

Agricultural Education Development Project  
(Contract No. AID/ASID-C-1297)

ISU 25225-1

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A total of 23 long and short termers\* have already come to Peradeniya under the Project as of October 1980. On the whole, they have been a truly outstanding group, both professionally and personally, and have had a significant impact on the PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture. After more than a year in operation, however, it is time to take a closer look at our experience in the interest of doing even better in the future.

1. Identification/nomination/scheduling

The short and long term assignments projected in our present Plan of Implementation are the result of continuing reassessment of need and reordering of priorities, starting with the 1977 PGIA request for assistance and Faculty of Agriculture development plan. Appropriate staff have already been identified for most, although not all, of the programmed assignments. However, naming the individual is only the first step in a process that must ultimately involve one or more of the CAED universities, the PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture, USAID/SL and AID/W, and the Academy. There would appear to be a number of opportunities for further improvement in this process.

The Plan of Implementation identifies the area of specialization for each assignment, and the Contract sets forth the general types of assistance to be provided. However, a scope of work that provides some background about the assignment as well as a detailed description of what the visiting staff will be expected to accomplish is also needed to assure that the person selected is "right" for the job.

Scopes of work can best be prepared by the Faculty/PGIA Department/Board of Study requesting the assistance of visiting staff, and they have been doing so since the Project became operational. Typically, however, their scopes of work are very brief, more like skeletal outlines than detailed descriptions. Such a format is consistent with local custom in preparing proposals, reports, etc. When presented to the CAED university or person selected for a particular assignment, the reaction is often a sense of frustration in trying to read between the lines to gain a fuller understanding of what is actually expected.

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\* Does not include those coming specifically for the Consortium Council meeting in February 1980 nor visits by Academy staff.

Attention is now being focused on this problem, and future scopes of work will hopefully be both more nearly adequate and made available further in advance of the assignment. Inquiries and feedback from the CAED universities can contribute significantly to such improvement.

Each nomination for a technical assistance assignment is scrutinized carefully when it reaches Peradenya. After examining the resume and supporting documentation for relevance and completeness, the Chief of Party submits the nomination to the PGIA Director, Dean, and Department concerned (with copy to USAID/SL). The Department/Board of Study reviews the nomination and their recommendation goes to the Dean who in turn passes it to the Director with his own comments. Only after the nomination has been approved at all three levels is it submitted to USAID/SL for clearance and to the home office indicating acceptance.

Approval of a nomination is far from automatic as evidenced by the fact that two nominations have been rejected. The later acceptance of one of these after receiving supplemental information indicates the importance of providing adequate relevant information about the training and experience of the individual at the time the nomination is originally submitted by the university.

The PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture seek to judge each nomination on its own merits--either the nominee is or is not qualified for the assignment in question. Therefore, although they appreciate having more than one candidate from which to select where this may be possible, one solid candidate per position meets their requirements. Since the Consortium is committed, through the Contract, to provide all necessary technical assistance, they do expect to receive nominations for all assignments far enough in advance of need to permit adequate planning for his/her arrival.

In evaluating nominations, the PGIA/Faculty uses several criteria. Technical competence is, for the most part, assumed. Relevance of training and experience to the specific assignment at Peradenya receives major attention, however. Both breadth and depth of experience are considered important, including previous overseas experience in similar assignments. In addition to examining qualifications of the individual, the PGIA/Faculty also looks for people who will contribute toward building linkages, strong continuing associations, with CAED and other major U.S. universities. For this reason, they much prefer nominees who are on the faculty of one of the CAED universities.

Too often, the field office receives little more than a minimal resume which does not provide sufficient information to permit the evaluation just described (the scope of work problem in reverse). It would help greatly in such cases to receive supplemental documentation--letters of support from colleagues showing how the experience of the nominee is relevant to the assignment or a narrative concerning the same written by the nominee--along with the resume.

The PGIA/Faculty and field office must rely almost entirely on the nominating institution to evaluate personal traits of the nominee and members of his family who may accompany him to Sri Lanka. Suffice it to say at this point that such an evaluation can be as important as that of professional qualifications.

Although the Plan of Implementation indicates specific periods for each assignment, scheduling must remain flexible to accommodate both program needs and availability of desired individuals. The PGIA/Faculty has repeatedly shown willingness to adjust teaching assignments, course offerings, etc., to the availability of the technician for his Sri Lanka assignment. The CAED universities must show a similar willingness to adjust schedules to meet the needs in Peradeniya.

