

PD-ABE-014

ISA 76782

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES - USCC

PROGRAMA DE EL SALVADOR

EVALUATION OF THE CRS/CARITAS TITLE II

MOTHER CHILD FOOD PROGRAM

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SAN SALVADOR, JANUARY 1991

## II. Background and Rationale for Review

In 1988 the Consultores en Mercadeo de C.A. conducted an evaluation of the PL-480 Title I, Maternal-Child program (MCH) implemented by CRS/El Salvador. Recommendations from this evaluation included the continuation and expansion of the program since it meet the goals and objectives stated in PL 480 Title II legislation. However USAID selected another finding which indicated that the program did not have a significant nutritional impact on participants as justification to request its closure. (Appendix 1 are the findings and recommendations taken from this study.)

After receipt of the letter from USAID indicating that the program would end, the El Salvador Bishop's Conference formally requested continuation of the program. An agreement was reached to continue the program an additional two years. The revised operational plan included activities to improve health education activities, promote food production and encourage medical-prevention activities. An OPG was provided from USAID which included funds for a second three-stage evaluation to be conducted by CONSUSALUD during the two-year continuation. This evaluation is in its final stage.

During the period January 21-January 29, 1991, CRS/CAP personnel, Vicki Denman and Jose Maguina were assigned to El Salvador to assess the status and accomplishments of CRS PL-480 MCH program activities. As a result of this assessment the team was requested to determine possible program directions to improve its efficiency in the short term and suggest improved linkage of food aid with development. The team based conclusions and recommendations on review of program documents, interviews with representatives of selected institutions and discussions with CARITAS.

### III. Program Accomplishments

The 1990 PL-480 Title II program distributed 6,678 mt of food to 495 nutrition centers in eight dioceses. Participants of the Maternal Child Program (MCH) include pregnant mothers, infants and children under 5 years old.

To assess the progress made by CARITAS since continuation of the program, a review was made of the contractual agreement signed in May 1989 with CARITAS for program improvement. Six conditions were laid out in this agreement (copy attached as Attachment 2). Briefly summarized the conditions stated that:

1. 10,000 beneficiaries of the institutional feeding program be included in the MCH program.
2. The National Soy Program be coordinated with MCH activities.
3. MCH resources be directed toward health and nutrition education and development projects. As such, the Diocesan educators and volunteers were to be trained.
4. Scales and growth monitoring cards were to be provided for MCH activities in each center.
5. A three stage evaluation was to be conducted to review the program jointly designed by CRS, CARITAS and USAID.
6. CRS/El Salvador was to provide the necessary technical assistance to CARITAS, as well as request funds from USAID for program improvement.

CARITAS has accomplished the tasks required in this agreement. The Institutional feeding program was absorbed in MCH. Participants in the National Soy Program are selected from MCH nutrition centers. During the past year, significant investments in training have occurred. The evaluation is in its final stages. The only item which still lacks significant attention has been CRS's commitment to provide technical assistance in integration of food resources with development activities, and their commitment to assist in securing significant levels of funding to assist CARITAS in its efforts.

It should be recognized that some efforts have been made by CRS. First a project proposal was prepared and \$25,000 in

#### IV. Current Program Status

At this point, CARITAS/El Salvador has complied with the terms of the agreement, as well as taken significant actions to better integrate their organization. However they remain dependent on MCH as it forms the basis for development activities and provides financing for Diocesan activities.

Changes that have occurred have been accomplished with little financial support. Thus National staffing consists of two people to manage all food program activities and development initiatives in development. Therefore, many of the systematic weaknesses pointed out in the 1988 evaluation still remain (and will probably be revealed again with conclusion of the current study). These issues in program improvement include:

- Training, especially in weighing and growth monitoring (Since the program is based on volunteer efforts, turnover is a reality and training efforts unending.)
- Increased supervision of promoter activity and MCH nutrition centers (Limited regular funding makes this recommendation difficult to ever fully satisfy. However maintenance of promoter efforts depend on it.)
- Increased assistance in promotion and funding of development activities.
- Preparation of a new manual for program operations.

