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TESTING A COOPERATIVE EVALUATION SYSTEM:
SMALL FARMER ORGANIZATIONS OF HONDURAS

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PREFACE

The evaluation reported in this document was carried out under contract number AID/SOD/PDC-C-0394, Work Order #7 by Development Associates for the Agency for International Development, Washington, D. C. The report was prepared as part of a contract to develop a system for evaluating projects to establish or strengthen cooperatives in less developed countries. The cooperative project assessed herein was selected for evaluation because it provided an opportunity to test that part of the system which focused on conducting impact evaluations of completed projects. The purposes of the report are: (1) to illustrate the use of the evaluation system, including identifying lessons or factors which would make for better evaluations in the future; and (2) to provide, for the record, an evaluation of the Honduras project.

The evaluation was conducted during the second week of February 1982 by Malcolm Young and Earl Jones of Development Associates, Inc. The study team gratefully acknowledges the assistance and information provided by the Washington, DC, office of AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL (ACDI) and its evaluation officer, Mr. George Reagan, who accompanied the team during the first few days in Honduras. Guidance was also provided by Mr. Juan Alvarez Jimenez, group chief in the Tegucigalpa office of ACDI. The monthly reports on the project were provided by Mr. Jorge Nery Chinchilla F., as well as interview information from his experience in conducting the project during 1976-1977. Prof. Adrian G. Zavala, head of the Division of Education and Dissemination of the OFFICE OF COOPERATIVE PROMOTION in Tegucigalpa and counterpart during the conduct of the project, furnished guidance for the study, information regarding its conduct, and detailed interview responses about the project's context and impact. Technicians Jorge Sarmiento, Antonio Barahona, Ramiro Pineda, and Enrique Duron, all of the Division of Education and Dissemination, trainees in the original project and subsequently trainers in a similar program, all contributed substantial information on the project and its consequent impact. However, the descriptions, conclusions, and recommendations are the products of the researchers and no endorsement of them by the Agency for International Development or by the other institutions involved is implied or inferred.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TESTING A COOPERATIVE EVALUATION SYSTEM: SMALL FARMER ORGANIZATIONS OF HONDURAS

This report was prepared as part of a contract with the Agency for International Development to develop a system for evaluating projects to establish or strengthen cooperatives in less developed countries. Honduras was selected as a country in which to field test the evaluation system because it contained a variety of cooperative development projects at various stages of completion. The cooperative project described herein was selected for evaluation because it provided an opportunity to test that part of the system which focused on conducting impact evaluations of completed projects.

The purpose of the report is two-fold:

- To illustrate the use of the evaluation system as the framework for conducting an evaluation, including identifying lessons or factors which would make for better evaluations in the future; and
- To provide, for the record, an evaluation of the Honduras project.

The evaluation was conducted by two Development Associates' staff with the assistance of a representative from ACDI's Washington office during the second week of February 1982.

I. RESULTS OF PROJECT EVALUATION

A. Setting

The project being evaluated was implemented by Agricultural Cooperative Development International (ACDI), under contract with USAID Honduras through the Government of Honduras' Office of Cooperative Promotion (DIFOCOOP). The basic aims of the project were:

- To improve small farmer organizations by training staff in management and accounting which in turn should lead to improved condition for members.

- To better qualify DIFOCOOP in the training of administrators and accountants of small farmer organizations and to extend this training to programs carried out by other public and private institutions concerned with the development of small farmer organizations.

To accomplish these aims, ACDI provided two high level specialists, a secretary, and the necessary office and equipment. DIFOCOOP nominated two of its experienced trainers as counterpart personnel. In addition, DIFOCOOP arranged release time from regular duties for many of its staff so they could attend one or more of the courses. The project was conducted during 1976 and 1977.

B. Findings

- Appropriateness and Timeliness of the Project: The project took place during a period of very rapid expansion of cooperatives and small farmer associations in Honduras. The large number of newly formed organizations far exceeded indigenous training and technical assistance capabilities, and there were clear indications of need for management assistance. Thus, both the content and timing of the project were appropriate.
- Quality of Project Personnel: The two ACDI technicians had substantial experience and education in cooperatives and other small farmer associations, and both were fully fluent in Spanish. The chief of party was also a Honduras national who had been a leader in the Honduran credit union movement and then worked outside the country with ACDI for several years. The DIFOCOOP personnel assigned to the project were also well qualified. They were experienced trainers who had worked with small farmer organizations throughout the country in several capacities.
- Adequacy of Project Resources: The amount and timeliness of funding and the availability of project related equipment and other material resources were apparently adequate throughout. They posed no significant problems for project implementation.
- Management of the Project: The available evidence indicates that the project was well managed. Successful modifications of the original training design to accommodate trainee needs and the smooth incorporation of the DIFOCOOP personnel into project activities indicate the flexibility which was necessary to work with so many different institutions.
- Materials Developed: The project developed seven significant publications, several of which continue to be widely used. A set of three booklets contain all of the basic accounting operations and procedures needed in small farmer organizations, and a simple accounting example taken from an existing cooperative. A set of two booklets were designed for managers and boards of directors of small farmer organizations while a separate volume sets out all the documents needed to meet legal requirements associated with cooperatives in Honduras. Finally, a volume of selected readings was prepared for cooperative extension personnel. The documents are clear, simply worded and contain practical exercises. They appear to have been quite suitable for most

trainees, although almost always there were some semi-literate trainees who could not read the material presented.

- Training Provided: A total of 21 training courses were offered through the project, seven in accounting, twelve in business management, and two tailored to specific organizational needs. Seventeen of the courses were of five days duration, three were slightly longer and one was only a one-day course. A total of 695 persons attended the various courses, 323 in the management course, 236 in the accounting course and 88 in courses combining the two. The number of trainees was more than the number called for in the project plans. Virtually all the trainees came from small farmer associations, and available evidence indicates that the type of persons receiving the training were consistent with project goals. No data were available regarding the extent to which trainees gained skills or information during the training courses.
- Follow-up Assistance to Trainees: To be most effective, training and technical assistance efforts should provide for sustained post-workshop contact with participants in order to reinforce the information and skills addressed. Except for irregular contacts by DIFOCOOP staff, there were no indications of systematic follow-up with farmer trainees.
- Institutional Effects: The creation and adequate staffing of the Division of Education and Dissemination within DIFOCOOP was the most tangible institutional result. The ACIDI project's chief Honduran counterpart was named head of the Division and six workshop trainees sent from DIFOCOOP were assigned there to work. The chief and six staff members are still so employed. In addition, nearly a dozen other DIFOCOOP staff were identified who received training and continue to make use of what they learned. Also training manuals and the accounting system developed as part of the project were still being used by DIFOCOOP staff in the training and technical assistance they offer small farmer organizations. At the level of local and regional associations, much less evidence of impact was found. Examples were given and subjective judgments supplied indicating that there were some lasting effects on some local organizations, but systematic evidence was not available. It is not likely that the use of additional evaluation resources would have produced much more evidence.
- Impacts on Rural Residents: For a variety of reasons no evidence of impacts on rural residents could be found. The logic of the project was that the training courses would lead to improved small farmer associations which, in turn, would contribute to improved conditions for their members. Since there was little evidence of impacts on farmer associations, little traceable impact on rural residents would be expected. This is even more likely since several of the assisted farmer organizations have not survived, other have fragmented, and there was much movement of personnel from one organization to another. Thus, there is little reason to believe that the five day training courses, worthwhile as they might have been in some respects, could have produced discernable impacts on individual small farmers. Further, review of records and discussions with participants and project staff provided no indications, however subjective, of impacts on that level. Thus, even if adequate pre and post data had been available it is unlikely anything meaningful would have been found.

C. Conclusions

In broad terms the project operated efficiently; it was on schedule, within budget and more persons were trained than planned. It was also effective in that it addressed a legitimate need and produced some results which have lasted well beyond its close. Materials were produced which were judged effective at the time and are still in use four years later. A reasonably well staffed and trained education division was established within the Government's Office of Cooperation Promotion (DIFOCOOP), and more than 600 managers received training in accounting and management techniques. Further, these managers returned to their organizations and, for the most part, continue to work with small farmer groups in rural Honduras. On the other hand, there is no real evidence that the project made a substantial difference to many small farmer organizations or impacted on the lives of small farmers themselves. Thus, the basic terms of the project were achieved; the purpose of better qualifying DIFOCOOP to provide future training was accomplished, but no more than anecdotal data indicated that the project accomplished its aim of directly improving the management and financial control of small farmer associations. Given the size and scope of the project and the information available on site, the evaluation team judges the project to be a reasonable success.

II. THE RESULTS OF TESTING THE EVALUATION SYSTEM

At one level the field test of the evaluation system went well, while at another there were substantial problems. Applying the system and its draft manual to the project went smoothly. Essentially, the system calls for: (1) matching the logical structure of a particular project to a general model of cooperative development projects; (2) identifying the sets of evaluation questions in the manual corresponding to the elements in the particular project model; (3) selecting specific questions from the manual and developing additional questions as needed; (4) editing the list of questions; and (5) selecting indicators from among those in the manual and elsewhere as needed. From there, evaluators are expected to draw on their skills and experience to develop specific work plans, instruments and analytic plans and then to proceed to implement the evaluation and report the results.

The Honduras project fit the general model without difficulty. The evaluation questions in the manual were generally relevant to the project. There was, however, a need to develop one entirely new set of questions plus several individual questions for particular topics. There also seemed to be some unnecessary redundancy among questions that should be corrected before the system is complete. Further, the draft manual did not include indicators for all sets of questions, and it would have been more convenient if it had done so. Finally, the manual did not include directions for its use, and those not previously familiar with its content and logic were initially at a loss regarding how to proceed. Those weaknesses were important to identify and will be addressed in the final revisions to the manual. Perhaps more important, however, was to confirm that the basics of the system were appropriate and useful. In a very short period of time it enabled relative strangers to a project to develop and implement a suitable evaluation design.

The implementation of the evaluation, however, was much more difficult. The project staff had kept careful records oriented toward their own operational needs and toward completing periodic statistical monitoring reports. They did not, however, collect baseline data on the pre-project conditions in the targeted small farmer organizations, the circumstances of organization members which might have been affected by project activities, or even the level of knowledge or skills of project participants before and after particular training events. Essentially, data on which to base judgments regarding many of the expected project results was totally absent. The judgments that could be made were based on tangible products produced (i.e., manuals and organizational units) and retrospective assessments by participants and staff. To be complete an impact evaluation of the project should have included visits to farmer associations and interviews with former trainees. However, given the lack of any recorded baselines as well as the apparently random nature of any follow-up, this seemed an unproductive use of time and funds. Thus, the evaluation itself is not as complete as one might wish, but nothing more of substance was likely to be found.

