected to be materialize by the end of the century, where people is expected to labor in their own work places and to exchange information and experiences through tele-communications links.

b. Tele-working implies a new way of organizing work and of working together with other partners.

c. The potential of tele-working, based on a more intensive use of telecommunications technologies and services was not fully exploited in Phase I due to budget restrictions and lack of a critical mass for experimenting.

d. The implementation of tele-working will require appropriate funding to put in place minimal communication infrastructure (communication software, modem, rental of public data network services, rental of international electronic mail services) and a short but intense training course in the use of these technologies.

e. Ideally, at least one half of networking work that formerly required travelling or physical transfer of data in Phase I, could advantageously be undertaken through tele-working mechanisms. Possible candidate activities are: training for new entrants to the network, coordination meetings, network bulletins, and data transfer.

It is recommended that:

IDIN Phase II should attempt to move quickly towards an operation predominantly characterized by tele-working.

RE-12.   **Network Management: Funding for innovation and adaptation**

Taking into account that:

a. Phase I pursued a rigidly set group of objectives and products in view of diminishing the variability of participants' work and facilitating project control.

b. The rapidly changing area of information transfer and communication continuously threatened the validity of objectives and products based on necessarily imperfect knowledge about future developments.

c. Project design is based on a number of assumptions about the behavior of the project environment, technological changes and situations affecting the institutions in charge. The dynamic of change is, however, so great that obsolescence of initial assumptions is likely to be very rapid.

d. Neither the project proposal for Phase I nor the network "culture" were explicitly generous in stimulating innovative patterns. A few experiments aiming to cope with technological changes were undertaken but they were not fully valued as "official" expected outputs of the project nor, of course, were resources available to further explore areas where promising results were to be expected.

e. A network will be successful as far as it is able to adapt to technological and organizational changes. Network survival will be facilitated, other things being equal, if a mechanism allowing for greater innovative behavior to cope with unexpected changes would have been needed.

f. It will highly desirable whether a special fund for innovation could be established. This fund will have a well known volume. Demanding institutions could have access to it through a competitive bid. Fund allocation decisions will be recommended by an inter-institutional committee where all partners should be equally represented.

It is recommended that:

A special fund be allocated to IDIN coordination and made accessible to all IDIN partners on an equal footing so that they can be able to test new concepts, and to modify strategies.

RE-13.   <u>Network Management: Stronger Coordination</u>

Taking into account that:

a. IDIN's Coordinator rotation has not been a favorable trait and that the coordinating mechanism adopted by the network was intentionally light in order to permit autonomy of the different project institutional components.

b. IDIN has to strike a balance between two types of activities. Activities autonomously undertaken by IDIN partners;Activities jointly undertaken by IDIN partners.

c. The first group of activities can be independently managed. The timing and strategies would have to be adopted in view of the peculiar institutional setting and the respective clientele. Cross communications either bilaterally, or multilaterally at meetings, or electronic conferences and electronic bulletin boards, would be enough for sharing experiences within IDIN. The second group, however, require a more effective coordination mechanism. For example, if a joint information product is envisaged as a desirable cooperative venture, somebody has got to ensure that timing and coverage of data collection and data quality standards are achieved.

d. It seems advisable that a unique coordinator be appointed for the whole of a project Phase. In this case for Phase II.Rotation could take place only after Phase II has ended or due to exceptional circumstances. IDIN coordinator has got to be a staff member of one of IDIN partners appointed by explicit mandate of the rest of IDIN Partners

It is recommended that:

One IDIN Coordinator be appointed for the whole of Phase II, with special budget allocated to fulfill the following functions:
Keep permanent contact with other IDIN partners.This will involve travelling, and frequent message interchange through telecommunications links.
Act as IDIN network counterpart to other institutions: IDRC, donors, etc.
Undertake necessary evaluation, monitoring and planning exercises covering the whole network
Provide advise to other IDIN partners in the evaluation, planning and monitoring of their own projects.
Produce and electronic bulletin board, including a printed version of the same.

