



PROCAR

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

October, 1987 - October, 1988

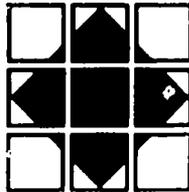
USAID/ZAIRE

AREA FOOD AND MARKET

DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

(660-0102)

CONTRACT NO. AFR-0102-C-00-8002-00



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I. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the activities of the USAID/Zaire Area Food and Marketing Project (660-102) during the first year of project implementation (October 1987 to October 1988) under Contract No. AFR-0102-0-00-8002-00. The project aims to improve the standard of living of more than one million people in the central Bandundu region of Zaire. To reach the project's goal, the project team is enhancing agricultural production, processing and marketing within local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their extension services. The project works with the Government of Zaire (GOZ) through the Department of Rural Development, the Zaire USAID Mission (USAID/Kinshasa), and qualified NGOs in the project area.

Changes and events have affected the project's goals since its initiation by USAID and the Government of Zaire. Hence, initial activities included a reassessment of the current social and economic situation, a survey of the project area and its marketing networks, and start-up of production trials to assess the agronomical situation.

Due to a number of administrative, contracting and staffing delays, the pre-implementation phase of the project began in 1985 and continued until October 1987. A start-up phase in mid-1986 was basically a caretaker initiative, and another scheduled start-up in early 1987 was delayed due to contracting difficulties at AID/Washington. The fielding of the project technical assistance (TA) team was not underway until October 1987.

The Pragma team was fully fielded by August 1988. The team includes:

David Olson, Chief of Party
Charles Toby Vaughan, Administrative Specialist
Craig Smith, Agronomist
Walter West, Research and Information Specialist
Wendy Ascher, Extension Specialist.

The team has been able to complete thirteen Rapid Rural Appraisals (RRAs), commence field trials, and begin the necessary institutional and financial analysis for project implementation. The project start-up phase has also included organizing the project staff, arranging for housing and offices, ensuring delivery of fuel and water to Kikwit, installing generators, and planning for effective implementation in light of delays.

A project review (start-up) was done in June 1988, approximately eight months after the arrival of the first two members of the TA team. This review assisted in clarifying further steps necessary to adjust the project to the changing conditions. Amendments were proposed to the TA contract and several local administrative actions were taken. An independent audit was conducted, resulting in several proposed changes in the administrative component of the project.

II. PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR

Principal activities during the period of October 1987 to October 1988 were as follows:

- o Project pre-implementation, including setting up housing, logistics, communications, limited commodity procurement, project organization, and liaison with USAID/Kinshasa.
- o Organization development and training of project staff.
- o Project implementation, including the following activities:
 - Followed up on previous project studies and completed the credit study.
 - Established links with NGOs and other organizations associated with the project, such as Projects 098 and 091 and other organizations in the project area.
 - Identified and planted forty-three demonstration and multiplication plots with four NGOs.
 - Completed RRAs in thirteen collectives in collaboration with USDA.
 - Followed up on activities for a Women in Development program in agricultural extension.
 - Drafted plans with NGOs and other potential organizations identified by the special NGO study.
 - Developed emergency and routine procurement and administrative and project management.

The past year was a period of intense activity, with the focus on project start-up in Kikwit.

The following activities significantly improved the implementation of the project:

A. Joining Process

As an identifiable process in team development and management, the joining process was critical to reestablish trust in and understanding of basic management principles following the initiation period. Successful workshops to improve communication were held at the project level. Exhaustive efforts were made with mission personnel to effectively reacquire authority and, hence, a modicum of control over the implementation of the project.

B. Clarification of Project Problems and Development of Potential Solutions

RRAs of the sixteen collectives in the project area were undertaken jointly with consultants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The compilation and assessment of this data will allow effective implementation and evaluation of all actions and interventions in the project area.

Project status was also evaluated through a review of some 120 project documents, of which 60 were trip reports or assessments based on personal opinion rather than hard data. These reports will only serve as historical notes and references since their usefulness for future work is limited. Problems with the reports included a lack of established steps for site visits, surveys of target populations and scientific assessments.