The paucity of baseline data available in this situation demonstrates clearly the need for advance planning for evaluation. It also illustrates the potential evaluation related roles that different actors in a project could play. Available

project records suggest that the only questions being asked the staff about project performance pertained to the number of trainees and types of organizations served. There appears to have been no requirement for the staff to report indications that participants benefited from the training or that their organizations were effected as a result. While such information clearly would help project staff know whether their materials or procedures needed change, this was not among their priorities. Nor, was it apparently of particular interest to USAID or ACDI. Any of the three parties responsible for the project could easily have caused the quite competent project staff to devise a simple way of gathering such data. As is often the case, however, the evaluative process was viewed as unessential to project success. Thus, the evaluation reflects the lack of advance planning, and some useful lessons from what appears to have been a reasonably successful enterprise may have been lost.

INTRODUCTION

On January 1, 1976, Agricultural Cooperative Development International (ACDI), an organization sponsored by many agricultural cooperatives in the United States, began training and technical assistance activities to promote institution building in small farmer organizations, chiefly cooperatives, and to enhance the administrative capabilities of those entities to provide services to their members. The project was financed by the Agency for International Development of the United States (AID) and approved by that agency's Tegucigalpa office, USAID/Honduras.

The project was carried out through an agreement with the Government of Honduras' Office of Cooperative Promotion (Direccion de Fomento Cooperativo), commonly known by the acronym of DIFOCOOP. ACDI established an office in the capital city, Tegucigalpa, near the headquarters of DIFOCOOP, to facilitate interaction with them.* The project duration was two years.

Development Associates, as part of a contract with AID, had undertaken several important tasks to assess that agency's efforts involving cooperatives. Among these, Development Associates developed a draft version of a system for evaluating cooperative development projects (14).

An important part of the review of the draft evaluation system was to be consultation with a sample of officials in a host country on the system design, study questions, and impact indicators. The actual use of relevant portions of the system to design an evaluation of a cooperative project was expected to further enhance the final product.

*Although scheduled to commence in June 1975, funding and preparations delayed the start until January 1, 1976.

To implement these activities, Honduras was selected as a consultation and study site. USAID/Honduras, ACDI, and the Honduran institution consent was obtained. Prior to the visit to Honduras an abbreviated, draft version of the evaluation system report was prepared in Spanish to enable detailed review in Honduras (13).

The complete English draft and the abbreviated Spanish version were both utilized during the review proceedings. Three corollary efforts were added to the assigned tasks: (1) examine data available and obtainable for possible future evaluations, (2) prepare tentative designs for one or more cooperative projects, and (3) assist in setting up basic, beginning data needs and interim internal evaluation procedures for a new cooperative project so that it could be effectively evaluated later in its history.

The present document describes the activities and results of only one of these tasks, that of an evaluative assessment of the 1976-1977 DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI training and technical assistance project. The multi-purpose work of the team during its stay in Honduras and the relatively short time available to any one of the tasks are important contextual limitations to the study. Despite these restrictions, some useful information was gained about the studied project and, at the same time, it served to further sharpen the system design for other evaluations. (The activities carried out under the other named tasks are reported separately in other contract communications.)

Project Description

Agricultural Cooperative Development International described two fundamental aims for the project (1):

- To increase the administrative abilities and financial control in small farmer organizations, thereby bettering their efficiency and effectiveness, as mechanisms to channel the services rendered to the members.
- To better qualify DIFOCOOP in the training of administrators and accountants of small farmer organizations and to extend this training to programs carried out by other public and private institutions concerned with the development of small farmer organizations.

To accomplish these aims, an experienced advisor in accountancy began as chief of party at the beginning of the project. A month later, a specialist in management training was added. Later in the year, a chief of counterparts and four accountants, all from DIFOCOOP, were assigned to this mutual effort. Another DIFOCOOP training specialist was added shortly thereafter.

The work plan allowed for five stages in the development and conduct of the activities:

Stage 1: The ACIDI technicians visited the different regions of Honduras to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the actual situation and needs confronted by the agricultural cooperatives, especially those comprised of small farmers, and to determine the immediate requirements for effectively carrying out their management and accounting functions.

Stage 2: From the findings resulting from the inspections, plus information from government and cooperative organizations, the ACIDI personnel, in conjunction with their counterparts from DIFOCOOP, designed management and accounting systems to meet the most pressing of the problems. Manuals to be used for instruction and to serve as technical assistance guides in the field, forms, course contents, and related materials were then prepared in draft format.

Stage 3: With the full integration of the DIFOCOOP personnel into the team, the following activities were conducted:

- The management and accounting systems were revised;
- The training courses were further refined and completed;
- The DIFOCOOP counterpart personnel were trained in the appropriate fields;
- The first two manuals were published and presented to the public and private institutions involved in rural sector development; and
- The educational activities were planned and scheduled.

The high training and content area capabilities of the counterpart personnel, plus their intimate knowledge of the conditions in Honduras, allowed a very rapid completion of activities in this stage.

Stage 4: These detailed preparations led into the planned field work:

- Training courses on basic management principles were conducted for national level promoters of small farmer organizations.
- The first farmer groups were trained in basic accounting and management procedures.
- Analyses of the utility of the training materials and procedures provided the basis for their revision.

During all of these activities, the DIFOCOOP counterpart personnel participated as trainers. Their own experiences, together with those of the ACDI technicians, were utilized in continual upgrading training to enhance trainer performance in the courses.

Stage 5: During the latter part of 1976 and all of 1977, training materials were refined and training workshops were conducted (2):

- The final versions of the seven manuals were prepared and published: five full volumes and two briefer example manuals;
- Twenty-one training courses were conducted:
 - One in administration for promoters of the National Association of Rural Hondurans (Asociacion Nacional de Campesinos de Campesinos de Honduras);
 - Seven in accounting for appropriate members of farmer organizations;
 - Thirteen in management for representatives of farmer organizations;

The careful preparation of the courses into basic concepts, followed by more advanced information, allowed for the integration of personnel from many organizations into appropriate sessions, thus spreading the potential effects of the training. (Detailed information on each of 21 courses held as the primary emphasis of this project is contained in Figure I; the numbers of participants by organization are provided in Table 1.)

Figure I: Provinces and Products on Map of Honduras



TABLE 1
Specification of the Formal DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI Courses

Topic	Dates	Days	Location(s)
1. Management/accounting	10/4-8/76	5	Zamarano
2. Management/accounting	10/18-23/76	6	Zamarano
3. Cooperatives	11/8-13/76	6	San Pedro Sula
4. Management/accounting	11/15-19/76	5	Choluteca
5. ANACH laboratory	11/25/76	1	San Pedro Sula
6. Accounting	12/6-10/76	5	Danlí, El Paraíso
7. Management	12/13-17/76	5	Danlí, El Paraíso
8. Management	1/17-21/77	5	Choluteca
9. Accounting	1/24-28/77	5	Choluteca
10. Management	3/21-25/77	5	Juticalpa, Olancho
11. Accounting	3/28-4/4/77	5	Juticalpa, Olancho
12. Accounting	4/18-23/77	5	Comayagua
13. Management	4/25-29/77	5	Comayagua
14. Business management*	5/23-6/23/77	10	Zamarano
15. Management**	7/4-8/77	5	El Progreso
16. Accounting**	7/4-8/77	5	El Progreso
17. Accounting	8/1-5/77	5	San Pedro Sula
18. Management	8/8-12/77	5	San Pedro Sula
19. Management	9/19-23/77	5	San Marcos Ocotepeque
20. Accounting	9/26-30/77	5	San Marcos Ocotepeque
21. Management	11/?/77	5	La Ceiba

* Apparently conducted in two split sessions.

** Two courses conducted simultaneously by separating the trainers into two teams.

Several related activities, partially outside the scope of the present evaluation, were sponsored or co-sponsored by the project and other work of Agricultural Cooperative Development International. They impacted directly on many of the DIFOCOOP personnel, however, since an important objective of the activities was the improvement of DIFOCOOP to plan and conduct both training and assessment. Two members of FECOAR, the Federation of Regional Agricultural Cooperatives in Guatemala (Federacion de Cooperativas Agricolas Regionales), assisted the trainers' acquisition of modern field techniques, broadened their knowledge of group dynamics, and increased their understanding of aspects of administration and accounting. A later seminar was designed primarily to teach self evaluation of procedures, methods, and supporting materials. A short observation visit to FECOAR in Guatemala complemented the advanced training.

A mobile course in the organization and administration of agricultural cooperatives was provided under the technical direction of the Cooperative and Labor Studies Center of Israel. Conducted in two sites in Honduras, the activities furnished additional technical information as well as the opportunity to see and discuss examples of agricultural cooperatives encountered in the field.

An important aspect of the training/technical assistance project was the complementary skills offered by ACDI and DIFOCOOP personnel. The ACDI experts, experienced in cooperative work and training in many sites, contributed the systems, previous materials, and the general management for the project. DIFOCOOP personnel, with years of experience working in Honduras, provided the specifics needed to adapt ACDI procedures to the local context. Although the senior DIFOCOOP team members had extensive experience with cooperatives, many of the younger members were only recently introduced to cooperative work. For younger members, the project provided a unique opportunity to add to their knowledge through readings and the training sessions, to enhance their training abilities by participating as trainers, and in general to prepare them to carry on cooperative work when the project was completed.

A wide variety of approaches was employed in addition to formal sessions in the courses. When only DIFOCOOP personnel were involved, the discussions were open to any questions relating to cooperative work; this format gave participants an opportunity to improve their general knowledge and skills, as well as to expand

concepts and make them pertinent to the Honduran situation. A further advantage of this procedure was that other DIFOCOOP personnel, not necessarily intended to form a part of the training corps, shared information about their specializations so that an overall view of the efforts of cooperatives and of DIFOCOOP was engendered.

Informal evaluation sessions were also conducted after all of the early training work and when needed later so that weaknesses could be explored and possible improvements made. Strengths were discussed with the view of enhancing them. Individualized instruction was further utilized as necessary to assist any one member of the team develop to full capacity.

Finally, many of the training sessions were actually conducted by the DIFOCOOP trainees after they had attended the basic courses. The institution building thrust of the work was thus carried to a much greater fruition, since assessments of performance were thus possible through the aid of their peers and the expert personnel who accompanied them and participated in the training.

