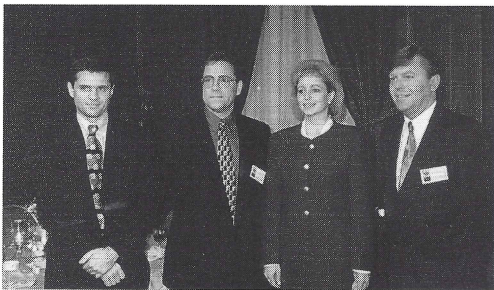


Ottawa Meeting

Executing Agencies Chart New Strategies



L-r: Olexandr Pavliuk, Institute for East-West Studies, Ukraine; Helgi Eyford, PSU Manager, CBIE; Olena Kucherenko, Director for USA and Canada, UNARD, Ukraine; and Lubomyr Markevych, Director, CUPO.

In late November, 1997, a Canadian Executing Agency Forum was organized for all CIDA-funded technical assistance projects working in Ukraine. This event was organized by the Program Support Unit (PSU) of the CUPP program in Ottawa. In all, over 60 project managers and CIDA officers participated.

The purpose of this first-time meeting was to give program managers an opportunity to meet each other, acquaint themselves with other projects in Ukraine, and to share knowledge and experience. It was the first time that such a group met, bringing together a powerhouse of information and a formidable wealth of expertise.

Following a welcome by Helgi Eyford, Chair of the Forum and manager of the PSU, round table introductions were made with three-minute overviews of each of the 33 projects represented. (Note: See volume 5/#3 of the Monitor for listing of all current CIDA projects in Ukraine). The format of the Forum was designed to provide maximum opportunities for learning and networking. Presentations were made by CIDA officials, project managers speaking on topics of common interest, directors of non-Canadian foundations, agencies working in Ukraine and, to balance the picture, experts from Ukraine. The keynote speech was delivered by Olena Kucherenko, Director for Canada and the USA, Ukrainian Agency for Reconstruction and Development (UNARD).

CIDA's Country Program Manager for Ukraine, Réal Lalande, and Michael Sperber, Senior Project Officer, provided participants with an update on CIDA's current country strategy for Ukraine and a summary of recent trends and events which have helped to shape that strategy. The pace of reform has been slower than anticipated and has not met the expectations of many funding agencies, CIDA included. With the upcoming Parliamentary elections this year and then Presidential vote in 1999, there is reason to expect that reform has been put on the back burner. The concern now is for projects to be designed to maximize impact on the transition process, to increase the capacity of institutions to influ-

ence the political and economic reform process in Ukraine. This is part of the rationale behind CIDA's Results Based Management (RBM) programming strategy for Ukraine.

Other CIDA officers went into the nitty-gritty of working with the Agency. Topics ranged from proposal writing and project eligibility to the new internet-based MERX system (previously the Open Bidding System, OBS). Reporting procedures were addressed, as were other administrative responsibilities which lie on the shoulders of Executing Agencies. The purpose and methodology of the dreaded evaluation process was outlined to the collective groan of the good-natured audience which already considered itself well-acquainted with CIDA procedures.

After five years of first-hand experience in Kyiv as Director of the Canada-Ukraine Partners Office (CUPO), Lubomyr Markevych addressed the question of effectively managing a program in Ukraine. Working in Kyiv since the days immediately after Ukraine's Declaration of Independence, he offered practical insight into what it took to set up and run one of Canada's most successful and high-profile undertakings in Ukraine. Topics included the need for a Canadian manager in Ukraine, the challenges of hiring local staff, what to look for in a local partner organization, and the legal and bureaucratic barriers to establishing an office.

From the Canadian perspective, Helgi Eyford addressed the topic of choosing good Canadian cooperants. The importance of screening candidates and sending the right people is underlined by the estimate that the success of a project is often only 50% dependent on their technical expertise, while the rest hinges on their cross-cultural and personal skills. Candidates can be prepared for the stress of working in another culture through pre-departure briefings which are available free to CIDA projects through DFAIT. Language barriers and the importance of choosing a good interpreter/facilitator were addressed, as were the disadvantages of confining one's contacts to the now-sizable "expatriate ghetto" in Kyiv.

Representing the large foreign donor community was Nick Deychakiwsky, Director of the Eurasia Foundation, and Marie-Aline Wood of the Economic Development Institute (EDI) of The World Bank. Both acknowledged that the rapid influx of international donors into Ukraine resulted in a lack of coordination and overlapping and duplication in some projects. As a result, there is an effort underway to coordinate these efforts, pool resources, and set up an efficient co-financing system. One example is a consortium of 8 partners currently working in the civil society

sector in Crimea, each bringing a different contribution to the project, and together providing grants to some 25 local organizations.

In order to provide a well-rounded perspective, organizers included two Ukrainians on the roster. On a note which was decidedly more optimistic than that of the CIDA officers, Olexander Pavliuk of the Institute for East-West Studies in Ukraine pointed out some of Ukraine's positive accomplishments, including financial stability and an improving climate in relations with neighbouring countries. Discussion included the role of the



"apparat" in policy formation and implementation, and the need to replace these middle-level obstructors with up-and-coming young reformers. Pavliuk stressed the importance of continuing foreign assistance as an impetus for reform and underlined the importance of exposing Ukrainians to Western education via study visits.

In her keynote speech, Olena Kucherenko, Director, UNARD, which coordinates foreign assistance to Ukraine, outlined the measures taken to simplify procedures and to cut red tape for donors who want to work in Ukraine. Referring to various Canadian projects, Kucherenko showed an understanding of Canada's programming strategy. While acknowledging Canada's good planning and the effectiveness of most CIDA projects in Ukraine, she nevertheless stressed the importance of donors being more responsive to Ukraine's self-identified priorities. She singled out agriculture as an example of a sector that needs reform and funding.

The program managers of the Canadian Executing Agencies gave high marks for the initiative which brought them together, providing them with an opportunity to see the bigger picture of Canada's activities in Ukraine, and leaving them with a feeling of belonging to a larger team. They were unanimous in their desire that such meetings would be held on a regular basis in future.