C. Emergency Procurement

By early 1980, six months after the arrival of the technical assistance team, a deficiency of many commodities became a serious constraint. Critical items for beginning implementation, setting up the PROCAR office and starting up the Rapid Rural Appraisals were not yet in place. Pragma took the steps necessary to procure urgently needed commodities. All items were ordered and procured in forty-five days with authorization from the contracting officer.

D. Systems Development and Administrative and Financial Management Interventions

A format and criteria were developed for the contracting and ongoing work with NGOs in project implementation activities. Mr. Nga-Ambun Kabwasa, Pragma's Financial Director, conducted a survey of the project site. His work was extremely helpful in setting up links with organizations outside the project.

E. CPF Commodity Procurement

Substantial CPF commodities were procured to enable the

project to maintain its own logistical systems and to enable the Bandundu Logistical Support Unit to complete needed renovations and improvements to project housing. A complete system of communication was developed linking Kikwit and Kinshasa.

F. Staffing

Once the permanent TA team was fully in place, staff members for mid-level and professional positions were sought. All professional staff for PROCAR were identified by early October. Continued interviewing of potential staff members coincided with their visits to sites proposed by the Department of Rural Development. Potential team members were interviewed by USAID mission staff and project staff on-site in Kikwit. All new staff members received orientation and on-the-job training, including participation in the joint planning sessions and meetings both at project level and with coordinating organizations.

G. Demonstration and Multiplication Plots

Demonstration and multiplication plots were planted in Season A (agricultural season). A total of 43 plots were planted in cooperation with the extension agents of the NGOs and the applied agricultural research project 091 or RAV/Kiyaka station personnel. The Project Paper calls for 130 plots at village-level managed by 10 NGOs. At this point, the project has 43 plots with 3 NGOs.

III. MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED

Administrative and commodity procurement constraints (resulting from procedural problems at USAID) delayed project set-up, pre-implementation and implementation, as demonstrated by the following information:

A. Project Review

The published project review cited excessive USAID oversight -- even after arrival of the TA team -- as having interfered with project start-up. CPF funds were signed for by the project officer until her departure, in contradiction to the contract agreement with USAID.

B. Audit

The Coopers and Lybrand audit and proposed training delayed the COP's use of funds until the departure of the former project officer. The audit and recommendations served to clarify all but one financial report (still outstanding from the former project officer). However, the audit left project management unclear, since many of its recommendations originated with the former

project officer, who maintained three different organizational structures for the project.

C. Project Paper

The Project Paper is too out-of-date and too vague to address current project needs, given the socio-economic changes that have occurred since it was written. The RRAs and the NGO study, both of which were called for in the contract and executed on time, mitigated the constraints associated with the Project Paper. Before the RRAs and the NGO study could be carried out, however, the PROCAR team had to overcome other constraints through emergency procurement, the purchase of vehicles and equipment, and hiring additional counterpart staff members through GOZ and USAID channels.

D. Commodity Procurement Delays

Delayed commodity procurement and delivery seriously hampered project implementation. Needed computers, furniture and vehicles were not available as planned for certain activities. Frequent emergency commodity procurement enabled the project to function and to focus upon the project goals.

E. Housing/Logistical Preparations

Inadequate housing and on-site logistical preparations for project set-up and pre-implementation activities delayed arrival of the TA team.

F. Project Officer

Communication problems between the initial project officer and her peers were resolved with the installation of the current project officer, Ms. Carol Felkel. Her insight and assistance have aided project implementation considerably.

G. Projects 098 and 102

Ineffective collaboration between Project 098 in Kinshasa and Project 102 will remain a constraint until they move to a joint project area in 1990. Efforts have been made to improve communications through regular coordination.

To overcome problems and constraints such as those listed above, the project will need:

- o Timely, effective and rapid commodity procurement to begin the focused interventions with NGOs.
- o Adequate short-term TA to produce project outputs in a timely and effective manner.

- o Development of a comprehensive workplan for the remainder of the project to achieve the outputs and goals of the project implementation schedule. This requires coordination within the project itself, with USAID, and with the NGOs identified and targeted for interventions in the coming years.
- o Flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing economic and cultural conditions in the project area. The Project Paper may need to be amended later in the life of the project.
- o Clarification and centralization of the project's management roles and responsibilities -- and those of cooperating NGOs as well.

