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EVALUATION REPORT:  
FPMD ASSISTANCE TO THE  
CENTRE FOR AFRICAN  
FAMILY STUDIES (CAFS)

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**FAMILY PLANNING MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT**

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## ACRONYMS

CAFS	Centre for African Family Studies
CERPOD	Centre for Applied Research on Population and Development
FPMD	Family Planning Management Development
FRAC	Francophone Regional Advisory Committee
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
INTRAH	Program for International Training in Health
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
PBD	Performance-Based Disbursement
REDSO	Regional and Economic Development Services Office
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Technical Assistance of the Family Planning Management Development Project (FPMD) of Management Sciences for Health (MSH) to the Centre for African Family Studies (CAFS) included personnel systems development, documentation and management training, internal computer capability and institutional development. It is necessary to look at FPMD assistance to CAFS within the context of the change through which CAFS is passing as a result of its separation from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). This period of change coincides with many uncertainties within CAFS, creating a crisis situation which has resulted in low morale among the staff.

There are three dimensions to this crisis. First, there has been no decision regarding the closing of CAFS' London office and the integration of the Francophone office with the main office in Nairobi. Second, CAFS does not have a permanent director; the current director has had the position of Acting Director for two years. These first two dimensions are discussed in Section III. A. The third aspect of the crisis, addressed in Section III. B., is the need for CAFS to develop a new identity while working toward sustainability through marketing.

The assistance of FPMD within this picture was generally considered by CAFS' staff members to be of high quality, with one notable exception: FPMD assistance to CAFS is not integrated into a coherent program designed to assist CAFS in overcoming its current crisis. CAFS staff members also expressed interest in developing a partnership with MSH and other collaborating agencies.

The major lesson to be learned by MSH is that, although FPMD's technical assistance was useful to CAFS, MSH should not commit itself to perform a series of disparate activities for an agency in need of radical transformation. There are also lessons to be learned for donors. First, sustainability should be allowed to develop gradually, in order to allow organizations to develop. Second, when an organization is passing through a crisis, donors should hand over "conductorship" of the organization to the agency providing the technical assistance. Finally, donor agencies should focus more on results, rather than process.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The evaluation of FPMD's contribution of CAFS (see Box 1 for a short description of CAFS) was conducted during two visits, one in December 1994 to the Francophone branch of CAFS, located in Lome, Togo, and the second to CAFS headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya in May 1994. Practically all professional and administrative staff of both CAFS offices were interviewed. Not all had been involved with MSH assistance, and therefore their knowledge of MSH interventions was sometimes sporadic and indirect. In addition, a few outside observers, knowledgeable about MSH were interviewed.

This evaluation, as all other internal evaluations of FPMD projects, deals primarily with MSH interventions. FPMD assistance to CAFS included personnel systems development,

documentation and management training, internal computer training capability and institutional development support for the Lome office. Nevertheless, more so than for most other FPMD projects, it was necessary to look at the broader picture within which CAFS has received assistance from MSH. This is necessary because CAFS is going through a period of tremendous change as a consequence of its severance from IPPF and the imperative to become autonomous. It is not only a period of change, but also a crisis period because of the many uncertainties looming over CAFS. The report therefore first looks at the difficult passage CAFS is navigating. It then looks at the MSH interventions, and it concludes with recommendations for MSH and other donor agencies.

### III. A DIFFICULT PASSAGE

#### A. A Ship without a Compass

It would be an exercise in self-delusion to deny that CAFS is traversing the greatest crisis in its history. There are three dimensions to this crisis. First, the decision regarding where to locate the Francophone office is still hanging in the air. Second, no permanent director has yet been appointed. Finally, the most crucial dimension of the crisis is the imperative for CAFS to define a new identity and develop a coherent program surrounding this new identity while making substantial progress toward the goal of sustainability. Because of its importance, this last aspect is dealt with in a separate section.

As a consequence of the crisis, morale is low at CAFS, even more so at its Francophone office in Lome because of the uncertainty about the fate of that office, which might be eliminated by the end of 1995. A decision was expected for January 1995; however no decision was made, and the new CAFS board is going to set up a small committee to study the pros and cons of an eventual transfer of the Lome office to Nairobi and its integration into the main office. There

#### Box 1 What is CAFS?

CAFS, the Centre for African Family Studies, was established in 1975 by the African Regional Council of IPPF as its training and research institution. Its headquarters are in Nairobi, and it has an office for Francophone Africa in Lome, Togo. Its primary objective is to inform and educate Sub-Saharan Africa on population and family planning issues as well as to create a pool of well-trained managers and service providers in the region. One of its major responsibilities was the training of senior and intermediate level personnel in the practical issues of family planning education, motivation, program development and service delivery; family planning research; monitoring and evaluation; family planning and population information resources management; and women and health issues. In addition CAFS provided technical assistance in these fields. It also undertakes a certain amount of research projects. Recent examples are: a study of the socio-cultural and medical factors associated with adolescent pregnancies in Kenya, determinants of male fertility and sexual behavior in Kenya, and the health status of refugee women in Kenya. The approximately 30-member multinational staff of CAFS includes demographers; IEC specialists; medical doctors and nurses; social science research specialists; journalists; documentation and training specialists; and accountants. CAFS services are supported by an in-house library and information and documentation unit. (Centre for African Family Studies, *In Country Training*; *Programme of Activities*; and *Technical Assistance Services*)

are advantages and disadvantages to such a move. Internal communication may be strengthened substantially, and in principle it should be possible to develop a stronger common vision and a more cohesive plan of action. However, internal communication problems in a bilingual environment should not be underestimated. Few members of CAFS are highly fluent in both English and French. Anglophone members at the Nairobi office are currently enrolled in a French course given almost daily at their headquarters. There is one staff member who acts ex officio as interpreter during the weekly staff meetings. As someone familiar with bilingual situations, it is my feeling that the speed at which effective bilingualism can be obtained is overestimated. Other advantages of the integration are common use of resources such as the library and documentation center and more unified and efficient financial and personnel administration.