The evaluation procedures for the project were stated in general terms in the Agricultural Cooperative Development International documents in both the early stages of the contract work and in the later recapping of the achievements. Both descriptions tended to focus on the products of the project -- planning efforts, start-up activities, manuals produced, courses offered, and the number of participants in them. DIFOCOOP institution building was specified as an expected result of the work.

The USAID/Honduras project description, on the other hand, took a wider view of the evaluation, apparently incorporating this particular project into into general efforts to improve the delivery of services to the rural sector and therefore influence the quality of rural life. The goal statement in the project description (34) specified that:

The overall goal of the sector program in general is to raise the standard of living of the rural poor of Honduras through increased income and more employment opportunities.

This broader view was further evident in the paragraph on the management of goal achievements since it noted that a baseline survey would establish a benchmark for changes in income and other socioeconomic variables. Followup surveys, including a control group, were to measure changes during the life of the project. More directly related to this specific project, the purpose was listed as:

...to increase managerial skills and financial control in small farmer cooperatives and associations.

The end of project status was stated as "three hundred small farmer cooperatives and associations will be employing trained managers and will have installed a standardized accounting system maintained by trained bookkeepers." Five output indicators were specified:

1. Development of an accounting system completed and ready for installation.
2. Training course for bookkeepers or auxiliary accountants implemented.
3. Training course in cooperatives management conducted.
4. Thirty personnel of DIFOCOOP trained.
5. Three hundred small business managers and three hundred bookkeepers trained.

While the level of training was not described, the massive effort, obvious from the numbers associated with the indicators, implied that except for the more intensive institution building with DIFOCOOP, only beginning knowledge and skills would generally be the expected products.

Evaluation Procedures

The evaluation of the training and technical assistance project of DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI was envisioned as an examination into project implementation, with some indications of potential project impact. Although the project had been concluded for some time, a detailed summative evaluation was judged impossible under the circumstances. A partial assessment, nevertheless, could offer worthwhile guidelines about this particular project as a specific undertaking, and could additionally help in the formation of baseline indicators for future training and technical assistance projects.

Five years had passed since the first of the courses had been concluded. (See Table 1 for the dates of each of the courses.) More than three years had elapsed since the last ones were offered. An important aspect of the development of cooperatives and other small farmer organizations in Honduras during the project period was a rapid proliferation of such associations, with many new ones appearing and some of the earlier ones disappearing. Further, some organizations divided into separate independent entities, not affiliated with the parent units. Thus, although Agricultural Cooperative Development International carefully preserved the participant lists by course, with the full names and affiliations of each participant, the rapid expansion of organizations allowed trained personnel to move from one cooperative and/or association to another, including to organizations formed since the project was designed. Also, the project was not the only source of training about cooperatives in Honduras; the USAID/Honduras agricultural assessment for 1978 (34) listed many such programs. Many participants were known to have enrolled in more than one of these. In all, these conditions made statistical sampling of the trainees too costly for the probable value that might be obtained from the interviews.

Despite these limitations, many assessment opportunities existed. The general approach was to make the most of them within the resources available. The major sources of information and how they were used are described below.

Examination of Documents: Each of the monthly process reports, including some important indicators of strengths and weaknesses, was studied in detail from the ACDI records. Annual ACDI reports also contained useful descriptions of the process and potential impacts. The USAID/Honduras agricultural sector assessment also contained worthwhile references to information given in training. The latter was especially helpful in confirming some of the contextual variables described by the interviewees. Similarly, the USAID/Honduras project description paper furnished vital information on the reasoning that led to the project and the roles of the contractor and the Government of Honduras in implementing the project.

Course Implementation Data: The preservation of the course outlines, enrollment lists, and monthly narratives related to the implementation of the courses provided one basis for course assessment and for determining the followup procedures

to obtain information about some of the participants. Existence of these materials allowed for verification, within general bounds, of the project's conduct.

Published Project Manuals: All of the regular, full length manuals produced by the personnel were available in the files. Two of the instructional examples, termed simplified formats, were also examined. The accounting system for small farmer organizations, specified in the project description, could be inferred from the manuals on that subject. Further evidence on the impact of these products was also available through the study of a similar document since published by DIFOCOOP and regularly utilized in its current training. Descriptions of similar manuals were provided by the DIFOCOOP staff which were identified through their continued contacts with cooperatives and others in the field.

Evidence of Institution Building: A major thrust of the project was the strengthening of DIFOCOOP's capabilities to deliver similar training after the termination of the contract. The creation of the Division of Education and Dissemination within DIFOCOOP, almost immediately following the training, and its continued existence furnished opportunities to assess institution building. An annual report of DIFOCOOP (18) provided additional data on the functioning of that division with indicators of the learning effects begun under the terms of the project. Secondary evidence of institution building in other organizations was obtained through the interview process. Personnel who had begun the acquisition of knowledge and skills via the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI work were named and descriptions of their work were given. During the life of the project, two of the several cooperatives that sent participants incorporated some of their learning into their own organizational structure. These units were still operating and were also cited as evidence of institution building. Documents assuring their existence were provided.

Impact on Individuals: The majority of the DIFOCOOP personnel included in the project training was still active in that agency's operations. Further, six of the trainees had been incorporated into the new Division of Education and Dissemination; four of them were present in the headquarters office and were interviewed. The head of the division, and the interviewed members, furnished

information on members working in the field at that time, both within DIFOCOOP as well as in other organizations and related agencies. Discussions with administrators in two other agencies also provided impact information on some of their personnel who had benefited from the training project.

In summary, a great deal of information was obtained on the project, its products, and indications of its impacts, despite some severe limitations imposed by the nature of the training, the development of cooperatives and similar organizations in Honduras, and the time frame. While still greater evidence of impact would have been desirable, the information gathered was sufficient to make an assessment of some aspects of the program.

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Honduras is one of the poorer nations of the Americas. The soils of much of the country are shallow, rough, and with insufficient rainfall to sustain intensive agriculture. The better areas, both in terms of soils and rainfall, have been occupied by banana plantations and other large scale agricultural enterprises. While the disparity between the rich and the poor has not been as obvious as in some other countries, Honduras has still a substantial proportion of its people living at subsistence levels and unemployment or underemployment has characterized much of the labor force.

The political events of the Caribbean and Central America of the past decade - revolutions earlier in Cuba and more recently in Nicaragua and El Salvador - have increased the pressures for more equitable economic and social development. Rising expectations of the rural and urban poor have brought about many private and governmental efforts to improve living conditions.

One of the responses to these circumstances has been the organization of the inhabitants, especially those in the rural areas, into several types of self help groups. Cooperatives were created in every part of the nation, attempting to provide better and more cost efficient services in agricultural production, credit, and housing. Operational problems have plagued them and about as many have failed as have continued to exist.

Land reform efforts have also been exerted in recent years with both government and private land acquired for resettlement of the landless. Some of this land has been used for small, privately owned farms. On other land, group operated settlements called asentamientos have been organized. Some of these, too, have expoused cooperative principles as their management mode.

Many national and international organizations have proffered help to these cooperative efforts: assistance in setting them up, education for their management, credit funds, and technical assistance. The Agency for International Development has been particularly active with both cooperatives and other small farmer associations. The project under study was financed by AID through a

contract with a U.S. based organization of cooperatives called Agricultural Cooperative Development International under an agreement with the Government of Honduras through the Office of Cooperative Promotion. The project sought the inculcation of cooperative principles, together with basic training in management and accounting principals. The two year project began January 1, 1976 and terminated in December, 1977.

The objectives of the project and its activities represent only one of many projects implemented by U.S. authorities to improve the conditions of the small farmer. Many other agencies also promoted similar improvements for the rural sector. Impacts from the project, then, must be assessed in terms of both the conditions in the country, as well as the various efforts to improve them.

The Nation of Honduras

Honduras is a small country in Central America, bordered on the north by Guatemala and El Salvador, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, the south by Nicaragua, and the east by the Caribbean Sea (Figure 1). Its total land area is 43,277 square miles, making it just slightly larger than Tennessee.

The 1980 estimated population was 3,690,000, a 29.8% rise from the 1973 estimate of 2,843,500. A part of that growth, particularly during the past two years, was refugees from Nicaragua and El Salvador, further straining the restricted resources of the country. The nation's own natural growth has been calculated at 3.5% in recent decades, making it one of the highest in the Americas.

Ethnically, the population is considered to be 90% mestizo, derived from early Spanish and Indian mixes; other Caucasians, Blacks, and Orientals make up the remaining portion. Spanish is the official language, but English is spoken in some coastal areas.

Tegucigalpa, the capital, is by far the largest city, followed by San Pedro Sula. The urban-rural proportion has been variously estimated but it approximates 30/70. A decade ago, 70% of the population was listed as working in agriculture; the present figure of 56% demonstrates substantial changes in the work force.

The non-agricultural pursuits include some mineral exploitation, clothing, textiles, cement, chemicals, and the preparation of sugar, tobacco, and timber products. The lempira is the unit of currency and its stability at 2 to 1 \$U.S. has held for many years.

Literacy has risen from 47% in 1970 to 57% in 1980, a response to increased availability of schools in the rural areas and to adult literacy programs. Currently, 42% of the 5-19 age population is enrolled in schools, with the vast majority of these in elementary education. A national university and several important business and vocational schools further increase the educational preparation of the residents. (23)

The latest statistics on health, for the period 1975-1977, list life expectancy at birth as 52.4 years for males and 55.9 years for females. Births per 1,000 were given as 48.6 and deaths at 13.7. Infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births was 31.4, a great improvement over a few decades ago.

Mayan civilization flourished in Honduras during the first thousand years AD and Copan, in the northern section of the nation, was an important city in that culture. The ruins of that city are an important tourist attraction. During colonial times, Honduras was part of the captaincy general of Guatemala under the rule of Spain. In 1821, along with others in the area, it declared its independence and was first included in the early nation of Mexico. In 1825, the Central American Federation, including Honduras, was formed. In 1838, Honduras became an independent republic. Since that time, both civilian and military governments have ruled the country; the present civilian government took office in 1981.

The Rural Situation

Farm income in Honduras is very low for a large proportion of the rural residents. In the 1977 AID survey (34), 42.6% of the farms earned less than \$250 U.S. Some additional income is generated from working on other farms, selling craft items, and a few other activities, but the estimates are that these increase the disposable income less than 25%. The total, perhaps just over \$310 U.S., can hardly be said to be subsistence at the prices of that period. A range of \$250 - \$500 U.S. included another 20.4%; 11.9% earned from \$500 to \$750.

Those three categories made up about 75% of the farms surveyed, indicating very few resources for a large portion of the rural population. Other studies have found the incomes to be in about that range, providing approximate verification of the AID survey figures.

