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SUBJECT: REPORTING CABLE ON THE PROCESS EVALUATION OF
- THE FARMING SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT-
- EASTERN VISAYAS (FSDP-EV) (PN 492-0356)

SUMMARY: THE EVALUATION HAS HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE SUBJECT PROJECT IN THE AREA OF INCREASED FARMER PARTICIPATION, GREATER QUESTIONING OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF SOME OF THE EXISTING QUOTE SHELF TECHNOLOGY UNQUOTE, AND INCREASED ATTENTION TO IMPROVING EXISTING FARMING SYSTEMS AS OPPOSED TO TOTALLY CHANGING THEM. IN ADDITION TO HAVING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT EVALUATED, THE EVALUATION HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON THE APPROACH OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (MA) TOWARDS RAINFED AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL AND IS HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OTHER USAID AND TWO WORLD BANK FUNDED PROJECTS. THIS CABLE BRIEFLY DESCRIBES THE PROJECT, REVIEWS THE METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THOSE CHARACTERISTICS THAT APPEAR TO HAVE INCREASED ITS IMPACT, SUMMARIZES THE FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION, AND IDENTIFIES SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE EVALUATION HAS HAD AN IMPACT. END SUMMARY.

1. PROJECT INFORMATION

- THE PROJECT IS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS OF LEYTE AND SAMAR, AN AREA REFERRED TO AS EASTERN VISAYAS OR REGION VIII. IT IS BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE REGION VIII MA AND THE VISAYAS STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE (VISCA). THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT IS TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS MECHANISM FOR ADAPTING RAINFED AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES TO THE RESOURCE CONDITIONS IN THE REGION AND TO DISSEMINATE TECHNOLOGIES THAT ARE FOUND APPROPRIATE. EXPECTED OUTPUTS INCLUDE ESTABLISHING SIX FIELD RESEARCH SITES, INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF THE MA REGIONAL STAFF TO IMPLEMENT FARMING SYSTEMS RESEARCH, AND IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH CAPACITY OF VISCA TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN REGION VIII.

UNDER A HOST COUNTRY CONTRACT, CORNELL UNIVERSITY IS MAKING AVAILABLE A LONG-TERM (36 PM) SOCIAL SCIENTIST ASSIGNED TO THE MA, A SENIOR LONG-TERM (24 PM) POLICY ADVISOR ASSIGNED TO VISCA, 36 PM OF SHORT-TERM CONSULTANTS,

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AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING. LIFE OF PROJECT FUNDING FOR THE FIVE-YEAR PROJECT IS APPROXIMATELY SIX MILLION DOLLARS, WITH AN AID CONTRIBUTION OF THREE MILLION DOLLARS. AT THE TIME OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 1983, THE PROJECT HAD BEEN ACTIVE FOR ABOUT 16 MONTHS.

2. METHODOLOGY

- A. THE EVALUATION SOUGHT TO ASSESS THE PROCESSES BY WHICH THE PROJECT WAS BEING IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING PROJECT PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPTS OF FARMING SYSTEMS RESEARCH. RESPONDENTS WERE REMINDED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION WAS NOT TO FIND FAULT NOR TO APPORTION BLAME, BUT RATHER TO FIND WAYS OF IMPROVING THE PROJECT. THE CANDIDNESS WITH WHICH QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED SUGGESTED THAT RESPONDENTS UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED THAT THIS INDEED WAS THE PURPOSE OF A PROCESS EVALUATION.