Despite these chronic difficulties in program management, information from the 1988 study and the current review indicate that overall the program operates well logistically serving a segment of the population which is truly in need.

A national food and nutrition survey held in 1988 indicates that malnutrition affects between 250,000-500,000 children mostly in rural areas (Source: Evaluacion de la Situacion Alimentaria Nutricional en El Salvador, ESANES-88, Asoc. Dem. Salvadorense, MSPAS and INCAP, August 1990). The 1988 study sponsored by USAID indicates that 75% of the beneficiary families on this program are in extreme poverty. In spite of the fact that the first stage of the current evaluation indicates 75% of the children can be categorized

funding obtained for a pilot agricultural project associated with the MCH program, however these funds have not been disbursed as yet. In addition, an OPG totaling \$73,000 was provided by USAID through CRS. Looking closely at the budget, actual funds to support CARITAS changes orienting program towards development are not included since \$50,000 of these funds went to the consultants hired to evaluate the program, \$15,000 went to purchase of scales for the nutrition centers, \$5,000 was budgeted for production of growth monitoring charts and \$3,000 for an audit. Thus little direct funding or technical assistance was actually provided in the encouragement of productive activities.

In defense of CRS, it should be noted that reductions in staff (departure of the country representative and project manager) and difficulties presented by the ongoing internal conflict during this period, created a situation where even simple food management logistics became a burden.

On the other hand, it appears that during this time CARITAS has slowly been working to improve of their organization utilizing the limited resources at their disposal. Significant accomplishments can be recognized in the areas to training and staff development, integration of diocesan teams utilizing MCH activities as a base for development activities, and introduction of alternate sources of funding through development of national macro-projects. These accomplishments will be briefly reviewed below.

In evaluating these efforts, one must keep in mind the nature of the CARITAS organization. Because CARITAS National has no direct authority over the Diocesan Directors, accomplishments are not standard throughout the organization but reflects the different attitudes and priorities towards development activities held by eight independent Bishops. As a result differing levels of success have been had in integration of development objectives in food programming.

#### A. Training and staff development

A major accomplishment in this area, is the development of a training structure which includes a well-defined curriculum, and implementation of a "train the trainer"

system designed to teach Diocesan educators to train volunteers operating the MCH program. By the end of 1990, ten five-day training seminars had been provided to the 25 diocesan educators. After each course segment, educators trained other members of the Diocesan team and MCH volunteers working in the nutrition centers. Utilizing this strategy, over 2,500 volunteers received training. The course includes administration and registration of MCH programs, as well as key health and nutrition issues.

Validation of the scope of this training effort can be found in the draft results of stage two of the current evaluation which reports 85% of the centers report that they have received training. The difficulties in management of this type of system become apparent in the fact that only 44% reported using all they were taught.

In addition to the basic curriculum, additional training was provided to diocesan educators and the 654 MCH volunteers working with the Child Survival Program. This program, sponsored by UNICEF, provides educational materials, pays the salary of the National CARITAS employee also in charge of the food program, and coordinates with local health clinics for 7,000 MCH participants under a primary health care scheme. The MCH volunteers completing child survival training serve as monitors in health and nutrition for approximately ten children in their community. This program operates in five of the eight dioceses (not in San Miquel, Santa Ana, Chalatenango).

Another accomplishment has been development of a training course in community leadership which focuses on methodologies in participative education and development of community organizations to stimulate analysis of problems, coordination of efforts and optimal utilization of human resources. Currently there are a total of 44 graduates of this course working with 72 communities in four diocese (San Salvador, Chalatenango, San Vicente, and Sosonante).

Other efforts include a seminar in accounting and project preparation which was offered last year to 40 people and will be held again this year. Seminars funded by European CARITAS has also been held on human values, AIDS, Church doctrine and Nutrition.

## B. Integration of MCH with Development Activities

As described by CARITAS (and reviewed in the one diocese visited), the Diocesan teams include individuals in specialities such as agronomy, social work, etc. The average team size is between 6-10 people. They operate using the MCH program as the basic unit of community organization, while offering development activities to interested communities to improve economic well-being.

