is also introducing new systems for monitoring program activity and performance at Posts. An important aspect of these processes will be the need to employ common definitions of program objectives, activities and results, and thus common indicators and measures. The Department also needs to introduce consistency between the data and information bases being used for various planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes. The study on "Management Information Systems Needs at Headquarters" points out that, to carry out their functions (which include planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating), departmental managers need information that encompasses transactions and events originating from planning, resource allocation, financial accounting, personnel utilization, substantive activities, program delivery, and related control and administrative processes in the Department. The study further noted deficiencies in the comprehensiveness, accuracy and timeliness of data in the existing automated systems and outlined in a general fashion data requirements throughout the Department.

If these requirements are to be effectively satisfied the Department will have to introduce a policy on data management. To reduce the problems of fragmentation that result from the operation of systems primarily designed to support the activities of individual departmental units, the focus of management must shift from systems to the data they produce. By standardizing data and processes across systems it will be possible to ensure the production of consistent information for managers. They will find it much easier than at present to extract program-related data from systems. The end result will be that corporate management information needs will be efficiently served including those articulated at short notice.

This planning document sets out the elements of a data management policy for the Department. It involves, among other things, the preparation of departmental standards for data bases, a departmental dictionary, and a glossary of departmentally authorized terms and coding schemes. This project must have priority, in order that future systems design can proceed on the basis of a clearly enunciated departmental policy.

If the Department fails to introduce a data management policy the result will be systems fragmentation, inconsistent definitions of data, uncertainty in various versions of the same data element, inability to produce cross functional data, redundant data storage, and multiple sources of documentation. Managers will not be able to obtain quickly the information they need. Moreover they will not be able to have complete confidence in its reliability.

## 4.6.5 BASIS FOR FUTURE POLICY

An effective Departmental data management policy will require:

(1) the creation of an unambiguous definition of each data element used by or produced by the Department's Informatic systems. (For example, three different application areas may refer to "date payment made" in their business activity. If group A believes "date payment made" is the date the cheque requisition is signed; group B believes that "date payment made" is the date written on the cheque; and group C believes that "date payment made" is the date that the requisition was sent to DSS then each will have given a different meaning to the same data element. Thus any consolidated information which purported to represent the totality of payments made by, say, March 31, would be meaningless. If, however there was a common definition used by each group, then the consolidated information produced would be accurate).

(2) Knowledge of what data elements are held within the Department and in what system they are held (e.g. an employee's name, job skills, experience profile etc. are held in the Personnel Management Information System).

(3) Knowledge of the attributes of particular data elements (e.g. frequency of collection or update, source of authority for its definition, and the systems which use it).