On the other hand, external communication with Francophone Africa conducted from the Anglophone environment of Nairobi may present its own problems. The postal system between West and East Africa is notoriously slow at its best. Furthermore, Francophone staff members will be removed from the proximity of Francophone Subsaharan Africa. As a consequence, the Francophone office may become less attuned to the reality of family planning in Francophone Africa. At the same time it will be more difficult to develop certain activities in close collaboration with local entities in Francophone Africa.

The second dimension of the crisis is the leadership vacuum. The current director, who is fluent in both English and French, has been acting director for more than two years. It appears that the board does not yet have a viable candidate in mind. Understandably, even with the best intentions and with capable talent, no director can muster sufficient human relations skills if his/her status remains defined as 'acting'. Several staff members pointed to the serious consequences of this uncertainty about future leadership for leading CAFS out of its present crisis and to the incongruity of this situation with the future of the institution and the need to make tough decisions.

The general demoralization of the staff is compounded by a series of personnel problems, partially the consequence of the situation, in turn further complicating its solution. From the interviews with CAFS members the following problems especially emerged:

- ▶ Among several staff members there is a feeling that their work is not sufficiently considered for advancement. Symptomatic of this feeling is the following statement: "There is no incentive for upward mobility in CAFS. Advancement depends on the time one has spent in CAFS and not on the number and the quality of the assignments." Someone put it more bluntly: "In the assessment of staff members I do not feel that justice is being done."
- ▶ Even more general is the perception that staff members are compartmentalized and that the pressure from the implementation of the projects makes it impossible to see

each other sufficiently to become a real team. Ongoing projects are described as vertical in nature and with few interlinkages. One comment summarizes the whole situation: "Interdepartmental collaboration is not very well developed at CAFS, and that is one of our principal weaknesses. Our activity reports reflect this situation. Collaboration with other people in implementing a project seldom appears in our reports. Criticism is not easily accepted because we want to protect our area, and not CAFS." The over-emphasis on project execution is blamed for the lack of team spirit: "When projects wind down one does not feel part of CAFS because your existence as a CAFS member may be threatened. It causes instability, fear, overcaution and, ultimately, concentration on the job suffers from it. We still feel too much as belonging exclusively to one program area. I should feel as the member of a team and be rewarded as such."

The lack of good job descriptions and the low level of system development are also frequently cited as contributing to personnel problems. It is felt that there are too many chiefs. One typical comment: "Roles are not well defined. There is not always a clear idea how the division of work has to be organized. This is reflected in the flows of information. There is no clear policy on what information has to stay confidential and what can or should be transmitted to others."

In sum, staff morality and job satisfaction are very low at CAFS. There is a perception among the staff that its personal and professional welfare are becoming the victims of the crisis through which CAFS is passing. Admittedly these impressions are based on subjective characterizations by the members of CAFS. While some of these characterizations could be independently verified, others could not. However there is no doubt that staff members perceive the situation as such and that the future director of CAFS will have to operate within an environment loaded with morale and personnel problems.

## **B. Sustainability and the Marketing of CAFS**

The issue of sustainability, as understood in its broad sense, is undoubtedly the most important long-term issue facing CAFS. The current grant from USAID to CAFS, initiated in 1994, consists of two distinct phases and will terminate in the year 2000. During the initial two years of the project, funds will be used to build the systems and technical capacity. For the second phase and assuming the systems have been successfully implemented, Performance-Based Disbursement (PBD) will be applied. This involves flexible funding depending on CAFS' demonstrated ability to become market oriented and viable. From 1994 to 2000 CAFS supposedly will operate with a budget US\$ 28.2 million. USAID will contribute US\$9.6 million. CAFS, through the sale of training programs and technical services, has to come up with US\$10.1 million. The remainder will come from other donor assistance.  
(REDSO/ESA/PH 1994)

## 1. Need for Sustainability

As the following observations from CAFS members show, the awareness of the need for sustainability now is strongly present in CAFS, but how to become sustainable remains problematic:

- We are starting to think in market terms. However 70 percent of our staff is not in a situation to exploit the market. We have a tough future ahead. Here collaboration with MSH would be very useful.
- The market awareness factor is easy. By that I mean that we are aware of the importance of the market for the future of CAFS. The implementation factor is going to be harder. I still find that several CAFS members are not realizing that you have to make sure that each project needs to pick up its own costs and still raise some additional revenue.
- In the past there was no standardized way for CAFS to provide technical assistance. Now we will need more negotiating and consulting skills. But these skills by far and large remain to be developed among us.
- We talk a lot about marketing. We have sort of a mission statement but we do not have a real strategic plan although a task force has been set up. We have indeed not marketed ourselves enough. Even in Nairobi people do not know us. We provided support to other institutions but CAFS is forgotten.

