
VOLUME I: EVALUATION REPORT

**Evaluation
of the
Peace Corps
Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program**

**Prepared for
Peace Corps
Office of Training and Program Support
under
Contract No. PC-388-1004**

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by

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PREFACE

The worldwide evaluation of the Small Project Assistance Program was conducted by TvT Associates for the Peace Corps under contract number PC-388-1004 between March 1, 1988 and March 21, 1989. The work was conducted in six phases: Pre-evaluation Research, Evaluation Design, Field Test, Field Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Report Preparation.

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Inter-America Region: Costa Rica, Dominican Republic,
Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay

NANEAP Region: The Philippines, Thailand

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ACRONYMS

ACN	Activity Completion Notification
A.I.D.	Agency for International Development (Washington)
AIP	Accelerated Impact Program
APCD	Associate Peace Corps Director
ARDN	Agriculture, Rural Development and Nutrition
B&F	Budget and Finance
COS	Close of Service
CMPB	Country Management Plan and Budget
DTEC	Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation
EO	Executive Officer
ESF	Economic Stabilization Fund
FSN	Foreign Service National
FY	Fiscal Year
HCC	Host Country Counterpart
HCG	Host Country Government
HCN	Host Country National
IAA	Individual Activity Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NANEAP	North Africa, Near East, Asia and Pacific
OTAPS	Office of Training and Program Support
PASA	Participating Agency Service Agreement
PC	Peace Corps
PCD	Peace Corps Director
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PD&M	Project Design and Management

ACRONYMS (Continued)

PO	Program Officer
PTO	Programming and Training Officer
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
SDA	Special Development Assistance
SPA	Small Project Assistance
TA	Technical Assistance
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development (Local Mission)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report "Evaluation of the Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program," dated March 21, 1989, is submitted by TVF Associates to the Peace Corps Office of Training and Program Support as a worldwide evaluation of the program under Contract No. PC-388-1004.

The SPA Program is designed to support small projects conducted at the grassroots level by Peace Corps Volunteers in cooperation with community groups and to supply technical assistance to the Peace Corps in the field in the areas of small project generation and support. This scope of activities is managed by Peace Corps through the Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS) with funding provided largely from A.I.D. and cooperating USAID missions.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to provide Peace Corps with information on the success of current and past project activities, the administration and management of the SPA Program, the nature of the A.I.D. and Peace Corps collaboration in the SPA program, and the effects of SPA funding on perceptions of Peace Corps Volunteers by host country nationals.

The work was conducted in six phases: Pre-evaluation Research, Evaluation Design, Field Test, Field Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Report Preparation. Information was collected from Peace Corps and A.I.D. staff, Peace Corps Volunteers, the SPA documentation for projects and other activities, and site visits to 94 projects in 11 countries with active SPA programs. Most importantly, evaluators sought information from people who had direct experience in the management and conduct of the activities relevant to this evaluation. These site visits were made in the summer and fall of 1988.

Key recommendations at the Policy and Programmatic levels are presented in the following matrix while detailed recommendations can be found at the end of each chapter.

The most important lessons learned during the evaluation are:

- o The SPA Program has provided the opportunity for successful sustained projects at the grassroots level which have obtained success rates of about 75% in meeting their objectives and an 85% sustainability rate.
- o The SPA Program has provided a mechanism by which Peace Corps can demonstrate their skills in grassroots development and make a recognized contribution as a development agency.

- o Difficulties in the administration of the SPA Program and with Peace Corps and USAID cooperation at the country level concern the movement of funds and accounting systems and procedures.
- o The SPA program does not appear to contribute to or diminish the perception of Peace Corps as a donor agency. Rather the perception is based on issues larger than the SPA Program. However, SPA projects may be approached in such a way as to minimize this perception.
- o Where projects incorporate community roles in the responsibilities of project planning and management (as intended in the SPA Program) the projects have higher success rates than those in which the Peace Corps Volunteer takes sole responsibility in the same roles.

PROGRAMMATIC OR ADMINISTRATIVE
ISSUE/RECOMMENDATION

JUSTIFICATION/SUPPORT FOR RECOMMENDATION

- o Pre-service and in-service training and technical assistance in the area of community project development should be increased for Peace Corps staff and Volunteers.
- o Materials, training, and technical assistance efforts should be increased for enhancing capacity of Peace Corps Volunteers and other staff to prepare or review project proposals.
- o Peace Corps should consider instituting a simply-designed worldwide evaluation system for the SPA Program.
- o The SPA program guidance should be updated and detailed in many aspects of program management and administration.
- o Programs should be instituted and/or expanded to train Peace Corps staff and Volunteers (as well as USAID staff) in the development of projects, including particularly how to develop interest, motivation and commitment of project participants in the community.
- o Projects in which Volunteers assumed sole responsibility for major activities were much less often successful than when project participants had major responsibilities. Peace Corps Volunteers should be trained to understand better that they are not to assume the major role in planning and implementing projects, but rather to serve as consultants, facilitators, or team members.
- o Existing materials, such as the Individual Activity Agreement, are inadequate guidance for preparing and/or reviewing proposals. Recently initiated technical assistance and training efforts regarding project design and proposal preparation appear to have been effective and should be expanded.
- o Sound project design is particularly important in the SPA Program. Because of the nature of the projects and the involvement and commitment of project participants, project sustainability rates are high even among projects that are not otherwise effective. Improved project design would lead to the increased effectiveness of sustained projects.
- o The development and use of simple checklists would provide both a project planning tool and a framework for an immediate post-project evaluation. Using the checklist a second time as an outline, the Volunteer and community would prepare narrative summaries and comments on the points outlined in the checklist. In combination with the project proposal (prepared with the checklist), this would provide the documentation on what the project did.
- o A simply-designed evaluation system (of perhaps semi-annual or annual follow-up visits of selected projects with a brief evaluative format to be submitted to Peace Corps Washington), would provide SPA/OTAPS with a continuing and consistent understanding of the projects being conducted. Project proposals and end-of-project comments prepared by project participants and Volunteers at the time the project was conducted would be used as reference points for these follow-up visits.
- o Each country should have a simple filing system based on standard information sets used at the SPA/OTAPS level to maintain project proposals, evaluations, and follow-up visit documentation.
- o Problems experienced in the management of the program, communication, accessing TA, and requests for clarity in responsibilities by Peace Corps staff require modifications in the program guidance.

I. PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background information on the purposes and design of the Small Project Assistance (SPA) Program* and provides the context for this evaluation. Also presented in this chapter are the objectives, scope, methodology and limitations of this evaluation.

SPA PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The SPA program operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Peace Corps Washington (PC) and the United States Agency for International Development (A.I.D.). The program is established independently in each country by the USAID Mission and the Peace Corps Post through cooperative agreements under guidance from Peace Corps and A.I.D. Washington. In the most general terms, A.I.D. provides the funds and Peace Corps provides the human resources for the conduct of the program. The program is intended to be "quick funding" and to operate with a minimum of red tape.

SPA funds have been used since 1983 to implement small projects which stimulate grassroots, self-help efforts with immediate impact at the community level. The projects are identified by Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) working in conjunction with local community organizations or groups. To be eligible for SPA funding, a project must fit within one of two categories: Agriculture, Rural Development and Nutrition (ARDN) or Health as follows:

ARDN

- o food production,
- o renewable energy,

* Throughout the text, "project" is used to designate the discrete activities conducted by PCVs and communities, while "program" is reserved for SPA as a whole, which includes the projects and technical assistance activities, and the programmatic management of those activities.

- o income generation,
- o small enterprise development, or

Health

- o diarrheal disease and immunization,
- o malaria and vector biology control,
- o maternal health care,
- o nutrition,
- o water supply and sanitation,
- o health education.

In many cases, activities may address more than one area. For example, although income generation projects are characterized separately, other types of projects (such as food production or enterprise development) often generate income as well. Health funds were introduced to the program in fiscal year 1985 and incorporated in country activities in fiscal year 1986. As explained in Chapter V, the funding mechanisms differ for ARDN and Health projects.

Additional constraints to SPA project funding are time frame and cost. In terms of time, the activities defined in the individual SPA projects must be scheduled for completion within one year after the project begins. Of course, one of the goals of the program is that local communities will continue projects and related activities on their own and without any U.S. assistance after the SPA assistance is completed. Another common restriction designated at the country level is that projects may not be undertaken by PCVs until they have been working at their job for a certain period of time (such as 6 months) or immediately prior to their close of service (COS) date (i.e., within 3 months of COS). In terms of cost, SPA projects are limited to a maximum of \$10,000, but many projects receive \$1,000 or less. In many countries, additional stipulations are placed on SPA projects, such as a lower limit on the maximum award available per project and minimum requirements for community contributions.

In the latest yearly summaries available from SPA (fiscal year 1987), 651 projects were funded for a total of \$1.34 million, for a mean funding level of \$2,057 per project. SPA funds are often supplemented by funds from the community and other sources, as well as by in-kind contributions. SPA funds usually represent no more than about one-third to one-half of total project costs, including in-kind contributions.

In addition to funding for projects, the SPA program includes funds for technical assistance (TA). The purpose of these funds is to provide programming and technical assistance to Peace Corps field posts to facilitate development and implementation of SPA projects. SPA TA funds are made available to Peace Corps through a Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) with A.I.D.; the TA is provided by Peace Corps Washington through the Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS). Peace Corps also provides matching funds to SPA/TA.

The SPA program represents both an extension of and a departure from the traditional emphases of Peace Corps and A.I.D. programs. For A.I.D., SPA represents an opportunity to support small, limited purpose projects at the community level. For Peace Corps, SPA creates the opportunity, through limited financial support, to undertake projects which can enhance the quality of life in communities and can increase the capacity of the communities for self-sufficiency. The potential benefits to Peace Corps of the SPA approach are counterbalanced by a degree of risk that Volunteers will be perceived as grantspersons or donors or that the Peace Corps program will be politicized.

The nature of the SPA program is summarized succinctly in the 1987 Annual Report for the SPA Program published by OTAPS:

Success of a SPA project is determined by more than the end product. The process of a community working together to address an identified need is as much a part of the success as is the end result.

Successful SPA projects should enhance a community's ability to organize, plan, and make group decisions. The PCV can play an important role in the process by acting as a "facilitator" rather than as a "doer." In this way, the Volunteer can convey technical skills while increasing leadership capacity and self-reliance within the community.

This evaluation analyzes how well the SPA program is fulfilling its promise and the degree to which its administrative arrangements facilitate or inhibit its effectiveness.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation has as its focus the examination of issues in five major areas:

1. The progress and outcomes of current SPA projects; that is, projects operating during 1988;
2. The impacts and outcomes of completed SPA projects; that is, at least six months after completion;
3. Administrative issues, including funding, disbursement, training, technical assistance, and evaluation;
4. A.I.D. and Peace Corps cooperation; and
5. Effects of SPA funding on perceptions of Peace Corps Volunteers by host country residents.

Lists of specific evaluation questions within each of these issue areas were developed by Peace Corps officials and included in the statement of work for this evaluation. These questions are shown in Appendix A. The specific questions and issues are discussed in context throughout this report as the evaluation results are presented.

The methodology and procedures of this evaluation are detailed in Appendix B. As noted in that discussion, the findings of this evaluation are based on interview/questionnaire responses from program officials and PCVs, informal discussions with community groups, and reviews of program records and documents at the Washington and country levels. Data obtained from interviews and questionnaires are not always reliable, particularly when past events are being recalled. Therefore, to the extent possible, multiple sources or respondents were consulted to cross-check and verify information. This approach also allowed comparisons of perceptions of events by various parties. To the extent possible, observations of SPA projects by the evaluators during field visits were used to verify and supplement information obtained from other sources.

The scope of this evaluation is worldwide. The findings are based on analysis of data obtained in Washington and in 11 countries in the Africa, Inter-America, and North Africa, Near East, Asia and Pacific (NANEAP) regions.* The time frame for data collection for the evaluation was the Spring and Summer of 1988. The management and administrative systems which constitute

* A.I.D. counterparts are the Bureau for Africa, the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Bureau for Asia and Near East.

the SPA Program in each country are dynamic and vary widely in form. For that reason, there is no assurance that the projects approved and funded at any one time were administered by the same system that was in place at the time of the country visit in any one country. However, a continuity is expected over the lifetime of the program since the basic structure of the program and of Peace Corps in general has not changed during that period of time.

The 11 countries included in the evaluation were chosen by Peace Corps and represent a cross-section of countries participating in the SPA Program, including large and small programs, potentially successful and problematic programs, and variations in disbursement systems. To the extent possible, SPA projects were selected within these countries to represent proportionately the range of activities found in all SPA projects worldwide. Approximately equal numbers of projects were visited in each of the 11 countries. More detail on project selection is provided in Appendix B. The sample included 55 completed projects and 39 in-progress or recently-completed projects. Brief descriptions of the sample projects are presented in Appendix C.