As an example, a recent nomination was accompanied by the statement that the technician could be available only during such and such a period. Not only was the suggested timing not in agreement with that decided only a couple of months earlier with the relevant CAED department head, but it did not coincide with any term of the PGIA/Faculty. The head of the Sri Lankan department involved was agreeable to shifting the assignment from the second to the third term. He had to insist that the technician be in Peradeniya for one complete term, however, since teaching will constitute a major portion of that particular assignment. Eventually, it became necessary to nominate another candidate who can be available at a time that meets program needs.

The importance of sufficient lead time in identifying, nominating and scheduling people for both long and short term assignments cannot be over-emphasized. Ideally, nominations should be submitted at least one year in advance of the assignment in order to maintain the high quality of visiting staff upon which the PGIA/Faculty rightfully insists. Timings should be only approximate at that stage, however, recognizing that shifts in program needs or prior commitments of the nominee may necessitate some later adjustments in arrival and departure dates.

The final steps in the nomination process are approvals of the nominee by USAID/SL and the AID/W Contract Office. As indicated earlier, the field office provides USAID/SL with pertinent information--including the scope of work and resume at the minimum--at the time the nomination is submitted to the PGIA/Faculty. Then, a copy of the nomination memo, approved by the PGIA Director, is passed to USAID/SL with a request for Mission approval.

Prompt action on such requests on the part of USAID/SL and AID/W are needed to maintain the lead time required for planning and preparation for any given assignment. In two recent cases, extended delays by USAID/SL in granting approvals jeopardized the possibility for obtaining the services of the nominees. Steps have now been taken within the USAID Mission to expedite clearances of this nature, and it is hoped that such problems will not recur in the future.

2. Pre-departure orientation and preparation

Generally speaking, recent arrivals appear to have been reasonably well briefed on Project housing and living in Kandy. With a few notable exceptions, however, their knowledge about the PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture appears to have been less complete. Advance preparation by the individual has varied from in-depth study of all available Project reports and documents, preparation of course outlines, and assembling sets of reference materials to failure to remember receiving a scope of work or to make inquiries into the nature of the assignment or the Project.

a. Living in Kandy. A few additional ~~comments~~ on this subject may be helpful. The Project handbook is in need of updating, which can hopefully be done during the coming year. For example, Sri Lanka no longer requires a smallpox vaccination for entry into the country. The only vaccination requirement at present is for yellow fever if arriving from an infected area (source: Health Information for International Travel 1980, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, HHS Publication No. (CDC)80-8280). The overall health and health hazard situations are still largely as described in the Handbook, however.

The question of "what to bring" is always pertinent. Unless advised in advance, all short termers will be housed in the AEDP Staff Bungalow which provides full services--meals, laundry, furnished rooms, bed linens, towels, etc. Snacks and liquid refreshments can be purchased locally or through the commissary, although the selection may be rather limited. The variety of goods of all kinds available on the local market is surprising, although prices for imports are high. Thus, physical needs are taken care of reasonably well.

Recreational opportunities present a much more serious problem for many people, both short and long term--particularly if they have not previously had extended assignments in developing countries. It is in this area that additional briefing and counseling might be helpful, including such points as:

- The AEDP Staff Bungalow has no radio or music facilities. If these are important to you, bring them.
- The AEDP Staff Bungalow has a small library of paperbacks. If you like to read, however, it would be a good idea to bring a supply of books you enjoy.
- Numerous opportunities exist for interesting trips on weekends and holidays. The Project field office will help you to arrange for transportation (a leased car in all likelihood), hotel reservations, etc. All such trips will be at your own expense.
- Both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches welcome those who wish to attend.

--Two hotels in Kandy have swimming pools which you can use for a modest charge; the movie theatres occasionally show English language movies; and cultural events are sponsored by various organizations. Beyond this and the shopping, however, outside entertainment is limited. Therefore, you must come prepared to provide your own entertainment to a large degree (birdwatching, writing, sketching, crafts are a few possibilities).

The last point mentioned above should be stressed, especially in cases where wives expect to accompany their husbands on short term (1 - 3 mo.) assignments. Unless prepared mentally and emotionally for an abrupt shift from the fast-moving hectic life of the U.S. with its television, clubs and numerous other diversions to the quiet, slow-paced life in Kandy with minimal "outside" entertainment, life in Kandy can be deadly. Accepted on its own terms, however, it can be an enriching experience, and an opportunity to become intimately acquainted with another culture.

b. The PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture. All the CAED universities now have access to hundreds of slides from Sri Lanka, and it is obvious that those coming to Peradeniya have seen them and talked to those who took them. To add to that information, an audio/visual presentation on the total Project could be helpful for briefings. (The PGIA and field office hope to develop such a presentation for use in Sri Lanka if time ever permits.) Also, more detailed information about his own university's responsibilities and contributions to the Project would be useful, including an introduction to all Sri Lankan staff studying there under the Project.

c. Pre-departure preparation. All those selected for Sri Lanka are busy people who must inevitably put in extra overtime to get their own work in shape to leave. Nevertheless, it is unfair to the PGIA/Faculty to arrive in Peradeniya for a short term assignment without having made some advance preparation.