RE-14. **Network Management: IDIN corporate image**

Taking into account that:

a. The proposal for Phase I did not contain provision for the "political" marketing of IDIN components within their respective institutional settings.

b. This strategy led to a situation where the "corporate image" of IDIN is rather diluted and weak, and characterized by an unprotected flank in terms of institutional visibility of the network.

It is recommended that:

. A budget component for Phase II be allocated to IDIN coordination so a top management consultant can be sub-contracted to design a strategy for the "political-institutional" marketing of IDIN.

RE-15.   <u>**Technology: Enhanced base of information technologies (hardware/software)**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. IDIN partners are basically operating with micro-computer centered technologies.

b. In some cases the available equipment will need a reposition soon, in others is technically obsolete and in other will be insufficient to provide the needed data processing and transmission power.

c. Access to telecommunications infrastructures are still rather weak

It is recommended that:

Hardware/software replacement and expansion are taken be explicitly be taken into account when designing IDIN Phase II proposal.

RE-16. <u>Technology: Scanning mechanism for detecting, testing and adapting new information technologies)</u>

Taking into account that:

a. IDIN network has already covered substantial ground in the testing, adaptation and mastery of externally acquired technology

b. Testing, adaptation and mastery of the technology was undertaken with sacrifice by an overburdened technical staff, mainly at OECD/DC.

c. Experiences in Phase I suggest the importance for IDIN of having access to a nucleus of activities devoted to the regular scanning, acquisition and testing of new information technologies that are appearing or will appear in the market.

d. An important activity of the nucleus will be to disseminate regularly (by fax or electronic mail) the results of the testing.

It is recommended that:

A small nucleus of information technologies scanning, testing and early warning be created within IDIN.

RE-17.   <u>**Proposed Objectives for Phase II**</u>

Taking into account:

a. The strategy and the tactics suggested in the conclusions

b. The need the proposal for Phase II be structured according to general and specific objectives

It is recommended that:

The following general and specific objectives be adopted for Phase II:

General Objectives for Phase II :

g1.   **Generation of intermediate and high value added information products and services** on development institutions, specialists and projects

g2.   **Create the conditions for establishing development intelligence capabilities** in the various regions participating in IDIN

g3.   **Acquire knowledge** on aspects where experience is available in IDIN is insufficient: income generation sources and the test of the construction of a high-quality global database.

Specific Objectives for Phase II :

i.   **Enhanced connections** between IDIN partners and other institutional and personal networks related with development research, training and communications.

ii.   **Augmented exploitation** of existing information resources and services specializing in development research, training and communications that would complement IDIN databases.

iii.   **Identification of income generation sources** and mechanisms that will enable IDIN partners to increasingly becoming self-reliant in the maintenance of databases on development institutions and development research project existing and taking place both in developing countries and Europe.

iv.   **Stimulation of information products design experiences** in the context of integrated development research-training-communications teams

v.   **Further decentralization** of data collection, processing and dissemination of information concerning development institutions and development research projects existing and taking place both in developing countries and Europe.

vi. **Development and/or adaptation** of existing intellectual, computer and telecommunications technologies for providing cost/effective referral services in support of development research and training.

vii. **Strengthening** of IDIN network coordination and IDIN management mechanisms

RE-18. **Distributed Networking**

Taking into account that:

a. The pattern of distribution of functions and responsibilities was adopted on the basis of what was considered to be needed in 1988.

b. The different comparative advantages for exercising responsibilities that, being of common interest to the network, are available in each partner institution. These comparative advantages are determined by many factors such as expertise available, geographical location, mission of parent institution, technological endowment, and so on.

c. A distributed network is an schema where each partner accepts to be in charge of one or more functions that are of common interest to all participants in the network because it enjoyed a greater comparative advantage with respect to aspects such as: operating costs; higher quality expertise, geographic location, supportive institutional environment, etc.

d. A distributed network can be represented as a ring where the flows of value added services and products that are common to the network are originated by different participants and are then shared and distributed to the whole. The ring configuration differs from that of a starred network in that this later requires a concentration of all expertise in one central coordinating body.

e. Value-added services and products that can be shared in a network such as IDIN are: training, technical assistance, information gathering, information analysis, keyboarding, database integration, database distribution, publications, electronic conference coordination, printed or electronic bulletin, network coordination, etc.