- B. THE EVALUATION TEAM WAS MADE UP OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED WITH AND CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROJECT BUT NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION. THEY WERE CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE PROJECT TO HAVE GENUINE INTEREST IN ITS SUCCESS, BUT NOT SO CLOSE AS TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE TYPES OF DECISIONS QUESTIONED BY THE EVALUATION AND THEREFORE DID NOT HAVE TO BE DEFENSIVE. THE ABSENCE OF OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS GREATLY REDUCED THE TIME THAT OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSUMED WITH THE CONSULTANTS' DEVELOPING FAMILIARITY WITH THE PROJECT AND WITH ITS CULTURAL AND BUREAUCRATIC CONTEXT AND MAY HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN INCREASING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE TEAM. TEAM MEMBERS' QUALIFICATIONS, PRIOR EXPERIENCE, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS FURTHER ENHANCED THE CREDIBILITY OF THE TEAM. THE TEAM CONSISTED OF: (1) AGAPITO TAURO, ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF CROPS IN THE REGION VIII MA OFFICE, THE SECOND RANKING STAFF MEMBER IN THE REGIONAL MA AFTER THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR AND A GRADUATE OF A THREE-MONTH SHORT COURSE IN FARMING SYSTEMS AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY; (2) EMILIANA BERNARDO, THE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND EXTENSION AT

VISCA, A U.S. TRAINED PH.D. IN ENTOMOLOGY, A GRADUATE OF A THREE-MONTH SHORT COURSE IN FARMING SYSTEMS AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY; (3) REBECCA BARBUSA, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REGIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION, A WOMAN WHO WAS VOTED ONE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING FARMERS IN THE COUNTRY AND A UNIVERSITY GRADUATE; (4) JAMES BEEBE, THE USAID PROJECT OFFICER, PH.D. WITH GRADUATE TRAINING IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION, AT THE TIME OF THE EVALUATION NEWLY ARRIVED IN THE PHILIPPINES BUT WITH MORE THAN FIVE YEARS OF PRIOR PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE FIRST AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, AND THEN AS A GRADUATE STUDENT COLLECTING DATA ON FILIPINO FARMERS FOR A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION; AND (5) JOSE MAZO, CHIEF OF THE PROGRAM COORDINATION DIVISION FOR THE REGION VIII OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, A UNIVERSITY GRADUATE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EVALUATION TEAM.

- C. DATA COLLECTION FOR THE EVALUATION WAS BY MEANS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS COMBINED WITH DIRECT OBSERVATION. THE TEAM WAS PROVIDED WITH A LIST OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BUT AT ITS FIRST MEETING DECIDED NOT TO BE BOUND BY THEM BUT RATHER TO USE THEM TO DEFINE TOPICS TO BE COVERED. THE DECISION NOT TO USE A FORMAL LIST OF PREPARED QUESTIONS RESULTED IN FREEDOM TO PURSUE INDIVIDUAL TOPICS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES DEPENDING UPON WHAT THE TEAM FOUND AT DIFFERENT SITES, AND ALLOWED THE TEAM TO CHANGE ITS EMPHASIS AS IT PROCEEDED. THE DECISION TO HAVE THE TEAM AT LARGE RESPONSIBLE FOR COLLECTING DATA ON ALL TOPICS AND FOR HAVING A FINAL REPORT REPRESENTING THE COMBINED WORK OF THE TEAM UNDER THE COORDINATION AND EDITING OF THE TEAM CHAIRMAN ENCOURAGED TEAM WORK, AND RESULTED IN MORE NATURAL AND OFTEN LIVELY DISCUSSIONS AMONG TEAM MEMBERS AND WITH RESPONDENTS. THE EVALUATION TEAM VISITED ALL SIX OFFICES OF THE SITE RESEARCH TEAMS, THE OFFICES OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR, VISCA, THE REGIONAL MA OFFICES, AND APPROXIMATELY 14 VILLAGES WHERE RESEARCH WAS ONGOING. FOR MOST SITE VISITS, PROJECT PERSONNEL WERE FIRST INTERVIEWED IN THEIR OFFICES AND RESEARCH RECORDS WERE EXAMINED. THE TEAM NEXT PROCEEDED TO WHERE A GROUP OF FARMER COOPERATORS WERE GATHERED AND THERE TALKED TO THE FARMERS, SOMETIMES AS A GROUP, OR DIVIDED INTO SUBGROUPS DEPENDING UPON THE SITUATION, AND FINALLY, THE EVALUATION TEAM PROCEEDED TO THE FARMS AND DEMONSTRATION FIELDS OF ONE OR MORE FARMERS. HERE THE FARMERS COULD BE INTERVIEWED WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF PROJECT PERSONNEL AND THE TRADITIONAL FARMING PRACTICES AS WELL AS THE RESEARCH TRIALS COULD BE EXAMINED. AT MOST SITES FARMERS WHO WERE NOT COOPERATING WITH THE PROJECT WERE ALSO INTERVIEWED.