Data from two studies on agrarian reform asentamientos found similar incomes in 1976: \$100 per capita. Those in cooperatives were somewhat better off: \$131 per person. While these groups made up only 6.6% of the surveyed farmers, the data note a continued deprivation among farm families.*

Poverty in rural Honduras has been well documented. In its *Geografia de la Pobreza en Honduras* . . .(29), the United Nations showed dire economic straits and inadequate living conditions in nearly every area of the nation. More recent research (33) calculated a preliminary index utilizing medical treatment, distance to potable water, type of house floor, access to latrines, and education, that indicated most of the items to be low or lacking. Two recent publications by Robert White (36, 37) contained substantial descriptions of poverty conditions in rural Honduras.

Nutritional status is often used as a measure of living conditions. In an exhaustive study of nutrition in Central America and Panama, INCAP (20) found more than half the preschool children in Honduras to be severely malnourished or at high risk in 1969. When income was controlled, that same study declared nearly 75% of the very impoverished rural population, children and adult, to be severely malnourished. More recent, partial data collections aggregating weight via the Gomez** degrees of nutrition, generally confirm these conditions at the present time.

* The data were derived from two studies, one by AID in 1976 and the other a contracted survey by ATAC in 1975.

**The Gomez interpretations elicit considerable controversy; for discussions about that system in relation to others, see the Development PL 480 evaluations (21, 22).

It must be noted that recent Honduran governments have expended considerable resources toward ameliorating unacceptable living conditions. The efforts of these programs, and those of some earlier governments, have been complicated and diluted because of continuing migrations from neighboring countries, especially El Salvador. While the problems in Honduras have historically been enormous, the rural poor of El Salvador have for decades seen greater opportunities in Honduras. Thus, scant resources available for improvement have been continuously subjected to diminished returns in observable results. The present difficulties being experienced by neighboring nations exacerbate the problem.

The trend toward the urbanization of the population should have given some economic relief to the rural areas. That is, lowered demands on land to provide subsistence would be expected to allow for measurable improvement in rural living conditions. Observations and studies appear to show little change. Two important elements are reportedly involved: the high growth rate of rural Honduras has essentially replaced immigrants; small increases in income only marginally affect dire conditions.

Agricultural Production

The discussion of rural incomes and other socioeconomic factors in Honduras obviates detailed descriptions and statistics on agricultural production among small farmers. Small amounts of arable land are available for crops; even the agrarian reform has been unable to change that situation substantially, since the vast majority of those involved were from the landless group. This factor, coupled with very low resources for increasing production on the same amount of land by small farmers, has actually brought about some reductions in production for the nation as a whole, thus affecting conditions in urban Honduras as well.

Latin America generally, and Central America particularly, has experienced progressively greater internal demands for the basic food crop production than the agricultural sector has been able to yield. The exhaustive research publication by the University of California Food Task Force (7) predicted, in 1974, increasing deficits in the area. The 1981 series of articles in Science

points out that the prediction is coming true; the Brown (6) article in that series portrays a losing battle among population growth, soil erosion, and production. The agriculture sector assessment of USAID/Honduras (33) was not optimistic about the case in Honduras. (Table 2)

TABLE 2: BASE YEAR PRODUCTION, 1983 ESTIMATES, 1983 DEMANDS, AND EXPECTED DEFICITS FOR BASIC GRAIN PRODUCTS (IN 000 METRIC TONS)

Product	Base Year 1973-1974*	1983 Estimates	1983 Demands	Deficit
Corn	342.5	458.5	541.0	84.5
Beans	33.8	38.5	43.5	5.0
Rice	20.0	22.0	50.0	28.0
Sorghum	40.1	47.2	49.3	2.1
Wheat	0.2	1.5	84.6	83.1

*The base year for wheat was 1976-1977.

NOTE: Adapted from Table 1, section VII, in AID/Honduras agricultural sector assessment (33).

The predictions for some crops in Honduras, especially bananas, tobacco, and sugar cane, are more optimistic and exports of these crops are expected to continue. No statistics were available on animal production but generalized statements expressed cautious positive trends. Some decreases in their export, however, were predicted due to greater internal consumption.

It must be noted, of course, that predictions on agricultural production are difficult anywhere and notably in Honduras at the present time. Natural calamities, such as floods and hurricanes, have caused extensive damage in the past. Internal and external political conditions could drastically alter the predictions - positively or negatively. Increased governmental attention to the rural sector, and directly to agricultural production, should have beneficial effects on food and food export availability. External assistance to Honduran agriculture through grants, loans, education, and technical assistance could exert positive influences on the nation's food production capability.

Responses to the Situation

The Government of Honduras has many programs that directly or indirectly respond to the needs of the rural population and to raising income in the rural sector. The Ministry of Natural Resources is a major contributor through technical assistance to agriculture and to forestry. An extension service with both general and specialized help, and research into agricultural production, is active in most of the nation. The ministry also provides many kinds of services to the agrarian reform program, to fisheries projects, and to small farmer associations.

Several banks, and especially the Banco Nacional de Fomento, furnish production credit directly to independent farmers, through cooperatives to their members, and through associations under certain conditions. Credit funds emanate from the Government of Honduras, the International Development Bank, Interamerican Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations Development Program, Central American Bank for Economic Integration, Canadian International Development Agency and the Agency for International Development. The World Food Program, Food for Peace, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and Several Protestant organizations provide food products which at least in some cases, are utilized for development projects.

Specialized technical assistance is also available from many of the institutions helping with credit. In-country personnel and foreign experts are employed to aid the development of production in many sectors. Large projects in forestry and irrigation are of important note among these. In-country and foreign studies programs add to the future capabilities of the nation. It should also be mentioned that credit, assistance, and training are available in many other sectors of the Honduran economy; sizeable help in housing, electrification, manufacturing, and infrastructure comes from the institutions already named plus West Germany, Japan, Austria, Australia, Spain, and Italy. As these projects impact on general life in Honduras, they also have the potential for elevating rural production and living conditions.

Many institutions have evolved to help farmers directly or to improve their capacity to produce. The major ones, and especially as they affect the training project being assessed, are as follows:

Asociacion Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras: This is a very large umbrella organization that works with agrarian reform groups. Some are organized as cooperatives, some pre-cooperatives, and some as associations related to rural residents that have not yet developed specialized administrations.

Ligas Campesinas de la Union Nacional de Campesinos and Union Nacional de Campesinos Autenticos: These operate as federation of member groups. They do not sponsor cooperatives per se but help groups obtain services that are usually provided in cooperatives.

Empresas Asociativas de Campesinos: This is a legal term applied to rural organizations, including asentamientos, that allows them to function as a single entity for most business purposes. These are not necessarily different groups from those included in the organizations previously described.

Federacion de Cooperativas de la Reforma Agraria de Honduras: The federation helps organize agrarian reform groups, helps such groups obtain land, and provides technical assistance to them. It insists that the groups become "true cooperatives" and aids them in their legalization processes.

CONCORDE: A number of Catholic and voluntary agencies such as VITA were involved in the formation of this umbrella program. Although not all the early affiliates still belong, the work has continued toward rural and general human development via technical assistance, studies, and fund raising. The most active of the present members are Accion Cultural Popular Hondurena, Asociacion de Promocion Humana, Pre-Federacion de Cooperativas de Servicios Multiples de Honduras, and Fundacion Hondurena de Desarrollo. The latter serves primarily as a fund raising entity while the others provide technical assistance, training, literacy classes, and other developmental help.

Federacion de Asociaciones Cooperativas de Ahorro y Credito: Since its founding in 1966 with assistance from AID and CUNA, this agency has grown rapidly. While it operates in many fields of endeavor, a major aspect of its work is with agricultural production. It has served as banker to many of the cooperatives through the use of members' savings, grants and loans from several sources, with some early assistance from the Government of Honduras.

Federacion de Cooperativas Agropecuarias de Honduras: Early cooperative efforts by the Governments of Honduras and the United States led to the formation of this organization. It grew quite rapidly but, due to political problems, was dissolved in the mid-1970s. A movement to revive it exists today. It worked closely with FACACH in providing credit for agricultural cooperative production.

Several product groups have also been organized and function within the rural sector: Federacion de Cooperativas Cafetaleras, Instituto Hondureno del Cafe, Cooperativa Agricola Algodonera del Sur, Cooperativa Hondurena para el Desarrollo Forestal, serving coffee and cotton growers and forestry operations, as their names imply. They generally provide a great deal of technical information and/or assistance as well as credit and some marketing. The Federacion Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Honduras is a major agency for cattle growers in the nation.

Not included in these partial descriptions but of major importance in serving small farmer groups is the Direccion de Fomento Cooperativa, which will be described fully as a subject of institution building of the project. The Instituto de Formacion e Investigacion Cooperativista is a service organization working primarily in special training courses for professionals and paraprofessionals, and in sponsoring research work.

While these are not all inclusive, the range of their organizational and functional characteristics was large. For a small nation, the responses to rural and agricultural problems have been unusual. No direct comparison with those in other nations was available, but a general summary, garnered from information in several studies, appears to view Honduras as much more activist in cooperatives and other types of associations. It is this context within which the training and technical assistance project DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI operated.

PROJECT PROCESS AND IMPACT INDICATORS

The Agency for International Development, through an indefinite quantity contract with Agricultural Cooperative Development International, funded a project of training and technical assistance in management and accounting for small farmer associations. An agreement with the Government of Honduras specified the Office of Cooperative Promotion (Direccion de Fomento Cooperativo), commonly known by its acronym DIFOCOOP, as the counterpart agency.

Agricultural Cooperative Development International (ACDI) provided two high level specialists, a secretary, and the necessary office and equipment for the contract work. DIFOCOOP nominated two of its experienced trainers as counterpart personnel. In addition, it arranged release time from regular duties for many of its personnel so they could attend one or more of the courses. A special benefit to the project was the incorporation of some of the trained DIFOCOOP personnel as trainers in several of the local courses. The work was conducted during 1976 and 1977.

The project was monitored by USAID/Honduras and their reports contained information mainly on project facilities. The Mission received and filed the monthly reports submitted by the Tegucigalpa office of Agricultural Cooperative Development International. Discussions were held between the personnel of the two organizations and notes of the important topics were preserved. Modifications of the time frame, necessary because of funding delays, were carefully documented. Since the project operated pretty much on schedule once begun, and since the products and courses were delivered as specified, the only evaluative comments included in available documents concern the timeliness of activities.