The above statements clearly indicate that there is no need to convince the staff members of CAFS of the importance of sustainability, and that awareness by itself is insufficient to obtain the goal of sustainability. When it comes to formulating exactly what needs to be done, there is often a lot of vagueness and even a certain degree of passivity. Reacting to the last statement that even in Nairobi CAFS was unknown, I asked what could be done to put CAFS more firmly on the map in Nairobi. I got startled eyes but no suggestions for effective action. It is not, as the following statements show, that CAFS members have not been thinking more concretely about some of the problems which need to be overcome or some of the decisions which need to be taken. What is lacking, however, is a coherent framework for, and an effective division of labor among, staff members for bringing CAFS to the market.

## 2. Problems and Suggestions Related to Marketing

CAFS personnel perceived some problems related to marketing, and offered some suggestions regarding marketing.

A correct assessment of overhead and its distribution over the different projects seems to loom large among the many problems CAFS members feel need attention in CAFS' long journey toward sustainability.

- The control of overhead is the key issue. We have to recover these costs. We need to work out our fees. Subsidies have been pervasive in our past experience. It is often difficult now to charge for overhead costs now. We have been addicted to these subsidies. Staff has to get involved so that expenses are recovered.
- There is the whole problem of time utilization. We need to assign the time of staff members more accurately to the various projects. For example filling out time sheets is needed to measure the contribution of staff work to various projects. People thought that it was an inspection mechanism and it was difficult to convince staff members of its usefulness.

Most persons in CAFS, almost to an irrational extent, put their salvation in the hands of a marketing unit and tend to forget that their own concerted efforts could be far more important and eventually could reduce the need for such a person or unit. The following idea was related by most CAFS members:

- There is not yet a marketing unit in CAFS. Nor as yet is there real marketing of CAFS. Neither is there a marketing specialist who supposedly has to be nominated. Marketing has been left to CAFS staff members. Marketing requires special techniques which we do not have. A marketing specialist is like the animal who leads the other members of the herd to the watering hole. If we have such an animal we can follow it. But we ourselves do not have the same instincts and may get lost in the jungle while starving from lack of water.

A few people, definitely a minority in CAFS, feel that the composition of the staff needs to be reviewed, their talents need to be assessed, and some hard decisions may need to be made. Symptomatic of this minority position is the following statement:

- The quality and the talents of our current staff need to be examined. There should be a way to assess abilities of present staff to function in a market-oriented organization, to determine relative needs and to present competent profiles. We have to become more business-minded. Staff members will need help to become aware of cost efficiency. And in some cases ruthless decisions must be taken.

CAFS in the past was mostly a training unit. Some staff members feel that training is that for which CAFS is known and that CAFS should continue to capitalize on it. Others feel that special efforts should be made to overcome the image of a pure training outfit.

- Training is one of our strengths. Our courses are very competitive. We are on the edge. We even use computers in our courses. It is through them that we should structure our market.
- Training was one of our main activities. USAID supported most of the course participants. Now there is no guarantee that USAID will support potential course participants. It is difficult to get course participants when they have to be

sponsored from other donors. At the same time course fees will have to be increased. But we can price ourselves out of the market. The price elasticity of our courses is considerable.

- We have to charge five to six thousand per person for enrollment in our courses versus an average of three thousand which American agencies such as MSH can afford to charge. Often it is also easier to get cheaper round trip tickets from and to the USA than between African cities. These agencies also recruit American candidates for their courses whom they can charge more.
- We have many training skills and we could do more for TOT. Despite high demand there is insufficient funding. Only a small number of candidates can be sponsored. Before for every course we were at least able to support about six students and other candidates got bilateral assistance. Not now. For regional courses it is very difficult to organize them on the base of the fees we would charge currently.
- We have to spread the word that we are not just a training outfit. We have to become experts and give technical assistance in financial management, MIS, evaluation methodology and others. We have to identify the right types of technical support we want to provide. And do it very well! We need a roster of family planning consultants. We have to develop strategic planning specialists.

### 3. New Directions

While discussing the issue of sustainability, CAFS members made many suggestions for new approaches and additional roles for CAFS to broaden its market:

- Most of our marketing efforts used traditional marketing methods such as the use of brochures and pamphlets. These approaches are relatively low cost but no real evaluation of the efficiency of this approach has been done for our work. We have not done much in what could be called non-traditional marketing approaches, that is, the definition of target groups and then development of appropriate methods to entice them in our net of potential clients. We also need to inspect more closely software which could be helpful in presenting ourselves and in identifying our target populations.
- MIS is one area where we should become active in the future. It is something tangible and it involves an image with connotation of 'modern things' such as computers and software. Currently it is impossible for CAFS to provide technical assistance in this area. We ourselves in fact need assistance in that area. First we need a consultant in this area. Staff needs far more training to give efficient assistance. We also need a full-fledged (computer) network to provide assistance which is really based on experience. Training of staff is very important.

- We have experience in family planning research and evaluation. Both areas are in need of more rigorous development in Africa. But we need to focus our research more and we need to let our potential clients know what kind of program evaluation we really can provide.

