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SOUTH PACIFIC REGION
Agricultural Development Project
(879-0267) An Assessment of the
Long Term Participant Training

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Introduction

The South Pacific Region Agricultural Development (SPRAD) project 498-0267 was approved in 1980 by the Agency for International Development (A I D) to provide 15 years of financial assistance to the University of South Pacific, School of Agriculture and the Institute for Research, Extension and Training in Agriculture (IREIA) located in Alafua, Western Samoa. Note the SPRAD project was funded by AID for two 5 year phases with the termination of the project before the beginning of the third five year phase. The SPRAD project was terminated as of December 31, 1993. The total life of project funding was 13 million dollars. The contractor selected to implement the project was the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM). The UHM subcontracted with Cornell University for selected technical assistance and the providing of some long term academic training.

The 1980 SPRAD project paper stated the purpose as "to promote agricultural productivity and further socio-economic development for the rural people of the South Pacific region by strengthening the agricultural research, education and extension programs of the University of the South Pacific." To achieve the project purpose resources were provided to support six activities that mutually complemented each other namely (1) Agricultural

Extension/Communications, (2) Agricultural Education; (3) Agricultural Engineering, (4) Crop Production, (5) Soils, and (6) Library Services

The long term academic training program as outlined in the two project papers was designed to train a total of twenty participants. However, during the initial first 5 year phase of the project the long term academic training awards were reduced from ten to six programs. The second 5 year phase of project included ten long term academic training programs of which eight were awarded. As a result of training award reductions and the lack of academically qualified candidates the SPRAD project supported a total of fourteen long term training programs. See Attachment A

Assessment Methodology

This long term participant training assessment was conducted to verify results of the post graduate training effort and assess the effectiveness of the academically trained human resources needed to serve the faculty of the University of the South Pacific, School of Agriculture, IRETA, and the agricultural sector of the eleven regional member countries. The assessment was conducted by interviewing faculty and administrative officials of the School of Agriculture, Institute for Research, Extension and Training in

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receiving post graduate degrees under the project and now serving on the faculty of the School of Agriculture and IRETA are well trained and doing commendable work

The SPRAD project papers were designed as a series of subject matter activities, i e., Agricultural Extension/Communications, Agricultural Education, Agricultural Engineering, Crop Production, Soils and Library Services. Consequently, these activities are now being carried out as independent entities within the faculty of the School of Agriculture and IRETA and not fully integrated into a multi-disciplinary team. While there exists a trained staff of many disciplines the faculty has been unable to integrate itself into a critical mass of scientists that can deal effectively in a multi-disciplinary manner with teaching or researching commodity problems and issues. The integration of available subject matter disciplines into a critical mass of scientists presents a real challenge for future faculty development of the School of Agriculture. IRETA has probably made the most progress in organizing its communication unit into a multi-disciplinary team however, its linkage to the faculty needs strengthening. The integration of the various disciplines within the communications unit is quite evident and functioning.

There exists an urgent need for both the School of Agriculture and IRETA to seek ways and means of continuing a post graduate studies

program in order to upgrade the faculty and to provide for an indigenous faculty from the region. A post graduate studies program will always be needed to fill vacancies created by members transferring out or moving into administrative positions. Also the School of Agriculture may wish to enter into new fields of teaching and research as an example the area of biotechnology or ecology. Since the University of the South Pacific is a regional institution serving 11 nations it is highly important to train scientists from the region to meet future requirements.

It was noted that the University of Hawaii had not provided any tenured staff to serve on the technical assistance team over the life of the project. University of Hawaii officials reported that because of tenured staff limitations it was only possible for them to provide specialized staff on a short term basis to support the specific project areas. Cornell University did provide two tenured professors to serve as technical advisors during the project implementation period.

