

**PROJECT ACTIVITY COMPLETION REPORT  
(PACR)**

**Technical Support for Food Assistance Programs Project**

(596-0116)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Background

By the mid-1980s, the socioeconomic and political situation in Central America and Panama (CA/P) had impacted negatively on the health and nutrition of the poorest populations. In response, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) developed its Priority Health Needs for Central America and Panama Plan (PPS/CAP). ROCAP agreed to support the technical support to targeted food assistance programs project proposed under this plan because it was consistent with AID health priorities, the ROCAP CDSS and the priorities of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America. In addition, this project, as well as another ROCAP-funded child survival project, were seen as attacking a regional problem and helping the Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama (INCAP) develop an in-house capacity to provide TA in food aid and primary health care.

### Project Description and Status

The project goal was to contribute to the reduction of infant and young child mortality and improve nutritional status among high-risk populations in the region. Its purpose was to improve the effectiveness of food assistance activities in the region by helping to establish national coordination mechanisms and strengthening the technical, managerial and evaluation capabilities of INCAP and national public and private agencies. Among the purpose-level objectives were:

1. The development of country action plans for improving food programs.
2. The development of national food aid strategies or policies.
3. The set-up and functioning of effective national food aid coordinating mechanisms.
4. Better managed and more effective food aid programs in the region through the development and use of general guidelines; improved technical and managerial capacity; better knowledge of food program costs, problems and solutions; improved knowledge and understanding of food program effects; improved targeting; and better coordination and integration of food programs with other development initiatives.

Project outputs were grouped into five components: Planning and Coordination, Training, Information Dissemination, Technical Assistance, and Operations and applied research. In spite of a delayed start-up, inconsistent government and agency commitment, changes within INCAP and U.S. government policy shifts, nearly all of the project outputs were produced. In the planning and coordination component, nearly all of the planned regional meetings, workshops and task forces were held. In addition, all of the guidelines were met. In the training and information dissemination components, the outputs were met or surpassed. Over 200 person-months of technical assistance (TA) were given by INCAP staff to the countries in all areas of food aid program planning, design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation. Finally, most of the research component studies, assessments, evaluations, informa-

tion systems and food technology activities were carried out.

Moreover, through regular reporting and evaluations, the project was intensively and extensively monitored and evaluated.

### Project Accomplishments

Certain outputs not necessarily contemplated in the Project Paper (PP), but considered relevant and useful, were also produced. These included the development of food security strategies or policies in five countries, a number of institutional assessments, special evaluations and studies on MCH and targeted consumer subsidy programs, the development of a methodology for doing operations research at the strategic level, surveys of the nutritional effects of structural adjustment programs, and the updating of consumption study methodologies.

Project outputs and activities had the following effects:

1. INCAP established itself as the TA provider of choice in food aid and food security improvement for governments.
2. Government officials now have a heightened awareness of the need to improve food aid programs, the value of food aid as an important development resource and the importance of good management of scarce resources.
3. Food aid program technical staff in all countries in the region has acquired important skills that can significantly strengthen food programs in the future.
4. The skills of the trainees have been recognized by their governments and donor agencies.
5. INCAP has begun building a reputation outside of the region for its work in food aid and food security.
6. INCAP has broadened its contacts with governments and international food and nutrition improvement efforts.
7. INCAP has shown food program planners and implementers the value of close collaboration of all levels of an organization in problem identification and resolution.

### Progress Towards Attainment of Purpose-Level Objectives

All of these objectives have been met. However, only surveys of programs affected by the project can determine whether they have really improved or not. These surveys would also have to derive indicators of effectiveness and apply them to the programs affected to see if the project purpose has been met. However, if we consider meeting the objectives as achieving the project

purpose, the purpose has been achieved.

### Lessons Learned

1. Government, donor and implementing agency commitment, interest and support are not always equal, but must be kept at high levels for a food aid technical support project to achieve its purpose.
2. To ensure that a long term technical advisor develops the level of trust necessary to be included completely in project activities, he/she should begin work as soon as possible after project start-up.
3. When working with a resource such as food aid, which can be used in so many ways, and with a dynamic political and social situation, flexibility in implementation is critical.
4. When food programs are not being implemented as designed, it is preferable to carry out process evaluations and subsequently improve program implementation rather than do impact evaluations.
5. The focussed multidisciplinary project team approach to implementation is dynamic and highly productive for this kind of project.
6. Video documentaries on food programs, as well as filmstrips and slide shows, are a major support to advocacy and training programs.
7. A balance between country and regional approaches for specific activities enhances the effects of a food aid technical support project.
8. Ultimately, food aid programs will become effective only when they are improved at the community level.

### Recommendations

The following are technical recommendations:

1. INCAP should enhance its skills to negotiate and sustain high levels of government and donor commitment. INCAP should work with donors to help governments obtain funding for food, nutrition and health projects and include funds for INCAP TA, when appropriate.
2. In implementing food, nutrition and health TA activities, INCAP should be flexible to ensure its ability to remain relevant in an ever-changing environment.

3. INCAP should expand and consolidate its use of focussed, highly interactive, multidisciplinary teams to carry out specific activities and projects.
4. INCAP should consolidate the knowledge and experience gained in developing video documentaries, filmstrips, and slide shows in support of its project efforts, and apply them to all INCAP activities.
5. INCAP should maintain its country-based orientation with the Basic Technical Groups, ensure that they have all the flexibility they need to identify and develop alternative solutions to problems, and ensure that they receive the training they need in planning, advocacy and management.
6. INCAP should enhance its capabilities in supporting the planning and implementation of community-based food and nutrition interventions.
7. INCAP should develop and disseminate household level food consumption and nutrition information to international fora on the social effects of structural adjustment, food security and nutrition.
8. If funds become available, one or more studies should be done of the food programs that this project assisted to see how effective they have become. It would now be useful to carry out at least one impact evaluation of a MCH, a school feeding, and a food for work program.

## 1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

By 1984-5, the socioeconomic and political situation in Central America and Panama (CA/P) had impacted negatively on the health and nutrition situation of the poorest populations. Malnutrition, mortality and morbidity were either increasing or not improving in all of the countries. In addition, targeted food aid programs, though numerous, long term and, in some cases, large, had not significantly reduced malnutrition or improved health. CA/P governments were uncertain whether other interventions should receive the scarce resources available to support social programs. Problems included a lack of global information on food program operations, impact and relevance; weak overall planning, strategy formulation and coordination; inadequate institutional capacity of executing agencies; and poor project design, food targeting, management and evaluation.