It is recommended :

The adoption of a distributed network organization.

RE-19. <u>**Budget structure**</u>

Taking into account that:

a. That the budget should help in making viable the functioning of a distributed network

b. That each IDIN partner should receive funds for its own regional operation and for the provision of general services that are common to the network

It is recommended that:

The budget be divided according to two components: funds to be allocated to regional activities and funds allowing for undertaking distributed networking responsibilities.

RE-20. <u>Lobbying</u>

Taking into account that:

a. The scarce international visibility of IDIN

b. The potential IDIN might have as one of the more promising and dynamic areas of ICCDA

It is recommended that:

Executive secretaries of the regional associations participating in ICCDA and OECD/DC chief executives that contacts and discussion are promoted and held with potentially interested donor agencies in supporting IDIN. Phase II.

EPILOGUE

After completing the report the consultant has the uneasy feeling of limitation in the means that has been prepared to communicate his findings and thoughts to others. A written piece of text once finished does not normally do justice to the richness, hues, and varieties of ideas, information and suggestions received. This happens to be the case in this international mission. Many things has remained to be said, further explained or clarified.

In this stage of perplexity, two elements come vividly into mind and reflect the adequate spirit with which the presented analysis and proposals could be looked again.

The first one, refers to the place the **protagonist** has occupy in a project such as IDIN. This agent is, of course, the **development specialist**.

Cadman ATTA-MILLS produced, in my view, a brilliant synthesis of the role of the social scientist in development (Atta-Mills, 1979). This quotation might help in reminding all of us who by different means have been involved in IDIN, that the ultimate mission of IDIN is the offering of intellectual tools and opportunities to a human being who is expected to play one or more of the following roles in a national society or international environment:

"An analyst of society; a commentator on the direction of social change and the evolution of human condition;

" A theoretician, a researcher who seeks to understand, illuminate (and not to mystify) the mechanics of social change;

" A visionary who seeks to present visions of more desirable societies, alternative patterns of organization of society, as well as (and more importantly) the nature of alliances that can struggle for, initiate and sustain a transition towards the alternative pattern of organization of society"

In what ways can IDIN Phase I help this human being to be a better analyst and commentator; a better researcher, a better visionary? What are the roles this agent can be asked to play in the information and communication area so as to render these substantive support activities more relevant to his/her projects and dreams?

The second aspect is the vivid remembrance of Pauline Ostwich actively looking for data in Chile to undertake a study on the pattern of utilization of information about development institutions activities by development scientist. As a first class researcher in information sciences, she knew about the limitations of existing knowledge on the behavior and dynamics of information requirements of our protagonist. And also knew., that information services, whether they operate in networks or not, will be finally limited by their knowledge on substantive specialists and their willingness and political ability to organize joint team works with the development specialists.

Regretfully, an industrial culture prevails in most information services. This culture implies the generation and delivery of information products and services to an outsider consumer, frequently unknown, sometimes detached and in a few cases perceived as arrogant, all this with the magic hope that what was delivered will eventually satisfied the recipient.

A cultural change is under way showing to the need to incorporate the so-called "user"- an abstract and de-personalized concept- as an active component of the information team. The creation and social diffusion of this culture will need new types of training, both offered to development specialist, information-communication specialists and both together.