Just as the sample of countries was chosen to span the spectrum of Peace Corps program size and administrative arrangements, similarly, the sample of projects was chosen to be roughly proportional by type to the total of SPA projects in the SPA data base covering 1986-1988. "Type" here is based on project objective and approach. Though not a "representative sample" in the statistical sense, it is believed that this evaluation provides a valid and reliable basis for policy and programmatic decisions.

II. OVERVIEW OF SPA PROJECT OUTCOMES

OVERALL SUCCESS

In this chapter an overview is given of the success of SPA projects, based on the sample of 94 projects reviewed. Details on the planning and proposal preparation aspects of projects are contained in Chapter VII, brief descriptions of the projects are provided in Appendix C, and tables reflecting additional data obtained on projects are contained in Appendix D.

Five success criteria were identified, and are displayed with their definitions in Table 1. Of these five--outcome as planned, production achieved, capacity-building achieved, desired impact achieved, and functioning--the "As Planned" evaluation is based on responses of people involved in the project (PCVs and community members); the "Functioning" evaluation is based on interviews and observations at the site visits; and the other three are evaluated against the proposal.

TABLE 1

DEFINITION OF SUCCESS MEASURES

Criteria	Definition
As Planned	This measure is based on whether the project conducted its activities and met its objectives as set forth in its plan.
Production	Refers to whether the project achieved or produced the measurable outputs as planned in its objectives.
Capacity	Refers to whether the project met its objectives of enhancing the capacity of project participants to help themselves through institution-building, skills transfer or other means.
Impact	Refers to whether the project resulted in a desired change in the community or among its residents; that is, did the project make a difference?
Functioning	For completed projects, this measure refers to whether the activities, elements, and/or outputs of the project still are functioning or are maintained after the completion of the SPA project. This variable thus provides a measure of sustainability after withdrawal of U.S. project support.

Table 2 displays the success rate of completed and recent projects against the five criteria. The number of projects which could be evaluated in each category is given in parentheses. Percentages are in terms of these numbers. The numbers are relatively low in all but the "As Planned" category for recent projects, because many of these still were in progress at the time of the evaluation; their higher success rate may be due to the fact that they are recent.

TABLE 2
PROPORTIONS OF COMPLETED AND RECENT PROJECTS WHICH WERE SUCCESSFUL

Success Variable	Completed % (n)	Recent % (n)	All Projects % (n)
As Planned	76% (55)	82% (39)	79% (94)
Production	73% (44)	92% (29)	77% (73)
Capacity	72% (32)	83% (18)	76% (50)
Impact	73% (37)	76% (17)	74% (54)
Functioning	80% (54)	100% (18)	85% (72)

Based on the proportion of projects meeting any particular success criterion, the overall success rate is on the order of 75 - 80 percent (Table 2). Ninety percent of the projects met at least one of the success criteria. These numbers indicate that on the whole, given the diversity and risk involved in community based development, the SPA program is fulfilling its function of grassroots development. The "Functioning" category has the highest success rate of all, and is also the most objective, reflecting the evaluator's judgment, based on interviews and direct observation. However, this probably indicates that in many instances a facility or capability of value to the community survives, though not necessarily at the level or in the manner planned. Better training and documentation for proposal planning and review will improve the success-rate in the categories of Production, Capacity, and Impact. These matters are discussed in Chapter VI.

Some caution must be exercised in using the numbers for "Impact", "Capacity", and "Production", since these were evaluated by comparing the projects in the field with what was written in the proposals. As discussed in Chapter VII, many proposals are rather skimpy in these areas, and therefore do not furnish firm standards for evaluation.

FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESS OF PROJECTS

In order to identify possible contributing factors to project success, success rates were retabulated for different values of a number of project characteristics which it was thought might affect the project success rate. These characteristics were (1) technological complexity of the project; (2) project budget level; (3) whether the project has recurring costs; and (4) types of project activity, that is, institution-building, construction, capital equipment, and skills transfers.

Technological Complexity. To compare technologically simple and complex projects, projects were classified into these three groups (Table 3):

- o Complex technologies, where more than one technical skill is involved; for example, projects which include income generation in addition to a technology such as food production, or which involve two or more technologies such as poultry and fish production.
- o Technologies which are not related directly to desired impact; for example, construction of water systems which may require an intervening education or skills training program to have an intended impact on health.
- o Single or simple technology which is employed to achieve a closely related product and impact.

Table 3 shows that the technological complexity of project activities does not appear to affect greatly the success ratios.

TABLE 3

PROPORTION OF PROJECTS MEETING SUCCESS CRITERIA
BY LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY OF ACTIVITIES

Complexity of Project Activity	Success Measure				
	As Planned % (n)	Production % (n)	Capacity % (n)	Impact % (n)	Functioning % (n)
Complex Technologies	77% (44)	75% (32)	78% (23)	61% (18)	81% (36)
Technology Differs From Desired Impact	80% (20)	65% (17)	80% (10)	69% (13)	100% (21)
Single/Simple Technology	79% (29)	87% (24)	71% (17)	87% (23)	84% (25)
Totals:	78% (93)	76% (73)	76% (50)	74% (54)	87% (82)

Project Budget Level. Projects were classified into five budget categories from under \$500 to more than \$5,000 (Table 4). In general, the very smallest projects (with budgets under \$500) have lower rates of success than larger projects. The data indicate also that incremental funding above the \$1,000 - \$2,000 range appears to have little additional effect on project success.

TABLE 4
PROPORTION OF PROJECTS MEETING SUCCESS CRITERIA
BY BUDGET LEVEL

Level of Project Budget	Success Measure				
	As Planned % (n)	Production % (n)	Capacity % (n)	Impact % (n)	Functioning % (n)
< \$500	62% (13)	60% (10)	60% (5)	83% (6)	67% (12)
\$501-\$1,000	77% (22)	65% (17)	78% (9)	67% (12)	83% (18)
\$1,001-\$2,000	64% (14)	81% (11)	75% (8)	75% (8)	90% (10)
\$2,001-\$5,000	81% (31)	83% (24)	79% (19)	79% (19)	95% (21)
\$5,001-\$10,000	85% (13)	91% (11)	78% (9)	67% (9)	82% (11)
Totals:	75% (93)	77% (73)	76% (50)	74% (54)	84% (72)

Recurrent Costs. On recurrent costs (Table 5), projects were classified by whether they had

- o recurrent costs for purchase of consumables such as in an animal project,
- o recurrent small costs for labor or maintenance such as for many gravity flow water systems, or
- o no recurrent costs such as some well, building or bridge projects.

As shown in Table 5, the necessity for the community to meet requirements for labor and other maintenance costs radically depresses the success probability for all but the "functioning" criterion. The higher level of functioning probably reflects that parts or all of many projects survive without maintenance.

TABLE 5

PROPORTION OF PROJECTS MEETING SUCCESS CRITERIA
BY RECURRENCE OF COSTS

Recurrence of Costs	Success Measure				
	As Planned % (n)	Production % (n)	Capacity % (n)	Impact % (n)	Functioning % (n)
Recurrent Costs for Consumables	82% (44)	83% (35)	68% (25)	73% (26)	85% (33)
Recurrent Labor & Maintenance Costs	68% (31)	60% (25)	73% (15)	53% (15)	79% (24)
No Recurrent Costs	89% (18)	92% (13)	100% (10)	100% (13)	93% (15)
Totals:	78% (93)	77% (73)	76% (50)	74% (54)	85% (72)

Type of Project Activity. For analysis purposes, projects were grouped into the following categories (Table 6):

- o "Institution-Building": Projects in which the technical activity directly supported the existence and/or growth of a group.
- o "Construction": Projects concerned principally with the construction of a physical object or system.
- o "Capital Equipment": Projects concerned chiefly with supplying equipment to a group or facility.
- o "Skills Transfer": Projects concerned with the transfer of skills to group members where skills development or knowledge is the desired end result.

Success probabilities of institution-building and skills transfer projects are much lower than for those involving equipment or construction (Table 6). Both effects reflect the difficulty in facilitating the development of groups and the important question of whether the community group "buys into the project" and has sufficient coherence and leadership to continue group activities by providing effort and perhaps costs without outside support.

To investigate further the effects of community involvement in all phases of project development, proposal activity and

conduct, thus strengthening the community group's cohesion, "ownership" of the product, and facilitating leadership development, success ratios were tabulated against who was most commonly involved in what aspects of the projects. Those tabulations are contained in the 50 tables of Appendix D.

TABLE 6
 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS MEETING SUCCESS CRITERIA
 BY TYPE OF PROJECT ACTIVITY

Type of Project Activity	Success Measure				
	As Planned % (n)	Production % (n)	Capacity % (n)	Impact % (n)	Functioning % (n)
Institution-building	64% (14)	69% (13)	67% (9)	78% (9)	69% (13)
Skills Transfer	60% (15)	55% (11)	78% (9)	33% (9)	64% (11)
Construction	88% (40)	84% (32)	80% (20)	80% (20)	93% (30)
Capital Equipment	83% (24)	82% (17)	71% (7)	91% (11)	94% (18)
Totals:	78% (93)	76% (73)	75% (45)	73% (49)	85% (72)

Aspects of involvement with projects include:

- o concept development
- o assessment of projects
- o information gathering
- o proposal preparation
- o project budget
- o money management
- o labor management
- o monitoring

"Who is involved" includes:

- o PCV and Group leaders
- o PCV and Group
- o Group representatives
- o Group
- o PCV, and occasionally local government or PVO agents, and
- o other combinations of the above.

It is clear from the data in Appendix D that success ratios for projects in which the PCV alone fulfilled a role are consistently low compared to success ratios for when group and host country nationals were involved. PCVs who take complete charge of one or more aspects of a project are using an approach to the project which does not emphasize group development, while those PCVs who put a major effort into the institution-building and skill transfer (especially management skills) of the project, will tend to stress this element throughout the project.

The tables of Appendix D, in conjunction with the overall effects noted above indicate the effectiveness of SPA's emphasis on community involvement, and the continuing need, through guidelines, training, review, and supervision to ensure that this approach is used in practice.

CONCLUSIONS

- o Most SPA projects are implemented successfully and have positive outcomes and impacts. About 90 percent of the projects studied were successful on at least one measure of effectiveness. Data show that only about 10 percent of the projects exhibited no success.
- o Project success occurred most frequently when host country groups and agencies were involved in all aspects of project planning and implementation. The few PCVs who acted in isolation usually were involved in unsuccessful projects.
- o Although overall success rates were high, projects that focused on institution-building or capacity-building and skills transfer were less successful than projects involving capital equipment or construction. Projects requiring expenditures of labor and/or funds for maintenance had lower success rates than those without recurrent costs, or with a need for replenishing consumables, presumably for income generation projects. Technological complexity and project

costs generally did not affect the success ratios, although projects with very low funding levels were somewhat less successful than other projects.

- o Ranking of success ratios of projects by type of involvement in various aspects of the initiation-proposal preparation-execution-continuation cycle, and by "who was principally involved" (for example, PCV and Group, PCV alone, Group alone, etc.) shows that projects in which the PCV acted alone have consistently low success ratios. The stress which the SPA Program Guidance puts on community involvement in all aspects of SPA projects is justified by the higher success rates of projects that satisfy this requirement. Sustainability rates of SPA projects are high. Commitment of host country nationals to these projects appears to be high, resulting in project maintenance beyond the period of SPA funding, even for some of the less than completely successful projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- o SPA/OTAPS should use the SPA Program Guidance to continue to stress the importance of community involvement in all project activity. The documentation should be expanded to guide a careful review of this aspect during proposal preparation and approval. Details of these suggested modifications are provided in Chapter VI.
- o PCV and staff training, training materials and technical assistance should be used to develop PCV and staff capabilities in the arena of capacity-building and skills transfer.
- o Improvements in project planning and proposal writing should be made to improve success rates in the project outcomes of "Production", "Capacity", and "Impact" equal to the success rates in the class of "Functioning". Specific training needs to meet this objective are outlined in Chapter VIII.

III. THE IMPACT OF THE SPA PROGRAM ON THE PEACE CORPS IMAGE

INTRODUCTION

There is a continuing concern at all levels of the Peace Corps from top management to the Volunteers, as to how the continued use of small grants will affect Host Country Nationals' perception of the Peace Corps as an institution which "helps people to help themselves". The concerns are how this will affect relationships with Host Country Government Agencies at all levels, and that of the PCVs with their communities.

The matter of maintaining the Peace Corps approach to development, which centers on the transfer of technical, organizational and management skills at the grass-roots level has always been a major concern of Peace Corps management and training. It is the most difficult approach to implement because of the special skills in intercultural and interpersonal communications required to implement it well. The question whether the SPA program undercuts Peace Corps goals and methods is therefore one that needs answering.

In order to elicit answers which were as objective as possible, interview guides and instruments were carefully constructed to elicit perceptions, follow-up questions were used to obtain detailed examples. Detailed responses to questions are found in Appendix E.