- D. BOTH THE COLLECTION OF DATA AND ITS ANALYSIS AND TRANSFORMATION INTO A FINAL REPORT INVOLVED CONSIDERABLE TEAM INTERACTION AND NUMEROUS MEETINGS SPREAD OVER MORE THAN TWO MONTHS. ALMOST ALL SITE VISITS AND MEETINGS WERE ATTENDED BY ALL EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS. THERE WERE TEAM MEETINGS TO REVIEW PROGRESS IN COLLECTING DATA

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WHILE THE TEAM TRAVELLED AND DURING EVENING SESSIONS THAT OFTEN EXTENDED LATE INTO THE NIGHT. THERE WERE FIVE ADDITIONAL TEAM MEETINGS AFTER THE DATA COLLECTION PHASE WAS OVER TO REVIEW, EDIT, AND CRITIQUE PARTS OF THE REPORT PREPARED BY THE DIFFERENT TEAM MEMBERS. THE DECISION MADE DURING THE SECOND OF THESE MEETINGS TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC EVIDENCE AND OBSERVATIONS TO BACK UP CONCLUSIONS WAS CRITICAL FOR ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE EVALUATION. DURING THESE FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS THE EVALUATION TEAM EVOLVED A SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA IT HAD COLLECTED THAN THE ONE IT HAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER HAVING COLLECTED THAT DATA. THE TEAM COLLECTIVELY CAME TO REALIZE THAT MUCH OF WHAT IT HAD DISCOVERED COULD BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS OF INADEQUATE FARMER PARTICIPATION AND INADEQUATE ATTENTION TO THE EXISTING FARMING SYSTEMS. BECAUSE OF THE TIME INVOLVED BETWEEN MEETINGS AND THE NATURE OF INFORMAL COMMUNICATION IN THE PHILIPPINES, BY THE TIME THE EVALUATION TEAM PRESENTED ITS PRELIMINARY FINDINGS TO A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PROJECT STAFF, MANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE ALREADY BEING IMPLEMENTED. THE EVALUATION TEAM DECIDED TO CORRECT ONLY MINOR FACTUAL ERRORS POINTED OUT DURING THESE MEETINGS AND TO THEN SUBMIT THE REPORT WITHOUT EXTENSIVE REWRITING OR EDITING. THIS DECISION WAS BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT A TIMELY

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EVALUATION REPORT THAT IS ROUGH IN PRESENTATION WILL BE MORE VALUABLE THAN A POLISHED REPORT THAT IS DELAYED.

- E. THE EVALUATION WAS NOT VIEWED AS AN AID EVALUATION AND AID FORMATS FOR THE PRESENTATION OF EVALUATIONS WERE NOT USED. THE USAID PROJECT OFFICER WAS ONLY A MEMBER AND NOT THE CHAIRMAN OF A TEAM MADE UP OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS. USAID PLAYED A ROLE IN DRAFTING THE SCOPE OF WORK AND THE USAID PROJECT OFFICER DRAFTED A CONCEPT PAPER THAT IDENTIFIED SEVERAL OF THE MAJOR ISSUES OF THE EVALUATION. WHILE THE USAID PROJECT OFFICER INFLUENCED THE CONTENT OF THE FINAL REPORT AND WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING TO DEFINE SOME OF THE MAJOR ISSUES, THE FINAL REPORT WAS THE RESULT OF A TEAM EFFORT.

3. SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- THE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES REPORTED IN THE EVALUATION PROVIDE CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT (1) DESPITE A GENUINE BELIEF ON THE PART OF PROJECT PERSONNEL THAT FARMERS WERE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT, MANY OF THE CRITICAL DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO FARMERS' NEEDS, AND (2) MANY OF THE MAJOR CHANGES IN THE EXISTING FARMING SYSTEMS BEING PROPOSED BY PROJECT PERSONNEL WERE BASED ON QUOTE SHELF-TECHNOLOGY UNQUOTE THAT DID NOT PERFORM NEARLY AS WELL IN FARMERS FIELDS AS IT WAS EXPECTED TO, IN SOME CASES DID NOT PERFORM AS WELL AS THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES OF THE FARMERS AND IN MANY CASES DID NOT PRODUCE AS GOOD AN ECONOMIC RETURN TO THE FARMERS AS DID THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES WHILE GREATLY INCREASING THE RISK EXPOSURE OF THE FARMERS.

THESE FINDINGS LED TO RECOMMENDATIONS THAT:

- (A) RESEARCHERS AT THE SITE LEVEL GIVE MUCH MORE
 - ATTENTION TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM AND ENSURE THAT
 - INDIVIDUAL FARMERS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DECISIONS
 - CONCERNING RESEARCH IN THEIR FIELDS.
- (B) RESEARCHERS AT THE SITE LEVEL LIMIT THE NUMBER OF
 - PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE FARMING SYSTEM.
- (C) RESEARCHERS AT THE SITE LEVEL MINIMIZE USE OF
 - PURCHASED INPUTS SUCH AS FERTILIZER AND INSECTICIDES
 - IN THEIR RECOMMENDED CHANGES UNTIL BACKUP RESEARCH
 - AT VISCA INDICATES THAT THEIR USE IS PROFITABLE AND
 - FEASIBLE.
- (D) RESEARCHERS AT ALL LEVELS CAREFULLY RECONSIDER THE
 - APPROPRIATENESS OF EXISTING QUOTE SHELF UNQUOTE
 - TECHNOLOGY AND THAT RESEARCHERS AT THE SITE LEVEL
 - CAREFULLY DOCUMENT FAILURES OF QUOTE SHELF UNQUOTE
 - TECHNOLOGY.
- (E) PROJECT MANAGEMENT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A
 - COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAM TO COMMUNICATE A
 - REVISED RESEARCH APPROACH TO ALL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

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- INCLUDING COOPERATING FARMERS.

(F) PROJECT MANAGEMENT WORK WITH CORNELL UNIVERSITY TO
- EXPAND AND BETTER DEFINE CORNELL'S ROLE IN THE
- PROJECT AND THAT THIS ROLE BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL
- PROJECT PERSONNEL.

(G) PROJECT MANAGEMENT WORK WITH THE REGIONAL MA TO
- ESTABLISH AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT.

(H) PROJECT MANAGEMENT IMMEDIATELY BEGIN TO WORK WITH
- THE REGIONAL MA TO STRENGTHEN THE LINKAGES BETWEEN
- RESEARCH AND EXTENSION.

4. EVALUATION IMPACT

- A. EVEN BEFORE THE FINAL REPORT HAD BEEN PREPARED,
THE PROJECT WAS MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARDS
IMPLEMENTING SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS. HOWEVER,
EVEN WITH THIS STRONG BEGINNING, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

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TO MAKE THE RESEARCH APPROACH OF THE PROJECT CONSISTENT WITH A FARMING SYSTEMS APPROACH TO RESEARCH. SHORT-TERM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN REQUESTED FROM CORNELL TO WORK ON A COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PLAN. DISCUSSIONS ARE PRESENTLY UNDERWAY ON USING RESOURCES FROM THE RAINFED RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT TO ESTABLISH A POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT AT THE REGIONAL MA OFFICE.