In response to the need to improve nutrition and health in the region, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) developed its Priority Health Needs for Central America and Panama Plan (PPS/CAP). Included was a series of projects, among which was one to provide technical support to targeted food distribution programs. ROCAP funded it as the Technical Support for Food Assistance Programs Project, No. 596-0116. ROCAP did so because:

1. It was determined that a regional technical assistance effort was justified in light of the common problems that all of the 60 food aid programs had and the advantages that economies of scale for TA response could bring. In addition, no other long term, comprehensive TA efforts for food aid programs were planned, either by bilateral USAIDs, other donors or governments.
2. It was consistent with AID health priorities of reducing infant mortality and malnutrition through more effective use of food aid.
3. The National Bipartisan Commission Report for Central America (NBCCA) listed the reduction of malnutrition as its first human development priority.
4. It was consistent with the ROCAP CDSS recognition of the importance of health and nutrition in the development of Central Americans.
5. The Oral Rehydration Therapy, Growth Monitoring and Education Project (596-0115) had been signed in late 1984. As another of the proposed PPS/CAP projects, it was envisaged that both 596-0115 and 0116 would complement each other, especially in improving the use of food aid as a resource in improving maternal-child health (MCH) and other primary health care programs.
6. ROCAP had been assisting INCAP in developing a capacity to solve specific nutrition and health problems as the most appropriate regional institution for doing so. Both 596-0115 and this project were seen as crucial for developing an in-house INCAP capability for providing regionally-based TA in food aid and primary health care.

## 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STATUS

### 2.1 PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the project was to contribute to the reduction of infant and young child mortality and improve nutritional status among high risk populations in CA/P. This was also the goal of project 596-0115. It was assumed that: (1) maternal-infant food assistance programs would be integrated with strengthened primary health care activities; and (2) national level commitments for carrying out and improving food assistance activities would continue during the LOP.

By and large, the first assumption proved accurate. The second fluctuated somewhat, as discussed elsewhere in this report. In addition, the objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification were relevant and well chosen. However, measuring goal achievement is a long term process that may take some years. Infant and young child mortality rates have fallen, and the proportion of infants and preschool children with severe growth retardation has decreased. Unfortunately, it is presently impossible to determine what part of this improvement has been due to improved food aid programs. Still, improvement in health and nutrition should be the result of coordinated efforts through numerous initiatives.

### 2.2 PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to improve the effectiveness of food assistance activities in the region by helping to establish national coordination mechanisms and strengthening the technical, managerial and evaluation capabilities of INCAP and national public and private agencies in CA/P. The objectively verifiable indicators were the following:

1. Country action plans for improving food programs elaborated and effectively implemented.
2. National strategies or policies for food assistance developed in at least three of the five participating countries.
3. Effective national mechanisms for coordination among implementing agencies, donors and PVO intermediaries functioning in at least three countries of the region.
4. Better managed and more effective food assistance programs in the region through:
  - a. The development and use of recommended general guidelines for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of food programs as well as for the development of technical procedural norms and information systems.
  - b. Improved technical and managerial capacity of regional and national

personnel responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of food assistance programs.

- c. Better knowledge of the costs, major problems and alternative solutions in the design, implementation and evaluation of food assistance programs.
- d. Improved knowledge and understanding of social, economic, dietary and nutritional effects of food programs.
- e. Improved targeting of food aid at the national level and beneficiary selection within individual programs.
- f. Better coordination and integration of food aid programs with other related food, nutrition, health and community development activities.

These objectives were developed after an 1984 assessment of food programs in the region by INCAP specified the difficulties faced by them, and are based on this assessment's recommendations. It was assumed that national and donor agency interest in improving food programs would result in necessary resources being provided on a bilateral basis to cover in-country training, materials and equipment costs necessary to improve programs. While interest remained high throughout the LOP, few countries or agencies were able to provide funds. The reason was simply that all of their development resources were limited. However, crucial aspects of program improvement efforts were funded by USAIDs in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the governments of Costa Rica and Panama, and the United Nations World Food Program.

The most effective means of verification were project evaluations and technical trip reports. Few food aid program evaluations were carried out during the LOP. INCAP project-funded statistical updates were also helpful.

## 2.3 PROJECT OUTPUTS

Outputs were grouped into five components, as follows:

### 1. Planning and Coordination

The purpose of activities under this component was to encourage the development of coordinated country-level action to improve food aid programs, the development of national food aid policies or strategies and the formation of national coordination mechanisms for food aid activities. Outputs:

- a. Six Project Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee meetings held.  
The intent of these meetings was to raise the consciousness of government, donor and PVO officials of the need for improved food aid programs,

obtain and maintain their commitment to supporting TA efforts, and ensure their input in project activities by involving them in a review of the previous year's activities and in planning those for the next year. One implicit intention was to establish INCAP as the TA source of choice in CA/P.

- b. Three regional promotion and planning workshops held on the role of food assistance in national, socioeconomic development, design and management of food programs and evaluation and information systems. It was expected that country delegations of technical people from governments, donor agencies and PVOs would attend the three, scheduled for the first, third and final years of the project. These workshops were expected to review the food aid situation in each country, produce and revise the country action plans for food program improvement, and serve as fora for discussion and approval of regional guidelines (another project output), exchange of experiences and the introduction of new information from experiences outside the region or from project research activities carried out under the operations research component (see below). It was hoped that the country plans would help INCAP set TA priorities each year.
- c. Five regional donor meetings and one national donor meeting per country per year held. These meetings were intended to stimulate the development of national coordination mechanisms and food aid strategies and policies.
- d. Sixteen technical task forces for development of recommended regional guidelines and manuals held. These task forces, made up of 7 to 10 donor, country and PVO representatives, were to be convened in the areas of: (1) national strategies and plans; (2) MCH programs; (3) school feeding programs; (4) food for work programs; (5) emergency/displaced persons programs; (6) evaluation and information systems; and (7) food management and preservation. The main purpose of these task forces was to review and revise technical guidelines, manuals and methodologies produced by INCAP staff (another project output. See below).
- e. Thirteen sets of regional guidelines and methodologies developed in the following areas: (1) national food assistance strategies and policies; (2) design of food assistance programs (MCH, school feeding, emergency, food for work); (3) organization and management of food assistance programs (same programs as in design); (4) elaboration of manuals of technical norms and operational procedures for food assistance programs; (5) planning and development of food and nutrition education activities in food assistance programs; (6) management, preservation and storage of food commodities; (7) setting up information and evaluation systems for food aid programs; (8) beneficiary selection and monitoring in maternal infant feeding programs; (9) process evaluation for MCH programs; (10) assessing food and nutrition

status of displaced persons and in emergency situations; (11) methodology for carrying out institutional and operational assessments of food aid programs; (12) simplified methodology for carrying out commodities use and acceptability studies; (13) simplified methodology for carrying out cost effectiveness studies of food aid programs.