Looking at the Diocese of Sosonante (please note that this site was picked as the best example of what was happening at the diocesan level), staff includes the administrator, an agronomist, four promoters (includes one vacant position), two accountants, one food program field supervisor. Salaries for the agronomist, and another promoter are paid by funds for refugee assistance from the EEC. The remaining staff are supported by the MCH program. Working with the 54 MCH communities which are divided into four regions are the promoters (one assigned to each region) and the 22 community leaders (each covering two communities). A total of 27 productive projects are currently underway. Loans for supplies and materials are provided from the revolving fund created under an old CRS project (Madre y Tierra). This fund has stretched over the years due to a 90% repayment rate (with 6% interest) provided by community held loan agreement. Projects include vegetable production, basic grains, and the national soy program.

To obtain a broader perspective on development activities, the information provided by CARITAS shows five dioceses are involved in project activity bringing a total of 1,603 manzanas (about 7,000 sq. meters per manzana) under cultivation and providing assistance to 1,282 families participating in the MCH program. A total of 78 communities are involved. Active dioceses in this effort include Sosonante, Santa Ana, Zacateoluca, Santiago de Maria, San Vicente and San Salvador. Chalatenango, a newly formed diocese, participates in the CARITAS repatriation program funded by CARITAS but has yet to begin development initiatives such as soy and basic grains. San Miquel operates no development projects but maintains the traditional MCH program.

### C. Introduction of Alternate Sources of Funding

At the time the new MYOP was negotiated with CARITAS, the bishops indicated that EEC funding totaling \$585,000 had been requested for development project activity. These funds were never approved. However, CARITAS has received a large EEC grant for repatriation activities. All eight dioceses are involved in this effort with funding covering several staff positions at the diocesan level. Development of macro-projects such as this was identified as a strategy for broadening the CARITAS financial base.

A major concern has been expressed over the dependence on beneficiary contributions and sale of bags/tins for funding of CARITAS administration. Although a more thorough investigation is required of this issue, it appears that beneficiary contributions do cover legitimate program costs in transportation, per diems, promoters, accountants and directors who work with MCH programs. Since dioceses incorporating development activities select clients from the MCH program, expenses for these investments in development are also justified. No funds from beneficiary contributions or sale of bags/tins are collected or spent by CARITAS National on administration, although they have been providing training, forms, accounting staff and limited supervision of the program. Thus, it is not clear that there is inappropriate use of beneficiary contributions. However, better accounting is certainly required and more careful evaluation. What is clear is that CARITAS National has recognized that dependency on these funds must be reduced, and are taking action to do so through development of other funding sources.

in "good health", the study further indicates that 61% were categorized with some degree of malnutrition (56% were first degree). Only 48.5% of participant children could be categorized as normal utilizing wt/age charts. Overall, it implies that if these children were not attended by the program higher levels of malnutrition might exist.

Another concern is the disincentive effects on local agriculture. Since most people participating in the program (according to evaluation results) are landless and lack sufficient income for purchase of the household market basket, the disincentive effect of this program should be minimal. The 1988 study also concluded the same. Statistics from 1990 demonstrate continued positive trends in prices and production for the major crops (maize and beans) subject to possible disincentive concerns (Evolucion Economica y Social, Informe Trimestral No. 3, Enero-Septiembre 1990, Ministerio De Planificacion y Coordinacion Del Desarrollo Economico y Social).

Other food programs operating in the country include several small EEC food assistance to various Church organizations and the World Food Program. Working through the Ministry of Agriculture, CONADES and Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health and Education, approximately 25,000 tons per year are brought into the country by the World Food Program. Of this total, one-third is monetized (primarily wheat) with the funds utilized in food for work program. Only one project (5,300 mt) is directed at women and children. Coordinated by the Ministry of Health and education, the program provides school lunches, but also provides food to local clinics for distribution of a ration to families with children under-going nutritional recuperation. This program serves 220,000 beneficiaries. Remaining projects are 'food for work. Thus CARITAS food assistance reaches a population (children under school-age, with lower levels of nutritional deficiency) than other programs operating in the country.