A number of the visiting staff have written to their Sri Lankan counterparts for additional information about their assignments, or to offer suggestions about what they might do. If we are successful in providing scopes of work farther in advance of the assignment, this will encourage such interchange. In addition, the First Annual Field Office Report and Plan of Implementation and End of Tour reports in related fields should be required reading. Beyond those, the more complete the preparation, the greater will be the opportunity for contributing effectively to the development of the PGIA and Faculty of Agriculture.

### 3. The assignment

Although each assignment has its own unique features and opportunities, experience to date has revealed a number of characteristics common to nearly all. Since they are frequently crucial to successful completion of an assignment, some of the more important ones are highlighted below.

The counterpart situation is usually, although not always, frustrating. All departments are understaffed, particularly during this period in which the majority of the junior staff are pursuing graduate study abroad. Senior staff now on board are seriously overcommitted and often hard for the visiting staff to find. As a consequence, some visiting staff gain the impression that they are not really wanted, while others take the attitude that they will sit back and wait for the Sri Lankan staff to come to them. Neither attitude is conducive to productive work, nor consistent with the wishes and expectations of the Sri Lankan staff.

The PGIA Director, Dean, and members of the Faculty have repeatedly expressed their own frustration at not being able to spend more time with visiting staff; and their strong plea has been for the visiting staff to seek them out, to assume the initiative in establishing and maintaining contact.

There is always the temptation to consider Faculty and PGIA programs as they exist, rather than as they may develop. The result of this approach has led to such statements as "there is no research program worthy of the name," with no indication of the possibility for improvement. For those who take this attitude, their end of tour reports tend to be limited in vision.

Another trap is to insist on the ideal, with ideal being defined in terms of a U.S. university model. This is particularly devastating in terms of contributing to development of the PGIA/Faculty. Two contrasting examples should serve to illustrate this point.

Two visiting staff made detailed recommendations for designing and equipping laboratories in their respective areas of expertise. One presented a list of equipment and a laboratory design with a take it or leave it attitude that left room for no alternatives or compromises. The other also presented an equipment list and a laboratory design. In this case, however, he had explored with other departments the possible joint use of certain expensive equipment items, and offered several alternatives in laboratory design and equipment depending upon the resources available. Resources were, as expected, insufficient to provide all the facilities and equipment recommended for either installation. The department must get along with less than the ideal; the second specialist's recommendations helped to come as close as possible, however.

To make the same point in a different way, PGIA/Faculty staff and administrators often already have a clear concept of what would be desirable in a program or facility. They are eager for assistance, however, in determining how to develop their institutions and programs within constraints imposed by resource limitations in such a way that they can both satisfy present demands and move steadily toward their ultimate goals.

Thus, the PGIA and Faculty look to visiting staff for concrete, practical suggestions for short, medium and longer term actions in the broad areas of curriculum, research and outreach. Although they obviously reserve the right to accept or reject such suggestions, all are carefully considered. The extent to which action on such recommendations is already underway is evidenced by the attached minutes of a special Faculty meeting.

Every technical assistance assignment originated with a request from a department for specific assistance. Each visiting staff is wanted. His counsel and recommendations are awaited. The PGIA and Faculty want him to take the initiative, to aggressively seek to describe the situation in his area of expertise and then to help them plan and initiate programs that are relevant to that situation. They are not looking for broad generalities except insofar as they are relevant for planning and action.

The above comments are consistent with the types of assistance specified in the present Contract, namely:

- a. teaching
- b. curriculum review and development
- c. research program development
- d. outreach program development
- e. facilities planning and development
- f. experiment station development
- g. library development
- h. graduate degree research supervision

Every assignment will constitute more than a fulltime job throughout its duration, provided the above hints are taken and activities outlined in the scope of work are carried out with imagination and innovative thinking by the visiting staff. For this to happen, however, the department involved must do a better job than at present in preparing for his visit, in making staff available to work with the visitor, and in assisting with arrangements for his in-country travel, needed facilities, etc. Also, the Chief of Party must improve both the initial orientation of the visiting staff and programmatic support throughout his stay in Sri Lanka.