## 2. Training

The activities under this component were designed to improve the knowledge and skills of planners, technicians and managers responsible for the design, management and evaluation of food aid strategies and programs, and to strengthen institutional capacity for implementing food programs. Through training activities, guidelines and research results would be disseminated to those most likely to apply them. This component would thus contribute to achieving the objectives related to improving the management effectiveness of food aid programs. Outputs:

- a. Ten regional courses and workshops and one itinerant course/workshop on priority food aid issues for program directors and managers, including: (1) food assistance for displaced families and for other emergency situations; (2) identification and design of food aid programs; (3) organization and management of food aid programs; (4) food management and preservation; (5) techniques and methodologies for food and nutrition education; (6) information and evaluation systems for food assistance programs; and (7) organization and management of food aid programs/food management and preservation.

In the original project paper, twelve regional courses in the above areas, except for food management and preservation, were contemplated. However, it was found in the first three years of implementation that not as many people could participate if the courses were regional. Consequently, one remaining course and one new course, found to be necessary during the LOP, were combined and were planned for country-by-country implementation.

- b. Three observational site visits for food aid program planners and special travel to international conferences carried out. The idea was to expose planners and managers to innovative solutions to common coordination, management and logistics problems or the successful integration of food assistance with other education and development activities. Thirty weeks of such visits were originally planned, but, though rated highly by participants, the visits were costly, and group logistics were complex and time-consuming. Consequently, ROCAP and INCAP decided to reduce such visits to three weeks, and use the funds thus saved for tutorials, more educational materials for special training courses, special counterpart travel and the application of communications technology to support project initiatives (discussed below).

- c. Twelve tutorials carried out. Tutorials were short-term individual training at INCAP for project counterparts so as to transfer specific, immediately applicable methodologies or procedures. They were not planned in the project paper, but were found to be more cost effective for some very specific technical areas than providing in-depth technical assistance at country level.
- d. Training materials developed and produced. Again, the development of such materials was not contemplated in the project paper. It became clear, however, that participants in the regional training courses, who were expected to design and deliver similar training courses to their national colleagues, could not do so without materials. Consequently, it was decided to produce such materials for the regional and itinerant courses that could be easily adapted for use at country level.
- e. Special counterpart travel carried out when opportunities develop. This activity, added when the project was amended in 1987, allowed country food program staff to attend international conferences on subjects relating to food aid. This activity was intended to increase the knowledge and skills of food aid planners, technicians and managers.

### 3. Information Dissemination

Through an AID-supported regional project, INCAP created, in 1981, an information clearinghouse for maternal-infant nutrition, lactation and weaning that was to be expanded under this project to include information on food aid programs and issues. It was intended as a conduit for: (1) the dissemination of project documentation, research results, guidelines and other information; and (2) the inflow of information on food program issues and ideas to CA/P implementers and INCAP. Accordingly, INCAP was expected to produce various dissemination outputs (discussed below), establish clearinghouses in each CA/P country participating in the project, and respond to ad-hoc requests for information on food aid from those who received documentation and information from the clearinghouse. In the course of the LOP, the focus of this component changed to one of applying communications technology in support of the entire project. This component thus supported all of the project objectives.

Outputs:

- a. Regional clearinghouse on food assistance programs established. As discussed above.
- b. Five national documentation centers established. INCAP and ROCAP planned to establish at least one in each of the five participating countries.
- c. Technical information disseminated by INCAP, as follows:
  - (1) Ten packets of technical documents on design, management and evaluation of food programs.

- (2) Five bibliographic listing updates done.
- (3) Fifteen project bulletins published.
- (4) Fifteen sections of INCAP Informed devoted to food aid programs.
- (5) Six documentaries on food program operations produced, distributed and shown.

The project bulletins and video documentaries were not contemplated in the original project design. The bulletins replaced the original two-page "technical sheets" on food aid issues since the format was more appealing and readers responded better. The documentaries were added as a means of replacing the observational site visits under the training component because the same effect could be obtained at substantially less cost. Four were to feature CA/P programs and two would concern programs from outside the region. Each video would be sent to documentation centers, then shown and discussed in meetings in each participating country, either as part of workshops or especially for this purpose.

Another aspect of using communications technology in support of project activities was the use of photos and videos in the collection, analysis and presentation of research data. INCAP expected that their advocacy of food program improvement would be enhanced by presenting visual/auditory images to political decision-makers. Funds for this purpose would be incorporated into research activities themselves.

#### 4. Technical Assistance

Through this component, it was expected that INCAP would help country program staff use the knowledge generated through the project and guidelines/methodologies to identify and solve specific food aid problems. As these problems were solved, it was assumed that food aid programs planning, coordination, strategy development, design, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation would improve, thus contributing to the achievement of all of the project's objectives. Two types of TA were contemplated: short-term (brief consultancies by INCAP and by international consultants through INCAP) and long term (assignment of an INCAP specialist in Honduras, El Salvador and in either Costa Rica or Panama). The level of TA was estimated to reach 360 person-weeks.

#### 5. Operations and Applied Research

The original purpose of this component was to: (1) supply information useful to improving food aid program processes; (2) improve the performance of national food assistance programs; (3) orient other project components; and (4) answer priority research questions of interest to the international food aid and nutrition communities. Two types of research were thus contemplated: improvement of food aid program processes and determination of food

aid program impacts. Research was organized under five topics, the first four of which would address program improvement, and the last of which would address impact: (1) food program evaluation, including program operations, institutional capacity and household food utilization; (2) analysis of the cost effectiveness of food aid programs; (3) definition of the technical basis for screening and discharge decisions and for interpreting growth monitoring data in MCH programs; (4) design and testing of simple information and evaluation systems for national food aid programs; and (5) food, nutrition and socioeconomic impacts of MCH programs on participant families.

In the 1987 project paper amendment, based on experience to date, it was decided to change the cost effectiveness analysis to simple cost analyses, and to eliminate the impact study. The cost effectiveness analysis was changed because most food programs were found to lack the most basic information on program costs, making it necessary to develop a methodology for doing so. The impact study was eliminated because the government that had originally agreed to carry out the study with INCAP support decided suddenly not to support the idea, requiring INCAP to find another country government so inclined, a very long and difficult process, then design a rigorous research design. It was decided that other countries had so many process problems that project focus should be on improving process.

Finally, ROCAP and INCAP decided to add some food technology work, since countries were interested in using local foods in place of donated food in their programs.

#### Outputs:

- a. At least 8 studies or evaluations to improve food aid program process:
  - (1) Process evaluations of the Costa Rica MCH and School Feeding Programs.
  - (2) Management assessment of Guatemala School Feeding Program.
  - (3) Study of the household use of food donated under the El Salvador MCH program and its effect on household diet, consumption, food economics and nutrition.
  - (4) Study of displaced persons food programs in El Salvador.
  - (5) Process evaluation of the Honduras MCH programs.
  - (6) At least two more process evaluations: at least one in a food for work program and at least one in an emergency program.
- b. Cost analysis of at least eight food programs.
- c. The development of a technical basis for screening, monitoring and discharge of participants in MCH programs.

