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A PROPOSED STRATEGY OF ACTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A NATIONAL NUTRITION PLAN FOR MOROCCO

Draft Proposal for Consideration by the Government of Morocco

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I. Background

Significant progress has been made in Morocco to increase agricultural production yield. With progress toward growth of the per capita food supply, increasing attention needs to be given to the actual food consumption by the population. Many officials in the Government of Morocco recognize that nutritional considerations are important in national development programs. However, a major question must be answered by government planners and policy makers before scarce resources can be allocated to alleviating malnutrition. This question is the relative importance of the obstacles to national development represented by poor nutrition. It is an extremely complex problem and its evaluation must look at factors as diverse as:

- The alternative uses of land: for example, high-yielding, relatively low-nutritional-value crops vs. more nutritious, low-yielding ones, import substitution or export-oriented agriculture, or perhaps cultivation of industrial raw material crops.
- The effects of changing nutrition on population growth.
- The positive and negative complementarity of health and nutrition.
- Broad social and political factors involved in major policy decisions ranging from employment opportunities to ethnic food preferences.

Moroccan Government leaders and planners have concentrated on increasing the quantity of food to meet the caloric needs of the people.

This policy cannot realistically be expected to change to include the emphasis of more nutritious food unless the benefits of such a policy change can expand economic growth and increase social equity. Planners traditionally have viewed problems of nutrition as being in the sphere of social welfare and health rather than in that of economic growth. Faced with this attitude, it is necessary to devise some mechanism that will not only enable policy makers to measure the impact of nutrition on economic growth, but will also provide a method for incorporating the various affected and affecting sectors of the Moroccan economy to achieve this goal.

A systems approach to the study of nutrition in Morocco will permit planners, among others, to evaluate the effects of alternative investments and strategies on the nutritional status of the population.

II. Proposed Goals.

It is proposed that the goals of the development of a national nutrition strategy include the following:

- To identify and implement intervention schemes which will upgrade the nutritional intake of priority target groups, focusing on infants, pre-school age children and pregnant and nursing mothers.
- To enhance the availability and consumption of nutritionally improved food by the lowest income segments of the Moroccan population.
- To alleviate malnutrition among a substantial segment of the target population and thus optimize physical and mental development resulting in a more productive citizenry.

III. Proposed Activities towards the Development and Implementation of a Moroccan National Nutrition Plan.

A. General Approach.

It is suggested that it be clearly stated and understood by all concerned that the proposed nutrition system study on Morocco is intended to yield tangible and practical results. The study should be "action-oriented" in the sense that shortly after its initiation, promising nutrition intervention schemes should be identified and implemented and that appropriate financial and manpower resources be allocated for them. For example, Morocco has 11 different operating programs that reach nutritionally vulnerable segments of the population. Although many of these programs do not now have a nutritional component as part of their activities, it is conceivable that with some minor additions, they could be effective nutrition carriers. Further, those programs which already contain a nutritional element could be expanded and improved to reach a greater number of the target population. Promising candidates for such modification or expansion are suggested under B. below.

Clearly, an analysis of the Moroccan nutrition system should come logically prior to some of the action-oriented demonstration projects. That is, the likely payoff from varying price policies, for example, can be estimated from the relationships that emerge in the development of the total system study and this will affect the nature and design of possible price-related or agriculture-related projects. There are, however, other areas in which available information is less adequate for establishing relationships to be incorporated in the total system. The entire subject of the impact of nutrition education is obscured by the absence of useful

results data. In this and similarly clouded areas, the need for demonstration projects is immediate, to complete and improve the analysis of the integrated nutrition system, in addition to testing the costs and benefits of specific intervention schemes.

In order to develop a nutrition system study and to implement its various components, the problem of malnutrition will have to be defined specifically--as to nature,¹ magnitude and location--and attempts will have to be made to ascertain cause, and potential and existing interventions will have to be identified, evaluated and compared in terms of their cost and relative impact.

It is imperative that this type of nutrition study command the attention and collaboration of a number of sectors which may not have traditionally considered themselves to be concerned with the general problem of nutrition. The study will require a fairly sophisticated application of the techniques of inter-sectoral analysis and planning and a determination of the relative cost effectiveness of identified intervention schemes in achieving desired objectives.