As stated at the outset, the Project has benefited greatly from the outstanding group of visiting staff who have already come to Peradeniya. The examples cited above are in no way intended to detract from that fact. Rather, they are offered in the spirit of utilizing past experience to improve future performance.

#### 4. Follow-up

Viable links between the PGIA/Faculty and the CAED members are rapidly being forged through both the visiting staff coming to Sri Lanka and the assistant lecturers going to the U.S. for postgraduate study. Every opportunity for follow-up that will contribute to strengthening those links should be actively pursued.

University of Peradeniya  
Faculty of Agriculture

Special Meeting : 80/4  
Date : September 3, 1980  
Time : 2.00 pm  
Venue : Dean's Office,  
Faculty of Agriculture

80-4-26 ATTENDANCE -

Prof. Y. D. A. Senanayake (Dean/Agriculture) in the chair  
Prof. H. P. M. Gunasena  
Prof. H. M. W. Herath  
Prof. A. S. B. Rajaguru  
Dr. R. H. G. Clements  
Dr. J. M. R. S. Bandara  
Dr. S. Pinnaduwa  
Dr. S. Illangantileke  
Dr. V. Pavanadasivam  
Dr. R. Rajamahendran  
Dr. M. C. N. Jayasuriya  
Dr. L. Goonawardene

By invitation -

Prof. T. Jogaratnam - Director, PGIA  
Dr. Howard E. Ray - CAED Chief of Party  
Dr. James Deegen  
Dr. G. G. Haugh  
Dr. W. G. Downs  
Dr. J. W. Bonner  
Miss M. Ponnudurai

In attendance -

Mr. R. S. Rajapakse - (SAR/PGIA)

80-4-27 Welcome -

The Chairman welcomed Prof. G. Haugh

80-4-28 The Chairman brought to the notice of the Faculty that the minutes of the meeting held on August 20, 1980 - No. 80/3 would be circulated before the next general meeting of the Faculty.

80-4-29 AED Project Report -

The AED Special Report No. 80-3 - "Summary of Recommendations from Visiting Staff End of Tour Reports" which had been already circulated was then discussed.

This report which was compiled by Dr. William Downs was reviewed item by item.

29:1 Item 1 - Libraries

It was stated that the Faculty Library had a fair acquisition and the progress was satisfactory. The Chairman stated that the recommendation to amalgamate the Faculty and PGIA libraries had been implemented and some time would be necessary to make an evaluation.

29:2 Item 2 and Item 11 - Language Requirements -

It was felt that the teaching of English should be introduced in the first year, so that the problem would not be aggravated in the later years. It was decided that a request should be made in the 1982 Estimates for an English Instructor in the M.I. cadre. English is a requirement for admission to the PGIA.

29:3 Item 3 - Salaries -

The Faculty agreed with the comments and suggested that the Agricultural Teachers' Association should take this matter up with the authorities.

29:4 Item 4 - M.Sc. vs M.Phil -

This matter had been considered by the coordinating committee of the PGIA and it had recommended to increase the M.Sc. credit requirement to 45 units. Since the M.Phil was a research degree it would not be necessary to include the requirements of a thesis for the M.Sc. degree. It was noted, however, that there was provision within the PGIA regulations for an M.Sc. degree candidate to do some Research Projects for credit.

29:5 Item 5 - Heavy Teaching Loads -

It was noted that due to the increase in the staff cadre in each department to about 15 within the project period, the heavy teaching load would decrease after the staff members returned from probationary study leave. The Academic Planning

now being undertaken should help to eliminate duplication and also reduce the teaching load.

29:6 Item 6 - Humanities and Item 7 Basic Sciences -

The Faculty while appreciating the comments made felt that there would be organizational difficulties in implementing the recommendations. However, it was agreed to refer them to the Curriculum Committee and find out to what extent they could be accommodated with the first year course and later years.

29:7 Item 8 - Textbook Shortage -

The Chairman stated that he did not like the phrase 'leads to mediocrity in teaching' as it was really not so. Lack of textbooks could lead to mediocrity in learning. The poor library resources in the Faculty library was due to the neglect of this library by the previous administrations in the University. The faculty library continued to receive the smallest allocation throughout. It was decided that recommendations should be sent from the Departmental committees on the requirements for new text books.