Long term Training Program

The post graduate study program of the SPRAD project was successful. The training program provided well trained scientists that are now either working at the faculty of the School of Agriculture IREIA or in other programs and institutions relevant to the South Pacific region. The fields of studies undertaken by

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the participants were pertinent and followed disciplines detailed in the two project papers

The long term training program provided funding for fourteen participants that were enrolled in ten Masters of Science and four Doctoral study programs. The selected participants came from four out of the eleven countries in the region, i e , Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Western Samoa

Of the fourteen participants trained, seven are currently employed in either the School of Agriculture or IRETA. These seven participants are working in the following disciplines Agronomy, Soils Science, Agricultural Education, Agricultural Extension/Communication, Horticulture and Library Services. Another three of the participants returned after their studies to the faculty of the School of Agriculture and taught for a period of time however, a trained librarian emigrated to a country outside the South Pacific region, an agricultural engineer departed the faculty and returned to his country of origin to work in the private sector and a trained agricultural education participant has taken employment in the South Pacific Commission. There are two participants who have yet to complete their dissertations, (Agronomy/Soils Science and Entomology). Two of the participants withdrew from their study programs and returned to their country of origin. See Attachment A

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increased the skill level of the teaching and research staff

Throughout the discussions with the returned participants one factor that was troublesome to most of the participants under the programs was the extra study time required to receive their advanced degree. This extra time was needed to satisfy the biological science requirement of the U S universities. The three year Bachelor of Agriculture degree given by the University of the South Pacific lacks sufficient basic training in the area of biological sciences. Thus there was a need for extra time of up to one year to prepare students to undertake post graduate study programs.

In designing future post graduate biological study programs it would be advisable to plan an extra year of training in sciences for students with a three year degree before the participant commences a graduate degree program. This is definitely a lesson learned from the SPRAD participant training program.

Another lesson from the participant training program has to do with the place where the student undertakes the research for the thesis/dissertation work. All of the SPRAD participants interviewed highly recommended that thesis/dissertation research work should be carried out in one of the countries of the South Pacific region, if at all possible. The participants believed that being able to conduct their research work in one of the South

Pacific countries contributed greatly to the success of their study program

Recommendations for the Future

The following recommendations are being suggested to strengthen both future training programs and build stronger professional relationships for those who have already received training. It is recommended that

(1) the University of the South Pacific through the School of Agriculture and IRETA continue to seek training grants from the donor community and as appropriate from A I D whereby current and future staff members can obtain post graduate study programs at the Masters of Science and Doctoral level at U S universities. The University of Hawaii and the East-West Center are institutions that maybe helpful in arranging for training grants. Other U S universities should be contacted too in order to ascertain if grants are available.

(2) the Director of IRETA take a leadership role in organizing commodity based networks which would involve a multi-disciplinary team of scientists of the School of Agriculture, IRETA and the research institutions of each individual country to conduct research in such areas as, taro production systems, sweet potato

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production systems, or specialty fruit, spice or vegetable crops. A multi-disciplinary team of scientists should be organized to conduct applied research on problems such as soil fertility, disease and insect management, economics of production and marketing. This commodity based network approach is being recommended to help narrow research objectives to the most pertinent problems that can be solved in the near term and direct the present limited talent to be sharply focused on solving the major constraints.

Also a functioning multi-disciplinary research team can make an effective contribution in the setting of a practical research agenda as well as reporting meaningful findings readily applicable to farmer problems and issues. Moreover, the research findings should be translated by the research commodity team in a timely manner and the knowledge put into practical measures for the Agriculture Extension Service.

(3) the IRETA and School of Agriculture leadership should continue discussions with the University of Hawaii to negotiate student internships/exchanges and faculty exchanges/sabbaticals. Student and faculty exchanges should be focused sharply on specific subjects, i.e., niche marketing of fruits, spices and vegetables, and the processing and packaging of products for the export market. These exchange programs should be facilitated through the already executed Memorandum of Understanding between the University of the

South Pacific and the University of Hawaii. In addition, talks should be pursued with the U.S.I.S funded Pacific Island Development project concerning possible future post graduate scholarships to meet the university human resource development needs

(4) the Director of IRETA should initiate a program to develop linkages with the University of Hawaii, South Pacific Commission, and the Agricultural Development in the American Pacific project that will help SPRAD trained scientists develop research proposals on common agricultural production and marketing problems, i.e., taro leaf blight, plant protection, soil fertility problems. A collaborative research proposal should jointly involve a scientist from each of the institutions. These joint collaborative research proposals developed by the team could then be submitted for funding to the South Pacific Commission, IRETA and the Agricultural Development in the American Pacific. The instituting of joint collaborative research endeavors will raise the quality of research at IRETA.