IV. PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following table reflects progress toward achieving project objectives as reflected in accomplishments during 1987 and 1988:

OBJECTIVES	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
20 NGO personnel trained	6 trained
10 NGO demonstration programs	3 in place
100 extension agents trained	35 trained
180 village plots	78 in site
Inter-organizational communication	16 involved
16 Rapid Rural Appraisals	completed
2 mills operational	1 operating
500 small mills/presses in villages	4 experimental
Marketing constraints identified	1 study done
Baseline data/benchmarks established	in progress
River/road transport needs identified	1 identified
Planning of credit program	completed
10 studies analyzed	completed

Progress in achieving project goals as called for in the contract schedule of deliverables is reflected in the following:

First Six Months: October 31, 1987, to April 30, 1988

Review all pertinent studies completed to date: Initially delayed by the former project officer, but completed by August 8, 1988.

Establish benchmarks for future impact evaluations: Delayed because of the late arrival of the responsible project TA team member, due to USAID's selection process.

Identify data lacking and propose how to obtain that data: Accomplished by the NGO study as of September 15, 1988.

Establish an action plan for the first two years of the project: Completed and submitted to (former) project officer, but held in abeyance until after completion of RRAs.

Develop eighteen-month implementation plans in coordination with project coordinator and A.I.D. project officer: Completed with copies submitted; there has been no response as yet to submitted plans.

Nine-Month Review

Carried out the project review in June 1988, and took subsequent actions in accordance with the recommendations of the project review in collaboration with the mission.

First Year: October 31, 1987, to October 31, 1988

Conduct RRAs of thirteen collectives: Completed by October 15, 1988, with the assistance of the USDA/University of Arizona team.

Identify priorities in sixteen collectives: Completed as a draft as of October 31, 1988.

Identify NGOs by collectives: Completed; NGO study of October 15, 1988.

Identify and Select at least eight NGOs with whom to work: Completed.

Design at least six interventions: In progress as of October 31, 1988.

Establish baseline benchmarks: In progress.

Initiate interventions with at least four NGOs: Completed October 31, 1988.

Establish PIU management system: Completed.

Establish and initiate a procurement system: Counterpart fund system is in place; the USD system is pending approval of local cost financing in U.S. dollars.

Establish an inventory and end-use tracking system: In place as of October 31, 1988.

Develop two eighteen-month implementation plans: Delayed due to project review and internal discussions at USAID.

Evaluate management capabilities of eight NGOs: Evaluated five.
Train PIU staff in management skills: Upgraded one.
Hire necessary clerical and support staff: Completed as needed.
Design management program for participating NGOs: Completed one NGO.
Establish project monitoring bases: Not yet completed because of delays in procurement and delivery of necessary tools and equipment. (See exception report for additional details.)

Supervisory trips by Pragma Project Manager: Dr. Mohammad Fatoorehchie has made several trips to the project site and to USAID/Kinshasa. His initial visit aided in setting up adequate housing with regular fuel and water deliveries, installing generators and establishing office procedures. His later visit helped the team focus on the project's goals and their strategy for project implementation.

V. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TA team was faced with the challenge of moving the project from a caretaker administration to an active phase. The team faced logistical problems, inadequate on-site preparations, strong oversight/joining dynamics, and delayed commodity procurement and delivery. Insufficient staffing and human resources were to some extent overcome, and the project review constructively suggested that steps be taken to get the project moving toward achievement of project goals and outputs. The new project officer's positive, participatory approach makes the project staff feel that their suggestions are now being used effectively in directing the project.

New difficulties await the project as it becomes more active with a full complement of staff and cooperating NGOs. Timely procurement and additional short-term person months of TA are greatly needed; both will significantly improve project implementation after this first year of initiating a number of project activities, namely staffing, assessments, studies and pre-implementation.

The following recommendations are submitted for action as soon as possible:

1. Amend the contract to add up to fifty-four person months of short-term technical assistance.
2. Amend the contract to allow commodity procurement in U.S. dollars by Pragma for needed commodities for 1989-90 project

implementation activities.

3. Amend the contract to include revised scopes of work for the technical assistance team as identified by the project review recommendations.