- d. Design and testing of simple information/evaluation systems:
  - (1) One simplified regional information compilation activity.
  - (2) Four model information systems (for each of the four types of programs) developed or adapted.
  - (3) Twenty-eight food aid program information systems reviewed.
  - (4) Model information systems applied in fourteen different food aid programs.
- e. Food technology applied to food aid programs:
  - (1) Development and acceptability testing of Panama cereal for food programs.
  - (2) Development of Guatemala cookie for use in school feeding programs. Training of bakers in how to bake it and how to ensure its quality.

The means of verification were valid, but the assumption did not always hold true. As stated above, the Government of Guatemala, which had agreed to collaborate with INCAP in the impact study before project start-up, withdrew its support, making it impossible to carry out the study. In addition, various countries who had agreed to allow their food programs to participate in cost analysis studies (especially Panama and Honduras) decided to participate no longer for reasons beyond their control (Panama) or because discussions of food program costs are politically difficult throughout the world.

## 2.4 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Nine professional staff were hired by INCAP to implement the project. Short-term staff was hired to focus on specific efforts as needed. In addition, the project design anticipated the hiring of a USPSC food program specialist to help INCAP staff become acquainted with the food aid world and be a reality check for their ideas. Project design also called for a 12-month promotion and planning phase, a 3-1/2-year implementation stage and a 6-month evaluation stage.

However, start-up was delayed because of longer than expected initial project planning, preparation and staffing. Thus, it did not get underway until the end of 1985, nine months behind schedule. The reasons--related to internal INCAP constraints, government and donor agency financial constraints, and political changes and resulting shifts in counterparts (and interest/commitment to supporting project activities)--are described in the September 1987 PP Amendment. Moreover, ROCAP was unable to hire the PSC Technical Advisor because of concern about ROCAP's future and availability of specialists.

Nevertheless, project staff adjusted activities so that by September 1987, all activities except

those of the research component were generally on schedule.

Also, ROCAP signed a Cooperative Agreement with Planning Assistance, an AID-registered PVO, in June 1987 to provide external technical assistance in place of the PSC Technical Advisor. As a result, Planning Assistance provided technical and managerial advisory services through a resident Technical Advisor, short-term consultants in specific areas, and a study-tour of operations research facilities in the U.S. for key INCAP staff.

Throughout the LOP, INCAP was challenged by three principal constraints:

1. Inconsistent government, donor agency and PVO commitment. Part of the problem was the number of major government changes during the project's seven years. Each successive administration would revisit commitments made to INCAP in food aid improvements along with other such reviews. INCAP thus often had to re-promote the project, with differing results. For example, in the case of El Salvador, the Christiani administration suspended all targeted food aid for several months as it did audits, especially of programs implemented by the government itself. During the suspension, INCAP had to promote the food aid information system that they had helped set up under the project. Once the suspension ended, with government approval to revive the food tracking system, INCAP had to train an entirely new staff in the implementing agency because the entire staff changed with the change in administration.

Similar changes in administration and changing government commitments for other reasons resulted in the elimination of the food aid impact study in Guatemala, the reduction in the number of cost analyses done, the loss of trained food logistics personnel in the Guatemala National Reconstruction Committee, and the modification of regional courses into itinerant national-based courses. The latter occurred because officials balked at releasing their staff for one or more weeks to receive training from INCAP in Guatemala, or to pay tickets and per diem. Their predecessors, or they themselves, had agreed to do so during project design, however. Also, INCAP, in spite of efforts by the Project Coordinator and the Planning Assistance Technical Advisor, were never entirely successful in reaching the level of both moral or financial support anticipated during project design for donors and PVOs. In addition, government and donor funds were far scarcer than anticipated, such that they could not always provide the financial support needed to send officials and technical staff to training activities and regional events organized by the project. These constraints also prevented them from buying INCAP services as often as hoped. The project dealt with this situation by funding government participants' travel and per diem for regional events and moving many of the training courses to each country.

2. INCAP changes, reorientations of programs and administrative challenges. During the LOP, the INCAP Directorship changed once, the Administrator changed three times and the Chief of the division in which the project was located changed several times. As a result, policies and procedures changed, causing delays in implementation of INCAP

activities. Also, the unique expertise of project staff made them useful outside of food aid activities. Consequently, they were sometimes called upon by INCAP to carry out tasks in their fields of expertise, and were thus diverted at times from key project activities. This affected publication of the final guidelines and methodologies, and certain educational materials.

Nevertheless, project major objectives were met by 1991, with some final activities altered to better integrate them into INCAP's technical menu and support country-based efforts.

3. U.S. government policy shifts. In 1989, the U.S. government suspended aid to Panama. As a result, a major cost analysis, the one that was to produce a methodology for application elsewhere in Central America, was cancelled; an important food technology initiative (Panama cereal for food programs) could not be completed, and numerous TA activities were suspended, causing some consternation on the part of the GOP regarding INCAP's commitment to helping them.

In light of the above, the following is a review of major activities:

1. Planning and Coordination

Five of the six Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee meetings, two of the three regional workshops and 2 of the regional donor meetings were held. The rest were not held because the including purpose was accomplished. In addition, it became logistically and financially difficult to bring donor and PVO representatives together, and less and less productive as coordination efforts took root within the countries.

Twenty two of the twenty five national inter-institutional food program coordination meetings took place. Coordination mechanisms were established in Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica, and meetings were held periodically to coordinate food programs in Honduras and Panama. By the end of the project, the dialogue in all of the countries had moved beyond targeted food aid to food security and nutrition, a shift that INCAP incorporated into all project activities, as well as into its institutional orientation for the 1990s.

Fifteen of the sixteen technical task forces were held. However, rather than simply review guidelines and methodologies already developed, they provided input into their development.

INCAP produced final guidelines and manuals on 7 of the 13 themes planned in the PP. The other 6 were produced in draft form, but are still being finalized. In addition, the project produced 18 manuals and guidelines for specific national programs as part of the TA component, on project design, management, supervision and evaluation.

## 2. Training

All eleven courses and workshops were held as planned. Over 400 participants were trained. Also, most of the courses were held in each country, or in one country for participants from that country and one neighboring one. This approach permitted participation by a greater number of participants than regional courses would have.

All the tutorials, site visits and special counterpart travel were carried out as planned, allowing participants to be exposed to food program operations, problems and solutions outside of their own countries.

Project staff made some attempts to follow up on participants to assess the degree to which lessons learned were applied. However, the efforts was less systematic and INCAP's internal evaluation strongly recommends such follow up. Also PVOs and governments seem to be increasing their own TA and training efforts.