Agricultural Cooperative Development International included sections on the project in its 1976 and 1977 annual reports. Intended for board review, they capsulized the major facets of the program. As would be expected in this type of report, project activities were the principal subject of discussion. In 1977, the report contained a brief section on assessment (2):

The results of management and accounting training courses were satisfactory, both in quantity and quality, especially in view of the participants' scholastic level. The project was eminently practical as a means of equipping the participants with elemental information to improve their basic organizations . . .

The greatest benefit obtained from management and accounting training courses is that employees realize the importance of maintaining competent accounting and an improved administration in their organizations. Furthermore, they realize that many failures are due to a lack of good organization and management. As expected, the better educated participants learned more and retained more.

The report listed all the didactic manuals produced in the project and praised their "simplicity and practicality." No terminal report was prepared because of the beginning nature of the training courses; the ultimate benefits were expected to occur much later as the trained personnel began to modify their administrations and employ better business methods for the cooperatives and other small farmer associations.

The Honduran Office of Cooperative Promotion, DIFOCOOP, also included brief sections on the training work in its annual reports. Although these were not available for inspection due to the short notice, they were characterized primarily as process descriptions, including the numbers of trainees, activities of the counterpart personnel, and some information on the accounting system and the training manuals.

Process Assessment

Each of the processes specified in the project identification document was examined through the interviews with personnel of AID, ACDI, and DIFOCOOP to determine compliance with the agreements and indications of their completion. The available documents were studied, synthesized, and used as corroboration of the interview information when possible.

Timeliness of the Training: Although a great deal of cooperative and small farmer association activity had been taking place for some time, the training was conducted during a period of very rapid expansion of such organizations in

Honduras. Some education on them was provided by other agencies, but the vast number of new organizations being formed had made it impossible for provision of training and technical assistance to all that needed them with the resources available. Too, many of the associations that had been formed were experiencing serious management difficulties, as evidenced by the reports on the number that were arrears on reporting, payments, and the legalization processes. In summary, the training was indeed needed at the time it was conducted.

Management of the Project: The judgment of all the interviewees was that the project was managed very well. No negative information was obtained. Minor adjustments were required to accommodate the training to other activities of the organizations from which the trainees came. The successful modifications of the schedule indicated the necessary flexibility to work with so many different institutions.

The monthly reports were submitted as required on time. They were preserved appropriately for later inspection. While brief, they contained the salient information: chiefly descriptions of the activities, the products, and the composition of the courses. Course outlines were appended as drawn up. The monthly reports also contained some internal assessments of strengths and weaknesses of the training, and difficulties experienced in carrying it out. Notations were made on modifications and other adjustments that were needed to further strengthen the program and resolve problems.

An essential ingredient in the management of the project was the incorporation of the DIFOCOOP personnel into that process. Frequent joint planning sessions were conducted with the participation of both organizations. It was also noted that the field experience of the local personnel was utilized in refining the strategies, the products, and the presentations.

Trainee Goals: The project documents specified that a minimum of 300 persons be trained, although some wording in the specifications appeared to call for more. In any event, the courses contained 695 trainees. (See Table 3, p.31.) While some persons were involved in more than one course, usually beginning with the

TABLE 3
DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI Course Participants by Course and Organizational Affiliation

Organizational Affiliation	Course (See topics in Figure I.)																					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
ANACH *	-	30	-	18	24	-	-	15	13	23	25	15	16	-	22	19	14	13	10	10	41	308
FECORAH	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	12	-	-	6	4	-	4	5	2	-	-	-	2	47
UNCA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	5	5	7	5	-	5	5	5	1	8	9	3	70
Independent	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	8	7	2	7	4	35
FECOAGROH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	2	-	1	1	1	-	9
INA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	1	-	4	1	1	1	2	-	1	-	17
DIFOCOOP	19	-	-	4	-	7	7	2	3	2	-	5	8	22	3	1	2	2	-	-	-	87
INFOP	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	5
MRN	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
BANAFOM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
JNBS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
COHDEFOR	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
IFES/AIFLD	-	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
Miscellaneous	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	8
Unspecified	-	-	-	-	-	29	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
TOTAL	35	30	24	23	24	36	42	38	36	38	35	36	34	35	38	33	32	27	21	28	50	695

* ANACH = Asociación Nacional de Cooperativas de Honduras; FECORAH = Federación de Cooperativas Regionales Agrarias de Honduras; UNCA = Unión Nacional de Campesinos Auténticos; FECOAGROH = Federación de Cooperativas Agropecuarias de Honduras; INA = Instituto Nacional Agrario; INFOP = Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional; MRN = Ministerio de Recursos Naturales; PANAFOM = Banco Nacional de Fomento; JNBS = Junta Nacional de Bienestar Social; COHDEFOR = Cooperativa Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal; IFES/AIFLD = extension service of American International for Free Labor Development.

basic course on cooperative principles and then advancing to courses in management and/or accounting (an entirely appropriate action) the number of trainees met or exceeded the stated goals.

Some specification of the organizational source of the trainees was included in the project goals. The National Association of Rural Hondurans (Asociacion Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras) was targeted as a major recipient of training. The courses contained 308 trainees from that organization, 44.3% of the total trainees. DIFOCOOP itself was also specified as an important recipient, and their trainees numbered 87, 12.5% of all trainees. All of the other organizations sending personnel for training were small farmer associations or agencies that served them. The evidence indicated that the organizations to be served had been included in training.

Selection of Trainers: Agricultural Cooperative Development International nominated the two technicians who were to serve as that institution's trainers. Each had a substantial experience and education in cooperatives and other small farmer associations. Both were fully fluent in Spanish, enabling them to carry out the training and preparation of materials. The Agency for International Development concurred with their selection. The interviewees stressed that the ACDI trainers were of very high quality. They saw their abilities as an important ingredient in the successful completion of the training.

The DIFOCOOP personnel incorporated into the team were experienced trainers of personnel in small farmer associations in Honduras. A corollary characteristic was that they had served such organizations in several capacities: inspections, auditing, technical assistance, and in the legalization processes. Further, they had worked in several capacities all across the nation, thus bringing their intimate knowledge of the sites where the associations were operating into the planning and implementation process of the project. Again, the interviewed trainees saw these two professors as highly qualified and the training they imparted as excellent.

The DIFOCOOP personnel who were trained in the project and later participated as trainers were already a part of that institution and were carrying out some of the functions for which they were being trained.

A high proportion of those trained and who served as trainers were incorporated into the subsequently formed Division of Education and Dissemination; most of them are still present and functioning in that organizational unit. Their experiential training as trainers together with what they already knew about the work, would appear to qualify them admirably as project trainers.

Selection of Trainees: It is important to note that the project personnel did not directly select the trainees. The program was operated as an opportunity for the personnel of small farmer associations and agencies that served them to improve their work. Project staff might discuss the kinds of persons who would be most appropriate to send to the training but they could not specify the qualities by which they were chosen. In general terms, the trainees included the following types of persons:

- staff members of umbrella agencies who secured the members and administrators of small farmer associations and groups beginning their organizations;
- employees of small farmer organizations;
- members of the boards of directors, vigilance committees, and credit committees; and
- members of the associations who through their voting assemblies exercised decision making in them.

These types of trainees were seen by AID, ACDI, DIFOCOOP, and the evaluators as entirely appropriate since their functions impacted on the operations of the associations. The reports from all three institutions involved stressed the problem of illiteracy and low level educational functioning of some of the trainees. A considerable difficulty arose in the utilization of written materials in the training and the use of the material as guides for the trainees back in their organizations to carry out the necessary functions of operating small farmer associations. The project modified its training approach to accommodate such trainees by supplying all the information orally, utilizing diagrams and pictures, and the most simplified training manuals possible within the context of the education to be imparted. Those modifications ameliorated the situation and probably made the learning greater for educationally handicapped trainees.

Despite the problems, it must be emphasized that the persons sent to the training needed that training. They were functioning in positions of responsibility. They were the intended recipients of the training, regardless of the level of educational attainment. Whatever learning could be engendered would help them and their associations. As noted by ACDI in its 1977 report (2) "helping these members become aware of the need to have competent managers and accountants is in itself an important function of the training." The interviewees noted that some cooperatives had not done this, and had suffered because of it, but that many others had and they cited specific examples.

Training Sites: The project had specified that the training would be conducted at sites where small farmer associations were operating. The courses were offered in eleven different sites, fairly well distributed through the main agricultural sections of the nation. At least one cooperative and usually several other types of small farmer organizations were available nearby. Actual examples of management problems and accounting systems from some of them were utilized in the teaching. Some sites had excellent training facilities, such as Zamorano and San Marcos de Ocoatepeque, allowing for many kinds of professional presentations. Some of the others were held at facilities with fewer amenities but they, too, were deemed adequate for the task. It would appear that the sites were appropriate.

Training Materials: The training and technical assistance given by the project were formulated to accomplish three types of results, depending upon the audience addressed:

1. Establish a uniform, practical system of accounting;
2. Help DIFOCOOP and other organizations improve their delivery of services to small farmer associations; and
3. Train employees and decision makers in the principles of good management and accounting.

The training materials were thus expected to assist not only with imparting the necessary information but also to serve as later guides for the several audiences. To those ends, the following manuals were produced and published in accounting:

- Ejemplo Simplificado de Operaciones Contables "Cooperativa Agrícola Morazan" (9)
(Simplified Example of Accounting Operations from the Morazan Cooperative)
- Desarrollo del Ejercicio Simplificado "Cooperativo Morazan" (8)
(Development of the Simplified Example for Morazan Cooperative)
- Manual de Contabilidad para Cooperativas Agrícolas (10)
(Accounting Manual for Agricultural Cooperatives)

One manual provides all of the basic accounting operations. Another manual provides a simplified example of cooperative accounting that utilized actual operations from a cooperative. The third manual emphasizes the process the accounting procedures should follow. Both the accounting and the procedures adhere to good bookkeeping principles. The operations used in the examples were real and thus should have appealed to the audience and impressed them with the need to learn them.

A corollary publication was published that listed the entire set of documents needed by a cooperative system so that it met the legal requirements. It is:

- Sistema de Registros Basicos en las Organizaciones de Pequeños Agricultores (11)
(System of Basic Registry Documents for Small Farmer Organizations)

An important thrust in this manual is that these organizations need to view themselves as "cooperative businesses," with the controls that name signifies, in order to help the members achieve their goals of greater agricultural production and thus improved living conditions. Examples of possible forms are included, each with an explanation of why the form is needed and the importance of each item. It also shows how the forms together provide a viable system. This document was utilized in both the accounting and management courses since a unitary thrust was vital to establishing a uniform system.