¹ An excellent beginning has been made through a nutritional survey sponsored by the Ministry of Public Health under the supervision of Dr. Belladj, Enquete National sur l'Etat de Nutrition des Enfants de Moins de 4 Ans, Bulletin de la Sante Publique, No. 54, 1973.

B. Suggested Plan of Action.

In identifying the following ongoing or proposed projects which would appear ready for implementation within a relatively short time, (after program design), a mix of activities are suggested which would in effect constitute an interim nutrition program in Morocco. As stated earlier, they would ideally be considered in the context of a national strategy--i.e., be assigned a priority status in terms of costs and benefits. But they can also be treated as trial activities or intervention schemes from which valuable information as to their effectiveness, in terms of impact and cost, can be taken during the planning process. They build on existing policy or programs.

1. Rejuvenation of the Inter-Ministerial Council for Food and Nutrition.

The Council could undertake the following activities:

a) Convene the first National Conference on Nutrition and National Development in Morocco. The purposes of the Conference would be: (i) to achieve a consensus on policies, priorities and plans; (ii) to review and evaluate the proposals and plans submitted by the various ministries; and (iii) to establish realistic achievable objectives and guide the direction of the follow-up work by assigning specific activities.

b) Enlist the cooperation of the various Ministries (Agriculture, Interior, Education, Health, Entr'Aide Youth and Sports) and institutions to prepare their respective recommendations and plans

for adding or intensifying the nutrition component in their sectors.

c) Monitor and supervise the follow-up activities, including the development of a national nutrition strategy.

2. Preparation of Reports by all Relevant Ministries for the Nutrition Conference.

Each Ministry will initiate the necessary studies and/or program planning for several activities for both early and long term implementation. It is expected that these studies will be carried out over an initial six months period and will serve as a guide for future planned activities to be decided upon at the Nutrition Conference. The focus of these reports could be as follows:

a) The role of nutrition in agricultural planning and programming, including the identification of projects or aspects of projects to be undertaken by the agricultural research program.

b) The program implications for Morocco stemming from the relationship between nutrition, health, and family planning.

c) The need and potential for intensifying nutrition education into primary and secondary education.

d) The potential role of the industrial food sector in meeting Morocco's nutritional needs.

3. Establishment of a Nutrition System Study Unit within the Ministry of Planning.

Preferably, a Nutrition System Study Unit would be set up in the Ministry of Plan prior to the national nutrition conference so that it could serve as an active voice in the conference and assist the inter-ministerial Council for Food and Nutrition in evaluating ongoing activities

and planning future programs.

It is desirable that the Unit be composed of inter-Ministerial personnel and be headed by a nutrition economist familiar with systems analysis and econometric techniques. The Government of Morocco might want to consider the assistance of two foreign professionals, a nutrition economist and an expert in food technology and distribution. In addition, the Government might wish to have available to the Unit, short-term consultants to undertake the specialized studies that will be required.

It is estimated that the work of the Unit would last for at least 24 months resulting in a methodology for the evaluation of existing programs and the formulation of a nutrition strategy within the framework of Morocco's economic development plans.

The Study Unit's terms of reference can be summarized as follows

a) Design a careful Work Plan which will outline the type of data to be collected, the surveys to be undertaken, and the type of analysis which is likely to be developed.

b) Collect all relevant information and data as identified in the Work Plan by contracting with local survey organizations and/or with the assistance of other ministries.

c) Develop a methodology which among others will establish the relationships between three sectors of the Moroccan economy; (i) agricultural production, (ii) the food processing and distribution sector and (iii) the food consumption and expenditure patterns of the Moroccan population.

If this activity starts in the near future and the Unit's work is completed on schedule, it may be possible to incorporate the results into Morocco's 4th five year plan which is due in 1977.

4. Training in Nutrition Analysis and Planning.

AID recently contracted with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge to initiate a special series of training courses in nutrition analysis and planning.

It is proposed that three or four key Moroccan professionals involved in national planning activities attend these courses.