GROUPS QUERIED AND DESCRIPTION OF QUERIES

The following groups were asked the indicated types of questions:

- o Forty-one Peace Corps staff members were asked: "Has the SPA program had an impact on the Peace Corps' relationship with Host Country Government and Local Communities". As indicated above, if an impact was perceived, follow-up questions elicited the nature of the impact.
- o Thirty-one Peace Corps staff who managed Volunteers were asked additional questions concerning the effects of the use of funds by Peace Corps Volunteers.
- o One hundred-thirteen Volunteers, of which 83 had funding experience, responded to a questionnaire on the sources of funds and on the effect of the use of funds. Questions on "how communities regard them" were

included as well as questions on the use of funds (both SPA and other), on advantages and disadvantages of the use of funds, and on whether they would use SPA funds, either again or for the first time.

PEACE CORPS AND HOST COUNTRY RELATIONSHIPS

Information on the impact of the SPA program between Host Country Government and Communities and the Peace Corps as an Institution is derived from interviews with Peace Corps staff. Table 7 summarizes these responses.

TABLE 7

SPA Impact on Peace Corps Relations with Host Country Governments and Communities

Type of Impact	Level of Government			
	National No. (%)	Regional No. (%)	Local No. (%)	Community No. (%)
Positive	16 (45)	18 (47)	25 (64)	27 (66)
Positive and Negative	3 (8)	6 (16)	8 (21)	9 (22)
Negative	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)	2 (5)
Unspecified Impact	1 (2)	2 (5)	2 (5)	3 (7)
No Impact	16 (45)	12 (32)	3 (8)	0 (0)
Totals	36 (100)	38 (100)	39 (100)	41 (100)

Note: Number and percent of Peace Corps staff who reported the indicated type of impact at each level of government and in communities.

As expected, because SPA projects operate at the community and Local Government levels, all estimates of impact increase with lower levels, both absolutely and as percentages. Positive and mixed positive and negative impact increases from 53 percent at the National to 85 percent at the Local and 88 percent at the Community levels. Negative and "unspecified" impact estimates increase from 1 percent at the National level to 12 percent at

the community level (including 5 percent negative). At the national level government personnel had interacted with SPA/TA, as well as with SPA projects. (Table 7 is summarized from tables E-1 through E-4, Appendix E.)

The most common detailed nature of positive impact, in order of decreasing frequency, are:

- o At all levels of government and in the communities, the most frequently mentioned impact was that SPA brought to the attention of the host country that Peace Corps is an agency involved in development activities.
- o Because of SPA, Peace Corps was seen at the national, regional and local government levels as a source of development assistance complementary to local activities.
- o At the community level, the impact of SPA was seen most often as developing positive and cooperative action between the PCV and the community.
- o SPA has provided an opportunity for PCVs to be seen as effective, and to demonstrate their capacity and value in development work.
- o At the National and Regional Government level, SPA/TA has provided the opportunity for interaction and training.

Specific negative impacts mentioned were:

- o A risk that PCVs would be seen as donors (2 respondents).
- o The program does not fit Peace Corps goals (1 respondent).
- o Local institutional capabilities might be decreased (1 respondent).

On the whole it is apparent that Peace Corps staff see the SPA program as positively affecting relations between the Peace Corps and Host Country Government and Communities.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The key questions, of major concern to the Peace Corps at all levels, is whether the SPA program causes community perceptions of PCVs to change from "People helping people to help themselves", to that of a source of funds (grantspersons). There are several facets of the issue:

- o Do communities regard PCV's as grantspersons, as a resource for the community, or as both?
- o To what extent is the effect of being regarded principally as a grantspersons reinforced by the SPA program?
- o How can this effect be minimalized?

The questions are, of course, interrelated. Below we deal with a series of partial answers which together yield insight into the key questions.

Community members are well aware that development workers have access to funds, and may quite naturally work to obtain some of these funds when interacting with development workers (including PCVs).

In most countries, a number of PVOs and other bilateral or multilateral programs, as well as various U.S. sources and SPA make funds available for small community grants. Evidence for this was obtained from the survey of 113 Peace Corps Volunteers. Of 113 respondents, 88 (78 percent) indicated the use of at least one funding source (see Table 8). Though SPA is the preponderant source of funds for the PCVs interviewed, 24 other sources were mentioned. The table shows the breadth and diversity of funding sources available to communities through Peace Corps and other channels.

As to general community knowledge of the availability of funds, this may be assumed from the great number of sources of funds. In addition, in the SPA evaluation, at least 29 Peace Corps staff managing PCVs listed "general awareness" as one cause why PCVs might be regarded as sources of funds. The SPA program has little influence on community perceptions and is therefore marginal to the "Grantsperson" issue. Given the general awareness of the availability of funds, it remains to explore the extent to which community members regard PCVs as both a resource and source of funds, and to what extent as a grantsperson.

The problem that community members might regard PCVs solely, or principally as sources of funds is recognized throughout the Peace Corps.

Twenty-seven of 31 Peace Corps staff managing PCVs stressed the danger of communities perceiving PCVs as sources of funds only. (Three said it happened constantly; one, never.) The leading disadvantage of the SPA program according to the Volunteers was the concern of being seen as a grantsperson; cited by 57 of 113 or 50 percent of PCVs (Table F-2, Appendix F). Despite the disadvantages of SPA noted by PCVs, they also

TABLE 8

SOURCES OF FUNDS USED BY PCVs IN PROJECT WORK

Funding Source	Number of Times Used
SPA	32
Host Country Agency Money	19
Trickle-up	8
AID Program	8
PCV's personal funds	6
PC Partnership	5
Local American Groups	4
Embassy Self Help funds	4
Community members' personal funds	4
Private donor in the US	4
Community funds	3
Project generated income	3
All donor funds to organization (many)	3
Dutch Embassy	2
Canadian International Development Agency	2
PC Post project funds	2
Local PVO	2
Catholic Relief Services	2
African Development Fund	1
Private Business	1
Inter American Foundation	1
Council for International Development	1
Lutheran World Relief Services	1
PCV Gains Memorial funds	1
Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA)	1
Taita/Taqueta District Development program, DANIDA Sponsored	1
Total	121

Source: TvT survey of 113 PCVs; 88 of whom used the funds from the indicated sources. Multiple resources were allowed and the PCVs reported 121 instances of using funds.

enumerated many advantages (Table F-1, Appendix F), and 34 of 36 PCVs responding (94 percent) said that they would use SPA again if needed.

Once a potential problem is recognized, it can be minimized.

The problem of access to funds is of course a double problem: the PCV may actually act like a grantsperson and/or the community may see him that way.

Perhaps the best guarantee that the problem will be minimized is the constant awareness of its existence at all levels of the Peace Corps. Peace Corps training, SPA Program guidelines, and documentation and technical assistance all stress the cooperative aspects of the PCVs' work. PCVs do not provide funds, they help communities find funds, so that the community can help itself with the aid of the PCV.

Peace Corps staff managing PCVs generally agreed that the problem could be avoided. Table 9 displays their solutions. The most frequent solutions are:

- o Familiarizing communities with the Peace Corps, and the objectives of the PCV.
- o Careful choice of community based and supported projects.

The need for this community awareness of the PCV's function is underlined by PCV experience. Half of the PCVs surveyed reported that the people they worked with were unclear about what the PCV was there to do. Complete responses are shown in Table 10.

PCVs involved with SPA projects feel good about the projects and about how the community regards them.

Peace Corps Volunteers involved with SPA projects were asked a series of questions about how their coworkers and community members regarded them. These are listed in Table 11. Eighty-one percent of the responses are positive.

TABLE 9

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY PEACE CORPS MANAGERS OF PCVS TO THE PROBLEM OF PCVS BEING SEEN ONLY AS A SOURCE OF FUNDING

Solution	Number of Responses
Communities learn what Peace Corps is about and PCV works with the community	8
- The problem can get worked out (sometimes through continued PCV placement) as the community learns about Peace Corps	
- As the PCV establishes professional credibility he is no longer seen as a source of funds, his ideas have value	
- Proper communication and good language skills	
- In 90% of the cases, communities can be educated to the PCV's role; APCDs can work on this during programming	
- Villagers' view of project different from PCV's expectations	
- Care with placement: agencies must understand PC support of their program is 100% the PCV, not funding	

TABLE 9 (Continued)
 SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY PEACE CORPS MANAGERS OF PCVS TO THE
 PROBLEM OF PCVS BEING SEEN ONLY AS A SOURCE OF FUNDING

Solution	Number of Responses
Addressing felt need with high community participation to conduct the activity	5
- Beneficiaries support projects in kind and in cash	
- Activities where a lot of planning and action takes place before they ever decide they need funds	
- Need to educate people about using local available resources and materials first	
- Small projects where SPA used as seed money & community puts in most resources, projects realistic (these factors limit the degree to which PCV seen as money source)	
Some negative impact outweighed by a lot of positive impact	2
PCVs cannot do funded projects for 3 to 6 months from start of service	1
Can help PCVs & communities <u>access</u> funds but we do not bring them	1
Good training can offset the problem	1
Improved since APCDs now involved in project design and approval	1
It's an inevitable problem; our goal is to avoid it as best we can	1

TABLE 10
 PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSES TO:
 "How clearly do people you work with understand your job?"

Degree of Clarity	Number of Responses (n) (%)
Clearly understand	41 (50%)
Have a vague or unclear understanding	25 (30%)
Some aspects are clear, others are unclear	17 (20%)
Total	83 (100%)

TABLE 11

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSES TO:
 "How do you think people you live and/or work with regard you?"

Description of Regard	Number of Responses* (%)
Positive, professional	29 (24%)
Positive, personal	25 (20%)
Positive, professional and personal	44 (36%)
Okay, but without resources	4 (3%)
As source of funds or things	13 (11%)
Negative, professional and personal	1 (1%)
Negative, professional	2 (2%)
Some positive aspects, some negative aspects	3 (2%)
Totals	121 (100%)

*107 respondents, 14 with multiple responses.

CONCLUSIONS

- o The effect of the SPA program on the perception of the Peace Corps by Host Country government agencies at all levels and by communities is largely positive. National and regional government officers have participated in SPA/TA. Other benefits include: (1) strengthened perception of the Peace Corps as a development agency, and (2) as a source of community support complementary to local government agencies.
- o The SPA program is essentially marginal to the "source of funds." Communities already often regard PCVs as potential sources of funds. These funds are now more accessible than formerly, but the danger lies in community perceptions and expectations of funds, and these exist regardless of the SPA program.
- o A method of minimizing the danger, suggested by Peace Corps staff, consists of careful preparation for Volunteer placement in communities and agencies, and clear definition

of PCV roles. The need for such briefing was clearly established from Volunteer responses. The process should be continued by the PCV after placement.

- o Peace Corps Volunteers who have conducted SPA projects feel largely positive about their relations with the community and the effect of the project thereon. Ninety-four percent would use SPA again.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- o Peace Corps Posts should be encouraged to work with a community or agency before PCV placement to explain the PCV's functions and duties, and to place the funding issue in its proper context. PCVs should continue this process after placement.
- o The concern of the Peace Corps with the "grantsperson"/ source of funds issue should be translated into proper training, especially by SPA/TA, of Volunteers and staff in the interpersonal and communications skills needed to produce projects integral to the community and in the planning, management and technical skills needed to ensure that projects are brought to a successful conclusion of lasting value. Details of skills and skill training requirements are given in other chapters of this report, especially Chapter VIII.

IV. A.I.D. AND PEACE CORPS COOPERATION

INTRODUCTION

In each country visited, Peace Corps staff and USAID staff directly involved in the SPA program were asked a series of questions on how well the collaboration worked on the SPA Program, advantages and disadvantages of the cooperation, and ways other than through SPA in which USAID and the Peace Corps might collaborate. Responses (some of which were multiples) were obtained from thirty-nine Peace Corps and ten USAID staff members. A complete set of the responses to the six questions (of which three are duplicated below) is provided in Appendix G.

The responses show great diversity among countries in the form of collaboration, though particular mechanisms are used in a number of countries.

POLICY SETTING

Nine countries reported that SPA policy was set by Peace Corps on an "as needed" basis through discussions with USAID, Peace Corps staff, and SPA Committees as appropriate. USAID participates in setting policy in seven countries through discussion or participation on SPA Committees. In three countries, USAID staff stated that policy for the SPA program was set by USAID with Peace Corps input or in an attempt to accommodate Host Country Government policies. No data were obtained on whether these policies were written down, and/or incorporated in the annual country agreement. The conjecture is that they are developed *ad hoc*.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Activities shared in the management of the SPA program were limited principally to participation on SPA Committees. In three countries, USAID personnel serve on SPA Committees; in two of these, USAID personnel occasionally make site visits. In addition, in all countries the Peace Corps must adapt itself to fiscal and accounting requirements worked out with the USAID Comptroller; unfortunately, this is not always done. In two countries, USAID pays for a Peace Corps SPA Coordinator. In four countries, USAID requires a separate review for projects.