## 3. Information Dissemination

All of the information clearinghouses were established. Indeed, 26 national clearinghouses were finally established (only 5 were planned), and are functioning. They are located in PAHO offices, Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Planning, and in agricultural and medical/nursing schools.

Twenty four technical documents were published and sent to over 1,000 organizations and individuals in Central America, Panama, the U.S. and Latin America, including USAID Missions. Also, a bibliographic listing of project-produced documentation is up to date and available.

All of the food aid bulletins were published and distributed to the same recipients. The bulletin evolved during the project as INCAP then combined the bulletin with that of project 596-0115 into a well-integrated health and nutrition bulletin.

Ten video documentaries on food programs were produced. These 20-25 minute films were extremely well received by country food program staff and political officials, and support INCAP and its countries in advocacy efforts, as well as in-country training efforts.

## 4. Technical Assistance

Over 200 person-months of TA were given by project staff to country food and nutrition programs. INCAP TA supported primarily government food program planning, coordination, design, management, logistics, monitoring, evaluation, targeting and staff training. INCAP also provided important TA to food security efforts, and, most recently, to helping countries mitigate the effects of structural

adjustment programs on the most nutritionally at-risk. INCAP helped produce guidelines, draft strategies, analyze data from studies, carry out evaluations, develop country food security and/or food aid action plans, and implement such action plans. INCAP assisted the governments of El Salvador and Nicaragua in developing cookies for use in their feeding programs, and carrying out feasibility studies for this purpose in Panama and Honduras. Finally, INCAP assisted the World Bank and other international agencies in carrying out statistical and narrative updates on food and nutrition programs in Latin America and Central America.

##### 5. Operations and Applied Research

Twelve of the 18 studies contemplated were carried out. Among these were the two evaluations of the Costa Rica MCH and School Feeding programs, the Guatemala management assessment, the study on the household use of donated food in El Salvador (with a preliminary anthropological study on household food distribution patterns in Guatemala, the information from which was helpful in the design of the El Salvador study), the study on the technical basis for MCH screening, monitoring and discharge, and an evaluation of the 5 Honduras MCH programs. The El Salvador displaced persons study was designed, but never carried out since a government change in that country caused interest shift away from singling out the displaced as an at-risk group. In addition, 2 of the 8 cost analyses of food programs were carried out, one in Costa Rica and the other in Guatemala. The Costa Rica analysis was published as part of the documentation of the Costa Rica

MCH and School Feeding evaluations. The Guatemala analysis was never completed. No more analyses were done because discussions of food program costs proved to be politically sensitive.

The regional information compilation exercise was carried out, and updated once. It provided excellent information, and the most complete record in one place of the Central American food aid situation that had ever been put together. Still, certain donors were unwilling to provide information on their programs.

Instead of 4 model information systems, 1 for each type of program (MCH, School Feeding, food for work and emergency), the government of El Salvador provided the opportunity to develop a comprehensive system for their 10 food aid programs operated out of their Community Development Directorate. As a result, the one system developed worked for all four types of programs.

By reviewing the food aid program information systems of several governmental implementing agencies that handled U.N. World Food Program food in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and by doing the same with the systems of the Ministries of Health and Education of Costa Rica as part of the evaluation there, INCAP was able to review the systems of over 30 programs. In the same manner, INCAP, by improving the organizational food aid information systems, improved the systems

of all of these programs.

INCAP completed the development of the Guatemala school cookie, trained bakers in its preparation, developed and trained bakers to apply quality control procedures and provided quality control monitoring services to the Guatemalan Ministry of Education. However, due to the U.S. government's suspension of all aid to Panama in 1988, INCAP had to suspend the Panama cereal initiative. After the suspension was lifted in 1990, however, INCAP helped Panama test cereal acceptability.

## 6. Planning Assistance Support

A complete report of this support is provided in the final report of the Cooperative Agreement between ROCAP and Planning Assistance. Briefly, the Planning Assistance Resident Advisor assisted both ROCAP and INCAP in:

- a. Producing and reviewing project documentation, as well as documentation related to INCAP efforts in food security and nutrition program improvement.
- b. Developing scopes of work for consultants, helping identify them, guiding them in their consultancies and reviewing and finalizing their reports.
- c. Helping INCAP plan and carry out follow-up to these consultancies.
- d. Helping INCAP carry out all project activities, including serving on several technical task forces.
- e. Helping INCAP work with donor agencies and international PVOs.
- f. Facilitating institutional relationships between INCAP and AID centrally funded projects.
- g. Preparing project documentation for dissemination to CDIE and other U.S. information centers.

In addition, the Cooperative Agreement called for short-term TA as needed. Such TA was to be provided in food program planning, design, implementation, management, monitoring, evaluation, PL-480 regulations and procedures, and food tracking systems. Planning Assistance also assisted in setting up a peer group review on the manual on feeding and nutrition during emergency situations (providing two peer group members), worked with ROCAP and INCAP in reorienting the operations and applied research component, provided consultants to review the manuals on food handling, management and quality control, and provided a consultant to review INCAP unified laboratory management systems. Finally, in the last year and a half of the project, INCAP and Planning Assistance signed a

subgrant agreement to carry out a project on the handling, processing and management of basic cereal grains in Central America. This subgrant, which used project funds under the Cooperative Agreement, allowed INCAP to work with each Central American country and Panama in assessing the needs for improving the handling, processing, management and marketing of corn, rice and other staple grains, and making recommendations to governments on how to improve them.

## 2.5 PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation

Several instruments were used to ensure regular ongoing project monitoring and evaluation:

Quarterly INCAP reports and quarterly reports by the Planning Assistance Technical Advisor--These reports provided a review of activities planned for the reporting period (the previous quarter) and those completed, explanations of any delays or constraints, and discussed plans for the next quarter. They also assessed progress made toward producing project outputs and meeting project objectives.

Monthly INCAP financial reports--They provided a record of inputs on INCAP's part. They were often late because INCAP waited for financial reports from INCAP country teams, which went from each country PAHO office to PAHO/Washington, back to INCAP when compiled, and then from INCAP to ROCAP.

Quarterly Planning Assistance financial reports--These reports were a monitoring tool for the project inputs that INCAP did not manage, namely, the U.S. technical assistance, and especially, funds under the ROCAP-Planning Assistance Cooperative Agreement.

Technical Advisor's daily contact with INCAP--This contact helped ROCAP and INCAP ensure that the project was on track, and identify potential problems and solutions.

ROCAP Semi-Annual Project Reports (SARs)--Through these reports, ROCAP was able to monitor inputs, outputs and progress toward objectives.

### Interim Evaluations

Both external and internal evaluations were carried out during the LOP.