29:8 Item 9 - Audio-visual needs and blackboards -

It was recommended that the audio-visual equipment could be centralised in the Extension Division of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management. With respect to the blackboard problem, it was decided that the departments should try out alternate methods to improve the situation and that the Dean should look into the matter. The Faculty also agreed to seek US AID assistance to get the best quality blackboards.

29:9 Item 12 - Prof. Gunasena brought it to the notice of the Faculty that all the departments had not sent in their recommendations with regard to courses. It was decided that curriculum review which was the same as "Academic plan" would be

discussed separately. The Faculty also agreed on the principle of introducing a course unit system.

29:10 Item 13 - It was pointed out that it was not possible to have an Associate Dean in charge of Research unless the University Act was amended accordingly. Nevertheless, the Faculty agreed that there should be a research coordinator and agreed to make a recommendation to the University for consideration.

29:11 Item 14 - Vehicles -

It was pointed out that there was a difficulty in obtaining the services of drivers and therefore the drivers available at present should be shared. The Chairman reported that during the discussions of Capital Estimates for 1981, the Treasury had approved a minibus for the Faculty of Agriculture.

29:12 Item 15 - Mahalluppalama -

Although there were shortcomings at MI it was felt that the authorities should provide more budgetary support to the Unit to improve the social infrastructure and teaching. If this was done and the senior staff associated more with the MI programme of work, the situation would improve. Academic planning would also help to strengthen the Unit.

29:13 Item 16 - Fragmentation -

It was pointed out that if the proposed Agricultural Research Council is established the necessary coordination in research would be provided and wasteful duplication would be avoided.

29:14 Item 17 - Grades -

It was pointed out that the first year course work was evaluated continuously and a final examination held, and grades given. Therefore, the statement in the report is incorrect. Moreover, the placement of the student on graduation was determined by the combined performance of the candidates at the first, second and the final examinations which were in two parts. The procedure

followed by the Faculty of Agriculture in the University system in Sri Lanka was the most rigorous. The Faculty recommended that the marks obtained in the first year course should also be taken into consideration in determining the placement of a student at graduation.

29:15 Item 19 - Laboratories -

It was decided that Heads of Departments should identify their requirements, and take special attention to keep the laboratories and their equipment in good condition.

29:16 Item 20 - Research Facilities -

The Chairman informed the members about what had transpired at the Treasury meeting, and since funds would be forthcoming for experimental station development, he requested the Heads to decide on the priorities that should be developed at the Stations and have them ready by December 1980, so that the work could be started by January 1981.

29:17 Item 21 - PGIA - Admission/Calendar -

The Faculty agreed that it was a matter for the Coordinating Committee of the PGIA.

29:18 Item 22 - Retention of Lecturers -

Discussed under item 3.

29:19 Item 23 - Undergraduate specialization -

The Faculty had expressed different opinions on the subject at previous meetings. The subject was being studied by the Faculty sub-committee on Curriculum Development.

29:20 Section B - Departmental Issues and Section C - Curriculum Review -

After discussion it was agreed that the Departments concerned and the Coordinating Committee of the PGIA should discuss the comments made and make appropriate recommendations to the Faculty for consideration. Some of the comments on the shifting of courses from one department to another may be valid but a more

detailed study should be done by the Departments. It was also suggested that the Curriculum Committee too should give some attention to the comments in these two sections.

29:21 Section D - Academic Planning -

A sub-committee of the Faculty had undertaken this function. Further discussion on it was postponed until the recommendations of the sub-committee was made available.

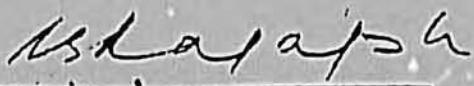
80-4-30 Report of the Senate Sub-committee on Promotional Scheme -

The Faculty discussed the report and made the necessary amendments. The Dean was requested to forward the amendments to the Vice-Chancellor.

80-4-31 Any other business -

Minutes of the Building Planning Committee -

The minutes of the meetings 80/1 and 80/2 of the Building Planning Committee of the Faculty were tabled for information of members. Prof. Rajaguru referred to minute 80-1-3 and pointed out that Prof. Miller in his report had suggested that Animal Husbandry department too should be accommodated in the Agricultural Biology/Agricultural Chemistry complex but now it had been left out. A lengthy discussion ensued and the Faculty recommended that since it was too late to alter the plans and as an interim measure the Heads of Agricultural Biology and Agricultural Chemistry should make available some space in the new building for the use of the Department of Animal Husbandry to accommodate the additional staff and equipment until such time as a new building was constructed for the Department of Animal Husbandry.

  
Senior Asst. Registrar

Dean's Office  
Faculty of Agriculture.

October 21 1980