Table 12 below shows the judgement of respondents on how well SPA program cooperation works. This table, as well as

Tables 13 and 14 have been included in the text to display the flavor of the responses that were given. On the whole, respondents seem satisfied with the way it works and positive responses outnumber the negative three to one among Peace Corps staff, and six to one among USAID personnel. Among positive responses, 43 percent of Peace Corps and 50 percent of USAID responses mention particular program features. Among negative responses, three of the Peace Corps responses and the one USAID response mention accounting problems.

Table 13 displays the advantages of the SPA collaboration perceived by Peace Corps and USAID staff. USAID participation in the program was seen as advantageous to Peace Corps in terms of (1) the financial support it provided, (2) the technical expertise of USAID staff, and (3) the support the program provided to PCVs and Peace Corps programs. USAID staff found collaboration with Peace Corps advantageous due to (1) the skill of Peace Corps in conducting small project work and (2) the direct benefit to the country. Other positive responses in Table 13 show an interesting mix of benefits, both to the SPA program, and to other possible areas of collaboration.

Table 14 displays the disadvantages of SPA collaboration perceived by Agency staffs in both USAID and Peace Corps. "None" is the most frequent response, followed by accounting problems. Peace Corps staff also emphasized the differences in culture between the two agencies (different philosophies and methods), a concern about Peace Corps becoming an arm of A.I.D., and a perceived lack of interest in the SPA program at USAID.

A number of cooperative undertakings credited to the SPA collaboration were mentioned by respondents:

- o SDA or Ambassador Self Help Funds are now under Peace Corps management or linking SPA and SDA.
- o Peace Corps and A.I.D. sectors working together.
- o Participate in program(s) together.
- o A.I.D. conducted training with PCV participation.
- o New activities in the planning phase now.
- o Other funding made available to PCVs from USAID.
- o A.I.D. helped fund a conference.
- o USAID able to identify PVO placements for PCVs.
- o The accounting staff developed a good consultative relationship.

TABLE 12

EVALUATION BY PEACE CORPS AND USAID STAFF
OF AGENCY COLLABORATION IN THE SPA PROGRAM

POSITIVE RESPONSES	PEACE CORPS (n=28)	USAID (n=7)
Works well, unqualified, no problems	12	3
Works well, shortens approval time	1	0
Works well, better communication, good communication	3	0
Works well, projects good	0	1
Excellent, feedback sought as needed	1	0
Works well, cooperative and supportive	2	0
Great, it's the way the program business should be done	1	0
Works well in principle, just provide funds, not a relationship, no relationship, no unreasonable demands	1	1
Works well, Memorandum of Understanding flexible	0	1
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>6</u>
NEGATIVE RESPONSES		
Does not work well because of personal capabilities of staff involved	1	0
Poorly, due to lack of accountability, monitoring and control on Peace Corps' part	0	1
Not well, A.I.D. person does not come to SPA Committee's meetings*	1	0
Okay but proposals sometimes get bogged down	1	0
Not well, money is not being disbursed	3	0
Not well, no interaction	1	0
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>
GRAND TOTAL	28	7

* Comment offered in a country which is not counted as having USAID participation on the SPA Committee in this report.

TABLE 13

NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS AND USAID STAFF CITING VARIOUS
ADVANTAGES OF THE A.I.D./PEACE CORPS SPA COLLABORATION

RESPONSES	PEACE CORPS (n=39)	USAID (n=9)
Money from A.I.D., assistance with funding	29	2
- Funds from A.I.D. controlled by PC		
- Quick and easy funding for small projects		
- Confidence in the funding source		
- Flexibility in spending outside of costs covered by PC		
- Additional administration money for funds		
Technical experience of A.I.D. personnel	11	0
- Outside observer's point of view		
- A.I.D. has good project experience, know-how		
- A.I.D. perspective, second opinion		
Benefit to the country	2	3
- Money remains in the community		
- Good for the country, a lot more gets done		
- Beneficiaries really appreciate Peace Corps projects		
Volunteers and Programs supported	4	0
- Provides a lot of PCV placements for A.I.D. projects		
Learning from and about one another	2	2
PC highly skilled in small project work, design, follow-up	0	4
- Good staff at PC		
Excellent interaction between PCVs and A.I.D.	2	2
- institutional coordination between A.I.D., HCG, and PC		
- Mutually beneficial		
- Collaboration at different levels is advantageous		
Individual PCVs would go to A.I.D. if SPA did not exist	0	1
Not intrusive, don't over-manage	1	0
A.I.D. spending money at the small community level which they could not do otherwise; enhances A.I.D. program	0	1
Relationship with A.I.D.-funded projects outside SPA	1	0
Potential collaboration	1	0
A link person at A.I.D. for project and money questions	1	0
A.I.D. does accounting for ARDN	1	0
Doesn't take a lot of time	0	1
Like to keep the agencies separate as it is now	1	0
TOTALS*	56	16

* Multiple responses allowed.

TABLE 14
NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS AND USAID STAFF CITING VARIOUS
DISADVANTAGES OF THE A.I.D./PEACE CORPS SPA COLLABORATION

RESPONSES	PEACE CORPS (n=38)	USAID (n=10)
None	15	5
Administrative obstacles in moving funds - A.I.D. rigid in releasing funds - Getting funding released (HC Loop) - Delays in implementation, delays in disbursement - Time consuming for programming documents (funding)	7	3
A.I.D. lacks seriousness, or interest in the program - A.I.D. personnel inaccessible because of low priority - they are not interested in the micro approach - A.I.D. not using a really good resource - PC - they look down on PCVs	6	0
PC becomes arm of A.I.D. - Sometimes identified as A.I.D. personnel - they think we are father Christmas - A.I.D. political image - A.I.D. attempts to use PCVs instead of hiring staff	4	0
Liquidation problems - Delays in liquidation of advanced funds - Minor problem - A.I.D. auditors try to apply large project auditing practices to small projects which are not held to the same accounting practices - Inflexibility of A.I.D. in receiving statements of account for advanced funds - Unclear who has which accounting responsibilities	3	1
Different philosophies on people, resources, programming, time lines & methods	4	0
Volunteer Placement must be carefully considered - Jeopardize PC philosophy if people expect PCVs to bring money	3	0
PCVs get discouraged quickly, burn out rate is higher on structured projects	0	1
PCV is fall guy on A.I.D. project if project not successful	1	0
Occasionally projects are inappropriate	0	1
Projects fall apart when the PCV leaves	0	1
Little follow-up on projects	1	0
Bureaucracy	1	0
TOTALS*	45	12

* Multiple responses allowed.

CONCLUSIONS

- o On the whole, the Peace Corps/USAID collaboration on the SPA program is working well. Joint efforts are principally in the areas of project review and policy setting as needed.
- o The satisfaction with substantive interaction is high, and many respondents mentioned ways in which closer collaboration can or has occurred, both within and outside the SPA context (see Appendix G, Tables G-3 and G-4).
- o Accounting issues with yearly budgets and projects were mentioned most often as disadvantages and problems with the program in discussions with staff at both agencies. They were a source of friction between the agencies and engendered suspicions of incompetence, inflexibility, and deliberate delay. When accounting problems surface in one agency or the other they tend to percolate to the management level and sour or halt other areas of cooperative action in the program. These accounting issues are discussed in detail in Chapter V, and recommendations are provided for dealing with them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- o OTAPS should encourage closer collaboration by publicizing examples of successful PC/A.I.D. cooperative efforts when they occur.
- o Recommendations for increasing USAID participation on SPA committees are provided in Chapter VI.
- o Recommendations for dealing with the accounting problems are provided in Chapter V.

V. SPA FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The funding of SPA projects involves three distinct, but closely interrelated stages: (1) The disbursement of annual SPA funds and renewal of annual agreements, (2) the replenishment of these funds in cases where funds are disbursed at various points during the year (such as on a quarterly basis), and (3) the disbursement of funds to individual projects. Administrative and management systems, including disbursement, within each country are described in Appendix H.

All Health budget authority is transferred from A.I.D. Washington to Peace Corps Washington, and then transferred in total to Peace Corps Posts. Accounting is kept essentially within the Peace Corps, with A.I.D. access for audit purposes.

A variety of methods are in use for ARDN funds, including project disbursements by USAID without moving funds to the Peace Corps Posts. These are described in some detail below, and more detailed information is provided in Appendix I. Some methods are more difficult to operate or provide less flexibility than others. Conclusions and recommendations based on these observations are given at the end of the chapter.

It should be noted that the information included here is current as of the date of the individual country visits: Jamaica (5/9/88 - 5/20/88), Costa Rica (6/13/88 - 6/24/88), Honduras (6/15/88 - 6/27/88), Kenya (8/1/88 - 8/12/88), Senegal (8/1/88 - 8/12/88), Mali (8/13/88 - 8/26/88), the Dominican Republic (8/16/88 - 8/29/88), Paraguay (9/12/88 - 9/23/88), the Philippines (9/15/88 - 9/24/88), Lesotho (9/21/88 - 10/1/88) and Thailand (9/26/88 - 10/7/88).

ADEQUACY OF OVERALL FUNDING

Peace Corps and USAID staff were interviewed regarding the adequacy of the country funding levels for ARDN and Health projects and for SPA projects overall. More than 80 percent of Peace Corps staff as compared with only 40 percent of USAID staff responding to this question judged the funding levels to be adequate. While larger percentages of USAID respondents reported that SPA funding levels are inadequate, it cannot be determined whether they are showing strong support for grassroots development or a lack of understanding of the limits of what Peace Corps can handle with available staff and Volunteers. The

total number of USAID respondents is too small to draw firm conclusions. Details are displayed in Table 15.

TABLE 15

NUMBERS OF PEACE CORPS AND USAID STAFF WHO PERCEIVE
THE CURRENT SPA FUNDING LEVELS AS ADEQUATE

Funding Level for:	Peace Corps				USAID			
	% (n)				% (n)			
	NO	YES	UNKNOWN	TOTAL	NO	YES	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
ARDN	1%(3)	87%(26)	3%(1)	100%(30)	38%(3)	38%(3)	25%(2)	100%(8)
Health*	13%(4)	77%(24)	10%(3)	100%(31)	25%(2)	38%(3)	38%(3)	100%(8)
Both Combined	16%(6)	81%(31)	3%(1)	100%(38)	27%(4)	40%(6)	33%(5)	100%(15)

* Some countries receive more than the standard \$15,000 of budget.

MOVEMENT OF FUNDS

Yearly Health funding is done through Peace Corps Washington. A.I.D. transfers Health funds through a PASA (Participating Agency Service Agreement) to OTAPS, which transfers budget authority to Peace Corps Posts. Accounting for projects (liquidation) is transmitted from the country to Peace Corps Washington, with USAID reviewing the documents as needed. ARDN funds are made available to the Philippines in the same way.

ARDN funds for three countries (Mali, Paraguay, Dominican Republic) originate in the USAID country budgets. Budget authority is transferred to Peace Corps Washington and back to the Peace Corps Posts. Mali receives authority for their budget on a yearly basis, while Paraguay and the Dominican Republic receive budget authority on a more or less quarterly basis.

In Kenya, Lesotho, Senegal, Jamaica and Thailand, ARDN funds are made available directly from the USAID budget either as disbursements to individual projects (all but Thailand) or in quarterly disbursements to the Peace Corps Post (Thailand). Costa Rica and Honduras use counterpart ESF (Economic Stabilization Funds) in their Small Project Assistance programs. In Costa Rica, even though non-ARDN funds are used, the projects are run according to the SPA program guidance, while in Honduras, some differences occur. ARDN accounts for all countries are

submitted to USAID or the local A.I.D. liaison in one way or another.

Once a project has been authorized, a number of mechanisms are in use to get the funds to the PCV and/or community who is to disburse them. The most common and convenient method is to transfer the money, with one or more checks, to the PCV and/or the community group. The transfer may be either in whole or in installments. In some countries the Peace Corps or USAID may have separate checks written for one major supplier, and another for all other expenses. In Senegal and Lesotho, a system of payment for goods and services requires the delivery of materials before settling the account, which leads to delays and difficulty in finding vendors. In Thailand, the Peace Corps imprest account is used with success, principally because the relatively low cost of projects in Thailand does not deplete the imprest fund to the extent that higher cost projects would.

PCVs are to liquidate projects by collecting all receipts, accounting for money spent, and returning any unspent balance. Peace Corps Posts are responsible for reviewing these accounts, for correcting any deficiencies, and for aggregating expenses across projects. Only in Lesotho does USAID manage project accounts directly.

FUNDING PROBLEMS

The most serious difficulties with the replenishment cycle occur in countries where USAID requires quarterly liquidation of projects before replenishing the SPA budget. This causes a great deal of labor for Peace Corps staff and Volunteers, sometimes requiring extra trips to the capital for Volunteers with consequent delays in ongoing projects. In addition, due to the need for projects to fit into the agricultural and environmental cycles and school calendars, requirements for funds tend to cluster in particular quarters. These factors often result in quarterly accounts which are not liquidated sufficiently to satisfy USAID requirements, and may lead to disagreements. In Honduras and the Dominican Republic, USAID has even occasionally refused to replenish the fund.

