

PD - AAY - 7
11/30/87

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Project Title: St. Vincent Agricultural Development Project
Project Number: 538-0101
Funding Period: FY84 - FY88
LOP Funding: \$2,000,000
Implementing Agency: RONCO Consulting Corporation
PACD: December 31, 1987

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Project was to increase productivity of small holder agricultural systems and improve marketing efficiency for commodities produced in these systems. The goal was to increase the net incomes of small farmers and increase foreign exchange earnings.

II. BACKGROUND

It was envisioned that the Project would provide resources to lessen small producers' constraints by focusing on three areas:

- a) Ag. Production Component: do production research to improve and extend technology for four vegetable crops, upgrade research facilities, procure office and irrigation equipment, buy vehicle and soil testing equipment, provide fencing and storage area at field trial sites, and establish an ORD credit fund for production inputs;
- b) Marketing Services Component: construct a marketing storage facility, do postharvest training for traders, expand market identification, establish market price information system, purchase packing materials, standardized grades and packing, establish the use of forward contracting, test sweet potato storage; and
- c) Ag. Data Gathering and Analysis Component: collect agricultural sector data, analyse data and publish ag. census, develop pesticide safety program, train staff, develop local capacity to conduct special studies, do geographic sampling frames and yield forecasting, and construct an extension of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture (MTIA) office building.

To accomplish the above, three technicians were brought in under a 'level of effort' contract with RONCO Consulting Corporation. The team included a Project Coordinator, Survey Statistician and a Fresh Produce Specialist, each for two years. There were two amendments to the original 11/30/86 PACD. The first amendment in 6/86, extended the PACD for one year, to 11/30/87, and the second amendment extended the PACD for one month, to 12/31/87. Extension requests were based on the need for additional time to complete construction of the MTIA office extension and the produce storage facility. While the PACD was extended for 13 months, the contract with RONCO was reduced by 3 months, with the exception of the Survey Statistician, who's stay was extended by 3 months.

A number of unforeseen political, policy and economic changes occurred early in the implementation which had serious impact on the feasibility of the original design. They included:

- * a change in the GOSVG;
- * suspension of the CARICOM concessional terms, agricultural marketing protocol for three of the four target vegetable crops;
- * the demise of the sugar industry based on a 4/85 GOSVG decision to abandon sugar which required major shifts in policies; and
- * an RDO/C shift from bilateral to regionally focused projects (a phase II was in the original design).

As a result of these factors and others, there were numerous changes in the original design. A winter vegetable production and marketing pilot activity was added without additional budget, which required considerably more resources and time than anticipated, resulting in less success in accomplishing the originally planned activities.

In addition there was about a one year delay in starting the data gathering activities for the census which involved a turf conflict. The MTIA apparently wanted to conduct the census outside of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development/Statistical Office, which is responsible for all country statistics. There was a long delay in getting approval to conduct the field work and the MFPD/Statistical Office was effectively left out of the process (except for the data processing person). The RONCO TA team left with the census still in draft form, having fulfilled their level-of-effort contract.

III. SUMMARY OF INPUTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inputs, as budgeted in the original Grant Agreement of 6/27/84, and amended in the final revisions, are indicated below by component and party (\$000):

	Original Grant			Grant Revisions
	Grant	CARDI/ORD	GOSVG	
Agricultural Production	236	75	65	518
Marketing	526	18	36	486
Data Gathering & Analysis	1,727	52	105	966
Evaluation	40		3	0
Inflation/Contingency	273			0
Total	\$2,000	\$ 145	\$ 209	\$2,000

USAID funded technical assistance was originally planned to include 73.5 person-months at \$862,500, later amended up to \$954,613. The 3 person team was in St. Vincent from 1/85 through 8/86 (except Statistician until 12/86). The CARDI in-kind contribution was for CARDI to support and coordinate research with the MTIA. The ORD contribution was for resources to manage the credit fund. The GOSVG contribution was for personnel, facilities and operating expenses for on-going activities, such as research, extension and data collecting by MTIA and marketing by SVMC.

The addition of the winter vegetable activity accounted for the doubling of the funds in the agricultural production component, at the expense of greater degrees of success in the other planned activities under the Project.

Accomplishments of the Project are outlined below.

- A) Construction of an extension to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture office building was successfully accomplished.
- B) Construction of a prefabricated marketing shed was successfully completed and a rack/pallet system was purchased to store produce awaiting shipment. But, neither the building nor the storage system are being used for the intended purposes.
- C) A credit fund of \$100,000 was set up and loans distributed under the auspices of ORD. To date the fund has been decapitalized by about 35%.
- D) Data was collected, entered in the computer and analyzed, but the completion of the agricultural census has not yet been achieved, due to concerns of editorial and other errors in need of correction in the draft document.
- E) One person in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development Data Processing Unit was trained in conducting agricultural census and surveys and the use of the computer program to enter and analyze the census data. Unemployed youth were trained as enumerators to collect the census data, and enumerator supervisors were trained.
- F) Vegetables were successfully grown in St. Vincent as a part of the winter vegetable activity. Some exports were successful, but it will most likely be difficult for St. Vincent to compete due to scale and market proximity, according to the final report on this activity.

