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# THE S.P.A. PROGRAM

A  
*Tool for  
community  
development  
workers*

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A joint project of the Agency for  
International Development and the Peace Corps.

## SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

**T**he success of an S.P.A. project is determined by more than the end product. The process of a community working together to address an identified need is as much a part of the success as the end result.

Successful S.P.A. projects should enhance a community's ability to organize, plan and make group decisions. They should result in a community being more confident and able to transfer organizational and technical skills to other aspects of their work and community efforts.

PCVs can play an important role in helping to ensure that an S.P.A. project is successful. A PCV who assumes the role of a "facilitator" rather than a "doer" of a project, helps to transfer technical skills, enhance leadership capacity, and increase self-reliance.

PCVs who have worked with S.P.A. projects have identified the following as crucial to the accomplishment of a project and to the process of skill transference and capacity building

**Ownership of the Project:** A successful project is owned by the community organization. A PCV brings skills that can help the community to define a problem, identify a solution, access resources, and implement the activity. It is the community, however, who must have identified the project as a priority and who must take ownership of the project.



**Problem Identification:** A successful project addresses a clearly defined problem, one that can be broken down to basic causes. A PCV's analytical skills can be extremely useful in helping the community to identify possible causes of a problem and thereby select the most appropriate solution and implementation strategy. For example, a community may know they have a shortage of grain. The PCV, using a problem solving approach, can help

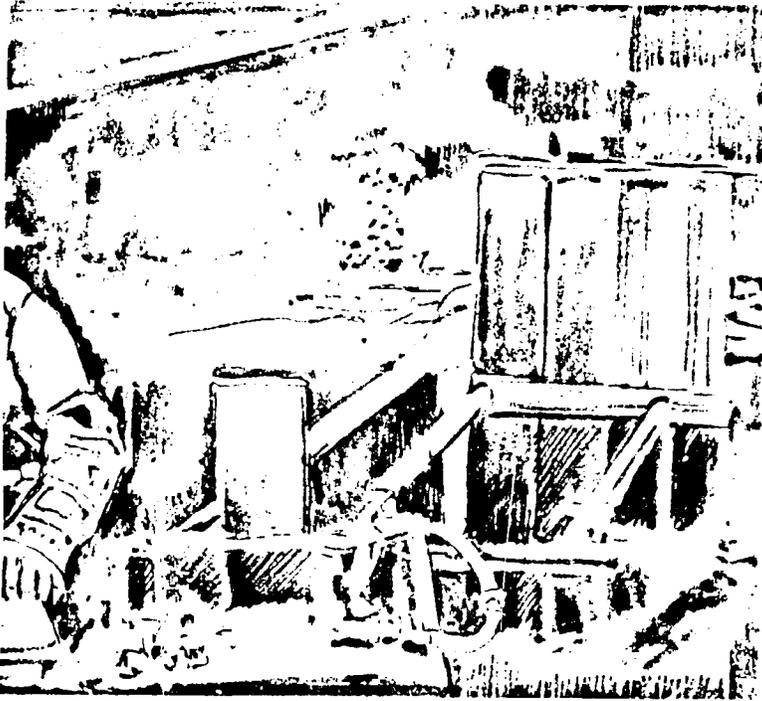


to identify whether the shortage is caused by poor seeds, inadequate water supply, poor soil, insufficient technical skills, pests, lack of labor, poor harvesting techniques, etc. Once the problem and the causes have been identified, an appropriate project strategy begins to evolve.

**Planning:** Successful projects depend on thorough planning before implementation. PCVs can help in the planning process by introducing simple planning methods and asking clarifying questions. The community group, however, needs to be involved in and take responsibility for the planning.

**Implementation:** Projects which have significant contributions from the community, both in-kind and financial, are more likely to succeed. During the implementation phase of a project a PCV may be instrumental in training participants in new and/or improved technical skills related to the project. The transfer of skills during this training is essential for the long term success of the project.

**The Proposal:** The content of a proposal should come from the community organization whenever possible. Some countries translate proposal forms to increase community members understanding and participation in submitting the proposal. PCVs can be extremely helpful in organizing and writing a clear proposal.



**Record Keeping:** S.P.A. projects are funded with government money and must, therefore, be accounted for with proper receipts and vouchers.

Before a project request is submitted, arrangements are made for handling the project money. Ideally, money is paid directly to local vendors for materials and supplies. In some cases, however, this is not possible and cash advances must be given to the community group.

Volunteers have found that setting up an account which requires co-signatures ensures open and responsible disbursement of the funds. Again, the PCV may be more knowledgeable about these procedures and can be of assistance to the community group.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Throughout the life of the project, the community group and the PCV should monitor their progress towards the project's goals. By this process, the community organization can make any adjustments necessary to ensure the ultimate success of the project.

For each S.P.A. project, the community is required to submit a final report which reviews the project to see whether the original goals were met, identifies lessons learned and discusses benefits of the project. While the final report may be written by the PCV, recommendations and comments should be from community members.