In some countries, notably the Dominican Republic, overruns occur in projects because of inflation between the time the budget is first formulated, and the funds are received. The original budget should address this problem in high inflation countries.

In Mali serious problems occurred because of the vagueness of instructions for releasing funds. In Costa Rica no projects have been funded since the switch to Economic Stabilization Funds (ESF) because of the failure of the Government of Costa Rica to give approval.

Finally, people involved in the projects were asked about problems with funding. In 32 out of 84 projects (38 percent), timeliness of receipt of funds was perceived to be a problem. However, in half the projects in which "timeliness" was cited as a problem, funds had been disbursed (although not necessarily received at the project site) in three weeks or less.

CONCLUSIONS

- o The principal finding is that any of the arrangements in use can be made to work with good will from both sides, except perhaps a system requiring quarterly Peace Corps accounting to USAID. Not all country agreements fully detail the mechanisms for the disbursement to and replenishment of SPA funds, and for the disbursement to and accounting for individual projects. This lack of description does not facilitate the smooth operation of the program or a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in management between USAID and Peace Corps.
- o The difficulties with quarterly accounting to USAID sometimes slowdown or temporarily halt the replenishment of SPA program funds.
- o The smoothest method--annual transferral of SPA funds to the Peace Corps Post--occurs for the Health projects. Difficulties arise with the transfer of SPA money in individual countries when there is breakdown in cooperation between the USAID Comptroller and the Peace Corps, for whatever reason. Annual transmittal of ARDN funds from A.I.D. Washington to Peace Corps Washington for forwarding to the Peace Corps Posts might lessen the detailed involvement of USAID Comptrollers, and resolve the problems with the quarterly replenishment process.
- o In general, funding of individual projects works well, except where funds are disbursed for projects to vendors only after the receipt of documentation that purchases have been delivered. This method severely hampers and restricts the search for suppliers. Delays in disbursement of funds to individual projects described by staff were mostly ascribed to random glitches, and to interference from other duties, either at USAID or at the Peace Corps (Table I-7, Appendix I).
- o Funds for individual projects are usually disbursed in a timely manner, but untimely receipt of funds sometimes occurs because of delayed delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regardless of the arrangements for the disbursement to and replenishment of SPA funds, and for the disbursement to and accounting for individual projects, these processes and responsibilities should be detailed in the annual SPA agreements between USAID and Peace Corps in every country.
- A.I.D. Washington and Peace Corps Washington should produce a firm set of guidelines for movement of budget authority and accounting standards for both Peace Corps Posts and USAID Missions which satisfy both USAID accounting requirements and Peace Corps needs for flexibility. Included should be guidelines for dealing with project overruns due to inflation.
- Quarterly accounting and replenishment should be discontinued. This would obviate the necessity for end-of-quarter accounting for individual projects.
- Disbursements to projects for goods and services only after documentation of delivery should be minimized, both because of the added burden on USAID, and because of the lack of flexibility in using local and small suppliers.
- Project proposals should contain recommendations for disbursement schedules to PCVs and/or community groups and major suppliers.
- Project proposals in high inflation countries should contain an inflation factor in the budget tying the cost to the time of project start. Project disbursement rules that are developed should be flexible enough to accommodate these inflation schedules.
- For each country, the amount of time should be estimated between approval of individual projects and the actual receipt of funds by projects. This includes the time necessary to prepare the disbursement and the time necessary to get it to the project. This information should be made available and included in planning strategies for SPA projects developed by PCVs and Communities.

VI. PROCESSES FOR PROJECT APPROVAL, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

PROJECT GENERATION

Project ideas are usually generated by PCVs and community members or groups at the grassroots level. Peace Corps Senegal, for example, helps Volunteers and communities develop project agendas, which may result in proposals for funded projects. Peace Corps managers then direct these projects to funding sources, including SPA. Many millet machine projects (a popular local project) are directed to SPA. Some projects in Paraguay are first supported by Peace Corps and USAID, and later developed by Peace Corps Volunteers as SPA projects. In Jamaica and Paraguay, Volunteers commonly work with government and private non-profit agencies, which deliver services to the communities. SPA project funds are therefore commonly channeled through these agencies as an extension of their capabilities of delivering services to the community.

Once an idea has been generated, the Volunteer and the community, perhaps with help from Peace Corps staff and experienced Volunteers, develop the idea, identify community counterparts, and eventually write a proposal. As noted in Chapter VII, the length of time to prepare proposals varies widely among projects. Once a proposal is prepared, it enters a formal approval process, as described below.

PROJECT APPROVAL PROCEDURES

Formal project approval procedures are different in each of the eleven countries reviewed. Some common features appear: in five countries there is a SPA committee, and in three of these a USAID staff member serves on the committee. In six countries, USAID approval is required separately from Peace Corps approval. In most countries an early review is made by an APCD who may be the SPA Coordinator; in countries with a Peace Corps SPA Coordinator another APCD may also conduct an early review. In Kenya review by local government is also required. Appendix J lists the approval procedures by country.

PROJECT APPROVAL TIMES

Information on project approval times was obtained from project participants (PCVs), from Peace Corps staff involved in the approval of projects, and, as available, from project documents which included dates of key events such as proposal submissions and approval dates. According to the best estimates (based on available project documents), approval times ranged from less than one week for both ARDN and Health projects to maximums of 27 weeks for ARDN projects and 28 weeks for Health projects. Overall, the mean approval time for projects was between 6 and 7 weeks, and the median time was about 5 weeks.

The approval times required are sometimes overestimated by PCVs, and Peace Corps staff generally report shorter times than were actually required. For example, Peace Corps staff members reported that projects have a mean approval time of 4 weeks whereas the mean approval time reported by PCVs was 8 weeks. One Peace Corps staff member remarked that PCVs are sometimes impatient because they think of the period for approval as beginning when the project is conceived. Conversely, there appeared to be a tendency for managers to ignore instances of particularly long approval times which they viewed to be unrepresentative of their system. Neither source is completely reliable, although PCV estimates appear to be the more accurate.

Delays in approval were reported by Peace Corps staff to be attributable to various factors. Reasons for delays cited by at least two people were:

1. Non-availability of the APCD or SPA Coordinator who were gone from the office fulfilling other job responsibilities (5).
2. Time required for PCVs to get answers to questions raised in proposal reviews and/or to revise proposals, which often required travel back and forth from their posts (4).
3. Staff conflict with other management activities at the end of the fiscal year (2).
4. Difficulties and/or delays in getting signatures from local authorities (2).

Project proposals are often sent back to the originating PCVs for rework, depending on the quality of the original proposal and the requirements of the individual country. It is clear from the descriptions of project approval processes (see Appendix J) and discussions with individual PCVs and staff that proposals have been turned back for significant revisions more than once in many countries.

Information regarding length of time for project approval was obtained for 68 (72 percent) of the projects, including at least half of the sample projects in each country except Jamaica. As shown in Table 16, 30 of the 68 projects (44 percent) required 6 weeks or more for the approval to be granted. In three countries, approval required at least 6 weeks for 75 to 100 percent of the projects, while in two countries no project approvals consumed that much time.

Table 16 also indicates whether the SPA approval process in each country includes separate USAID review for approval or SPA Committee approval. It appears that inclusion of a separate USAID review in the process increases approval time (58 percent of the projects with separate USAID review had approval times of 6 weeks or more, compared with only 25 percent in its absence). The presence of a SPA Committee review was less often associated with lengthy approval times than was separate USAID review (27 percent of the projects with SPA Committee review had approval times of 6 weeks or more, compared with 58 percent in the absence of a SPA Committee).

It is reasonable to expect that an additional step in the approval process, such as a separate USAID review, would increase the length of the process. SPA Committee review rather than lengthening the process may sometimes shorten it, possibly because Committee review builds consensus regarding the merits of project proposals and eliminates sequential reviews by committee members (some of whom are USAID staff).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROJECTS

Sixty-nine interviews were conducted with APCDs and SPA Coordinators who had spent time in management activities for 60 projects visited during this evaluation. Forty-two of those respondents reported spending time on monitoring, averaging 5 hours per project (ranging from one-half hour to six working days). Only three respondents reported spending any time evaluating a project, averaging 4 hours per project (ranging from one hour to one working day).

Formal evaluation of projects has been rarely attempted by Peace Corps Posts. In Costa Rica and Mali, a PCV/SPA Coordinator and a SPA Committee of PCVs (respectively), designed and initiated reviews of selected projects. In Honduras, the SPA Coordinator designed an evaluation which tabulated information reported by PCVs on 83 projects.

TABLE 16

PERCENT OF PROJECTS
WITH AVERAGE OR LONGER THAN AVERAGE APPROVAL TIMES
AND USAID AND SPA COMMITTEE ROLES IN APPROVAL PROCESS

Country	Total No Projects Reviewed	No with Approval Data	No with 6 weeks+ Approval	Percent 6 weeks+ Approval	Separate USAID Approval	SPA Committee Approval
Jamaica	9	2	2	100%	yes	yes
Lesotho	8	8	8	100%	yes	no
Kenya	9	8	6	75%	yes*	no
Senegal	9	8	4	50%	yes	no
Costa Rica	8	4	2	50%	no	yes
The Philippines	8	7	3	43%	yes	no
Honduras	9	8	3	36%	no	yes
Mali	9	5	1	20%	no	yes
Thailand	8	6	1	17%	no	no
Paraguay	9	5	0	0%	no	yes
Dominican Republic	8	7	0	0%	yes	no
TOTALS	94	68	30			

* The system at the time these projects were approved included USAID in the approval loop. Through mutual agreement USAID no longer participates in this process.

Table 17 lists some of the impediments to project evaluation. Most Peace Corps staff and Volunteers involved in the daily management of the SPA program stated that they believed that evaluation is a necessary part of the program as did all USAID respondents commenting on this issue (Yes = 20 Peace Corps staff and 4 USAID staff, No = 1 Peace Corps staff). Lack of time, human resources, guidelines, and clearly defined responsibility impede regular evaluation according to these same respondents (Table 17).

TABLE 1.7

NUMBER OF PC AND USAID MANAGERS
CITING VARIOUS IMPEDIMENTS TO PROJECT EVALUATION*

Impediment	Peace Corps (n = 21)	USAID (n=4)
Lack of time, human resource, staff time	15	2
Lack of indicators and guidelines	5	1
Would require community involvement	1	0
Lack of funds	1	1
Who is responsible for it? Us? OTAPS?	2	0
Question of Cost Benefit	2	0
No sense of obligation after the project is completed. No follow-up after COS of PCV. Have to do it while the PCV is still here.	3	0
Lack of initiative, low priority.	1	1
Totals	30	5

* Multiple responses allowed.

CONCLUSIONS

Project Generation

- o By and large projects seem to be developed jointly between PCVs and their "community", based on perceived needs and community priorities.
- o In cases where the PCV works with local government agencies or nonprofit organizations which deliver services to the community, it is necessary to check that the benefits are realized at the community level in accordance with SPA intent.

Project Approval Procedures

- o It appears unlikely that delays due to absences of the APCD will be easily mitigated, especially where there is no paid SPA position and staff conducting the tasks relevant to SPA projects do so as an addition to an already full agenda. Other reasons for delays such as conflict with other duties and responsibilities of staff can be accounted for in the regular proposal/planning process.
- o Frequent rework of proposals by a PCV before formal approval was mentioned as one source of delay in proposal approval.
- o Formal approval processes differ from country to country, though common features such as first screening by an APCD or equivalent, the use of SPA committees for review, and a separate USAID approval appear in several countries.
- o The use of SPA committees is correlated with relatively short approval times, while a separate USAID review appears to lengthen the process.
- o Perceived approval times tend to differ from actual ones; PCVs overestimated while Peace Corps staff underestimated approval times, with the latter appearing to disregard "atypical" cases with long delays.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- o Monitoring of on-going projects by Peace Corps staff is fairly common, but generally little time has been devoted to the evaluation of projects. In those cases where some evaluative work has been conducted, the materials collected were not comparable across programs. There is common agreement among most Peace Corps and all USAID staff that evaluation is necessary to the program. However, neither organization has the resources to do evaluations.
- o The absence of follow-up to SPA projects raises serious policy issues. Many of the best SPA projects involve capacity development, the ability of local groups to continue activities and perhaps develop new ones; the transfer of skills; or the maintenance of structures or equipment. The success of all of these may often hinge on continuing some support to the community, not continuous support, but revisits on a semi-annual or annual basis. These could be made both by PCVs and Peace Corps staff. However, instituting such a follow-up schedule for selected projects would require a change of Peace Corps policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Generation

- o Guidelines should be adjusted to ensure that if funding of projects occurs through Government agencies or PVOs, the benefits are realized at the grassroots level. The guidelines should be sufficiently precise to enable determination of whether the project complies with SPA intent.