As can be seen from the above suggestions and the further suggestions for activities in collaboration with MSH (see Section IV. C.), CAFS does not lack in ideas to broaden the market. However, these suggestions suffer from two fundamental flaws present in the current psychology of CAFS. First, they suffer from the lack of a comprehensive strategy and plan to market these activities and establish priorities. Second, several of the suggestions imply well-organized manpower development plans; beyond the desires for manpower quality improvement, these do not seem to exist at CAFS. And behind all these flaws, it is this evaluator's impression that some persons, admittedly a small minority at CAFS, are not completely convinced of the necessity of entering the rough waters of the market. Typical in this regard is a statement that the market perspective will stifle the goodwill of the current clientele of CAFS:

- We are likely to lose our clientele by becoming a market institution. Before entering on the path of 'marketization' several issues need to be examined. It will never be done though because the pressure is just too big!

### C. CAFS vis-a-vis IPPF

Although CAFS was set up by IPPF, the relationship from the very beginning has been one of tension and ambivalence. To IPPF, CAFS often appeared as the spoiled child whose whims had to be satisfied by continuous siphoning of funds while the child refused to grow up. To CAFS, the relationship appeared as one of dependency, stifling its desire to become an independent adult. As one outside observer commented:

- For a long time they (CAFS) were dependent on IPPF. They were confident to always funds from IPPF as its training arm. They felt very comfortable because they got core support from IPPF and project support from USAID. They saw family planning associations as their primary benefactors. It was a weakness from IPPF's side. They (CAFS) believed they did not have to change. On the other hand CAFS perceived IPPF as using (or even abusing them, in CAFS' words) CAFS if it was needed for the purposes of IPPF.

Under the new arrangement CAFS has now a new independent board. At IPPF the situation was described in the following terms:

- CAFS will be completely autonomous. We will not look any more at their plans. They will not report to our board. They have to succeed or to fail on their own! IPPF will still provided some funds for training. They will receive priority for training programs. Even beyond 2000 we will still give them priority if they perform well and have proper accounting and proper planning. However there will be no carte blanche!

At CAFS there is the definite feeling that this is an improvement as the following statement, shared more or less in the same form by many CAFS members, shows<sup>1</sup>:

- Our identities were confused. Our status vis-a-vis the Regional Council of IPPF was one of dependency. We were run by and large by an overpoliticized board. Now CAFS is really free and not part of IPPF politics. CAFS now is not subject any more to certain restrictions to which IPPF by its own nature is. On balance, the link with IPPF has been a disadvantage.

Still, some CAFS members have lingering doubts about the authenticity of this new autonomy:

- On paper we are autonomous. I don't feel it yet. There are still many decisions which have to refer back to IPPF. There was personalized tension on both sides and something of that has not yet completely disappeared.

Others look at the new arrangement with some preoccupations:

- There is now an independent board and this allows CAFS to explore the grasslands by itself. However we are so accustomed to getting our food without having to look for it. IPPF was our biggest client. CAFS will make it only if it transforms itself and positions itself as a market agency.

#### **D. How Do CAFS Members See Their Organization's Future?**

CAFS members were questioned about their perceptions regarding the chances for success. They were unanimous in their doubts about the time frame for the process of self sufficiency. Most of them were convinced that it could not be done within the next two years. A period of four years was considered more realistic. About the chances to succeed, opinions varied from extreme pessimism to moderate and prudent optimism, with some expressing uncertainty about making meaningful predictions for the future of CAFS

- It is difficult to answer the question [about the future of CAFS]. We are still in the stage of transition. Many things are not settled. There is no director. There is really no basis for making a realistic prediction.
- I am very pessimistic for the year 2000. The financial base is very thin. CAFS cannot pay sufficiently to maintain the quality of manpower. There are many chances for a high rate of personnel turnover. But to maintain quality you must retain a minimum of staff!
- To reach self sufficiency by the year 2000 depends on the definition of self sufficiency. By the year 2000 it may be possible to be no more dependant on USAID or other major

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these quotations contain observations on IPPF. It is not our intention to present those as fact. It was not the purpose of this evaluation to analyze IPPF's role, nor was there time to check the validity of these observations. What is important is to point out for this report is that they are perceptions by CAFS and as such have an important role in the thinking of CAFS about the current crisis.

donors. 'No donor' self sufficiency, however, is not realistic. On the contrary CAFS will have to expand its portfolio of donors. The donor base should be amplified. This is more realistic. After all, you guys at MSH expect to continue to depend on USAID. You are in the process of bidding on the continuation of FPMD.

- Obtaining self sufficiency by the year 2000 is feasible if certain structural changes occur at CAFS, especially in regard to management and mentality. But we need to collaborate with outside agencies and we need to go beyond family planning technology.
- To reach the 2000 expectation [i.e., the goal of self sufficiency] one has to be realistic and one has to look at many things. We have the capability but we do not have leadership to provide the necessary vision. We do not have courage to get rid of things not in tune with the new orientation, and we are too lax in the way we manage certain tasks. We do not sufficiently realize that to be competitive we need the strength of the lion and the cunning of the leopard. We don't need to be ruthless, but we have to be more firm in personnel management. It may require the replacement of some persons. Otherwise we will start from unfavorable levels. Attitudes definitely need to change.
- CAFS has a good chance to succeed. The new board is very technical. It contains real professional people. One board member is a marketing man. Things are bound to change. The staff is now very open! We should be able to improve and to do it by the year 2000.