#### External:

The first such evaluation was completed in May 1987. The evaluation team consisted of Dr. Jaime Benavente, Dr. James Pines and Dr. Carol Adelman, under a contract with Community Systems Foundation. The following were the major findings:

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1. INCAP had overcome significant constraints in incorporating the project into its overall program. Among these were integrating engineers, management specialists and planners into an organization dominated by physicians and other health professionals.
2. The major administrative issues were how to relate the research component to other project activities and how a long term external advisor would be used.
3. In the planning and coordination, technical assistance and training components, INCAP's success related directly to their becoming increasingly sensitive, and responding to individual country needs rather than imposing their own ideas.
4. INCAP's emphasis on large-scale research initiatives was proving to be inappropriate in countries strapped for funds, particularly when host counterparts had not been sufficiently involved in developing research ideas. Additionally, the little research carried out to that point had been too academic to be practical. Overall, this component was the only one to be seriously behind schedule.
5. Too many activities were carried out on a regional level when a more effective orientation would be national, and insufficient people with direct food aid experience were involved with the project.

Major recommendations included the following:

1. ROCAP should allow the project to test the effectiveness of assigning full time INCAP facilitators to one or more countries. This was done, and ultimately resulted in INCAP's adopting the country team approach in all of its programs.
2. The project should use food-aid-experienced PVO staff as consultants in project activities, to take advantage of their practical experience and mobilize their support for the project. This was done, with the result that project staff learned much about food aid and the consultants themselves supported project activities for the entire LOP.
3. The research component should be redefined, and no new research initiated until this was done. This was done in August 1987. The redefined component was written into the PP Amendment of 1987.
4. Project researchers should increase their operations research skills so that these can be better integrated into other project activities. Through the operations research study tour sponsored by Planning Assistance, their own experience and TA from PRICOR, this recommendation was implemented.
5. The food program impact study in Guatemala should be eliminated since it is not appropriate for achieving project objectives and there is no governmental support for it. This was done as part of the redefinition of the research component.

The second external evaluation was done in May-June 1990 by a team of evaluators provided through John Snow, Inc. This was a joint evaluation of both ROCAP-funded projects implemented at INCAP. The team leader was Dr. Abraham Horwitz. Dr. David Nelson, Dr. Joyce King and Mr. James Noel were the three consultants who dealt with this project, whereas three other evaluators dealt with the other project, and Dr. Joyce Osland assessed the institutional implications of the two projects. This evaluation was seen as the final external evaluation. Its recommendations were seen not only as helping the two projects improve their effects and impacts, but also, and especially, as helping ROCAP and INCAP draw out institutional lessons that would help design a follow-on institutional strengthening project. The main findings for this project were the following:

1. The project has developed an effective, competent team which was coherently developing and applying technologies, methodologies and guidelines (TMGs) in all of the countries in the region. However, Honduras was the farthest behind in this work. In addition, the TMG development process had not affected the local community or feeding site level to any degree.
2. USAID missions and PVOs in the various countries felt left out of the project process, even though they agreed with its objectives.
3. Food program effectiveness measures had not been established. Thus, achievement of the project purpose could not be fully measured.
4. INCAP had not been able to ensure effective completion between the two ROCAP-funded projects in order to achieve the project goal (the same goal for both projects).
5. It seemed unlikely that TMG development could be completed in the rest of the LOP (at that point, the PACD was December 31, 1990).

The evaluation team then made the following recommendations:

1. The project should be extended in order to complete the TMG transfer process to the countries and provide time to evaluate effects. Two extensions were carried out, with a current PACD of May 31, 1992.
2. Joint activities between the two ROCAP-funded projects should be developed to achieve project regional food, health and nutrition objectives, including food security at national, community and family levels. While a committee was formed for this purpose, few joint activities were ultimately carried out. However, as part of its strategic planning process for the 1990s, food and nutrition security was adopted as the focus of all INCAP activities, with a view to improving the regional health and nutrition situation in the region. Activities from both projects and their spin-offs were integrated into this overall focus.

3. The project should develop an innovative, decentralized strategy to deal with the special conditions in Honduras. By 1991, INCAP had formed country teams, including a large one in Honduras. One of the members was asked to help facilitate the development of activities in the food and nutrition area. The result has been increased activities there, including an acceleration of the TMG transfer process.
4. To improve the effects of the TMG process at local and site levels, INCAP should develop and promote community participation using the expertise of PVOs and other outside consultants with experience in the area. INCAP did begin developing this area, and it has appeared as an institutional orientation in the strategic plan for the 1990s.
5. INCAP and ROCAP should continually try to improve relations among USAIDs, ROCAP, INCAP and other donors. This has been done at various levels. The most successful networking has been INCAP Director presentations to USAID Mission staff, accompanied by ROCAP staff. The project was also able to develop joint initiatives and promote food aid coordination in Guatemala with the World Food Program. Relations with PVOs remain somewhat distant, although individual PVO staff have supported certain INCAP initiatives. Also, information exchange has improved at country level, as well as between ROCAP and USAIDs.
6. Indicators should be developed and tested to verify food program effectiveness, and a tracking system should be designed and implemented. Planning Assistance attempted to define effectiveness in a project assessment (discussed below), and INCAP project staff developed a set of indicators in response to a ROCAP-initiated development of purpose-level indicators exercise that was carried out soon after this evaluation for all ROCAP-funded projects in the region. However, this exercise was over shadowed by other priorities, especially the INCAP strategic plan work, and was never completed.
7. A follow-on project should be developed to help ensure that regional health, food and nutrition objectives are met. An institutional strengthening follow-on project was developed and signed in June 1991. It was decided that INCAP would contribute best to such objectives if it could be institutionally strengthened, thus consolidating the technical capabilities it had developed under the two ROCAP-funded projects.

#### Internal

INCAP carried out activity assessments and accomplishments reviews at various times during the LOP. It produced two such assessments just prior to the two external evaluations (April 1987 and May 1989). It also produced assessments in November 1987, November 1988 and October 1989, in preparation for the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee meetings those years. The recommendations of these assessments and reviews were aimed at increasing INCAP internal support and country support for the project. Among the concerns were slow INCAP administration, diversion of project staff attention from key activities, the lack of sustained commitment on governments' parts, especially after a change, and a need to do more at community level.

A final internal evaluation was done by the Planning Assistance Technical Advisor in December 1988. It was meant to be the basis of a planning meeting between ROCAP, the INCAP Director and Project Coordinator, and the Technical Advisor, to make adjustments in project implementation and enhance the Planning Assistance contribution. It was in this document that an attempt was made to define effectiveness in food programs. It also attempted to link project activities with project objectives that they each would help meet. Finally, the assessment recommended ways for project activities to relate to each other more closely to avoid dissipation of efforts and ensure that project objectives could be met. The planning meeting was held, used this document as its base, and resulted in better integrated activities and Planning Assistance support.