(5) the IRETA Associate Director for Communications should develop outreach linkages with the communication unit of the Agricultural Development in the American Pacific. Through this outreach linkage it would be possible for professional articles concerning extension, research findings and other scientific matters to be regularly exchanged between institutions thus strengthening the

journals, newsletters and satellite communications of both institutions

(6) the students accepted for Master of Science or Doctoral fellowship study programs of 2 to 4 years at U S universities receive funding for an additional one year to undertake academic studies in biological sciences before commencing the graduate degree program This one year of additional academic study in biological sciences should be designed to complement the three year Bachelor of Agriculture degree given by the University of the South Pacific.

(7) the students enrolled in Master of Science or Doctoral degree study programs be encouraged and helped by the U S university staffs to conduct the required thesis/dissertation research in one of the eleven countries of the South Pacific region

ACADEMIC TRAINING PROGRAM

NAME	COUNTRY	TRAINING INSTITUTION	DEGREE OBTAINED	DISCIPLINE	EMPLOYMENT/COMMENT
N K. Dayal	Fiji	University of Hawaii	MLS	Library	University of South Pacific (8 months) Immigrated.
H K. Prasad	Fiji	University of Hawaii		Agronomy/Soils	Has not received Degree. Completing Ph D Dissertation.
A Sharan	Fiji				Withdrew from Program.
R Tamankarvarou	Fiji	University of Hawaii		Entomology	South Pacific Commission. Ph.D Dissertation not completed.
N Tuivavalagi	Fiji	University of Hawaii	MSc	Agronomy/Soils	University of the South Pacific.
A Kama	Solomon Islands	Cornell University	MPS	Agr. Education	University of the South Pacific.
T. Moengagongo	Tonga	University of Hawaii	MSc	Agr. Engineering	Private Sector in Tonga.
E. Adams	Western Samoa	Cornell University	MPS	Agr Extension/Comm	University of the South Pacific.
F Afato					Withdrew from Program
F Amosa	Western Samoa	University of Hawaii	MSc	Agronomy/Soils	University of the South Pacific.
L Fautai	Western Samoa	Cornell University	Ph.D	Agr Education	University of the South Pacific.
M Hazelman	Western Samoa	Cornell University	Ph.D	Agr. Education	University of the South Pacific (3 years). South Pacific Commission - Now.
S Melesea	Western Samoa	University of Hawaii	MSc	Horticulture	University of the South Pacific.
M. Valasi	Western Samoa	University of Hawaii	MLS	Library	University of the South Pacific.

ATTACHMENT A

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Attachment B

OFFICIALS CONTACTED

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U S Consul, Apia

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USAID

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John Teiwa	---	Permanent Secretary for Agriculture
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Regional Fruit Fly Project in the South Pacific

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East - West Center

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III. STATEMENT OF WORK:

The contractor shall evaluate the effectiveness of the long-term participant training undertaken in Phases I and II of SPRAD, with particular emphasis on the second objective which is to provide the region with the necessary human resource base needed to serve the agriculture sector.

In doing this, the contractor should address the following questions:

- * How successful was the project in terms of providing the USP/SOA with a full-time, qualified regional/national staff?
- * How successful was the project in strengthening the agriculture human resource base in individual countries of the South Pacific region?
- * What factors contributed to both the successes and failures of the long-term training objectives of the project?
- * What were lessons learned by: contractor (UHM); grant recipient (USP/SOA) and USAID in project implementation?
- * How can these lessons learned be effectively fed back into Mission design and the implementation of projects of a similar nature that have an integral long-term training component?