The diversity of the answers is another manifestation of the crisis. There is not a strong uniform feeling among CAFS members that it will be successful. While the extremely pessimistic prognosis is a minority opinion, the other opinions express a certain degree of uncertainty that needs to disappear from CAFS in order for it to face the future in a positive vein as a strong collaborative team.

#### IV. THE ROLE OF FPMD/MSH WITHIN THIS PICTURE

It is within this somewhat distressing picture that MSH has been called upon to provide its technical assistance, directed in part toward the solution of some of these problems.

##### A. The Quality of MSH/FPMD Technical Assistance, as Perceived by CAFS

With one important limitation, to be discussed later in the section, the assistance (including the experience of CAFS members participating in courses organized by the training department of MSH) received from MSH was judged generally to be of high quality. We give several quotations confirming this:<sup>2</sup>

- We received assistance from MSH for the *preparation of basic texts and other training material*. We prepared a comprehensive list of about 150 texts we wanted to use for the

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis in the following quotes was added by the evaluator to bring out the key points.

preparation of this material. It was an instance of very successful support. MSH was able to get the material. We got materials for three years to support training programs. Follow-up from Boston was very good. There were telephone calls from Boston to check whether the material had arrived. It was an example of efficient service and good liaising.

- From colleagues who participated in an *MSH training course* we hear it was very professionally done. Apparently the course presentation was very attractive. I have been advised to borrow some of the presentation techniques of that course. CAFS participants talk highly of the course. Of course, they would prefer that such a course could also be taught to our clients on African territory.
- I have assisted in a workshop with one of the MSH consultants, who was excellent. The technique was impressive. She is fluent in both English and French. There is no document on strategic planning in CAFS. I was especially interested in how to do strategic planning and to teach it to others.
- I have observed *excellent relations between MSH and CAFS personnel*. It was a real opportunity for the transfer of skills. I am really driving on that training. It shocked our thinking and we want to continue the relationship with MSH.
- You are asking about weaknesses in MSH's technical assistance. It is not weaknesses that I can mention; it is more an expectation. *I expect MSH to be more available.*

Other comments, while containing positive assessments, also mention weaknesses. This occurred especially when discussing the market study conducted by MSH for CAFS.<sup>3</sup>

- The market analysis document was well done. But *there was no workshop or seminar to discuss the results of the report*. It was a nice piece of work but it is gathering dust because it was really never used.
- *The market survey was useful. It gives a sense of some, but not of all, needs*. There are certain areas where our market is OK [in the sense that CAFS is very knowledgeable about that particular market], and other areas where it is not and we would have wanted the report to give more attention to those. We have an idea of the needs to which our efforts need to be directed. We have also an idea of some areas such as IEC, MIS, where we can be useful. But other areas such as service delivery and counseling did not find a place in the report. The marketing report was too general in the sense that it did not give statistical information to make up one's mind
- *The market survey contains excellent suggestions but in some ways it was too traditional* because it implies that the area of women and health cannot be exploited as a potential market by CAFS. It was not mentioned in report.
- *Not enough staff members from CAFS were involved in the market study*. CAFS had only two or three staff members involved. MSH should have demanded more involvement from CAFS in the

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<sup>3</sup> For a complete report on the CAFS marketing study, see Kornfield, et al., 1994.

design of the market study. It was very biased and narrow in scope and only few areas were considered. It only looked at the existing, not at the potential, market. We cannot use it for activities dealing with information and documentation or women's issues. The marketing report is very limited. It is difficult to use it for the formulation of a strategic plan.

- *The report on computerization was quite comprehensive but it should have considered various disciplines* [various sectors of CAFS]. It is at too basic a level. We need information on more advanced stages. Some people use DOS, others need assistance and specific documentation dealing with software packages such as administration and accounting, networking, E-mail, how to provide electronically documents to other family planning associations.
- All MSH consultants have been extremely efficient and cooperative. However we would wish that consultants did bring more documents and leave them when they complete their consultancy.

All these comments reflect subjective perceptions of CAFS personnel, and as such may be partially biased or without all relevant knowledge to make a correct final judgment. For example, independent consultation with persons familiar with the genesis of the market report tell that CAFS was explicitly invited to nominate a CAFS member for the team, but they never did this. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the majority of CAFS members judge the report as only partially useful.

It should also be emphasized that the USAID/REDSO representative considers the report outstanding. Two firms—one local, the other MSH—had been asked to prepare market studies. MSH/FPMD's study, according to USAID/REDSO, was far superior. Nevertheless, there was strong criticism from this agency regarding the process of the market consultancy. In spite of supposedly explicit agreements between USAID/REDSO and MSH (as laid out in the scope of work, about the organization, logistics and conduct of the consultancy), according to USAID/REDSO, MSH deviated from the agreements and was even described to me as being not straightforward in its relations with USAID/REDSO. The team members arrived at short notice and decided unilaterally to reduce both the time and the number of countries to be visited. They also decided to spend more time on report writing in Boston than in Africa. Furthermore, MSH had implied that its Nairobi office would be very much involved in the consultancy, including responsibilities for hotel reservations and other logistic aspects of the mission; according to REDSO, this was not done in an organized way.