- B. THE IMPACT OF THIS EVALUATION ON THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND ON OTHER DONOR-ASSISTED PROJECTS HAS BECOME OBVIOUS ONLY RECENTLY. EVEN THOUGH SENIOR MA OFFICIALS BEGAN TO MAKE REFERENCE TO THE EVALUATION IN MID-JANUARY, AND TO REPORT THAT THEY HAD PROVIDED COPIES OF THE EVALUATION TO VARIOUS AGENCIES AND STAFF IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS OF THE MA, IT WAS ONLY WITH THE FEBRUARY 29 ADDRESS OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH OFFICE OF THE MA DURING THE CLOSING PROGRAM OF THE TRI-MISSION (INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES, THAILAND) WORKSHOP ON RAINFED AGRICULTURE THAT THE FULL EXTENT OF THE IMPACT BECAME CLEAR. THIS WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT BY A SENIOR MA OFFICIAL THAT QUESTIONED THE ASSUMPTION THAT QUOTE SHELF UNQUOTE TECHNOLOGIES ARE ALREADY AVAILABLE FOR THE RAINFED AREAS AND THAT SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY DISSEMINATED. DURING THIS ADDRESS THE FSDP-EV EVALUATION WAS GIVEN SPECIFIC CREDIT FOR RAISING QUESTIONS ON FARMER PARTICIPATION THAT WERE USED IN A REVIEW OF A MAJOR WORLD BANK PROJECT AIMED AT ESTABLISHING REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEMS. THE USAID PROJECT OFFICER HAS NOW BEEN REQUESTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEXT REVIEW OF THE WORLD BANK PROJECT. PUBLIC RECOGNITION BY A SECOND SENIOR MA OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL EXTENSION SERVICE THAT THE TYPE OF VARIABILITY IN THE UPLAND RAINFED AREAS IDENTIFIED IN THE PROJECT EVALUATION MAY MEAN THAT IN SOME CASES THE TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY OF THE FARMERS WILL PROVIDE A BETTER RETURN TO THE FARMERS ALSO REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM PAST MA POSITIONS. QUESTIONS NOW BEING ASKED BY BOTH OFFICIALS ON THE NATURE OF THE TECHNOLOGIES BEING DEVELOPED AND PROMOTED BY THE MA COULD HAVE MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REVISED MA POLICY FOR THE RAINFED AREAS.

- C. THE CENTRAL VISAYAS URBAN-RURAL PROJECT, ANOTHER WORLD BANK-FUNDED ACTIVITY, IS PRESENTLY USING THE FSDP-EV EVALUATION AS THE BASIS FOR ITS TRAINING PROGRAM. AS A RESULT OF THE FSDP-EV EVALUATION, THIS PROJECT'S TRAINING PROGRAM WAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE TIME IN THE FIELD AND TO DEAL SPECIFICALLY WITH THE ISSUES OF FARMER PARTICIPATION AND AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGY.

- D. ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED UNDER THE NEW USAID-SUPPORTED PROJECT FOR RAINFED RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IS A FARMING SYSTEMS PROGRAM FOR THE BICOL REGION SIMILAR TO THAT OF EASTERN VISAYAS. BECAUSE THE DESIGN WORK FOR THIS ACTIVITY HAD BEEN COMPLETED BEFORE THE EVALUATION WAS DONE, IT HAS PROVEN DIFFICULT TO GET BICOL REGION V MA TO MAKE CHANGES IN THEIR PROJECT BASED ON EVALUATION.

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THE EVALUATION HAS, HOWEVER, ALLOWED POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREAS TO BE IDENTIFIED EARLY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS. BECAUSE OF THE IMPACT OF THE EVALUATION ON THE CENTRAL OFFICES OF THE MA, THE INITIATIVE FOR SEEKING ACCEPTANCE OF THESE SUGGESTIONS IS SHIFTING FROM USAID TO THE MA CENTRAL OFFICE.

A PROPOSAL HAS BEEN MADE TO DO AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BICOL ACTIVITY USING THE FSDP-EV PROCESS EVALUATION AS A MODEL AND TO THEN USE THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY CHANGES THAT ARE NECESSARY IF THE BICOL FARMING SYSTEMS ACTIVITY IS TO BE FINALLY APPROVED.

5. COPIES OF THE EVALUATION AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE METHODOLOGY ARE AVAILABLE FROM JAMES BEEBE, PROJECT OFFICER, ORAD, USAID/MANILA/PHILIPPINES. BOSWORTH

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