I do hope that IDIN can, from now on, incorporate itself into this new cultural trend!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Naturally all errors and mistakes that still remain in the report might contain are uniquely of my responsibility.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

ACRONYMS
(Bold text indicates IDIN Partners)

ADIPA.   Association on Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific.

AICARDES. Association of Arab Institutes and Centres for Economic and Social Development Research.

CEPAL.   Comisión Económica para América Latina.

CLACSO.   Latin American Social Science Council.

CLADES.   Centro Latinoamericano de Documentación Económica y Social.

CODESRIA. Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa.

EADI.   European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes.

ICCDA.   Inter-Regional Co-ordinating Committee of Development Associations.

IDIN.   International Development Information Network.

IDRC.   International Development Research Centre.

IDRIS.   Inter-Agency Development Research Information System.

OECD.DC.   Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation. Development Centre.

UN.ACCIS. United Nations. Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems.

UNDP.   United Nations Development Programme.

ANNEX 2

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ANNEX 3

IDIN PHASE I: QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF SOME TECHNICAL DIMENSIONS

A preliminary result of the visits carried out by the consultant to the headquarters of IDIN partner institutions has been a qualitative view of what IDIN has technically accomplished during Phase I and what are the major pending technical problems to be solved during Phase II.

1. First layer of information infrastructure accomplished

Information infrastructure is an encompassing term that includes trained information specialists, information technologies and information resources.

A major investment was done in the <u>training</u> of technical people.

Resources for training were allocated mainly in support of staff of the regional associations' secretariats directly involved in IDIN activities. However, in many cases this training went beyond and covered regional association's member institutions or institutions related with member institutions.

This formation and skill's upgrading exercise was on the whole effective for transferring operational abilities and for transmitting co-operation attitudes to the recipients. Less successful or intense, however, were the efforts to train trainers.

IDIN has brought about the formation of a group of trained assistants in charge of the technical operations of the project. The dissemination of knowledge through this kind of training is an almost finalized task within the Regional Association's Secretariats but is just starting at the sub-regional and national levels.

The training took place at various levels and instances:

> On-the job training at OECD headquarters;
> Workshops in the context of ICCDA meetings;
> Participation in workshops and other training events offered by institutions external to IDIN; etc.

The trained technicians conform the basis over which the next technical steps within IDIN (Phase II) could be based.

Some of these people, the ones with higher potential could be trained for training other people. This will unable to speed up the decentralization process in the network.

Obviously, each regional association secretariat is expected to take steps to ensure the retention of this personnel and to continue investing on them so that they do not become obsolete professionals in a rapidly changing field: information transfer.

In terms of <u>information technologies</u> a distinction has got to be made between **intellectual** technologies for conceptually elaborating the information and **physical** technologies required to process, store and transmit the information. A major issue in the realm of international information systems is the question of compatibility of intellectual and of physical technologies so that information flows are not hampered by artificial differences. IDIN Phase I brought about technical changes at these two levels, that would hardly have existed in absence of the project.

In terms of <u>physical information technologies</u>, the following impacts can be associated, although not exclusively, with the existence of IDIN.

    a.   <u>Diffusion of microcomputer technologies</u> : IDIN advocated, from its early beginnings, the use of microcomputer technology after Pauline Ostwich's report.

           A substantial contribution of IDIN was the introduction of computer technology in a few of the regional associations secretariats. While in some cases IDIN project was the first instance to introduce this tool, in others the project stimulated, even further, an early adoption of the technology in the context of development research projects and other means.

           The adoption and use of an international, public domain software -UNESCO's cds/micro isis- was also promoted by the project. Also, software interfaces were tested in the context of a few of the project components to ensure the transfer of data between different software packages.

    b.   <u>Telecommunication technologies</u> : IDIN created opportunities in some of the associations for the introduction of electronic mail. This is however, an area where the full potential of these services has just begun to be explored.