IV. DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

The development impact of this Project can be said to be **fairly minimal**, largely due to unforeseen events and design changes that exacerbated the already overly ambitious Project design. While there was some measure of success in the \$100,000 credit fund executed by ORD, the construction, data gathering and vegetable production activities, there were few lasting improvements attributable to the Project.

The marketing storage facility is not being used by the traders to store their produce. A market price information system was not established, but some postharvest training was provided to about 200 farmers. The rack/pallet system has not been assembled and the purchase of the forklifts and pallets was not realized, thus leaving the envisioned package of improved produce export quality control unfulfilled.

Although agricultural data was collected in 1986, the accuracy is in question, numerous tables are missing or incomplete and the draft document requires additional work before it can be printed and distributed for use. Although there is a plan to bring the RONCO statistician back to St. Vincent, the objective of timely agricultural data for planning purposes has not been achieved.

While vegetables were successfully grown, there was minimal success in identifying markets for them.

There was little success in the research or training aspects of the Project. Research facilities were not upgraded and soil testing equipment was not purchased, although a fence was placed around the Belle Isle Research Station. Planned research activities were dependent on CARDI financial support and coordination with the MTIA Research Unit. While a few varietal trials were conducted, impact was limited. Although a pesticide committee was established and a proposal for pesticide safety was drafted, a pesticide safety program is not operational and MTIA staff was not trained in conducting special studies on yield forecasting, using geographic sampling frames or pesticide safety.

Among the greatest weaknesses in the execution of the Project, as pointed out in the Final Evaluation Report dated 9/30/86 (15 months before the actual PACD), was the lack of training and institutionalization of the Project's activities for long-term effectiveness.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUING MONITORING

The following activities are recommended for Project Officer follow-up:

- A) Urge MTIA to pay outstanding bills under the Project in order to liquidate more of the outstanding advance balance of \$37,816.88 (Reliance Press for printing, MS Flower for stylet oil, others?).
- B) Prepare another letter advising MTIA to liquidate the advance by 9/30 88 or an Bill of Collection will have to be issued.
- C) Issue a Bill of Collection for unliquidated advance balance if it hasn't been fully settled by 9/30/88 (nine months after PACD).
- D) Continue to work toward achievement of a printed census:
 - * get Robert N'Gong, RONCO Census Statistician back to SV to finalize incomplete tables, find the missing tables, etc.,
 - * if Mr. N'Gong does not agree to return at RONCO's expense, obtain services of another statistician (est. cost US\$ 13,000 from PD&S),
 - * edit and distribute the draft version for review to GOSVG, USAID and Census Committee,
 - * obtain written approval from all parties to print and distribute the final census document, and
 - * print and distribute the final completed census (est. cost US\$ 10,000 for 1000 copies from 538-140.07 Special Studies).

VI. LESSONS LEARNED

***Overly ambitious project design** complicated by unforeseen interventions that were not adequately dealt with and interjection of even more activities into the implementing environment was largely responsible for the limited success of this Project.

***Extending the PACD for a year without extending the technical assistance contract** did not result in satisfactory completion of Project objectives.

*** Conducting a 'Final Evaluation' for the Project in 8/86, two months after it was decided to extend the PACD for an additional year (to 11/30/87), does not result in an evaluation that can effectively assess the final impact.**

*** Accomplishment of an agricultural census is doomed to fail without widespread consensus and political support throughout the host government and the society.**

*** Care must be taken not to impose overly ambitious targets for crop research activities, particularly where regional organizations are mandated to conduct the research in collaboration with a local research unit, without clear funding, limited local capacity to conduct research, no assurances of commitments and inadequate monitoring.**

***Very careful market research and identification are critical** before venturing into the production of crops for any market, local, regional or international.

***Where a significant new project component is added to a project without additional funds or person-months, designers should take appropriate steps to ensure that originally planned activities can still be carried out or make changes to allow for the shortfalls.**

*** When external factors change to affect the basic project, care must be taken to thoroughly reassess the underlying assumptions and possibilities for success and not allow piecemeal implementation to occur.**

*** Institutionalization requires the identification of counterparts and trainees at early stages and close working relationships throughout the LOP.**

*** The GOSVG MFIA does not have the capacity to successfully handle USAID advance funds and account for their use.**

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Clearances:

JSleeper/ARD	(Draft)
LLaird/ARD	(Draft)
KFinan/PD	(per 7/1 telcon advised to finalize w/o PD clearance)
JAHn/A/CONT	(Draft) no clearance as of 6/30
ABisset/D/DIR	(Draft)
RGrohs/Act.g. PROG	(Draft)

Cleared original to: Lynette Frost/PD