

April 17, 1974

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R-AAF-210-B

ACTION MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

FROM: TA/RIC, J. K. McDermott

Problem: Request for approval of Small Research Project: "Cost/
Effectiveness of Controlling Vitamin A Deficiency".

Discussion: Dr. Michael Latham and Mr. Barry M. Popkin of the graduate School of Nutrition, Cornell University are engaged in research on a four-staged planning model for the Philippines in which they will: (1) determine the incidence of xerophthalmia (vitamin A deficiency blindness), (2) analyze for various factors associated with the disease (3) conduct cost/effectiveness and other analysis of possible nutritional interventions and (4) evaluate the nutritional benefits of eliminating xerophthalmia.

The project was initiated about a year ago in 12 barrios in Cebu in the Philippines. To date, a socioeconomic and medical survey has been conducted on 1200 children aged 6-12 and 500 children aged 7-15 and their families. AID is being asked to provide support for the statistical analysis of this collected survey data. Most of the analysis will be carried out at Cornell using the computer facilities of that University. Other parts of the project are being supported by WHO, Cebu Institute of Medicine, Cornell University, and the National Science Development Board of the Philippines.

Justification: AID/TA/N has had a small working group study the seriousness of Vitamin A deficiency and xerophthalmia around the world. The group reported the situation as being ominous in several LDCs. Certain areas of the world show Vitamin A deficiency in a significant proportion of their child population. The deficiency disease is recognized as being one of the four most prevalent nutritional problems in LDCs. It affects millions of children as a leading cause of blindness in these areas. The blindness that develops from xerophthalmia is irreversible. The Philippines is one such country in which deficiency in this vitamin is widespread among its young, especially in its large number of low-income children.

Technical "know-how" to cope with the problem exists. The AID/TA/N working group recommended that projects that seek to understand and promote implementation of Vitamin A use in target populations be supported.

Currently the government of Bangladesh is engaged in a program to eradicate xerophthalmia throughout their country. The program is targeted toward infants and pre-school children and is conducted through the network of malaria workers long established in that country. Unfortunately, no definitive alternative cost and benefits estimates were conducted or planned in conjunction with this program. Information obtained from this Small Research Project will be greatly helpful in planning subsequent xerophthalmia eradication programs.

The study affords the opportunity to obtain a valuable return of information within a short time frame from a very modest investment.

Recommendation: That you approve the project for funding under the Small Research Projects program.

Attachment: Project Statement

Approved: _____

Disapproved: _____

Date: _____

Clearance:

TA/N, MJForman _____ Date _____