**A**n independent research evaluation documented overwhelming agreement that the S.P.A. Program is one of the most successful AID/PC collaborative projects. Volunteers see SPA as an efficient mechanism which responds directly to small grassroots development needs . . .

**"It helps people help themselves"**

PC Staff and Volunteers see the program as an effective way of increasing resources available to Volunteers and expanding their capacity to work with developing communities.

**"It gives more opportunity for PCVs to work with local groups— they can do a lot with a little money."**

AID sees the program as an effective means for delivering their resources to the community level in a manner not previously available.

**"The funds go directly to the community and the community gets involved" . . .**

## SAMPLES & QUOTATIONS

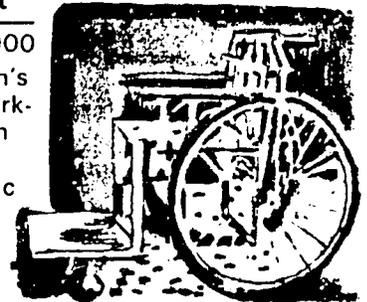
### Thailand—\$302

The Kraburi Wittaya School repaired the students' chicken house and purchased chicks and start up supplies to begin a poultry demonstration project for the community.

### Morocco Project

#### Funding Amount: \$5,000

The Marrakech Women's Welding and Woodworking Cooperative, which employs women to manufacture orthopedic apparatus, received seed money through S.P.A. to develop its operation.



### Honduras—\$250

SPA funds were used to purchase equipment needed to bottle and store honey as a means of helping establish a honey cooperative.

# S.P.A. PROGRAM

**T**he Small Project Assistance Program (S.P.A.) is a unique program which joins the human resource capabilities of the Peace Corps and the financial resources of the Agency for International Development to help communities help themselves.

For twenty-five years Peace Corps Volunteers have been working with community groups enhancing leadership skills, transferring technical skills and promoting self-reliance. During this same time the Agency for International Development (AID) has been involved in large scale development projects, providing expert consultants and financial resources.

In 1983, Peace Corps and AID established the Small Project Assistance Program, which would support small self-help efforts through direct grants to community organizations.



for a specific project. Peace Corps staff review and approve the requests.

Although some countries tailor the criteria for project approval to meet the specific needs within their communities, all individual projects must meet the following criteria to be approved for S.P.A. funding:

- The project must be conceived and implemented in conjunction with a local community organization or group. A significant financial or in-kind contribution is expected from the community to demonstrate their involvement and commitment.
- The specific project will not encourage nor require U.S. assistance for continued support.
- The project supports development in the areas of food production, energy, competitive enterprise development, health, and/or income generation.

## THE S.P.A. PROGRAM

There are two components to the S.P.A. program:

- 1) the S.P.A. Fund which directly supports community projects and
- 2) the Technical Assistance (T.A.) Agreement which provides training and technical advice to Volunteers, staff, and Host Country Nationals who are working on field projects.

**S.P.A. Fund:** Each year AID Mission Directors and Peace Corps Country Directors sign country agreements to participate in the S.P.A. Program. Through this document AID agrees to transfer funds to Peace Corps for S.P.A. projects, and PC accepts responsibility for project approval and administration.

A Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) working with a community organization can submit, to his/her Peace Corps post, a proposal requesting funds

- The project will be complete within one year of its commencement.
- The contribution of S.P.A. funds toward completion of the project will not exceed \$10,000.

S.P.A. grants are made to community groups who are working with Peace Corps Volunteers. Therefore, both the PCV and the community group are responsible for submitting the proposal, setting up and implementing the project, and reporting on the completed project.

**Technical Assistance Agreement:** Funds are available through PC/W to provide in-service training for PCVs and HCNs, and program consultants. The T.A. activities should stimulate and/or directly support S.P.A. projects.

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**Countries participating in the  
S.P.A. Program**

**AFRICA**

Benin Botswana Burundi Cameroon  
Central African Republic Chad The Gambia Ghana  
Kenya Lesotho Liberia Malawi Mali  
Mauritania Niger Senegal  
Sierra Leone Swaziland Togo

**INTERAMERICA**

Belize Costa Rica Eastern Caribbean  
Dominican Republic Ecuador Guatemala  
Haiti Honduras Jamaica Paraguay

**NORTH AFRICA, NEAR EAST, ASIA  
AND PACIFIC**

Morocco Nepal The Philippines Sri Lanka  
Thailand Tunisia Yemen Arab Republic

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**QUOTATIONS**

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(S.P.A.) makes the volunteers get real involved  
with villages, shows the villagers that Peace  
Corps exists and assists local people.  
—APCD/ Admin.

It helps people help themselves. —APCD

Gives more opportunity for volunteers to work  
with local groups—they can do a lot with a little  
money. —APCD

"Monuments" have not happened, projects  
have been self-supporting. —PCD



**For further information:**

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