The third set of documents produced included two that were specifically for managers of small farmer groups and their boards of directors. The two form a set, volume 1 and volume 2, and were prepared so as to be kept as guides in the offices of the cooperatives and other types of associations. These documents are:

- Lecciones para Gerencia de Cooperativas Agrícolas: Manual del Instructor (tomo 1)(24)
(Lessons for the Management of Agricultural Cooperatives: Instructor's Manual)
- Lecciones para Gerencia de Cooperativas Agrícolas: Introduccion (tomo 2)(25)
(Lessons for the Management of Agricultural Cooperatives: Introduction)

The first volume was intended primarily for trainers. It is also seen as a useful guide for managers as they develop the management capabilities of the board of directors, committees, and the voting members.

Another publication was initially designed as an informational packet for those who serve small farmer organizations as extension personnel in business practices, in technical assistance in any of the subject areas of the cooperative, or in training persons to conduct those tasks. This publication is:

- Lecturas Selectas para el Extensionista (26)
(Selected Reading for Extension Personnel)

The publication contains brief introductions to working with individuals and groups, to approaches that have proven effective in initiating change, and to some procedures to help extension workers establish the type of relationship that will promote the educational process. An important section on leadership and identifying it in local communities was included. The principles espoused were those that have been found effective in working with rural people in Latin America and most other parts of the world.

Project documents insisted that the publications should present clear but simply worded narratives and exercises. Comparisons of the manuals with others utilized in several countries in Latin America were made. An important comparison was that done with a popular set of publications on cooperative housing, judged by many to be written at the level for needed comprehension and yet preserving the technical aspects that would enable learning; De la Gente, por la Gente, para la Gente: Cooperativas de Vivienda para America Rural (5). The length of the sentences, the brevity of the explanations, and the vocabularies were quite

similar in the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI and the Rural America Corporation publications. No essentially difficult passages were contained in either. Both utilized some technical words but they were needed for the content and in most cases were explained. For most of the trainees, the publications should have served well. The interviewees agreed with that judgment. All of them pointed out that in some courses, especially those with local cooperative members enrolled, there were always some trainees who could not read the material. Interviewees also noted that the level of literacy of such trainees was so low, or non-existent, that materials could not have been prepared for their consumption.

Adequacy of the Teaching Methods: Written descriptions of the methodologies employed in the courses were few. References to some aspects of them were contained in some of the documents. Emphasis was said to be placed on practicality, as previously mentioned, on simplicity of presentation, and on easy-to-follow logical format. Examples were declared as a vital part of assuring that each principle was understood. The project publications indicate that when used as training guides, those methodological principles were followed. The interviewees, although all with substantial formal education, stated that all but a few of the trainees could understand and profit from the instruction, even when they could not read; that is, the oral teaching process was thorough enough to permit learning without reading. While the evidence for positive judgments about the methodologies was scarce, no negative evidence was discovered. Apparently the teaching methods were generally satisfactory for the majority of the trainees.

The examinations into the processes utilized in the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI project resulted in generally quite favorable assessments on almost all the items. The documents available provided the information and data needed for many processes. Interviews with former trainers and trainees supported the documentary evidence. Some of the processes could not be concretely assessed since the information was incomplete or was not included in the documents. Supplementary information from the interviewees was used in those cases; those, also, resulted in largely positive assessments on process. Overall, the evaluators assessed the processes as favorable to learning.

Institution Building

Assistance to in-country institutions, so they can work effectively in the delivery of their assigned services and in the performance of other required tasks, has always been an important aspect of the work of the Agency for International Development. A recent draft document (32) examined the patterns in AID's institution building portfolio. Reports by Weinstein (35), Mariscal and Company (27), and Dulfer (15) contained sections on this process and its results. Evaluations and assessments by Fledderjohn (16), Hatch & Flores (17), Development Associates (21, 22), and White (36) made recommendations pertinent to institution building. Emphasis on this aspect has not diminished over time.

The USAID/Honduras project description paper specifically addressed increased institutional capacities, citing "an accounting system developed and in place," "managers and accountants trained to carry out their functions," and "assist DIFOCOOP to strengthen its capabilities to conduct training for small farmer associations." (34) ACDI reports (1, 2, 4) reflected these same goals.

An accounting system was developed by the project personnel, as evidenced in the manuals on that subject (8, 9, 10). The subject was taught directly in ten of the courses listed in Table 1 (p.12). Additionally, the need to install an accurate bookkeeping system was emphasized in the management courses and in the laboratory session. The acceptance of the system was demonstrated in a number of ways. DIFOCOOP was still using and teaching an accounting system that was essentially the one set up by the project. A few modifications had been made but the basic structure was still intact. The National Association of Rural Honduras (ANACH) also uses a manual to train and assist its member groups. That document was not examined by the evaluators but was reported by the interviewees to be an almost exact copy of the one developed in the project. Furthermore, the interviewees named several cooperatives that had adopted the project system during and after the training and that were still following it. Some evidence for the installation and use of the project system was obtained even though the extent of its perserverance could not be ascertained.

Training for both management and accounting procedures was held and many trainees attended the sessions. As mentioned in an earlier context, the learning was reported to be from "very low" for illiterate participants to "very high" for those with sufficient education to understand the principles and the procedures. Again, the continued inclusion of trained DIFOCOOP personnel in that agency's training efforts provides some evidence, even though unmeasured, of increased capacity. Too, the interviewees named more than a dozen managers and accountants working in cooperatives who had been trained in the program. Two other organizations, the Federation of Cooperative Housing (FEHCOVIL) and the Federation of Savings and Loan Cooperatives (FACACH), specifically named members of their staff who had taken the training and were still providing training and/or technical assistance based on what they learned, or had advanced higher in the organization and were monitoring the work of others in those fields. A secondary report stated that the Federation of Regional Agricultural Cooperatives (FECOAR) also had personnel who had the training and had advanced from working in cooperatives to federation monitoring posts. Obviously, these examples do not add up to a very large portion of the 695 trainees. Nevertheless, they are important products of the project and the potential multiplier effect from those who are now conducting training, providing technical assistance, and monitoring those activities, constitute some concrete evidence of institution building as a result of the project.

The major effort in institution building was, of course, focused on the Office of Cooperative Promotion (DIFOCOOP). AID, ACDI, and DIFOCOOP cited the formation of the Division of Education and Dissemination within DIFOCOOP as evidence of substantial success of the project. The division was formed about a year after the project closed and is still operating today. The principal counterpart professor in the project team is now the head of that division. Further, six of the staff members who work with him were trained in the project sessions. The interviewees also named nearly a dozen staff members of other divisions in DIFOCOOP who received the training and who make use of what they learned in their present assignments.

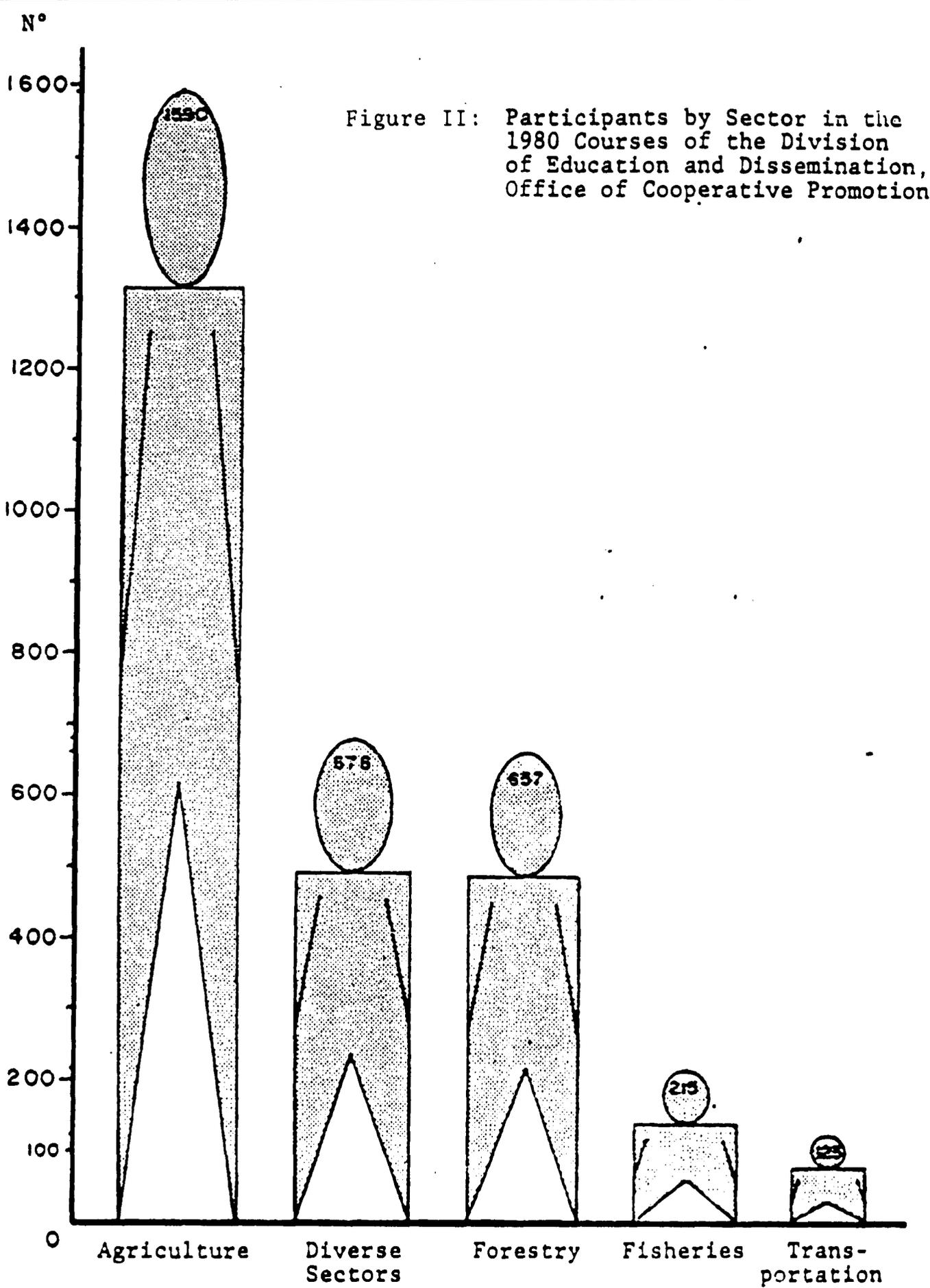
Four of the trained trainers in the Division of Education and Dissemination were present in the capital offices at the time of the interviews and their opinions on the training and its value to them were sought. All four commented that

although they knew some aspects of the management and accounting system taught (all four were "peritos mercantiles," approximately business school graduates), they had gained a great deal of specific knowledge about accounting for cooperatives and other small farmer associations through the courses. They further cited their increased capacity to carry out training and give technical assistance in both management and accounting as a result of their participation. Indeed, they commented that their successful work as "trainee trainers" in some of the project courses had helped them obtain positions in the division. They ascribed the same benefits to the two other trainees who were not present but were doing field work and not in capital at the time.