Project Approval Procedures

- o In-country procedures should include provisions for minimizing the number of times a proposal is returned to a PCV for rework during proposal development.
- o OTAPS should continue to develop guidelines and training materials for the preparation of SPA proposals, so as to minimize the rework necessary to produce acceptable proposals.
- o SPA guidelines should be revised to recommend strongly the use of SPA committees for the principal proposal review, and to minimize the number of sign-offs preceding committee review. These new guidelines also should encourage USAID personnel to serve on the SPA committee and to exercise their review duties in that capacity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- o Country SPA management of ongoing projects by Peace Corps staff should continue on an as-needed basis.
- o SPA/OTAPS should consider the development of simple checklists for various project types in order that the PCVs may obtain some substantive and quantitative information on project progress and at project completion. The checklists would first be used as a tool in developing projects. After the project was completed, the checklist would be used as a review tool. The information collected during the review phase would be used to demonstrate immediate results of a project and would serve as background for later evaluations of project impact.
- o A.I.D. and the Peace Corps Washington should institute regular evaluation procedures. One possibility is to institute a periodic (perhaps semi-annual) revisit to selected SPA project sites by in-country staff or PCVs. The resources required for this activity would have to be directed from SPA/OTAPS. Such revisits would furnish a modest evaluation capability and provide ongoing information on the

long-term effect of SPA grassroots development projects for impact analysis and planning purposes. The information would also provide ongoing reference for periodic (3-4 years) worldwide evaluations.

VII. SPA PROJECT DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: to evaluate the quality and adequacy of project design and proposals, and to identify any modifications that could be made to SPA program documentation which would lead to better proposals, and thus to more effective and better run projects.

The evaluation is based on a review of the 94 sample projects. For these, proposals were compared in detail against program guidelines and documentation. In addition, Peace Corps and USAID staff involved in program review were interviewed to elicit their opinion on what it takes for a PCV to produce a good proposal. Evaluators also identified items of information they judged would have been helpful in the approval and conduct of a project. These items are either in addition to or in more specific detail than that which is currently required by SPA program documentation.

PROJECT DESIGN

Proposal Development

A number of factors affect the length of time that is devoted to proposal preparation, including the complexity of the project, difficulties in obtaining support from local authorities (as needed), the number of steps and nature of the proposal review process (as described in Chapter VI and Appendix J), conflicting duties of the PCV, help provided to the PCV by Peace Corps staff, etc. Forty-three PCVs provided information regarding the length of time that they devoted to proposal development. Approximately one-half of the PCVs reported that they devoted less than one month to proposal preparation, and nearly one-third (13) spent no more than 2 weeks. At the other end of the spectrum, about one-quarter of the PCVs (11) were involved with proposal preparation for more than 3 months, and 3 PCVs spent a year or more.

Proposal Quality

TvT evaluators reviewed the proposals for all of the sample projects, as well as the documentation used for approving or

rejecting those proposals. All proposals for SPA funding must, of course, meet certain minimum quality standards to satisfy funding requirements. Suggested documentation includes at a minimum a simple "SPA Program Proposal" form. Beyond the minimum standard, however, the quality of proposals varied widely. For example, in 7 of the 11 countries visited, SPA project funding decisions were made regularly on the basis of brief project descriptions included on the "SPA Program Proposal" form. For cases in which this method was used, proposals had many more shortcomings than when longer, detailed proposals were used as the basis for funding or to supplement the "SPA Program Proposal" form.

General observations regarding proposal quality are that:

- o Goals of projects (desired impacts of project activities) often were not well-defined in proposals;
- o Objectives (planned outcomes of the project activities) often were not well-defined, but planned production outputs of a physical nature (such as establishing a nursery or constructing a building) were usually defined more clearly than objectives and planned outputs concerning group or individual capacity-building; and
- o Tasks to be conducted to achieve project objectives were rarely presented in detail.

Table 18 summarizes the percent of projects in which basic elements of proposals were judged to be adequate by the evaluators. As that table shows, the proposals for recent projects* are more often explicit and detailed in every category than those for completed projects, indicating that recent training and technical assistance for project initiation and management provided by SPA/OTAPS appears to have been successful.

Table 18 shows that nearly all project proposals defined opportunities for action (conditions to be addressed by the project) and the actions to be undertaken. However, the opportunities for action were not always assessed adequately, resulting in incomplete justification of the suitability of the proposed action and definition of its potential impact.

* As discussed in Appendix B, "recent" projects include those that were in progress during Spring-Summer 1988, and those completed after October, 1987.

TABLE 18

PERCENT OF PROJECTS WITH ADEQUATE DEFINITIONS OF SELECTED ITEMS IN PROPOSALS

ITEM	Completed Projects (n=55)	Recent Projects (n=39)	All Projects Combined (n=94)
Opportunity for Action Defined	93%	97%	95%
Opportunity for Action Assessed	55%	77%	64%
Action Defined	89%	97%	93%
Suitability of Action to Opportunity	67%	77%	71%
Impact Defined	76%	87%	81%
Production Outputs Defined	82%	95%	87%
Capacity Outputs Defined	58%	77%	66%

In addition to the overall review and analysis of project proposals, the evaluators also compared proposals for all sample projects against the Individual Activity Agreement (IAA) Checklist. (The IAA checklist is reproduced in Appendix K.)

Table 19 lists the percentages of project proposals for each item on the IAA checklist that the evaluator rated as (1) clearly detailed, (2) raised questions, (3) omitted but needed in the proposal, and (4) not applicable to the proposal. As before, proposals for recent projects were generally rated higher in quality and clarity than proposals for completed projects.

TABLE 19

CHECKLIST REVIEW OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

Checklist items	Completed Projects (n = 55)				Recent Projects (n = 39)				All Projects (n = 94)			
	C	Q	O	N/A	C	Q	O	N/A	C	Q	O	N/A
Community initiated and directed	46%	42%	13%		64%	33%	3%		53%	38%	9%	
Self Help effort/addresses community need	75%	15%	11%		82%	15%	3%		77%	15%	7%	
Clearly defined objectives	85%	15%			95%	3%	3%		89%	10%	1%	
Capacity building component	62%	29%	7%	2%	80%	13%	8%		70%	22%	7%	1%
Significant community contribution	72%	24%	4%		72%	23%	5%		72%	23%	4%	
Completion scheduled within 1 year	93%	2%	5%		82%	15%	3%		88%	7%	4%	
Community aware they must not rely on continued U.S. assistance	27%	26%	46%	2%	40%	28%	31%	5%	31%	27%	39%	3%
Community's commitment and ability to cover recurring costs	33%	36%	29%	2%	49%	31%	18%	3%	40%	34%	25%	2%
Complete and realistic budget	78%	20%	2%		80%	18%	3%		79%	19%	2%	
Suitable land for activities	55%	24%	13%	9%	74%	5%	10%	10%	63%	16%	12%	10%
Sufficient manual labor	73%	26%	2%		77%	8%	8%	8%	75%	18%	4%	18%
Uses locally available materials	78%	15%	6%	2%	74%	18%	5%	3%	77%	16%	5%	2%
Indicators/process for monitoring the project's progress	49%	29%	22%		69%	15%	13%	3%	57%	23%	18%	1%
Evaluation method and plan	36%	31%	29%	4%	51%	23%	26%		43%	28%	28%	2%

Note: C - Clear; Q - Queries; O - Omitted; N/A - Item not applicable to proposal).

Peace Corps and USAID officials who were involved in project design and/or proposal review (44 respondents) were asked what it takes for a PCV to produce a good SPA proposal. The items most frequently mentioned by these managers were:

- o Community involvement; community-initiated idea; viewed as a community project (22)
- o PCV discusses and plans proposal with the APCD (18)
- o Characteristics of the PCV, such as on-site supervision capability, good relations with community, understanding of SPA, common sense (11)
- o Clear need for project established, represents a community priority (9)
- o Clear and up-to-date budget (8)
- o Community commitment of resources (7)
- o Project feasibility established (7)
- o Background research demonstrated (5)
- o Clear definition of project objectives and components; planning and organization (5)
- o Technical plan (3)
- o Clear time line; specified beginning and end of project (3).

Based on the frequency of these responses, it may be inferred that the main concerns of PC and A.I.D. managers regarding proposals are related primarily to community and agency involvement in the process as opposed to the technical aspects of proposal preparation. This emphasis is reflected in the evaluators' ratings of proposal documents presented above.

The evaluators identified even more detailed questions about the proposals than were prompted by the checklist reviews. Some of these questions might be subsumed under a more general category in the checklist, but they are not addressed explicitly in the checklist. Table 20 lists the various information gaps identified by the evaluators and the number of projects to which they apply.

TABLE 20

INFORMATION GAPS IN PROJECT PROPOSALS
(Identified by the Evaluators)

Information Needs	Number of Projects in which Gaps Were Observed (N=94)*
Technical plans	12 (13%)
Better organized proposal addresses checklist items	11 (12%)
Justification needed for appropriate technology	11 (12%)
Who is the "community"	11 (12%)
Work plans	10 (11%)
Roles and responsibilities described	10 (11%)
Market plan	9 (10%)
Community claims operating costs as contribution	8 (8%)
Income generation plan	7 (7%)
Income management plan	7 (7%)
Expenditure management plan	5 (5%)
Evaluation of earlier similar work	4 (4%)
Project maintenance plans after the PCV leaves	4 (4%)
Capacity element of training	4 (4%)
Training plan	3 (3%)
A Description of the HC Government's involvement	3 (3%)
How recurrent costs are to be covered	3 (3%)
Baseline health study	3 (3%)
Description of feasibility of activities, objectives	2 (2%)
Transportation plans	1 (1%)

* Multiple gaps occurred in some proposals. Percentages are based of total numbers of projects (94).

CONCLUSIONS

- o In 7 out of 11 countries, SPA funding decisions were regularly made on the basis of the brief project description on the "SPA Program Proposal" form.
- o The overall level of adequacy of the proposals reviewed varies by proposal element examined, from 95 percent for definition of "Opportunity for Action", to 66 percent for definition of the Capacity Output.
- o In all categories, recent proposals are often more adequate than older ones.
- o Peace Corps and USAID staff judged that the factors that could most help PCVs produce better proposals were:
 - o A firm community base in initiation of the project.
 - o Support from experienced personnel.
 - o Good relationships between the PCV and the community.
- o Evaluators judged that modifications of the checklist to include both additional items, and more specificity in listed items would help PCVs to produce better proposals, and ease the approval process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- o SPA/OTAPS should revise the "SPA Program Proposal" form and the IAA checklist. The revised checklist should incorporate relevant suggestions made by Peace Corps staff, and should reflect the greater specificity suggested by the evaluators. SPA/OTAPS should prepare documentation on the use of these forms.
- o SPA/OTAPS should encourage local use of the checklist both by PCVs preparing proposals and by Peace Corps and USAID staff in the review and approval process.

VIII. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

SPA Technical Assistance (SPA/TA) is provided by Peace Corps from the Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS). SPA/TA covers two areas of assistance: support of the SPA program in general, and support for specific technical assistance events such as workshops and conferences.

This chapter on technical assistance is divided into five sections:

1. Technical Assistance Events Supported by SPA/TA Funds
2. Sources and Needs for Technical Assistance
3. Communications with SPA/OTAPS
4. Training Activities and Needs
5. Conclusions and Recommendations

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EVENTS SUPPORTED BY SPA/TA FUNDS

Thirty-two of the 154 SPA-supported technical assistance events conducted in FY 1986 and 1987 were reviewed during the country visits. This was done through interviews with the Peace Corps staff and Volunteers who designed and managed the events and/or participated in them. Those events included activities conducted for individual Peace Corps programs and attendance at sponsored multiple-country activities and outside events such as international conferences. A list of the activities reviewed is given in Appendix L.

Technical assistance supported with SPA funding (SPA/TA) was considered successful in general by Peace Corps staff. The in-country use of SPA/TA was judged to have broadened the scope of grassroots, community self-help efforts by 86 percent of the Peace Corps managers familiar with the resource. Participants in specific SPA/TA activities (which included out-of-country activities such as programming conferences) rated 95 percent of them successful. Specific events were also reported to have had particular community or job related applications by 49 percent of the participants interviewed.

The analysis of the content and impact of these activities is based on information collected during the interviews. Some documentation was available on each activity in the SPA Washington files but few files contained complete and comparable documentation including all cable traffic and final reports.

Little or none of this type of information was available at the individual Posts. In addition, at least part of the communication for many individual events is conducted by phone for which there are no records. Some final reports may be available from OTAPS/Sector Specialists but the time constraints of the evaluation did not permit a search for these documents.

Information was also sought on accounting for each event. However, most Peace Corps Posts were not able to provide any information on past SPA/TA events since these costs are not tracked by individual event.

The thirty-two SPA/TA funded events reviewed fell into five kinds of events (Table 21), conducted in five forms (Table 22) and covering 13 different technical areas (Table 23). Participants reported on the usefulness of the TA in their subsequent work (see Degree of Usefulness in each Table) as "none" or not useful, useful "in general", and useful "in particular".