The availability of trained people in this aspect of planning is likely to facilitate improved nutrition planning in Morocco and a greater appreciation of the potential role that improved nutrition can play in achieving national economic development goals. The trainees will be exposed to both the techniques and developments of national planning as they occur in other countries.

MIT offers two kinds of courses: a) an intensive four-week course, designed for higher level officials, and to which two Moroccan professionals might be sent; and b) a one-year course which two Moroccans might attend, at a somewhat lower level (university level).

It may be desirable that the returning personnel, in addition to the immediate application of their training to their assignments, they be assigned the task of determining training requirements in this field within the country and perhaps set up and carry out appropriate seminars to widen the availability of talent in Morocco.

5. Upgrade the Capabilities of Provincial Supervisors and Monitrices to Teach Nutrition in Social Education and MCH Centers. (1)

This describes a program which has already been requested by Entr'Aide to be carried out with the assistance of Catholic Relief Services/Morocco in social education and MCH centers where supplemental food is being provided. It is also hoped that the benefits of forming a trained and motivated cadre of women will spill over into any other programs for child and mother care that are receptive. (1)

The objective is to upgrade the capability of the monitrices who work in the 200 centers served and to establish for each province a more highly trained "area supervisor" to be in charge of the centers in each province. The goal is to reach some 64,000 mothers directly in a one-year period with basic nutrition education. About 126,000 children will be reached in the centers. Among subjects to be stressed will be the most efficient use of family budget and of local foods (and as available, appropriate use of PL 480 and new weaning foods). (1)

Specifically, the upgrading of capabilities will include:

a) In depth training of 15-21 "supervisors" to direct the programs in the provinces. The training, of perhaps 3-months duration, might take place at the Tunisia Institute of Nutrition or in a similar institution. The monitrices, both those joining the program and those already at work, will be trained in two-week seminars held throughout the country. One or two nutritionists will be in charge of training activities, assisted by two teachers, a translator and an aide. (1)

b) Since there are two monitrices in each center, a total of 400 monitrices will be trained or retrained during the one-year upgrading program. It is suggested that arrangements be made to cover the first two years of salaries for the new supervisors, allowing adequate time for this continuing activity to be funded from other sources. Teaching materials, audio-visual aids and some equipment should be provided. The project will also have available to it the professional assistance of the CRS area nutritionist with long experience in materials development, and the coordinating counsel of the nutritionist in the Health Ministry.

6. Introduction of Intensified Nutrition Education into the Activities of Foyers Feminins.

The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Youth Sports and Social Affairs sponsor over 320 women's centers, or Foyers Feminins. These centers essentially provide training and instruction in traditional home economics to Moroccan women, unmarried and married. The Ministry of Health provides instructors in health education, (i.e. hygiene, family planning and nutrition) but the instruction is very rudimentary at this time.

It is proposed that this program include a more structured and intensive instruction in nutrition. The existing distribution of the Foyers Feminins, one half in urban and one half in rural areas, suggests an important and strategic infrastructure for reaching a segment of the target population who is critical to the process of improving the nutritional intake of pre-school children--the potential or present mother.

The Ministry of Health was recently assisted by USAID in purchasing 33 movie projectors for family planning training. They acquired the projectors for Foyers sponsored by the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. Some additional materials, however, remain to be developed.

It is proposed that in developing the family planning material, it include a nutrition education and training aspect as well. This would seem to be a cost effective way of utilizing existing equipment and personnel by adding nutrition to an ongoing family planning program and perhaps provide a more positive and complete training message. Some required steps are suggested below:

a) Develop the substantive aspects of the material on nutrition and family planning for adaptation into a movie. The Ministry of Health has the capability in both disciplines. It is suggested that they be assisted by an outside short-term consultant experienced in audio-visual aids on the combined message.

b) Contract with a Moroccan technical entity to produce the movie.¹

c) Since there are some 800 monitrices working in the over 320 Foyers Feminins, their training should take place in a number of locales over a period of time. Each training session might last one week, so that the training of 800 monitrices could be accomplished in two or three months.

¹ For example, La Societe Autonome de Publicite, Casablanca.

d) It is suggested that this program proceed into a second phase--i.e., while the first phase of training is taking place, a second set of audio-visual aids be prepared for follow up to the earlier training and for the reinforcement of motivations and capabilities' of the monitrices.