In terms Of <u>intellectual information technologies</u>, emphasis was given to tasks that would ensure the adoption of methodologies, norms and standards for data preparation and information interchange. In the case of IDIN Phase I, these tasks were:

    c.   <u>Diffusion of compatible data formats</u> : Two data formats were disseminated through IDIN Phase I.

       The <u>format for bibliographic entries</u> represented a new or alternative useful standard for many development associations and institutions. It was based on a study of existing widely used international formats.

       The <u>format for referral entries</u> was designed to handle records corresponding to institutional profiles, research in progress and specialists. A myriad of formats were in use for the elaboration of inventories of projects, directories of specialists and institutions in the development field, but there were few widely accepted international standards. The widespread utilization of the format developed through IDIN Phase I, on the whole very simple and logic, had an impact within the network and could even offer an important contribution beyond the context of IDIN in other information networks.

    d.   <u>Diffusion of data codings</u> : IDIN permitted the further promotion of an existing tool created to facilitate the retrieval of information from databases and to ensure the substantive connectivity of development information systems: the OECD Macrothesaurus.

       The Macrothesaurus was already being used in various regions. However IDIN, contributed to its further dissemination and stimulated the identification of new local terminology that in due course could be suggested to the agencies coordinating the development of this tool.

In terms of <u>information resources</u>, IDIN attained a remarkable data collection, data organization and dissemination effort was carried out to assist the development communities.

During IDIN (Phase I) 1988-1991, the following databases were produced either in magnetic media or printed form:

	Res. Proj.	Specialists	Institutions	Bibliogr.
Arab Countries	M P	M	M P	M
Africa	M P	M	M	M
Asia and the Pac.	M P	M	M	M
Europe	M		M	
Latin America	M P1 P2	M	M P	M

(M) indicates availability in magnetic media
(P) indicated printed version of a subset of the database (i.e. a directory)

Although it is true that the information contained in the databases, either in magnetic media or in printed forms, is of heterogeneous quality, no doubt the procedures are already in place for enriching and up-dating their contents.

Concrete results were:

a.<u>Compatible. Magnetic media databases</u> : information resources could potentially be added up in larger subsets and constitute a global database.

b.<u>Wide distribution of printed products (directories)</u>
Directories were widely distributed and possessed, in general, a good technical quality, although they seldom contained information not always comprehensive or up-to-date.

On the whole, in our opinion, this series of printed products, had as its main impact, the definition of an external profile for IDIN and helped providing physical visibility to the project.

All the accomplishments mentioned in this section render now possible to:

Add more information to the databases;
Incorporate new software and technologies (hypertext, optical scanning, cd/rom,..);
Install external databases;
Develop new applications dealing with higher value added information products;
Further enhance information distribution media and channels

2.   Technical support weaknesses

The functioning of IDIN "production system", namely referral database construction and dissemination of information contained in the databases through information products and services require a group of peripheral support activities.

These activities are critical to the successful operation of the production system. Among them the following could be mentioned: transfer of technology within the network; technical documentation of network processes and communication links between IDIN partners.

The transfer of technologies within a network requires at least that the following ideal conditions are met:

That technologies are tested
That knowledge on the tested technology is documented before the transfer
That people be trained.
That follow-up training is ensured
That trainees remain stable in their posts
That permanent changes in the technologies are carefully filtered and monitored

These conditions were met in varying degrees during IDIN Phase I

Technologies were tested, but it was learned that the testing was more time and resource consuming than what was expected.

Knowledge was transferred, but the documentation could not be fully developed. Documenting is a highly intellectual-intensive effort that require high level people to be available for the task.

People were trained following different methods. The options ranged from massive seminars where the cost of the trainer was spread out through many recipients, but where less direct supervision and in-depth interaction were possible, to highly personalized, high quality, trainer-intensive "etages" in the Development Center in Paris. It was learned, although no thorough study has yet been made, that different training methods were not equally cost-effective.

Follow-up training was difficult to implement. Resources for this were apparently not envisioned.