TABLE 21
NUMBER AND KIND OF SPA/TA EVENTS
AND PARTICIPANTS' ASSESSMENTS OF USEFULNESS

Kind:	No. of Events	---- Degree of Usefulness ----			Total Number of Participants Interviewed
		None	In General	In Particular	
Transfer of skills	16	0	11	10	16
Program Assistance for individual programs	5	0	1	0	1
Programming	3	2	10	5	12
Dissemination of information	6	0	5	3	7
Resource development	2	1	2	1	3

TABLE 22
NUMBER AND FORM OF SPA/TA EVENTS
AND PARTICIPANTS' ASSESSMENTS OF USEFULNESS

Form:	No. of Events	---- Degree of Usefulness ----			Total Number of Participants Interviewed
		None	In General	In Particular	
Workshops	18	1	13	11	19
Consultations	2	0	2	0	2
Conferences or seminars	8	2	13	8	17
Evaluations	3	0	1	0	1
Site Visits	1	0	0	0	0

TABLE 23

NUMBER AND SUBJECTS OF SPA/TA EVENTS
AND PARTICIPANTS' ASSESSMENT OF USEFULNESS

	No. of Events	----- Degree of Usefulness -----			Total Number of Participants Interviewed
		None	In General	In Particular	
Technical Subjects:					
Programming	2	2	8	4	10
Health	5	0	4	3	6
Water	5	0	4	4	5
Resource Libraries	2	1	2	1	3
Small Enterprise Development	1	0	0	1	1
Women in Development	1	0	1	0	1
Fish Culture	4	0	2	0	2
Beekeeping	1	0	2	0	2
Agroforestry	3	0	2	1	2
Project Design and Management (often with SPA focus)	3	0	3	5	6
Appropriate Technology	1	0	0	0	0
Evaluation	3	0	1	0	1
Agriculture	1	0	0	0	0

Multiple responses "In General" and "In Particular" allowed.

Many one- or two-time events were successful "in general" in terms of Kinds, Form, and Technical Subject. Where events were repeated more than 2 times, Transfer of Skills Kind of Event was the most successful "in general" while Programming events were the most successful "in particular". In terms of Form, workshops were the most successful "in particular" while conferences and seminars were most successful "in general". Technical subjects which were the most successful "in particular" were the Project Design and Management workshop and events concerning water technologies. Water subjects were also very successful "in general" as was programming as a technical subject.

Specific comments on the relevance to small project work and management of the SPA program made by participants (and the numbers commenting) were:

COMMENTS

- o The activity brought a variety of people together. Appreciated the opportunity to exchange information and network with others (8).
- o Improved ability to apply management in the technology (7).
- o Resulted in application of programming activities and or knowledge (6).
- o Achieved a better understanding of a technique and its local applications (5).
- o Applied the skill learned directly to a project (5).
- o Increased motivation achieved (5).
- o Overview of technology achieved (5).
- o FSN work with Washington Staff was good (2).
- o Transfer of skills to local HCNs achieved (2).
- o Defined and understood roles and responsibilities (1).
- o Shared information (1).
- o An opportunity to see other programs (1).
- o Better understanding of Peace Corps resulted (1).
- o Recognized need for addressing problem (resource center) (1).
- o Opportunity to work with HCNs a great advantage (1).
- o Resulted in better proposals (1).
- o Assistance obtained with trouble shooting (1).

Peace Corps Managers made the following observations regarding the subsequent impact or consequences of TA activities.

- o Consequences to Peace Corps programs reported by managers were as follows:

- High impact on sector programming (2).
- High impact on sector planning (2).
- Institutionalized training for technology (2).
- Developed project guidelines and tools for effective project management (2).

Designed tracking document for negotiating agreements (1).
Ministry asked A.I.D. for future support for PCVs (1).
Oriented new PCVs (1).
Laid foundation of current program (1).
Better communication among PCVs (1).
Decisions based on recommendations made (1).
Placed PCVs with institution associated with the event (1).

- o Consequences to participants reported by managers were as follows:

Good impact on HCNs, they understand PC better (5).
PCVs now talking more with HCNs, opened channels to
PCV/HCN interaction (3).
HCNs have implemented some technical skills in their
regular work places (2).
Increased technical awareness (2).
Evaluation gave continuity to the WID committee PCVs (1).
Collaboration with HC Government good (1).

- o Consequences to Projects reported by managers were as follows:

Better project implementation and management by PCVs (7).
Generated ideas for projects (6).
PCVs better prepared to implement projects (2).
Revised manual and training (1).
Incorporated new technical standards to project work (1).

- o Consequences to reporting reported by managers were as follows:

Better administrative reporting of PCVs (3).
Better reporting to OTAPS (1).
Better reporting by PCVs (1).

- o Consequences to technical applications reported by managers were as follows:

Better application of technical skills (1).
New innovation technique developed (1).

- o The most common requests and negative comments about the events by participants and managers which reflect program issues were:

- there was no follow-up and feedback (10)
- staff requested more periodic and regional programming conferences (3)
- more project design and management training (3)
- needed more time (3)

It should be noted that SPA/TA was observed to have little impact on individual SPA-supported projects conducted by PCVs and community groups. It was not indicated as a direct resource on any project visited during the evaluation and was never mentioned by a respondent. However, SPA/TA has supported technical training where some PCVs involved in water projects as in Mali have learned the skills they were applying in their SPA projects. Additionally, participants and managers familiar with SPA/TA funded activities reported that new projects and improved small project work had been stimulated by the events.

SOURCES AND NEEDS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Sources

Peace Corps Posts use a variety of funding sources for individual technical assistance events, of which SPA/TA funding was reported by Peace Corps staff as the most common. Table 24 below shows the number of respondents who reported using various TA funding sources in the six months previous to the country visits.

TABLE 24
SOURCES OF FUNDING
FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

SOURCE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS USING SOURCE
1. SPA/TA	17
2. Post Funds	4
3. OTAPS, Unspecified	3
4. A.I.D.	3
5. OTAPS/Sector(s)	2
6. Host Government	2
7. PVO multilateral organizations	2
8. Peace Corps, Region	1
9. Unknown TA PASA funds	1
10. PC Washington	1
11. German Govt. support	1
12. Canadian Govt. support	1
13. Dutch Corporation support	1
Total	39

Respondents were often unsure of the actual source of the funds acquired through Peace Corps. Other categories are also likely to represent SPA funding at least part of the time (numbers 3, 5, 9 and 10 above). Peace Corps staff who were familiar with or who had used funding for technical assistance (21 respondents) listed between one and four different sources. Peace Corps staff were most able to answer this question where they had used the funds themselves.

Support Needs for Individual Events & the SPA Program as a Whole

Sixty-two percent of the Peace Corps staff interviewed reported that they received all the technical assistance they needed (Table 25 below).

TABLE 25

NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS STAFF WHO RECEIVED NEEDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

	Staff Person Responding				
	ADMIN.	PCD	APCD	PTO	SPA/CO*
No	0	0	10	2	1
Yes	1	4	7	4	2

* Two country SPA Coordinators responding "Yes" are double counts from other columns.

Of the respondents, APCDs received relatively less of the technical assistance they needed than any other class of staff. The types of technical assistance which they reported needing included:

1. Project design and management and SPA training (3)
2. Background documentation on different technical subjects (2)
3. Staff development (2)
4. Evaluation of the Community Development program (1)
5. An activity offered by OTAPS but never delivered (1)

6. A consultant for document analysis and case studies (1)
7. Sector workshops (1)
8. Technical assistance (funding) for longer training periods of 2 months (1)

Peace Corps respondents also indicated the need for management and administrative assistance in the SPA Program (Tables 26 and 27 below). Management assistance was identified as a need by 31 percent of the respondents, and administrative assistance by 32 percent.

TABLE 26

NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS STAFF WHO IDENTIFIED MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE AS NEEDED

	Staff Person Responding					
	ADMIN.	PCD	APCD	PTO	SPA/CO*	PCV
No	1	4	9	4	2	1
Needed	0	1	6	2	2	0

* Three country SPA Coordinators (1 "No" and 2 "Needed" responses) are double counts from other columns.

TABLE 27

NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS STAFF WHO IDENTIFIED ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE AS A NEED

	Staff -Person Responding					
	ADMIN.	PCD	APCD	PTO	SPA/CO*	PCV
No	1	2	10	4	4	1
Needed	0	3	5	2	2	0

* Three country SPA Coordinators (1 "No" and 2 "Needed" responses) are double counts from other columns.

Needs for personnel to conduct the administrative and management duties of the SPA program as a whole were mentioned throughout the management interviews. Human resource needs were highlighted by twenty-five percent of the respondents, who made the following comments during management interviews:

- o Recommended: a SPA coordinator full time, a full-time funding position (4).
- o Recommended: some assistance. (For example, one Peace Corps Cashier estimated that SPA took 20 percent of his time.) (3)
- o Need secretarial assistance or more manpower to improve communications with SPA/OTAPS (2).
- o With respect to management and administrative needs, a full-time SPA position, another person to handle the paperwork or no Individual Activity Agreements and Activity Completion Notifications (2).
- o With respect to concerns about the program, would the program be better managed if there were a staff person to manage it? (2)
- o Want someone else (administration in-country) to do the administrative headache of SPA/TA (1).
- o To improve communications with SPA/OTAPS, make one person responsible for SPA communications at the Post (1).
- o With respect to country funding levels, we cannot provide support at the current level (1).
- o With respect to concerns about the program, funding for administration if there were no SPA Coordinator (1).
- o Recommended: need a SPA officer to visit all SPA projects (1).
- o Recommended: a full-time assistant to the SPA Coordinator (1).

COMMUNICATIONS WITH SPA/OTAPS

This section deals with communications on the whole range of SPA/OTAPS activity, including the SPA program, projects and technical assistance activities. There is considerable confusion among field personnel concerning the nature of services, management structure, and availability of resources offered by OTAPS. This is especially true of technical assistance and SPA

as a source of technical assistance. Therefore, the comments in this section should be seen as representative of Peace Corps field staff perspectives of both SPA/OTAPS and OTAPS as a whole.

Some of the communications described here flow from the country program to SPA/OTAPS such as those concerning project proposals (IAA proposals) and their associated Activity Completion Notifications and Quarterly Reports and Final Technical Assistance Statements. Some of these communications flow from SPA/OTAPS to the field such as SPA Program Guidance. Two-way communication is characterized by requests for guidance of specific issues and technical assistance requests.

Peace Corps managers (including two SPA Coordinators paid by USAID) charged with communication with SPA/OTAPS, or who otherwise communicate with SPA/OTAPS, were asked a series of questions concerning the content, quality, timeliness and burden of the communication detailed above. Of the 49 Peace Corps managers interviewed no more than 19 had any experience communicating with SPA/OTAPS concerning any individual subject (Table 28).

TABLE 28

SUBJECTS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEACE COPRS STAFF AND SPA/OTAPS
(As Reported by Peace Corps Staff)

	<u>Total No. Respondents</u>
<u>Subject:</u>	
Individual Requests for Guidance	14
SPA Program Guidance	9
IAA Proposals	13
Activity Completion Notifications	13
Quarterly Reports	14
Technical Assistance Requests	19
Final Technical Assistance Statements	16

Peace Corps Staff were most satisfied with communications concerning individual requests for guidance in terms of quality, timeliness, and degree of burden in communication. However, half the respondents providing information on the SPA Program Guidance reported that it is inadequate to their needs. As one PTO interviewed pointedly asked "What Guidance?" Suggestions for improving communications with SPA/OTAPS highlighted this problem with requests for an update on the Program documentation by 42 percent (8 of the 19) respondents. A detailed list of suggestions is given in Appendix M.

Approximately one-third of the Peace Corps managers indicated that communications concerning individual project documentation (IAA Proposals, Activity Completion Notification, and Quarterly Reports) were inadequate to their needs. While these subjects on communication have previously been treated as one-way communications (from the field to the Washington office), it is now clear that Peace Corps staff want feedback on the content and receipt of those materials.

Communications concerning technical assistance requests were rated inadequate by 21 percent of the respondents, and increased clarity in SPA/TA criteria was the most commonly requested improvement to communications with SPA/OTAPS (47 percent of the respondents). Communications concerning technical assistance requests were the most heated issue in this segment of the inquiry. One person characterized the SPA/TA approval system as accepting requests in principle and denying the particulars. For some respondents it was unclear exactly what activities SPA/TA would fund, and inconsistencies had been observed over time. Timeliness in funding was also an issue: "Washington juggles our money needs between the pockets and it takes a long time and is unclear to us."

Accessing technical assistance appeared to be a problem in general. All but three of the needs for assistance outlined in "Needs" above, had been identified through the Country Management Plan and Budget, to the Peace Corps Director, to SPA/OTAPS, and/or to OTAPS. However, staff had not been able to access sources for these assistance needs. Two Program and Training Officers noted that staff are not trained well in how to access technical assistance, and they had requested but not received staff development assistance through the same avenues listed above.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND NEEDS

This section focuses on the groups who have need of training and information: Peace Corps Volunteers and Peace Corps and USAID Staff. Indications of training, skills and information needs were collected from Peace Corps staff with direct experience with the SPA program, Peace Corps post training specialists, and Peace Corps Volunteers. Assessments of training needs are also drawn from the evaluators' observations of SPA projects, requests for program guidance and other program communications.