For other instances of technical assistance by MSH, CAFS, while describing the assistance as positive, admitted that the advice from MSH consultants had not been followed up:

- The consultant for MIS systems was good in identifying our problem and about what we needed to do. Everybody now has some computer literacy. The consultant helped to set up an internal committee for in-house training. After the consultant left, things slackened and went down. The situation is now one of recommendations without implementation. One of the committee members left. The reorganization of CAFS made the implementation difficult. Plans to reactivate the committee are very much in flux. It is not clear who will coordinate the committee. We need more continuous follow-up.

- The consultant for MIS systems initiated and developed efforts for capacity building and computer training and use. The consultant produced a report which contains a lot of suggestions. Because of the transition we have not yet implemented much of it.

The explanation for the non-implementation of certain recommended actions by MSH consultants as a consequence of the pressures and uncertainties of the transition period is another reflection of the crisis through which CAFS is passing. However, the pertinent question should also be asked whether it is not also the consequence of the low morale and a certain degree of passivity in the face of the crisis.

## **B. One Important Limitation of MSH's Technical Assistance**

As hinted before, there is one overarching limitation to the technical assistance of MSH provided to CAFS. It is a patchwork of undoubtedly useful activities, but it is not integrated into a coherent whole supported by stronger resources. As a consequence, the technical assistance to CAFS is not making a difference in helping CAFS face its existential crisis. Staff members are clearly aware of this, as the following quotes will show. Independent analysis of the configuration of the assistance by the evaluator strongly confirms this limitation.

- There is a lack of a protocol agreement between CAFS and MSH. The collaboration is ad hoc. A better framework for the assistance is needed.
- Technical assistance comes in discrete drops, not as an integrated package. In the future there should be a memorandum tying everything together. There is lack of coherence and coordination. We have only scattered activities. There should be a clearer understanding about what things should be done, when they will be done, and who will do them and how the outcomes should be used. We need to think more in terms of strategic planning. There is nowhere a document stipulating all this. Therefore the evaluation of these activities is made difficult because we have only a vague view of how the expected outputs of the assistance fit in the overall picture.
- The expected outputs are not clear. What did CAFS get out the technical assistance? How has it to be evaluated? Each activity was conducted in its own way. There was no person to really coordinate MSH activities. We like to see something more formally organized. It should be part of a total implementation project.
- The assistance is too fragmented. There are too many pieces, and sometimes these are not the ones which are exactly needed at this moment. For example we have received technical assistance for computers from both MSH and IPPF, the last in regard to networking capabilities<sup>4</sup>. This assistance should not be parceled out among different agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> Except for the Section of Finances, computers at CAFS are not yet networked.

### **C. Search for Partnership with MSH**

As a consequence of the scattered nature of the technical assistance from MSH—and, it should be noted, from many other agencies, as both the interviews and an analysis of the portfolio of the assistance received by CAFS demonstrate—there is a desire from CAFS to enter into explicitly structured cooperative arrangements on the basis of more equality. Often, interesting suggestions are made that may be worth exploring in more depth when programming for further assistance to CAFS.

- The collaborative agencies were very good in the 80's and early 90's. Now they have big problems. They have spread themselves too thin. They are involved here and there, they just get a slice but no one gets a big morsel. Now their way of working has to change. They have to shape their activities within the mold of real partnerships.
- We need joint activities, not discrete pieces of technical assistance. We look at collaboration beyond the production of documents. We should establish a common front in negotiations with big donors.
- We are both involved in training courses. Both MSH and CAFS have a certain degree of recognition in this area. Why don't we put our resources together and organize some course and workshops jointly?!
- The interface between the world of training and the world of work should be stronger. As an agency with the practical advantage of working in the African environment we can strengthen this interface. We could provide more concrete management case studies. We could help the external agencies in visualizing the local problems more concretely. We could appoint among our staff members 'mentors' for specific agencies. The agencies would be in continuous contact with their mentor and would consult with their mentor when looking for new programs in the African environment. Vice versa there should be a kind of mentor in the external agency who would help in keeping CAFS in contact with recent developments in management thinking, MIS systems and computers and software.
- The relationship between CAFS and collaborative agencies should be a partnership. We should exchange personnel for certain periods of time from three months (a month is too short) to a year. During that time, they would be integral members of the host institution. In addition, the time could be used for the development of collaborative projects, pooling the strength of both agencies.
- We all at CAFS would like to get more involved in technical assistance for MIS, personnel systems and the management of health systems. Also, more of our people should have overseas training opportunities. Whatever one thinks about the need to organize on African soil, overseas travel and training for CAFS personnel is empowerment for Africans.
- MSH could help us in creating awareness on gender issues that affect women's health, and in preparing collaboratively with us information on gender segregation, and in establishing management systems for women's movements.

- Many agencies think that they have the right attitudes to work in the African environment: humility, desire to understand and to adjust to the African environment, no interest in playing the boss. However behind this well-intentioned facade there is often the flag of paternalism. I have a particular agency in mind which is strong in product development. It produced a textbook which is considered the alpha and omega on the particular subject matter. The agency has a legitimate claim to this label because it has real expertise in the subject matter. Still their manual could be more practical in the African context if they had consulted with us to grasp the realities of Africa.