These interviewees also praised the manuals that were produced during the project. One remarked that he "jealously guarded" his copies as they were still of great assistance to him in preparing courses for new groups. According to these trainers, the preparation they received as extension agents was also an important asset to them in their present work. They commented that while they possessed some knowledge about accounting and other business practices from their business school education, no one had helped them prepare to go to the field and work with rural residents to inculcate the principles and practices into the work of the cooperatives. They felt these were valuable assets gained from the project. Each of these elements supplies some concrete evidence of institution building as a result of the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI project.

The Division of Education and Dissemination of DIFOCOOP still works primarily with cooperatives and with "pre-cooperatives." It also provides a considerable assistance to other small farmer associations throughout the country. The early orientation toward agricultural cooperatives continues to be directly usable; almost half the participants in their training courses during 1980 were from that type of organization. (See Figure II on the following page.) What they learned in the project and subsequently refined in their work is directly applicable to their present positions and to all the staff in the division.

The division has also expanded its scope of activities to encompass other types of cooperatives and associations. Figure II indicates a substantial part of the work is with forestry groups, especially cooperatives, and also with fisheries and transportation cooperatives. The interviewees noted that the accounting and



*Taken from DIFOCOOP Division of Education and Dissemination 1980 annual report (18).

management principles are the same for all cooperatives. Minor adjustments need to be made for the particular services, supplies, and products but those still fit within the "cooperatives as a business enterprise" system for which they were trained from the beginning.

In summary, some solid evidence of institution building emanating from the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI project was demonstrated. Quantitative assessment of the strengthening of local and regional cooperatives was weak in that few could be named that had continued in operation after assistance by the project. Those that were cited constituted important examples. Institutional help to umbrella organizations was confirmed in several important cases; again, the numbers of the trainees involved were small in relation to the total trained but their potential effects within those organizations was subjectively judged to be high. The manuals on accounting had exerted a considerable influence on DIFOCOOP, some local and two regional cooperatives, and on another national organization; objective evidence was obtained on those. The creation of the Division of Education and Dissemination within the Office of Cooperative Promotion was listed by all three of the participating agencies in the project as a major success of that project. The transfer of six of the trainees to work in the division was seen as significant. The naming of the counterpart professor as the head of that new division was also cited as an important byproduct of the project. Institution building was viewed as one of the strongest results of the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI training and technical assistance project.

Impacts on Rural Residents

USAID/Honduras stated some important benefits expected to accrue to rural residents from the operation of the project. Increased agricultural income and consequently improved living conditions were chief among them. It was anticipated that improved operation of cooperatives and other small farmer associations would finally bring these into fruition. The measurement of these potential benefits, however, requires that baseline data be collected against which summative data can be compared. Several farm/rural studies were conducted in 1975, 1976, and 1977 that could have, in general, served as baseline data. The present study did not provide for a followup survey nor were data from other sources immediately available.

Even if the pre and post data had been collected, there were some circumstances that would mitigate against a cause and effect study in the case of this project. The courses were mostly five days in length, thus they furnished primarily a beginning set of knowledge and skills to the participants. While even that level was badly needed, it might not necessarily be sufficient, in and of itself, to bring about the sweeping modifications that were apparently needed. Followup training and technical assistance would be required for many of the participants to effect an accurate management and accounting system. At least two cooperatives did benefit from additional special attention. Data from the members in those would have been useful, not only to determine some long term effects of the project but also to ascertain how much followup is needed.

A second factor limiting the measurement of long term effects of the project on agriculture was the many other programs of training and technical assistance that were offered by other entities. As previously discussed, several of these were described in the USAID/Honduras agricultural assessment of 1978 (33). Some of the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI project trainees were known to have benefited from one or more of them, as did members of their farmer associations. Direct cause and effect relationships, then, would have been contaminated.

The third deterrent to a rigorous study of long term effects was the fragmentation of some of the original institutions into several others. Related to this problem, too, was the movement of personnel from one organization to another. Insofar as they carried the acquired knowledge and skill with them and applied these to the new organization, some residual effects could have resulted. Some, however, transferred into other kinds of work in which the training offered little assistance. Some presumptions about being aware that small farmer associations must be viewed as business enterprises could imply that some benefits always accrue. While no doubt some of this did follow with the trainees, direct relationships would appear quite tentative.

Finally, some of the cooperatives and other small farmer associations did not survive from 1976 to 1982. When their demise was due to inadequate management operations, some possibilities of project failure could be inferred. Project personnel and interviewed trainees agreed that some of the participants learned very little from the courses. On the other hand, Honduras suffered a recession

during a part of the period which would cause severe difficulties for small cooperatives and for their members. Also, political events, especially those related to the agrarian reform and unions, affected the configurations of existing associations. Detailed case studies would be necessary to understand the nature of those cooperative groups that disappeared, separated into distinct entities, continued but in different forms, or modified themselves without essential structural changes.

Looking at the entire range of possibilities of positive and negative effects of the project on agricultural production and rural living elicits no worthwhile conclusions at this point in time. A lack of progress in some institutions from which the trainees came may, in part, have resulted from the lack of or incomplete learning in the courses. Some successes could be surmised from cases in which cooperatives have survived and appear to be operating effectively today. The absence of data, however, prevents definitive statements for or against enhanced agricultural production and rural life emanating from this project.

Assessment Summary

The process indicators examined showed mostly favorable project operation. The provision of training in the project was especially appropriate in light of the rapid growth of small farmer associations at the time. The resources were managed well and personnel from the counterpart agency were suitably incorporated into the operations. USAID/Honduras, ACDI, and DIFOCOOP performed some monitoring functions. The number of anticipated trainees was exceeded and they came from the expected institutions. Project personnel could not select the trainees since those were nominated by their organizations. Generally those sent to the courses were considered to be those who needed the training even though a few in each session had had little or no formal education and were judged to have learned less than was desired. The trainers were well prepared in both the content and the methodologies for the courses; the interviewed trainees were unanimous in their praise of them. The courses were held in areas where cooperatives and other associations were present and those organizations were utilized in the education process. The training materials were technically correct and couched in simplified language and format; many continue in use.

Evidence of institution building in some local cooperatives was related by most of the interviewees. Contributions to the functioning of some umbrella organizations were also described by trainees and by some heads of institutions. DIFOCOOP created a Division of Education and Dissemination, promoted one of the counterpart professors to be its head, and transferred six of the trainees to form part of the staff. That agency continues in operation and primarily serves those groups intended as beneficiaries of the project.

Impact on agricultural production and rural living could not be ascertained from this evaluation. Some successful cases were described by the interviewees; some inferences about less than desirable learning and organizational failure were possible but direct cause and effect, in either the positive or the negative cases, could not be determined. Many mitigating circumstances existed, obfuscating the potential effects on agricultural production and farm family living conditions.

The combination of almost entirely positive project process indicators, substantial institution building in the counterpart agency and some growth in other agencies as well as some concrete evidence of continued utilization of the project manuals gave a favorable impression of the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI program. While more definitive data would have strengthened the evaluation, the lack of that information did not constitute a case for negative effects. The overall judgment was that some very positive benefits accrued from this effort to provide training and technical assistance in management and accounting for small farmer associations in Honduras.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluations of training programs for the personnel of intermediary agencies have frequently encountered severe limitations in determining the process variables that impinge on learning, retention, and subsequent application. The definition of what constitutes learning is in itself problematic in many cases. Further, since these personnel are expected to utilize the learning to improve the operation of their agencies the measurement of impact is extremely complicated.

The case of the joint training and technical assistance program to improve the management and accounting capabilities of small farmer organizations by the Agency for International Development, Agricultural Cooperative Development International, and the Office of Cooperative Promotion in Honduras was subject to all of these difficulties. ACDI and DIFOCOOP personnel conducted a series of courses for persons who would assist other institutions, employees of cooperatives, members of boards of directors and the associations themselves, and trainers for the training of all of these. Thus several tracks can be perceived between the training process and the ultimate goals of increased farm production and consequently enhanced rural living. In addition to the many channels through which the benefits are to accrue, time itself becomes an important measurement factor. Measures of learning are usually best applied at the conclusion of the courses. Increased incomes, however, is a relatively long term effect.

These assessment problems emphasize the need for early evaluation planning. Utilizing the project objectives, particularly if they are stated in quantifiable behavioral terms, can provide the content for an assessment of learning. The project under study intended to impart specific information and engender certain skills. Tests and/or demonstrations could have been devised to supply the data on what was learned. While measurement of learning at that point does not guarantee retention and application, it at least supplies a base for making some important judgments about the training.

When substantial resources can be supplied for an evaluation, inspection of accounting records and management processes in place afterward in a trainee's institution can furnish the data for determining the use of training principles. This also permits assessment of increased delivery of services or goods by the organization as a result of enhanced management. Some proportions of greater cost effectiveness in the delivery of services and increased profit margins can be ascribed to improved management when other circumstances impinging upon costs can be controlled.

Calculations of augmented production and income for cooperative members have been done. The recent Hatch & Flores (17) publication on projects in Panama is an example. Inflation, supply/demand fluctuations on prices, and weather may contaminate the results but when these, too, can be statistically accounted for, useful information can be produced.

All of the previous discussions emphasize the need for prior planning for evaluation efforts. The need for planning, of course, has been stated many times. Nevertheless, many projects are implemented without such planning. The present project is a case in point. Although the project was seen as a beginning effort, some preparation could have enabled more precise measurements of impacts of the training. Hindsight will not help the present assessment but it should give useful indications to other projects that are in the planning stages.

External evaluations are relatively expensive and are not always conducted. The data presented in the institution building survey conducted by the Agency for International Development found a large number of projects on which neither evaluations nor audits had been performed (32). The increased demands of the U.S. Government for accountability in projects places renewed importance on knowing the accomplishments of such efforts. Internal or self evaluations thus appear as an aid to the sponsoring institution, providing data for improvement of the process, but also as evidence of successful completion.

The Tendler (31) suggestions to project directors and evaluators offer useful indicators that can be pursued in self evaluations. The recommendations in Mariscal and Company (27) reinforce them. Handbooks for self evaluation have been produced in several fields; one by Development Associates (28) utilized a

step-by-step process that has found wide acceptance in the health care field. The study questions and indicators included in the Development Associates (14) system drafts are equally applicable to internal and external evaluations.