It is estimated that this scheme could be carried out and completed over a 12-months period. Clearly it is anticipated that the beneficiaries of the Foyers Feminins program will be receiving improved and more effective instruction in nutrition and family planning. The materials developed for the training sessions would subsequently be utilized by the monitrices for instructing the women who come to the Foyers--and if successful, to even wider audiences in the country.

7. A Proposed Pilot Food Fortification Scheme.

It has been established that the technique of food fortification can be an effective mode of increasing the availability of both protein and vitamin rich products. The technology has been available for a number of years and it can be adapted to the needs and conditions in less developed countries. It is therefore proposed that a food fortification pilot scheme be undertaken in Morocco.¹ Such a scheme could be carried out under the direction of the Agricultural Research unit within the Ministry of Agriculture and perhaps in collaboration with ONICEL. It is suggested that the fortification scheme include:

a) A technical feasibility study in order to establish the

¹ The development of a nutritive weaning food may also prove as an effective nutrition intervention scheme. It is our understanding that this is being tried at present with the assistance of UNICEF.

efficiency of food fortification in Morocco. Such a study could be executed over a period of six months and the Government may wish to consider the assistance of a food technologist as a consultant to the study entity.

b) If the feasibility of a food fortification scheme is established and the most desirable product mix is identified, a pilot project which will simulate commercial production of the fortified food could be undertaken. This may require some new equipment for plant modifications and the services of a food technology consultant with experience in food fortification.

c) Test the acceptability of the fortified food both in terms of quality and unit price. Clearly, the cost of the developed product has to be low enough so that the lower income groups could afford to purchase it.

It is estimated that the execution of activities described under items (b) and (c) are likely to require two or three years of work and experimentation in order to be able to draw some firm conclusions with respect to its efficacy as a national nutrition intervention strategy.

IV. Estimated Costs of Selected Elements of the Proposed Activities.

The cost estimates provided below reflect only those elements of proposed activities for which the Government of Morocco is likely to require foreign assistance. No attempt has been made to estimate the total costs of individual activities since these can be estimated only after a detailed project design is available.

The activities are listed in the order in which they were described (Section B) even though some are not likely to require outside financing. It should also be noted that where provisions were made for only one year of assistance, it does not preclude the possibility, and in some instances the desirability, for continuing the activity beyond the first year and perhaps seeking additional resources.

Activities

Estimated Component Costs
(In thousands U.S. \$)
FY¹1975 FY 1976 FY 1977

1. Rejuvenation of the Inter-Ministerial Council for Food and Nutrition	-	-	-
2. Preparation of Reports by Relevant Ministries for the Nutrition Conference	-	-	-
3. Establishment of a Nutrition System Study Unit in the Ministry of Planning	<u>118</u>	<u>133</u>	-
(a) Nutrition Economist & Planner	45	45	-
(b) Food Technology & Distribution Expert	43	43	-
(c) Other costs (surveys, EDP, etc.)	25	25	-
4. Training in Nutrition Analysis & Planning	<u>5</u>	<u>20</u>	-
5. Upgrade the capabilities of provincial supervisors and monitrices to teach nutrition in Social Education and MCH Centers	<u>124</u>	<u>19</u>	-
(a) Salaries of program administrators	19	19	-
(b) Training costs (salaries, travel, per diem, etc.)	92	-	-
(c) Equipment	13	-	-
6. Introduction of Intensified Nutrition Education into the Activities of Foyers Feminins	<u>60</u>	-	-
(a) Consultant for Audio-Visual Aid (4 man months)	20	-	-
(b) Materials and Technical Services for the Development of a Movie in Morocco	25	-	-
(c) Training Costs	15	-	-
7. A Proposed Pilot Food Fortification Scheme	<u>50</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>150</u>
(a) Food Technology consultant (6 man months & 3 man months)	30	15	-
(b) Equipment and materials	20	150	150
TOTALS	<u>352</u>	<u>317</u>	<u>150</u>

¹ FY refers to the American fiscal year beginning on July 1st and ending on June 30th. The availability of funds is subject to U.S. Congress allocation.