Based on the brief review of program status, continuation of the program is recommended for several reasons. First because of the motivation CARITAS has demonstrated for program improvement, which has been accomplished for the most part on limited financial resources. Secondly because CRS has an obligation to assist this long-term counterpart in its transition from food distribution to effective development activities. Despite efforts in broadening the program base undertaken in the past few years, closure of the food program would be catastrophic to the CARITAS at this time. In addition, with the continued uncertainties of

the on-going war, protection of vulnerable (children under 5) segments of the population remain important.

#### V. Suggested Program Directions

The program requires strengthening in several areas for improving the impact on health/nutrition and increasing opportunities for economic development in the target population. Since over the past two years, these investments were not made, particularly in staffing, technical assistance and project financing, we believe that the findings of the current evaluation will provide little change from what was discovered in 1988. Therefore, we return to the same crucial point in justifying continuation of the program and suggesting activities to improve its nature.

In this respect, we feel the program can be justified because of its contribution to people on the edge of poverty. We also find that it does not appear to be creating major disincentives to production. In addition, closure at this time would adversely affect a major counterpart.

What our recommendations hope are the requirements for development of a much more specific plan for further food programming with CARITAS. This plan, unlike that produced to resolve the 1988 crisis, will provide carefully delineated goals and objectives backed by the technical assistance necessary to achieve program improvement. This plan should not be CRS's plan, but the result of a continued dialogue and planning process entered into with CARITAS.

We recommend that the program be maintained at the same level for fiscal year 1992 in order that this process take place. During this year, CARITAS and CRS must obtain the technical assistance and professional staff to initiate this planning process and implement the data collection systems required to make decisions on program changes and directions. Program changes resulting from this analysis and planning process might include possible introduction of Food for Work Programs, establishment of pilot development projects which can be expanded to a National level, investigation of funding sources to encourage development initiatives and increased levels of staffing in CARITAS National, and evaluation of the adequacy and composition of the beneficiary ration, and means to improve targeting of resources within the zones and El Salvador. The result would be a new plan to be produced by CRS/CARITAS for 1991-1992.

This planning process can not be stressed enough. In order to make fundamental lasting changes to a structure which has been in place for well over 20 years the process must include both parties and a through look at the current circumstances. Quick remedies such as offered in 1988 (another consultant study external to planning and program mechanisms in CARITAS, distribution of more scales, and growth charts) will provide the same limited results in changing program direction. However, working through the planning process within the counterpart organization can perhaps lead to development of new internal systems which can better equip the organization in undertaking new endeavors.

In order to begin the planning process, the following actions are required immediately:

#### A. Recommendations CARITAS/National

##### 1. Administration

Require that CARITAS provide a professional who has full-time formal responsibility for the Food Program. CRS will match this investment by provision of funds for recruitment of a projects officer, and for computer and clerk to handle data management. Currently the food program is managed by the Head of the Education Department. This position is currently funded by UNICEF to promote health and nutrition education for their child survival project. Although a capable individual, the combined responsibilities of child survival, diocese education and the food program provides little time for planning and orchestrating Food Program enhancements.

Introduction of a professional person who reports directly to the Director will focus attention on this activity and begin to change its status from CARITAS basic resource, to that of another area of activity with separate the food program funds and legitimacy.

The Food Program coordinator will be charged with tasks such as:

- (a) Coordination of Diocesan efforts in setting food program goals and objectives, and beneficiary targeting.
- (b) Establish a separate account and reporting system for collection and expenditures of beneficiary contributions and sale of containers.

(c) Ensure coordinated activities with the National Soy Program and UNICEF child survival activities.

(d) Organize collection, follow-up, and evaluate statistics gathered from growth monitoring activities and income generation activities.

(e) Provide technical assistance to the dioceses in program activities through visits to the dioceses and coordination with other resources.

(f) Coordinate with other organizations working in the country. In particular, the World Food Program managed by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF.