The stability of trainees as full participants in the project. was uneven. Phase I permitted to become aware of the fragility of human resources structures within IDIN project components. A few desertions were caused by unexpected personal events. In other cases, lack of incentives to newly trained people and/or the attraction exercised by extra-mural markets caused desertions. Also it happened that people after receiving the training were rotated to other positions outside the scope of the project, engendering a loss of training investment.

Preparation of training material was discovered to a difficult and also time consuming task.

Monitoring of exogenous changes in information technologies created opportunities for simultaneous and uncoordinated uses of different versions of the same technologies. The differential paces with which various versions were distributed and adopted became a source of poor communication and incompatibilities.

One of the functions of the technical coordinating body, or the IDIN coordination, was to monitor and alert about projected changes. Although this was done formally or informally at ICCDA's meetings, this function would have require more resources so that technological changes could have been planned, anticipated and documented.

Knowledge captured during the testing of other techniques and during the utilization of the existing tools has not been fully documented. This situation has been produced due to a lack of sufficient resources for allowing the information specialists working in the project to be dedicated to the task. Alternatively, there were no resources for subcontracting these developments.

The preparation of technical support documentation present a mixed situation. Phase I produced, on the one hand, manuals on the use of bibliographic and referral formats. These were major tasks and had a positive impact on the evolution of the network.

On the other hand there were weaknesses in the following areas:

Absence of Training kits to enable recipients to learn about:
Primary information gathering
Preparation of databases records
Basic informatics culture
Microisis utilization
Management of databases
Generation of information products and services
Translation of existing manuals to regional associations'
working languages other than english

The absence of this documentation will certainly act as a
deterrent of further decentralization of the network.

Communication links also were rather weak and in some cases
constituted a stumbling block for coordinating actions between
the several institutional IDIN components.

Apparently, at the beginning of the project, there was the hope
that both North-South and South-South communications were going
to function at a tolerable level of expenditure and efficiency.

North-South communications functioned reasonably well in terms of
telephone, fax and postage in that order. South-South
communications presented a totally different picture In this
case, postage, telephone and fax connections were extremely
difficult and unpredictable. National postal services and
airlines connections were very poor or non-existing.

Electronic mail connection through academic or non-profit making
networks (BITNET,INTERNET,APC,..) are a promise but funds were
not anticipated to permit the acquisition of a real experience.

3. Other unexplored modern information technology

IDIN components have basically mastered database technology
(cds/micro isis and, in some cases, commercial packages of the
Dbase kind) and word processing technologies.

Apart from experimentation done at CLACSO and at the OECD/DC,
little attention has apparently been given to hypertext and
hypermedia technology.

If IDIN components got involved in this area they would be able
to impact people involved in substantive development research
intellectual work and also intellectual work of information
specialists. Indeed, hypertext has been included under the
heading of "nouvelles technologies de l'intelligence" in a recent
book written by the french author Levy.

For development specialists these technologies are tools not only useful for accessing larger amounts of information, data and images, but can be considered as tools that can directly be brought in during <u>the very thinking process</u>.

For information specialists, hypertext and the like offer new possibilities for enhancing the information products, by making them more attractive, more integrated and more flexible and easy to use in terms of their utilization.

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ANNEX 4

IDIN PHASE II: PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

It is recommended that:

The indicated partner institution be asked to undertake-during IDIN Phase II-the tasks and responsibilities listed below. The suggested scheme of labor division, if adopted by IDIN partners, would be transitory and would be revised after Phase II had been completed.

TRAINING :BASIC LEVEL

Contents: Data collection methods; creation and maintenance of databases on development institutions, research projects and publications; computer literacy; database online-searching techniques; preparation of basic training manuals.

Suggested responsibility : CODESRIA

Justification: CODESRIA has a group of highly motivated documentalists fully conversant with IDIN basic intellectual and computer technologies. They are also endowed with the personal traits required for becoming an outstanding training team.