The conduct of the present evaluative assessment and the conditions of information and other data reviewed point to some positive aspects of the project under study as they relate to evaluation:

Careful preservation of monthly and annual reports materially aid in interim and summative study of a project, as evidenced in the present case.

Training enrollment lists, although seemingly of low utility, enable contacts later with the students; those were available.

Not only were these directly useful to the evaluators, they also led to other sources of information that improved the ability to describe the project and establish some of the contextual clues to its conduct.

At relatively low cost and level of effort, this project and many others of its type could accumulate some utilitarian data for an internal or for external evaluations. Some that should be considered include:

- A few items of demographic data on the trainees (age, occupation, position, formal education) can materially assist in differentiating project effects.
- When feasible, pre and post measures on the content of the training give worthy indications of how projects might improve their delivery, and at the same time, provide evidence of learning.
- If attitudinal change is an essential ingredient in the training, administration of an opinionnaire can furnish data on its accomplishment.
- Trainee judgments obtained with a formal instrument at the end of each day, section, or the course provide helpful information about the teaching methods, content covered, and trainee perceptions of their acquisition of the knowledge and skills.

Periodic reviews of the data gathering instruments enable some mid-course corrections that are likely to enhance the success of the training. Analyses of the data collected, either internally or by an external evaluator, lead to some worthy conclusions on the project processes and some potential impacts.

Training programs with large enrollments, such as the 695 in the project under study, usually experience difficulty in any subsequent measurement of impact unless technical assistance directed toward followup activities is included in the contract. Random or stratified random sampling can be employed in some cases. In others, purposive studies of some segments among the trainees may be of greater information value.

In instances when special effects are anticipated from the training, case studies offer highly useful information.

Fortuitously, the creation of the Division of Education and Dissemination within the Office of Cooperative Promotion provided a partial case study in the present project. The division's personnel and reports furnished explicit information on institution building as a result of some of the project efforts. With more resources, the assessment could also have studied some of the successful cooperatives, and perhaps some with less desirable results, as case studies. Secondary information on them was helpful, but direct investigation would have strengthened the evidence. Projects should examine their intended audiences for special cases such as these and be sure to collect the information required to identify them.

Short term programs of training for persons at different organizational levels meant to be used to increase agricultural production, especially when studied as a single influence, are seldom useful subjects for impact evaluation. The project evaluated constitutes a case in point. Many intervening variables, some of them unknown and some known but not measurable, were involved. The absence of rural impact data, therefore, should not be interpreted as evidence against this project or others of its type that may be contemplated. Projects that initiate a management system may offer the best strategy for effecting changes when coupled with followup efforts and/or higher level training later on.

In that vein, then, the present evaluative assessment recommendations, if carried out in future projects, offer an additional advantage to the sponsoring institutions. Objective information on the immediate effects of a training program can give valuable indications of subsequent projects that may be needed. Further, the planning efforts for those new directions should be much more effective since knowledge obtained in earlier projects can guide the formulation of the content and often the methodologies for additional training or technical assistance.

APPLICABILITY OF THE EVALUATION SYSTEM

The evaluative assessment of the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI training and technical assistance program for personnel of cooperatives in Honduras was a useful task unto itself. The project had been concluded; internal reports on its implementation and some impacts had been submitted. No external evaluation of it had been conducted. The work by the evaluation team, however, was also guided by the intent to field test the appropriate sections of the Development Associates draft system for evaluating cooperative projects (13, 14). A second level of analysis was therefore performed to assess the applicability of that system to a training program of this type.

This second level of analysis was done in two stages. The first was a review of the pertinent study questions and the indicators with the appropriate staff members of USAID/Honduras, the ACDI specialist who had worked on the earlier project and was again assigned to Honduras, the chief DIFOCOOP counterpart professor in the training project, and four trainees of the original effort. The second stage consisted of the use of selected study questions and indicators from the system in the evaluation of the project.

The replies from the personnel of the several organizations with whom the review was conducted and the analysis of the quality and quantity of the data and other information obtained were synthesized to facilitate the assessment of the system. Although the two stages of activities were conducted separately, the information is integrated in the explanation of the procedures and their results.

Procedural Assessments

The principles of evaluation call for two assessment time frames, formative through interim examinations during the life of the project and summative analyses conducted at or sometime after the conclusion of the project. Either may be carried out by the personnel involved in the project. Internal, formative evaluation is crucial to the conduct of the program. This determines the

effectiveness of the procedures and suggests corrections when required, enabling maximum impact. External formative studies often involve audits, but they may also examine the processes and some potential impacts in order to give suggestions for improvement in program delivery. Internal summative assessments usually take the form of an "end of project report" similar to that done on a similar project in Guatemala (16) and the second ACDI annual report (2) on the Honduras training program. The present document is the result of external assessment and is summative.

Formative Evaluation: All four organizations - USAID/Honduras, ACDI/Washington, ACDI/Honduras, and DIFOCOOP - agreed that formative assessments should be undertaken. Evidence from the ACDI/Honduras monthly reports attested to monitoring by USAID/Honduras, although access problems prevented viewing the USAID reports. ACDI/Washington monitoring was recorded in the monthly reports from Tegucigalpa and from the annual reports of the parent organization. The ACDI/Honduras monthly reports contained a great deal of formative assessment and efforts to resolve difficulties. DIFOCOOP assessments were also evident in those same reports. No other written documents were available from the counterpart agency, but it saw itself as an integral part of the project, hence, the monthly ACDI/Honduras reports included their assessments.

The DIFOCOOP trainees interviewed stated that many formative meetings and individual conferences were conducted during their involvement. They also noted that the work at some of the cooperative sites furnished information on the learning of the trainees from those organizations. The most important weakness in the formative system was the lack of written evaluations by the trainees during or at the end of each course. Since 695 persons received the education and several years had passed, documentary evidence of their assessments of the processes and probable impacts would have significantly strengthened the formative evaluation.

Management Assessment: The ACDI/Honduras and ACDI/Washington reports contained substantial information on the conduct of the administrative tasks of the project. ACDI/Honduras provided additional insights, and those were confirmed by DIFOCOOP. The USAID/Honduras monitor was no longer on the staff but the present officers expressed general satisfaction with the management of the efforts of the ACDI entities and DIFOCOOP.

Process Evaluation: The ACDI annual reports and the documents of ACDI/Honduras (monthly reports, course enrollment lists, course outlines, and manuals produced) provided ample information on the processes followed in the project. The quantity and quality of the information are reflected in the process examinations within the present report. Some evidence on the applicability of all the Development Associates evaluation system indicators was found. Trainee assessments of the processes, not collected by the project staff, were lacking. Some were collected by the external evaluators but the limitations of time and access to the many trainees severely restricted the elaboration of this aspect.

Impact Evaluation: A frequently encountered impact dichotomy was found in this project. Direct, immediate impacts were envisioned: trainees learning, installation of a suitable accounting system for small farmer organizations, and institution building. The assessments of learning were mostly subjective about who learned enough and who did not. No written tests or trainee assessments of learning were administered. Interviews with some of the trainees contributed some primary source information. The positions some held and the work they conducted were directly related to the training received and thus furnished additional impact information. Secondary information was obtained from several persons on other trainees who had benefited from the training and who were currently performing tasks related to what they learned. Some interviewees also cited cooperatives whose staff members had been trained and which had received the benefit from project offered technical assistance. Their continued operation was seen as positive evidence of project success.

Some objective evidence of the installation of a suitable accounting system was discovered; that is, adaptations of the original in DIFOCOOP and in another national organization. Continued utilization of the project manuals on accounting and management was reported by some trainees.

Two levels of institution building were anticipated from the project. Enhanced capacity to perform training and technical assistance by DIFOCOOP was a stated objective. Many of the trainees still functioned in that agency at the time of the evaluation. A further evidence of institution building was the existence of a Division of Education and Dissemination, which had not existed before the

project, and was allegedly formed because of the experiences in the project. The second target for institution building was cooperatives. Some secondary, and probably mostly subjective, information was obtained on this facet. Primary evidence was said to exist, but the evaluation resources did not allow for field work outside the capital where those cooperatives were in operation.

Other expected project impacts were enhanced agricultural production and family living, as stated in the USAID/Honduras project description. Probably some effects on these were engendered as a result of the project activities but no positive or negative evidence was produced. The courses were beginning level; other training was available and used. Too, the short duration of the courses mitigated against definitive data on such a secondary effect - trained cooperative personnel leading, it was expected, to more effective operations, leading thereafter to greater agricultural production. The cause and effect sequence was subject to too many other variables to permit objective evaluation of such impacts. They should be stated as eventual and anticipated goals, but direct measurement would seldom be possible. The agricultural production and social benefits indicators in the Development Associates system were thus untested in this case.

System Recommendations

The section on process evaluation in the Development Associates system document should be reinforced with additional information for project directors and monitoring institutions. Specifically, this project, and probably most training projects, should collect data on:

1. trainee perceptions of the processes involved;
2. trainee perceptions on their learning; and
3. learning evidenced from examples utilized in reinforcing the general sessions and/or written tests covering the materials.

When the preparation for the training differs greatly among trainees, as it did in this case, the collection of some trainee characteristics will help explain variations in learning or perceptions of learning as evidenced in the previously suggested assessments.

Sponsoring institutions also need to do some planning for evaluations before a project is completed. Timeliness of an evaluation is an important factor in its successful conclusion. Short courses provided to many trainees should be assessed relatively soon after the trainees have completed them, especially in an environment in which there are many changes in organizations and in the positions of the personnel involved. Recall is enhanced and a greater definition of retention is thus possible. Changes in the operations of a cooperative are likely to occur within a limited time after course work is completed. Further, assignment of the course as the cause for change is much more likely to be accurate. No funds were budgeted for a summative evaluation in the case of this project, thus the lack of it does not reflect negatively on the sponsoring institutions. Preparation for such an evaluation, however, should always be a part of the total planning effort.

Finally, despite the evaluation deficiencies encountered in this effort, stemming from both some absence of data and reduced resources for this evaluation, some useful information on the project was obtained. That information should be helpful to the staff of other projects as they plan their work. It was also important in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the draft evaluation system.

The criticisms evoked from the data bases and from the evaluation procedures should not be interpreted as inferring negative results from the DIFOCOOP/AID/ACDI project. The general consensus was that within its limitations or resources, it had performed well. The project was seen as a useful component in the preparation for improved cooperative operation within the context of its time and circumstances.

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