



# SAS® AIDS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE EFFORTS

DevTech Systems develops SAS® applications for USAID

## Industry

Government

## Business Issue

Provide complex data analysis capabilities for US foreign aid workers.

## Solution

Information delivery and analytic technologies from SAS.

## Benefits

SAS® provides data for important policy decisions in minutes.

The United States has a long history of helping people overseas who are struggling to make a better life, recovering from a disaster or striving to live in a free and democratic country. For more than 40 years, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has worked to achieve these goals by supporting health, agriculture, education, economic growth, global partnerships, humanitarian assistance, the environment, and democracy and governance around the world.

Today, much of the business intelligence behind USAID's lifesaving work is powered by SAS software. Whether immunizing children in sub-Saharan Africa, providing safe drinking water in Latin America or offering disaster relief to tsunami victims in South Asia, USAID officials can discover and share important information about the people they help through a powerful, Web-enabled application called the Economic and Social Database (ESDB).

Designed by DevTech Systems, a Virginia-based technical consulting firm that specializes in public policy affairs, ESDB combines, analyzes and presents data from more than 50 different data sources worldwide. It enables USAID employees to research broad information about various countries or compare detailed data from specific sectors of a country on everything from civil liberties to educational trends.

"The database is very useful in responding to simple data requests and for discover-

ing answers to complex questions that require in-depth analyses," says Frank Martin, Senior Economist at DevTech. "It helps USAID staff monitor country indicators and assists them in making policy and operational decisions."

## Complex information requests in minutes

DevTech relies on SAS to warehouse the data and to deliver reports via the Web. Available to USAID and US State Department employees through the agencies' intranets, ESDB provides information by country and by hundreds of categories, including population, gross domestic product, growth rates, trade data and government finance statistics. Data also can be sorted by years or queried by various combinations of variables.

The DevTech team also used SAS to produce a series of standard tables, graphs and charts based on the most popular queries to the system. Pre-packaged for speed and ease of use, these reports are updated each time the data changes.

## DEVTECH

"Many users are surprised at how easy it is to access this complex data," says John Gold, Senior Economic Analyst for DevTech. Recently, for example, a researcher for USAID's Conflict Management and Mitigation office contacted DevTech with an urgent request for population statistics for all

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**Jennifer Powell**

Senior Economic Analyst  
DevTech Systems Inc.

failed states – those countries that can no longer perform basic functions like education, security or governance.

After requesting the information, she asked, “Is that even possible?”

“Not only is it possible,” replied Gold, “but it’s already on your computer.” He described where to find the population charts for each country, and the researcher was able to access the data immediately.

“This is a researcher in the State Department who is obviously responding to some need or growing problem in the world,” explains Gold. “With SAS, we can immediately address the request and help provide information that might otherwise take days to gather and analyze. Instead, with SAS, she can do it at her leisure in an hour or so.”

Kim Schneider, Senior Economic Analyst at DevTech, describes another request from a researcher in the West Africa office, where a major USAID policy initiative is to increase exports from West Africa to the United States. “He wanted to know, on a quarterly basis, the region’s exports to the United States.”

Schneider explains: “It’s hard to find data that show exports from these countries, so we compiled US import data from the countries in West Africa and sent an e-mail within hours that presented the data by country and by product.”

**Public economic data online**

In addition to the ESDB and its associated reports, DevTech also turned to SAS to develop a series of publicly available sites that report worldwide economic and education data. Those systems include:

- **The Greenbook** – Officially named US Overseas Loans and Grants, Obligations and Loan Authorizations, the Greenbook provides a historical record of US foreign aid to the rest of the world.
- **The Global Education Database**– Primarily of interest to educators, this site offers a menu-driven, interactive computer program for accessing education data compiled from USAID and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- **Trade Capacity Building Database** – Offering access to the full set of survey data in an easy-to-use, Web-based format, the TCB compiles and reports information that

comes directly from US agencies that support trade capacity building activities in developing countries.

- **Latin America and the Caribbean: Selected Economic and Social Data**– Providing a robust set of data on the countries of the region.

“We have the power of SAS behind everything we develop on our intranet and on the Internet,” says Jennifer Powell, a Senior Economic Analyst at DevTech. “With SAS, we don’t have to convert our data. We can do anything with your data and put it out there. Graphs, regression, modeling and everything else that SAS can do is available to thousands of users online. You can’t do that in any other package.”

Martin agrees, saying SAS helps bring powerful data analysis capabilities to all of USAID’s employees. “Instead of limiting the products we can make available using USAID numbers, SAS helps us provide additional, unlimited levels of analyses and information that’s derived from those numbers.”



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