TRAINING: ADVANCED LEVEL

Contents: desk-top publishing of databases segments; hypertext; hypermedia; cd/rom construction; electronic mail; consultation of online databases; network management; marketing. Preparation of advanced training manuals. Some of these functions may require the subcontracting of experts.

Suggested responsibility: OECD/DC

Justification: Highly skilled human resources, experience accumulated in the testing and experimentation with advanced information technologies plus its location in one of the hubs of the North, places OECD/DC in a privileged position to undertake this job.

TESTING AND/OR DEVELOPMENT OF INTELLECTUAL AND COMPUTER -BASED TECHNOLOGIES

Contents: intellectual technologies: maintenance and adaptation of common tools and procedures (IDIN formats; microisis updates; basic operational manuals; Macrothesaurus)

Suggested responsibility : OECD/DC

Justification: Same reasons as above

INCOME GENERATION AND MARKETING OF INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Contents:Studies of income generation sources for IDIN; IDIN institutional marketing to raise corporate image (videos, pamphlets); adaptation of marketing techniques; manuals.

Suggested responsibility :ADIPA

Justification: Sound institutional marketing at ADIPA's plus access to valuable experience and expertise existing in some successful countries in Asia, place ADIPA in a favorable position to undertake the tasks.

INTER-REGIONAL DATABASE INTEGRATION (TEST OF GLOBAL DATABASE PRODUCTION)

Contents: Merge of regional segments of development institutions and research databases; final editing of databases.

Suggested responsibility : EADI

Justification: Experience already accumulated during IDIN pilot project at EADI/IVO/University of Tilburg is an asset for IDIN.

ACQUISITION OF COMPLEMENTARY DATABASES
AND CONVERSION TO IDIN FORMATS

Contents: Regular preparation of regional and/ or thematic compatible segments of global databases akin to IDIN databases: IDRIS; ACCIS; INRES;UNESCO Social Sciences; British Library Research Projects; US Library of Congress; Down loads from commercial databases (agreements with IDRC library)

Suggested responsibility : EADI

Justification: EADI/IVO/UNiversity of Tilburg has excelled in producing good quality results in this regard.

CONVENTIONAL INFORMATION PRODUCTS

Contents: Preparation of segments of databases in printed form (end of cycle of published directories); Mailing of products; operation of computer
systems that can be accessible remotely and where IDIN latest version of databases are installed.

Suggested responsibility :OECD/DC

Justification: OECD/DC has accumulated considerable experience and has access to good technical infrastructure and contacts with the best outside expertise.

TELECOMMUNICATION OPERATIONS

Contents: Testing of electronic mail; electronic bulletin board and tele-conference services; creation of services and animation and encouragement of circulation of electronic messages within IDIN.

Suggested responsibility : **CLACSO**

Justification: **CLACSO** institutional accumulated experience and highly motivated staff justify the choice.

NETWORK INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Contents: Organization and hosting of IDIN network regular meetings (once during phase II). Organization and hosting of other international meetings of interest to IDIN network.

Suggested responsibility : **AICARDES**

Justification: Good logistic support, favorable geographical location, accessibility, city security, reasonable accommodation and administrative costs suggest **AICARDES** Secretariat as an institution and Tunisia as a place as good choices for IDIN inter-regional meetings.

NETWORK COORDINATION

Contents: Preparation of meeting agendas; coordination of evaluation and planning exercises. Coordination of tele-meetings. liaison function with donor agencies;Electronic bulletin board and Newsletter

Suggested responsibility : **CLACSO**

Justification: **CLACSO's** accumulated experience in IDIN Coordination, close participation in the evaluation/projection exercise, experience in project formulation, effective publisher of IDIN network bulletin, etc.. are all reasons that suggest the convenience of asking CLACSO to stay in this role during Phase II.

ANNEX 5

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