The desire to enter into cooperative agreements within a framework of equal partnership is very strong. The expression 'equal partnership' cropped up in many conversations with CAFS members. Occasionally there was bitterness in these comments because it was felt that CAFS was being used by external agencies for the promotion of their own goals. The following quote is symptomatic of this attitude.

- External agencies, when bidding for projects and contracts, normally contact CAFS. The contact, however, is frequently exploitative. There is a tendency to extract letters of intent from CAFS. And then subsequently to forget about us. As a minimum, CAFS should be given an opportunity to have a look at the draft document to be submitted to the issuer of the bid. There should be discussions about the specific role CAFS is expected to assume if the project is approved and there should be agreement on the path to be walked by both CAFS and the bidding agency.

This interest in cooperative arrangements is reinforced by the need for CAFS to occupy a strong position in the market and by the perception that, in the competition, CAFS could become the victim of its lack of contacts in the donor countries. Better therefore to forge partnerships with more established organizations in place of competing with them in a market which, as CAFS perceives, it will favor the other organizations more!

- We have to look for new partnerships with organizations which have more experience in the market. CAFS does not have a lobby agent in Washington. They are really market oriented.
- Every one is chasing other organizations to survive. As long as we are subcontractor we may not develop as well. We should develop partnerships with INTRAH, the Population Council, Pathfinder Fund and of course MSH. We should not be competitors. If we are the ground will disappear under our feet.
- Our attitude toward collaborative agencies is ambivalent. On the one hand we need them for more technical and other assistance and for the necessary contacts in the first world. On the other hand we have often the feeling that we can not compete with them on a level plane. It is said that we can underprice them through lower salaries. But the external agencies often have resources to complement the salaries of their personnel. We do not have these resources.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MSH has to draw an important lesson from this experience. Although its technical assistance undoubtedly was useful to CAFS, it did not make a difference for the solution of the big crisis confronting CAFS. The assistance, as now fully recognized by both CAFS and MSH, was piecemeal, fragmented, and lacking in an overall framework that would have permitted MSH to collaborate with CAFS in a persistent effort to develop an enduring and dynamic vision and formulate a realistic strategic plan, an appropriate division of labor and a set of activities. These activities, as their first priority, would have to help CAFS overcome its crisis. In the future, MSH should never commit itself to perform a series of disparate activities, however useful by themselves, for an agency in need of radical transformation. By committing itself to the type of technical assistance provided to CAFS without the opportunity to play a major role in the organizational rebirth of an institution the effects of its technical assistance could only be very limited in the face of the grave problems. It is useful to draw a comparison with the experience of CERPOD in Mali. This was also an institution passing through a grave crisis endangering its very existence. Thanks to the collaboration with MSH—which occurred in a framework where MSH played a major role in the genesis of a new vision, a reformulation of its basic mission, and the formulation and implementation of a coherent strategic plan, CERPOD was able to supersede the crisis. (Mertens 1994)

### Box 2 A new vision for CAFS

There are many well-intentioned visions for CAFS at the organization. They all have their value, but they lack a central focus. There is no framework uniting the disparate visions into a purposeful and coherent whole. Nevertheless, the current population dynamics of Sub-Saharan Africa lend itself easily to such a vision. There are signs—in some quarters hesitant, in other corners strongly convincing—that Sub-Saharan Africa is embarking on the most important demographic period of its history though which a human population can pass: the demographic transition. This transition consists of a series of transitions: fertility and family transition, reproductive health transition, transition in the role and status of women, mortality, health or epidemiological transition, and the urban transition. All will affect African society and its individuals in ways affecting its populations forever. (Locoh and Hertrich, eds.)

CAFS' central vision should be to be a major player in the demographic transition of Sub-Saharan Africa. By developing a program which focuses on the acceleration of the health, fertility and women's transition, CAFS could establish a powerful identity and present a coherent set of technical assistance possibilities. These activities would provide inspiration and effective technical assistance to a myriad of health and family planning agencies in the public and private sector in their endeavors to give a fully human dimension to these extraordinary secular macro trends.

### Box 3 What is FRAC?

FRAC was established in 1987 and is a network of senior family planning managers and policy makers from Francophone Africa and Haiti. They meet annually to discuss a specific family planning program management issue, selected by the members of the network themselves. It is a program of the FPMD project of Management Sciences for Health in collaboration with the Centre for Development and Population Activities. FRAC members have met each year since 1987 (except for 1990, when the Gulf War imposed travel restrictions) as the following table shows:

Meeting Number/Date	Theme	Place
I. 1987	FRAC start-up meeting	Massachusetts, USA
II. 1988	Integration	Marrakech, Morocco
III. 1989	Community participation	Dakar, Senegal
IV 1991	Quality of services	Boston, MA, USA
V. 1992	Decentralization	Kigali, Rwanda
VI. 1993	Supervision	Tunis, Tunisia
VII. 1994	Sustainability	Conakry, Guinea

The 1994 meeting in Conakry was the last one directly organized by MSH under the FPMD project with core support from USAID. FRAC participants at the Conakry meeting unanimously recommended that FRAC be continued. (Mertens 1995) This enthusiasm has been effectively transformed into the decision to organize the eighth FRAC meeting in Cotonou, Benin, in 1995, on the topic of family planning and community participation. Participants will look for their own support to participate in the meeting. CAFS is responsible for the organization of the meeting and will continue to do this in the future. MSH is using its experience in organizing the FRAC meetings to assist CAFS.