Peace Corps Volunteers

In the countries visited, Peace Corps Volunteers received some training in the SPA program in nine countries (Table 29).

Of the Volunteers surveyed, 71 percent reported that they had received some training on the SPA program, either pre-service, in-service, or a combination of the two. Training in project planning is conducted in nine countries, and in project management in nine countries. Other subjects covered, as mentioned by Peace Corps staff, include using resources, funding sources, proposal preparation, and accounting and bookkeeping. Most PCVs surveyed (72 percent) also reported receiving some training in the risks of using funds as a resource.

Most materials for these types of training are locally developed. Three countries have adapted portions of the Project Design and Management workshop (developed and supported through SPA/TA), and some countries use the SPA brochure and forms in discussions about the SPA program.

Seven of the 11 countries visited reported having had a Project Design and Management (PD&M) workshop recently (Table 30). The numbers of PCVs trained in this workshop have been small to date, and it is unlikely that they are represented in the sample of projects reviewed in this evaluation to any great extent. However, as discussed in the description of proposals, the proposals for recent projects have shown a marked improvement over earlier proposals in meeting the review criteria. This may be due in part to the spread effect of the PD&M workshops, and the Peace Corps staff in place who request and support this type of training. Peace Corps staff report observed improvements in project design, implementation and follow-up, as well as an increased use of the SPA program by participants who have attended the PD&M workshop.

Peace Corps staff also reported PCV and staff training needs. Many of these are requests for further PD&M workshops or are needs that could be addressed with materials from that workshop (Appendix N).

PCVs surveyed (113) reported on a wide variety of skills involved in small project design and management (Tables 31). Many PCVs reported that their skills were most often developed before Peace Corps. It is not clear, however, to what extent previously acquired skills can be relied upon to the exclusion of additional training. Previous experience in these skill areas may differ greatly from the applications appropriate to the grassroots development activities of Peace Corps Volunteers. Observations made during the evaluation suggest that many of these skills are in fact relevant to the development and conduct of small project work; however, PCVs reported Peace Corps training in these skills at rates of only 13 percent to 52 percent. Based on observations made during the evaluation, additional training needs are outlined in the recommendations at the end of this section.

TABLE 29
SUBJECT TRAINING IN SMALL PROJECT WORK, BY COUNTRY
(As Reported by Peace Corps Staff)

Country	SPA Program	Subject and Recipient		
		Project Planning	Project Management	Other
Philippines	PCV,HCN *	PCV,HCN	PCV,HCN	
Thailand		PCV	PCV	
Costa Rica	PCV,HCN	PCV	PCV	
Dominican Republic	PCV,STAFF	PCV,STAFF	PCV,STAFF,HCN	
Honduras	PCV	PCV,STAFF,HCN	PCV,STAFF,HCN	Using Resources PCV
Paraguay	PCV	PCV	PCV	Funding Sources PCV
Jamaica	PCV,HCN		PCV,HCN	Funding Sources PCV,HCN Proposal Preparation
Kenya**		PCV	PCV	Funding Sources PCV Accounting and Bookkeeping
Lesotho	PCV			
Senegal	PCV	PCV	PCV	
Mali	PCV	PCV		

* People included in these trainings were Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV), Host Country Nationals (HCN), and Peace Corps Staff (STAFF).

** Kenya offers training on the SPA program on an individual basis as needed.

TABLE 30
EFFECTS OF PROJECT DESIGN & MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP BY COUNTRY
(As reported by Peace Corps Staff)

	Improved Project Design	Improved Project Implementation	Improved Follow-up	Increased Use of SPA*
Philippines**	yes	yes	yes	
Thailand				
Costa Rica	yes	yes	yes	
Dominican Republic	yes	yes	A Little	yes
Honduras	yes	Too Early	Too Early	Too Early
Jamaica	yes	yes	yes	yes
Senegal	yes	yes	yes	yes

* compared to those who did not receive the training.

** Peace Corps staff only

TABLE 31

NUMBER OF PCVS WHO ACQUIRED THE INDICATED PROJECT DESIGN AND
MANAGEMENT SKILLS*
(n = 113)

Skills	Before PC	During PC Training	Developed as a PCV	Total
assessing problems	89	34	35	112
supervising	74	13	41	103
delegating	74	13	37	103
management	71	11	41	99
project design	37	35	47	96
trouble shooting	67	23	36	94
monitoring	45	19	42	91
community development	23	46	56	89
budgeting	47	12	28	79
accounting	46	11	22	70

* Multiple responses were allowed.

Peace Corps and A.I.D. Staff

Of the 50 Peace Corps Staff who responded to a question about training and experience, 19 had had some training regarding the SPA program, most commonly an orientation session held in stateside staff training. Eight USAID staff responded to the question, none of whom had received any training about the intent or conduct of the SPA program (Table 32).

Those people charged with daily hands-on management of SPA projects, including project approval, are most commonly APCDs and country SPA Coordinators. An analysis of training for these groups showed that they were, at best only briefly trained in the guidance of the SPA Program.

Some Peace Corps staff noted their lack of skills in proposal review and others cited improved proposal review skills learned in PD&M workshops. Others mentioned the subjective use of or ill-defined criteria in approval processes.

TABLE 32

NUMBER OF PC AND USAID STAFF WHO RECEIVED SPA-RELATED TRAINING,
BY SPA EXPERIENCE LEVEL

SPA Experience and Training	Peace Corps	USAID
More than 6 months experience, no training	24	8
Less than 6 months experience, no training	5	0
No direct project management experience, no training	2	0
More than 6 months experience, with training	15	0
Less than 6 months experience, with training	2	0
No direct project management experience, with training	2	0
Totals	50	8

CONCLUSIONS

Technical Assistance Events Supported by SPA/TA

- o SPA-supported technical assistance has had a wide diversity of impact on Peace Corps work and the SPA program, from the programming level to individual activities. Participants in specific activities rated those activities successful 95 percent of the time, and 49 percent of the participants interviewed found that there had been particular community- or job-related applications of the skills or information learned.
- o Technical assistance activities which were rated most successful "in general" were transfer of skills (kind), conferences and seminars (form) on water and programming (technologies). Most successful "in particular" were programming events (kind), workshops (form) on project design and management and water (technologies).
- o The most common complaint about these activities reflected a desire for follow-up and feedback on these activities on the part of the participants.
- o SPA/TA was not mentioned as a resource for projects visited during the evaluation. However, SPA/TA supported technical

training events were observed to be an important component for PCV preparation in some water projects in one country.

Sources and Needs for Technical Assistance

- o Although Peace Corps Staff were not always able to identify the source of their technical assistance, SPA/TA was the most commonly-reported source of technical assistance used.
- o APCDs received relatively less of the technical assistance they needed than any other group of Peace Corps staff.
- o Management and administrative assistance in support of the SPA program was reported as needed by Peace Corps staff at rates of 31 percent and 32 percent respectively. Need for personnel to conduct these duties was an issue.

Communications with SPA/OTAPS

- o Issues concerning communications on technical assistance cannot be clearly separated for SPA/OTAPS and OTAPS in general.
- o Clarification of the SPA Program guidance and feedback on the content and receipt of submissions from country programs by SPA/OTAPS were needed and valued by Peace Corps staff.
- o Accessing technical assistance has been a problem for some Peace Corps staff and the guidelines governing the qualification for this resource are unclear. In addition, it is unclear how SPA/TA fits into the range of technical assistance offered through Peace Corps Washington.

Training Activities and Needs

- o Individual countries provided some training on the SPA Program, project planning, and project management in some combination in nine of the eleven countries visited. Training in these subjects is done with a variety of materials developed in-country, and with adaptations of materials from the Project Design and Management Workshop.
- o Seven countries have conducted the Project Design and Management workshop and results reported to date have been positive.
- o Although Peace Corps Volunteers appear to bring many skills appropriate to the conduct of small projects with them to the Peace Corps, it is unclear how relevant their experience in these skills is to the Peace Corps. In addition, the same people received low rates of Peace-Corps-related training in these skill areas.

- o Peace Corps and USAID staff active in the management of the SPA country programs had little or no training in the background or conduct of the SPA program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Needs for assistance or improvement concerning the conduct of the SPA program include:

- o The SPA Program Guidance should be updated and clarified for programmatic use, projects & technical assistance.
- o The communication and feedback between SPA/OTAPS and Peace Corps posts should be updated to include information now identified as needed by the field.
- o Staff should be provided additional training and development in the potential applications, access, and management of the SPA Program.
- o Peace Corps Washington should evaluate individual country staffing needs for improved communications and the management and administration of projects and technical assistance aspects of the SPA Program, and provide the required staff positions and funding to conduct those activities.
- o A closer link should be developed between SPA/TA and the support of individual projects through the dissemination of information on the ways that the two components can be linked, and successful examples of that support relationship.

Additional training needs for Peace Corps Volunteers and Peace Corps and USAID staff are listed below.

Training Needs for Peace Corps Volunteers:

- o **Skills in assessing problems in the project design.** About one-third of the PCVs received Peace Corps training in this skill area. These skills are critical to the design of all project work. Need for additional attention is indicated because projects have higher rates of sustainability (84 percent) than in meeting their goals or objectives. That is, some projects which last do not have the intended results. Better skills in project design and problem assessment will bring more sustained projects into the realm of desired and intended impact.

- o Skills in accounting and budgeting. Only about one-eighth of the PCVs received Peace Corps training in either of these areas. However, Volunteers are conducting many funded projects, including SPA-funded projects. Training in simple accounting methods could allay Peace Corps and USAID concerns about PCV capabilities in those areas and reduce the need for staff reworking of unsatisfactory project accounts put together by untrained Volunteers attempting the task for the first time without guidance, as was often observed during this evaluation.
- o Training in management, monitoring, supervising, delegating, and community development. It was found that where PCVs alone were responsible for projects, the projects were successful less often than where these activities were shared or conducted by community members. Training in delegating responsibility while carefully monitoring progress is essential to improvements in this area.
- o Training PCVs to be trainers, nowhere mentioned, is also seen as essential to establishing new roles, responsibilities and skills in project groups, thus promoting the increased capacity for self-help that is central to the philosophy of the SPA program.

Training Needs for Peace Corps Staff:

- o Training in the development of project design and the review of proposals to the end of helping PCVs and communities develop strong projects.

Training Needs for Peace Corps and USAID Staff:

- o Training in the intent and conduct of the SPA program.

EPILOGUE

The clear, unequivocal conclusion of this evaluation is that SPA is a good program. It may not be perfect (yet) in execution, but it is sound in concept and direction.

In popular parlance, nobody does development like Peace Corps. Almost thirty years, a whole generation, has passed since the first group of Volunteers took to the field. The world has changed, the Third World no less than the developed world. A whole generation in the Third World has grown up who have experienced the accelerated pace of development which began with a renewed interest in development by the industrialized nations in the early 1960's. The challenges are still there, but to some extent they have changed, they have evolved. *And Peace Corps has changed to meet those challenges.*

The debates continue in the international arena: macro vs. micro projects, trickle up vs. trickle down, private sector vs. public sector development. Through it all, Peace Corps continues to believe, and to demonstrate, that change happens "on the margin". Real, observable development happens at the grass-roots, in small increments, involving one or a few individuals at a time. And when these small, marginal changes are added up in a country over time, who is to say that the impact is not as profound or lasting as many a \$40 million project?

SPA is a powerful tool for grassroots development. The existence and shape of the SPA program reflects the needs of the Volunteer in the field, and particularly the need for a flexible response to the development needs of the community. Sometimes a little money will get something started, or move it forward, or finish it. Does this make it more likely that the Volunteer will be viewed as a grantsperson? Yes, probably. But the evaluation in no way indicates that there is *less* likelihood that the Volunteer and the members of the community will have a positive, satisfying relationship or that the Volunteer's chances for personally fulfilling the three goals of the Peace Corps will be diminished.

Don't many of the SPA-funded projects fail to meet their objectives? Yes. Some fail for reasons which might be avoided -- this evaluation report is filled with analysis of all aspects of the SPA program and recommendations for improving it. Another perspective is possible. A core tenet of the program is to encourage *self-help* and, as with all self-help, boot-strapping efforts, it should be expected that there will be belly-flops as often as soaring flight. In fact, if there aren't a fair number of "failures", it probably should be concluded that not enough chances are being taken, not enough opportunities seized. Grass-roots development is not about caution, it's about trying in spite of the difficulties.

Both the Peace Corps and A.I.D. acknowledge that fact and it brings them together in this collaboration called SPA. They are to be congratulated for this effort for it remains, in the end, that SPA is a program which can boast of many "successes" and a sustainability rate which any multi-lateral or bi-lateral donor agency would be proud to claim.

The future holds only promise.