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**Critique of Contractor's Experience
in preparing
AN EVALUATION OF ROCAP ACTIVITIES
IN MARKETING**

**Submitted to the
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**by
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EVALUATION OF ROCAP ACTIVITIES IN MARKETING

Critique of Contractor's Experience

This evaluation was unusual in several respects. First, it involved the delicate matter of evaluating efforts which were largely those of another contractor. Second, the findings of the first phase were to provide a basis for conclusions about the respective roles of ROCAP and the USAID Country Missions in the provision of future assistance to marketing. Third, our broad view of future needs and roles had to cut across many project boundaries as formulated by ROCAP and the USAID Missions, because no projects in the region are identified with "marketing" as such.

The proposed approach leaned heavily upon widely ranging interviews with individuals in the public and private sectors throughout the region. At first it appeared that we would have few other sources of useful information, and we retained this view even after a preliminary reconnaissance visit. We later found that a wealth of reports and documents were available in the MRI files. However, although these proved very helpful in the analysis, their availability did not diminish the importance of the planned interviews, which were completed with excellent cooperation from all concerned. For a similar type of assignment, we would not propose major changes in the approach or methods. However, we did find it both surprising and a matter for concern that so little background information for examination of a sensitive issue seemed to be available in AID/Washington.

Reconnaissance Trip

The only significant problem in the entire evaluation occurred in connection with the reconnaissance visit to ROCAP by Mr. Loftus. Although plans for his visit were arranged between AID/W and RRNA, he arrived in Guatemala only a short time after the conclusion of these arrangements. Thus he arrived before a full explanation of the reason for his visit and the modified objectives of the evaluation reached the ROCAP Director from AID/W. As a further unfortunate result of the limited communication, Mr. Loftus arrived in Guatemala to find the President of MRI and his assistant out of the country during the period of the reconnaissance visit. This absence left RRNA without knowledge of the full extent of the available documentation, and without the helpful information that MRI could have supplied for guidance in preparing the prospectus.

Formation of the Team

RRNA proposed a study team including a marketing management specialist, a development and trade specialist with a quantitative economic background, and a team leader with experience in the AID evaluation process as well as in his special field, that of agricultural economics. The firm also indicated that it could, on request, provide assistance from another specialist with an extensive background in export promotion and tourism, but AID did not appear to favor this.

Some question was raised in AID/W about the emphasis placed in the prospectus on the quantitative economic background of the development and trade specialist. It therefore seems

appropriate to note here that his combination of talents proved highly complementary to those of the other members of the team. Although no elaborate quantitative analyses were produced, the quantitative economist was able to spot various opportunities for strengthening the assembly and presentation of factual evidence.

Price data assembled by the marketing trainees who studied the cadena in Tegucigalpa, for example, had not been fully analyzed; limited effort by the quantitative economist produced new conclusions derived by the calculation of weighted average prices. Data on intraregional trading patterns were updated by obtaining access (which required fluency in Spanish) to various unpublished materials in SIECA's Statistical Department.

The Field Study

While the RRNA study team was in Guatemala, ROCAP staff members were extremely cooperative and helpful. They spent many hours in interviews with the team, contributing valuable suggestions relating to sources of additional information. They also searched their files and provided copies of needed materials. A change of officers in the human resources section of ROCAP diminished only slightly the informational inputs relating to the status of business and marketing education in the CACM area. The MRI Contractor and his assistant were cooperative and helpful, notwithstanding the pressure they felt from other work. They were able to provide us with detailed files on MRI activities and were willing to expand verbally on their work. The MRI files were consulted as a basis for identifying the former students, manufacturers and others chosen for our field interviews.

The evaluation team was also fortunate in having generous help from all five USAID Missions. Staff members provided information from their own fund of knowledge and helped to arrange interviews with representatives of local organizations, productivity centers, and private businesses.

Support

Logistic support from ROCAP was satisfactory in every respect. The transportation office did a first-rate job in providing local ground transportation as well as in arranging for needed visas and scheduling air travel. The bilingual secretarial help provided by ROCAP was outstanding. Without the efficient help of Sra. de Perez and Sita. Ruiz, the RRNA team would have been hard pressed to produce the draft reports within the existing time constraints.

The sensitivity and perceptiveness of the ROCAP Director enhanced the general environment in which the evaluation was conducted.

Comments on CACM Data

The RRNA team thought it relevant in connection with ROCAP's present and future role in export expansion to highlight what had been done in recent years with respect to the identification of potential export possibilities, and to determine the actual level of exports of nontraditional items. We could find no record that either of these tasks had been done by ROCAP or any other organization in Central America. The trade specialist was relatively successful in identifying recommended export

products, primarily from reports in ROCAP files. However, the task of determining the dollar values of many currently exported items was not very successful. This is due to the NAUCA/NUECA coding system, a Central American creation that does not conform to the world system approved in Brussels. It was unfortunate to be unable to determine the export levels of tomatoes, honeydews versus cantaloupes, and other specific agricultural products, to say nothing of discrete clothing items, home decorative accessories, handicrafts, etc., which may well represent "trials" under PROP-033. Furthermore, very little is known by the persons we interviewed on the subject of full or partial "drawback" operations in those countries that permit them.

The above data deficiencies were discussed with the Chief Economist of ROCAP, who already knew of them. It was he, incidentally, who instigated the program to shorten the time needed to publish aggregated foreign trade data from 2 years to 2 months.

Tourist data of all types are especially deficient in Central America. SITCA might be well advised to seek assistance from one of the Caribbean countries (such as Jamaica or Puerto Rico) in developing base data that include visitor characteristics, expenditure patterns, etc. We were repeatedly told that Guatemala had the best data on tourism, but we found that present records and activities left much to be desired.

It was also disappointing to find that ROCAP's public administration program, which included such desirable projects as improved data collection, support for the 1970 census and the household surveys, failed for the most part to get off the ground and is now defunct for all practical purposes.