## 2. Nutrition and Health Information Management System

A major aspect of the program has been growth monitoring however the information is not used effectively in the centers, dioceses, or national levels to improve program targeting, reinforcement of nutritional messages, or development of additional forms of assistance. Creation of a system for the collection and management of this information at the National level provides a basis for effectively planning program activity and provides basic data necessary in presentation of projects. This structure can be expanded to provide information of effects of income generation activities and agricultural production.

To accomplish this activity CRS should support the acquisition of a computer and employment of a data clerk in CARITAS. The steps include:

(a) Definition of indicators to be used in the system including wt/age.

(b) Establishment of a system for information flow with the processing required at each level and specific uses of the information for planning purposes.

(c) Design forms and plan frequency of reporting for each step. Decide appropriate actions to be taken at each level. For example, children falling below the growth curve result in discussions between mother and MCH volunteer, and, if necessary, referral for clinic treatment.

(d) Design data presentation sheets for utilization at each level and computer data base.

## D. Income Generation Activity

In order to establish a more formal relationship between development activities and the food program, the following activities are suggested:

(a) Organize a department of projects at the national office staffed by a development professional.

(b) Meet with the diocesan teams to define economic conditions and appropriate development activities to address specific conditions (i.e. the National Soy project only addresses land-holding participants, and is not appropriate for landless people).

(c) Assist Dioceses in formulation of viable projects.

(d) Coordinate with international organizations to find funding.

## E. Recommendations for CRS/El Salvador

1. Recruit a full-time professional to expand CRS/SV staff and allow provision of technical assistance to CARITAS. The position will focus on responsibilities in development of a comprehensive plan and objectives. This person should be recruited on a one-year contract in the eventuality that CARITAS is unable to demonstrate significant capacity for program improvement, or after program data is reviewed the need for the program is not demonstrated. This professional should be responsible for providing technical assistance and support to CARITAS food program and projects manager. Key in this process will be development of specific workplans with activities, objectives, and schedules; and continued insistence that future program activities are dependent on adherence to their plan.

2. Arrange redesignation of the \$25,000 provided under SV-OD-006/A (which have yet to be disbursed) to be used as a CARITAS National enhancement grant. This grant will provide one professional staff position specifically to coordinate development initiatives with food assistance program including the preparation and evaluation of development projects, funds for travel, one computer for data collection and a clerk over a two year period.

3. CRS should be prepared to provide funding for a limited number of pilot projects undertaken by the diocesan teams with the support of CARITAS/National.

The consolidation of technical capacity in CARITAS/National is expected to take at least two years. The first year (FY 1991) will require extensive technical assistance from CRS in order to design a program strategy for implementation in 1992. By the end of 1992, it will become apparent whether a continued program is merited based on internal data collection and the ability has shown in improving administration. At that time, decisions on whether to transfer activities to CARITAS for direct operation, continuance as a development initiative by CRS, or program suspension is advisable. With failure to develop and accomplish specific program goals being the clear criteria.

## Interviews and Resources

Wednesday, January 23

Review of Office Materials

Interview with CARITAS National

Bishop Cabrerra (President of Board)  
Padre Guerra (Vice-President of Board)  
Daniel Barrera (National Director)

Discussion with CRS/El Salvador

Thursday, January 24

Diocese of Sonsonante, interview CARITAS

Jorge Ramiro Galban (Caritas Director,  
Sonsonante)

Visit Training session for MCH/Child Survival

Interview Director CONSUSALUD evaluation

Dr. Carlos Diaz del Pinal

Friday, January 25

Interviews:

Sta. Ana Gladis de Guillen  
World Food Program

Daniel Barrera  
Director CARITAS Nacional

Review of materials, discussion with CRS/El Salvador  
and initiation of document preparation

Saturday/Sunday, January 26/27

Preparation of draft materials

Monday, January 28

Discussion of draft conclusions CRS/El Salvador

Meeting CARITAS  
Bishop Cabrerra  
Daniel Barrerra

Meeting USAID

Julio Mena  
Food Program Officer

Ana Christina Mejia  
Nutritionist

Tuesday, January 29

Meeting UNICEF

Ernesto Attia  
Child Survival Officer

Elizabeth Morales  
CARITAS Coordinator

Preparation of review document