### Project Activities Completion Report

This report will be completed by the PACD.

### Program Reviews, Sector Assessments and Multiproject Evaluations

INCAP carried out four of these during the LOP:

1. Progress in the Improvement of the Use of Food Aid in Central America and Panama, 1988. This document reviewed the status of food aid programs for the participants in the second Regional Workshop. It was the basis for discussions and especially, the revisions of country action plans.
2. A Summary of the Progress, Accomplishments and Perspectives of Regional Food and Nutrition Projects, 1989. This was an assessment done by INCAP of food aid and other food and nutrition programs.
3. Priority Area Evaluation: Improvement of Regional Food and Nutrition Projects, 1985-89, 1990. Project 596-0116 was one of several projects in a PAHO regional plan to improve health and nutrition in the region. This document represents an evaluation of all of them, and does not discuss any of the projects at length.
4. Analysis of the Food and Nutrition Situation in Central America and Panama, 1990 and 1992. This is more of a sector assessment, which includes food aid as one of the ways to improve food and nutrition problems.

### Post-Project Monitoring

Since the project has become part of the INCAP institutional strengthening process, its food security activities should be monitored along with the technical strengthening activities of project 596-0169, INCAP Institutional Strengthening.

### 3.0 CONTRIBUTION SUMMARY

#### Project Contributions

The major contributors in support of the Technical Support for Food Assistance Programs are as follows:

- USAID/ROCAP Regional Office of Central America and Panama.
- INCAP Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama (INCAP)

The value of contributions made by each participating institution is summarized below:

<b>Cooperating Institution</b>	<b>Planned Contributions</b>	<b>Value of Contributions</b>	<b>% of Total Contributions</b>
USAID/ROCAP	\$6,100,000	\$6,099,467	100
INCAP	<u>\$1,733,000*</u>	<u>\$2,148,000*</u>	<u>124</u>
TOTAL	\$7,833,000	\$8,247 467	105

\* The amount of Counterpart Contributions will be confirmed with the results of the Financial Management Review being performed by Arthur Andersen.

### 4.0 PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to the project outputs discussed in previous sections, the following were produced:

1. Food security or food aid policies or strategies in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. In their final form, they are all food security or "food and nutrition" plans and strategies. They also help achieve the project aim of integrating food aid with other development initiatives by including food aid and other development activities as ways to achieve food security and improved nutritional status.
2. Institutional assessments and strengthening efforts were carried out with support from project staff in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. 12 government food aid implementing or planning institutions were involved, covering about half of all Central American food aid programs.

3. A methodology for carrying out strategic level operations research was developed and tested. This methodology involves the identification of problems, constraints and intrainstitutional relationships by all members of an organization at all levels, guided by a facilitator. It was used in El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala with success, and published as a set of guidelines.
4. A comparative study of two mechanisms for carrying out a MCH program was implemented. This study took place in the Totonicanpan area of Guatemala in 1991. It compared two MCH programs run by CARE and the World Food Program through the Health Ministry. The CARE program was community based, whereas the Ministry program was clinic/health post based. Both had the same logistics, management and technical problems. However, the community-based program had more overall control problems, whereas the clinic-based program lacked trained personnel.
5. INCAP helped do a short MCH program evaluation in El Salvador. It was meant to gather and analyze preliminary information for a World Food Program evaluation team on real program structure, admission norms, effects of time in program and services given. This study allowed the World Food Program team to carry out a more thorough evaluation than they might have otherwise.
6. Two short studies on the nutritional effects of MCH programs were carried out. The study in El Salvador showed that the program did not affect overall prevalence of malnutrition in the rural population in which the program was carried out, but the older the children were, the more likely it was that their nutritional status would improve. The study in Nicaragua showed that 51% of the children studied did improve their nutritional status by the end of their participation in the program, and that the donated food rations helped the most malnourished children more than the less malnourished.
7. A study was carried out on the use of damaged or spoiled donated food. When donated food is declared unfit for human consumption, it is either sold/donated for animal feed or destroyed. This study attempted to suggest how some amounts of unfit food could be recovered and cleaned, and how the rest could be mixed with other animal food to provide improved animal nutrition.
8. A survey was done of food program coverage in Guatemala's sentinel areas. It was found that only about one-third of all families were receiving food rations, and that the rations given were not always well targeted to the most at-risk families.
9. A survey was done of structural adjustment programs in Central America and Panama and their effects on the food and nutrition situation. This document served as the basis for a regional donor-government conference in November 1991 on the effects of structural adjustment programs on the food and nutrition situation, what could be done about it, and who would do it. INCAP sponsored the event under this project, and used it to show its capabilities with a view to defining its role in alleviating the effects of structural adjustment programs in the region.

10. The Basic Food Basket methodology developed by INCAP was updated under the project. This piece of work, to be published in 1992, updates the basic methodology and revises tables on the nutritional value of foods available in the region. This update will be useful in carrying out consumption studies.
11. A review of methods of carrying out consumption studies was completed. This study reviews existing consumption study methods as a reference for study implementers.
12. Many training materials were produced. These materials, developed as part of training courses and workshops, are being used by trainees in their own work, and by some of these trainees in instructing others in their countries.
13. A USAID-funded evaluation of the Honduras food stamp programs was conducted. In this evaluation, done in late 1991 and published in mid-1992, INCAP recommended improvements in the administrative and information systems of the GOH implementing agency, and that this agency should increase the understanding of the program beneficiaries, as well as their communities, of how the program should operate and benefit them. The implementing agency is interested in having INCAP help implement the recommendations.
14. INCAP assist IFPRI in following up on a study of the nutritional and social effects of a switch to non-traditional export crops in rural Guatemala. This study resurveyed the same population in the Cuatro Pinos Cooperative area as a mid-1980s study to see if there had been any change in social and nutritional indicators. INCAP carried out data collection and preliminary analysis.

Project activities and outputs had the following effects:

1. INCAP established itself as the TA provider of choice in food aid and food security improvement for government officials. Through this project, INCAP gained a deeper understanding of the food and nutrition situation in the region, how PVOs and donors operate, and what country food and nutrition needs really were. The project also helped INCAP acquire significant food and nutrition planning skills, such as food policy development, food and nutrition project development, food handling and management skills and human resource development skills. This knowledge and project efforts helped INCAP become less academic in its approach to practical problems and more problem-solving oriented. It also helped INCAP begin the process of identifying where its comparative advantages are, and market them to potential clients.
2. Government officials, at both political and technical levels, now have a heightened awareness of the need to improve food aid programs, the value of food aid as an important development resource and the importance of good management of scarce resources. It has become clearer to government officials that food aid will continue to be a major development resource for some time, as well as a humanitarian intervention. The current strong awareness of food aid's role has been encouraging, and perhaps one

of the project's most important effects if it can be sustained.

