4. EVALUATION DESIGN

4.1 Approach

The recommended approach to the evaluation of Consular Services is to start with a conceptual evaluation of the entire program, and to follow this by a more in-depth look at certain aspects of program process, plus a quantitative evaluation of some elements of effectiveness.

A conceptual evaluation requires the program to meet the least stringent conditions of the different evaluation types. It is not necessary to be able to articulate the objectives in a form amenable to measurement, to establish concrete links between activities and their effects, or to have program effects insulated against influences by events outside the control of the program manager. An evaluation of this type normally includes an examination of the program mandate and the identification and study of issues related to the program. Subjective determination of intended and unintended program impacts is made, together with an assessment of alternative ways to obtain the desired program outputs or effects. The principal benefits of such an exercise are likely to be role clarification and recommendations for alternative program design.

A process evaluation, on the other hand, generally is undertaken with a view to improving the efficiency of the program design for possible resource savings. It can be carried out when the activities are coherent, the process is reasonably well defined, and both the process and the outputs are amendable to measurement. The actual program effects on the environment may be difficult to identify or measure, but this is not an obstacle, as the main thrust is to do the same thing better. Some aspects of the activities carried out at the consular posts satisfy the necessary conditions.*

Finally, an effectiveness evaluation is principally concerned with identifying and measuring the program effects or impacts, and the extent to which they achieve program objectives. In order to perform such a study, both objectives and effects must be clear and a causal link between activities (or outputs) and effects must be discernible.

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* In many respects, a process evaluation may be similar to a broad operational audit, but the emphasis is on alternative ways and resource levels for carrying out the process with greater efficiency or economy, rather than on the adequacy of the particular existing systems systems, procedures and controls.