This gate toward rebirth is still open for CAFS, but the hour is late. CAFS is in need of many things: a permanent director who can provide leadership for a mixed group from Anglophone and Francophone Africa, a final decision about whether and how to unify the two offices, and a coherent plan to find its niche in a competitive market. Above all it needs a dynamic vision. Although CAFS has some types of visions, it still does not have a dynamic vision of what it can and should do, a vision which really injects CAFS' activities with direction and purposefulness and inspires its search toward a place of importance in the family planning scene of Sub-Saharan Africa. One leaves its offices in Lome and Nairobi with the impression that there are a lot of good intentions but a lack of firm intent to explore new paths (see Box 2). Being more closely associated with the FRAC (see Box 3) as project director certainly would make CAFS come in more direct contact with the concrete reality of family planning

programs in Francophone Africa. For CAFS to be a successful project director for the FRAC project will require a suitable transition period with a temporary but strong MSH presence. However, the opportunity to take over the direction of FRAC in collaboration with MSH will not be sufficient to cross the strait from the threat of nothingness toward the calm waters of purpose and long term survival. To reach this goal a partnership needs to be established between MSH and CAFS which will enable MSH to provide technical assistance in a coherent framework.

The experience also contains lessons for donors in general and for USAID in particular. We think especially of three of these lessons. The first lesson concerns sustainability. The current trend for population activities in Africa and elsewhere is the promotion of sustainability. Sustainability is a necessary long-term goal based on imaginative vision and realistic strategies. Financial resources in Africa and especially Francophone Africa—for any kind of activity and certainly for family planning—remain thin. Too often, efforts toward sustainability from donors are redolent of the desire to escape sustained efforts for the benefit of their grantees and do not reflect a realistic assessment of the environment and the time frame needed to attain sustainability. Sustainability as a goal that can be reached in the blink of an eye is a mirage, and linking continued support to its achievement within the near future is misguided. It is even more difficult in a situation where many agencies simultaneously are being prompted to become sustainable, with the double negative consequence of the imperative to compete with a multiplicity of agencies—each on the lookout for sustainability—and the replacement of positive collaboration with unproductive jealousy. The experience of similar endeavors in Asia and Latin America show that longer lead and gestation times are needed. CAFS' activities, accompanied by a dynamic vision of where it wants to go, can substantially improve the continuity and quality of family planning programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, if it can operate in an atmosphere in which there is no need for it to confront at every corner the message of sustainability in big red letters. More gradualism will ultimately create more favorable conditions for authentic sustainability.

The second lesson concerns the 'symphony director bias,' which is common in many large scale governmental and international agencies. It is based on the presumption that these donors need to and can orchestrate the whole symphony as they see fit. Only if *they* assign the right instruments and the correct parts can the public enjoy the orchestra. Every agency is allocated a place in the orchestra under the paternalistic eye of the conductor who erroneously assumes that he has put together a well coordinated group of musicians. However, the players and their responsibilities in the symphony are only superficially interlinked because they have not been given the opportunity and resources to play in a way that really captures the audience. In certain circumstances (those currently prevailing at CAFS) of difficult transition when a particular agency is groping for a fresh role and a new definition of its identity, it needs the assistance of, and partnership with, a technical assistance organization with the responsibility to guide it through its difficult passage. In other words, this organization needs to play symphony director for the transition period and needs clear responsibilities and adequate resources to stimulate the development and follow-up of a new vision and a strategic plan for

the agency. This implies that the 'big donor' delegates its conductorship to the organization with the expressive purpose that it provides the 'problem agency' with the leadership required for the solution of the crisis.

The third lesson concerns process versus the attainment of objectives. Donor agencies, especially governmental agencies, have a tendency to put far more emphasis than is needed on how certain objectives have to be obtained than on their eventual attainment. There is undue emphasis on the process at the expense of the results. A case in point is the market survey referred to in Section IV. A. Although the process was different from the one stipulated by the donor agency, it was finally judged as outstanding by the sponsor. Why, then, all the fuss about the process?! Focus on results in place of process will reduce bureaucratic headaches and direct the work to its essence.

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ANNEX

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

## **LOME**

Mrs. Kekeli AGOUNKE  
Dr. Ayessou AKOUELE (Division of Family Health)  
Mrs. AZANDOSSESSY CAPO-CHICHI (DSF)  
Adeleke EBO (UNFPA)  
Pape A. GAYE (INTRAH)  
Nyedzy A. KOUDAYA (ATBEF)  
Mr. Kwasi Charles MENSAH  
Dr. Mariam SANGARE

## **NAIROBI**

Mrs. S. AZORBO  
Mr. Victor CHECHE  
Mr. Alpha DIALLO, Acting Director, CAFS  
Dr. A. ILINIGUMUGABO  
Mr. E.B. KALAULE  
Dr. D. KIHWELE  
Dr. R. KIRKLAND, USAID/REDSO  
Mr. M. KIRUHI  
Mrs. Jane KWAWU  
Ms. M. MATHAI  
Mrs. C. McWEST  
Mrs. K. Mworia, IPPF  
Mrs. C. MUGO-MUNA  
Mr. I MUVANDI  
Ms. E.K. NAGAWA  
Mr. D.M. ODERA  
Mr. C.W. WAIKWA

ANNEX 2

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