3. Food aid program technical staff in all countries in the region has acquired important skills that can significantly strengthen food programs in the future. Project trainees have gained skill in numerous areas related to project design, management, systems analysis, food handling and management, and food and nutrition education.
4. The skills of the trainees have been recognized by their governments and donor agencies. Project trainees have begun taking the lead in project development and management. Some have even been hired by donor organizations and PVOs.
5. INCAP has begun building a reputation outside of the region for its work in food aid and food security. Some of its manuals and guidelines have been ordered by U.S. universities and donor agencies for use elsewhere in Latin America. One donor agency has even suggested that various manuals be translated into English and French for use in Africa and Asia. In addition, INCAP has been looked to for assistance by the World Bank, the PEC and other international programs and agencies to collect and analyze food and nutrition data throughout Latin America for reports. Finally, INCAP has been praised for the quality of its work and its presentations of this work at international fora.
6. INCAP has broadened its contacts with governments and international food and nutrition improvement efforts. Through the project, INCAP has learned to work with Ministries of Agriculture, Planning, Finance, Education and others. In the past, it had worked almost exclusively with Ministries of Health. INCAP has also become involved with regional food and agriculture planning efforts through its membership in CORECA, the Central American ministry of agriculture planning council.
7. INCAP has shown food program planners and implementers the value of close collaboration of all levels of an organization in problem identification and resolution. In the organizations with which INCAP has worked in operations research and information systems development, INCAP facilitated the intensive, joint analysis that led political and technical staff to evaluate their programs and develop information systems. The dialogue opened has continued within organizations. In many cases, it was the first time that each department or division understood fully what every other one did and how each contributed to meeting institutional and program objectives.

## 5.0 PROGRESS TOWARDS ATTAINMENT OF PURPOSE-LEVEL

### OBJECTIVES

All of the purpose-level objectives were met. Country action plans for improving food aid programs were developed and updated once during the LOP. As stated above, national food aid or food security policies, plans or strategies were developed in five countries, thus surpassing

the objective. Food aid coordinating mechanisms were set up in five countries, surpassing that objective as well. How well they function depends on government and donor commitment.

In addition, food program staff has acquired the skills needed to manage food programs better and make them more effective. The required guidelines have been developed, and promulgation has begun. Country food program and some donor staff have improved their technical and managerial capacity. Both INCAP and food program planners and implementers have a greater knowledge of major problems and alternative solutions. They also have a better understanding of the social, economic, dietary and nutritional effects of food programs. Finally, food programs are now better integrated into other development activities. Finally, at least 10 food programs have improved their targeting of beneficiaries.

## 6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

1. Government, donor and implementing agency commitment, interest and support are not always equal, but must be kept at high levels for a food aid technical support project to achieve its purpose. As discussed earlier, interest has remained high, but commitment has waived as governments changed and staff changed with it. Food aid has been seen as a political liability to some governments. They know that they need it, but it is administratively difficult to deal with if done well, a source of corruption if not, and a source of criticism in any case. Also, political and social priorities change as governments change. As a result, project activities may be suspended for a time, and may need to be changed or modified. In addition, support waived according to financial resources. Experience under this project has shown that considerable advocacy is needed to ensure high interest, and to ensure that this interest translates into commitment and support. It is also important to ensure that activities planned are realistic in terms of resources that may be available for carrying them out. In the case of this project, when government and agency funds proved to be scarcer than assumed during project design, the project spent more to bring regional activities to country level, to bring country participants to regional meetings, and to carry out actions that the governments could not fund themselves. The latter is risky, because it is unlikely that governments will find the funds to continue or follow up on these activities, an important step if food aid program improvement is to continue and be consolidated. It might be better to plan and implement smaller, shorter term activities that require small amounts of funding and would show results much sooner and thus generate increased interest. This could help sustain commitment and bring funding for larger scale activities.
2. To ensure that a long term technical advisor develops the level of trust necessary to be included completely in project activities, he/she should begin work as soon as possible after project start-up.. In the case of this project, project implementation began by the end of 1985, but the advisor did not arrive until August 1987. By that time, project staff felt that they did not need an external advisor. ROCAP insisted, and it took a long time before the advisor was trusted enough to be brought into project planning and implementation. Consequently, the Technical Advisor, a knowledgeable foodaid manager, was not utilized

as well as he could have been. This resulted in plans and documents that did not meet ROCAP standards in their first version, and needed to be reworked. Consequently, funds were sometimes delayed for activities. Once the Technical Advisor was able to review documentation and plans, they were usually accepted by ROCAP the first time they were presented, and delays caused by a need to redraft submissions were reduced.

3. When working with a resource such as food aid, which can be used in so many ways, and with a dynamic political and social situation, flexibility in implementation is critical. While keeping to the purpose and objectives, we needed to change the form of some activities. Also, when governments changed, activity timetables changed as INCAP tried to generate interest in, and commitment to the project by the new authorities. In addition, new activities were added when countries sought support from INCAP in areas not originally contemplated in the PP, but which were clearly relevant to achieving the project purpose and objectives, and met country needs. Finally, some institutional strengthening activities were added in preparation for the follow-on institutionally focussed project. Also, as governments and agencies moved toward using food security and nutrition as organizing concepts in improving nutrition in the region, the project adopted that orientation as well. This flexibility ensured that the project purpose and objectives were met.
4. When food programs are not being implemented as designed, it is preferable to carry out process evaluations and subsequently improve program implementation rather than do impact evaluations. It is especially important to first ensure that the targeted beneficiaries are regularly receiving the correct ration, and consuming it. Otherwise, there will be no impact to measure.
5. The focussed multidisciplinary project team approach to implementation is dynamic and highly productive for this kind of project. This approach was the most effective way of ensuring an effective analysis of problems and the development of solutions in response to a complex reality. A more segmented approach would not have worked as well.
6. Video documentaries on food programs, as well as filmstrips and slide shows, are a major support to advocacy and training programs. This proved true in this project, especially in helping program managers find ways of solving problems.
7. A country-based approach to identifying and solving problems is more effective than a regional approach. It is true that certain interventions need to be planned on a regional level, and certain technologies, methodologies, guidelines and norms can be developed regionally. However, each country presents different conditions, interests and needs. Consequently, the regional outputs of this project had to be tested and adapted in each country. Also, INCAP established itself as the TA source of choice for food aid not by its regional efforts, but by its country-based work.
8. Ultimately, food aid programs will become effective only when they are improved at the community level. As a PAHO institution, INCAP was required to focus much of its work on the central government level. However, INCAP was able to work with regional, district

and local institutions under this project to some extent. In all cases where INCAP did so, it was felt that their work had had a greater effect on program management and implementation.