Prepared for:
Office of Health and Rural Development
USAID-Tegucigalpa
Honduras
Under Work Order No.: 80
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CARITAS/CRS TITLE II PROGRAM IN HONDURAS: A CHALLENGE TO USAID

An Evaluation Report

Prepared By

James M. Pines, Consultant
Joyce M. King, Consultant

Field Work 13-31 May 1985

Report Produced by:
John Snow Public Health Group
210 Lincoln Street
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PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY*

1-12. Face Sheet.

13. The CRS/Caritas Title II Project shows considerable improvement in management, administration and control, following changes instituted in response to the 1984 audit. Caritas added staff and reorganized, for the first time placing a full-time person in charge of the food program. Caritas resolved the problem of making national and diocesan autonomy compatible by decentralizing the administration, through subsidizing the employment of six "food program promoters" to work in diocesan offices uder diocesan authority but subject to national office influence. Improved administration has generated acceptable, though still delayed, quarterly reports, satisfactory reporting of number and kind of FFW activities, and better coordination of plans and food distribution. Detailed reporting of participation, heavily dependent of untrained volunteers, continues to suffer from lack of supervision, though the amount and quality of reporting continue to improve.

The Program suffered from an AID misunderstanding that delayed shipment of the Mission-approved third 1985 call forward. The resulting emptying of warehouses, by easing administrative burdens, encouraged better inventory management.

CRS has appointed a new country representative and taken other steps to support the Program. With CRS help, Caritas should be able to generate the added financial support essential for alleviating long-standing supervision, transport, and facility problems. Little possibility exists for increasing the GOH $50,000 annual program contribution, unchanged since 1967.

Although the child and mother feeding (Vaso Nutricional) component still falls far short of AID guidelines for MCH activities, modest improvements in nutrition monitoring and education, especially at urban sites, are likely if more resources can be made available. FFW projects link well to GOH agencies, exhibit few disincentive effects, and strengthen the Caritas housewife clubs in food production and related broader social development programs.

The current state of the Program supports gradual increase in tonnage and beneficiary allocations. The impressive self-help aspects of the Vaso Nutricional activity merit increased USAID help, despite technical limitations, as a demonstration of how feeding programs can strengthen a private development network. Even with current fair but limited participation of children under two and vulnerable women, geographical targeting appears effective. This, coupled with individual attention and other activities addressed to the most deprived beneficiaries, together with the low costs made possible by reliance on volunteers, makes it likely that the project's benefit-cost ratio will compare well with that more sophisticated MCH activities.

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* Numbered paragraphs correspond to questions as numbered in USAID Project Evaluation Summary form.

14. USAID/Honduras requested a "management and impact" evaluation to determine whether or not the CRS/Caritas' program should continue and the levels and terms of any continued USAID support. The evaluators were to review CRS/Caritas capacity and willingness to make needed changes, assess their costs and benefits, and determine whether objectives were realistic and achieved.

Since a full administrative audit had been made in May 1984, the team did not review, in depth, storage and supervisory practices (unlikely to be improved without additional resources) but noted significant changes that have not been acknowledged in the status of still open audit recommendations. There is no weight monitoring in the program and a field measurement was not feasible or desirable.

The team visited 20 of the 300 program sites, focusing on areas of greatest program concentration, and looking into suspended programs as well as fully operating ones. They interviewed Diocesan directors, Caritas-paid Diocesan promoters, the Bishop, priests, volunteers, beneficiary mothers and the national staffs of CRS and Caritas.

15. Current economic stress in Honduras probably increases difficulties that families are encountering in paying for transportation of food and inhibits their establishment of a revolving fund that could pay costs in advance. It also damages the nutritional status of beneficiaries, making achievement of nutrition improvements more difficult.

16. Because of past administrative difficulties, the CRS/Caritas program was held to a maximum of 24,750 beneficiaries in FY 1985. The 814 metric tons approved were to be distributed as follows:

Program	Number of Beneficiaries	(in metric tons) Milk	CSM	Bulgur	Oil	Total
MCH	19,250	210.5	104	104	104	522.5
FFW	5,500		120.2	150	21.5	291.7
Total	24,750	210.5	224.2	254	125.5	814.2

The team estimated that these foods have a market value of approximately one million dollars, or $.58 a pound. CRS estimates that beneficiary contributions will constitute an estimated $150,000 for twelve months, or $.08 a pound. The Government of Honduras continues to contribute $50,000 annually, unchanged since 1967, and used for payment of the six diocesan promoters, customs fees, salaries and expenses of Caritas national office, and fringe benefits. CRS has estimated the value of Caritas volunteer staff at $50,000 annually. Roughly totaling up these inputs, costs may be estimated as follows:

Local market value of food	$1,000,000
Government Health Ministry	50,000
Caritas (in kind)	50,000
Beneficiaries	150,000
Total	$1,250,000

These figures do not include CRS staff.

17. Because of a misunderstanding resulting in a delay of the third quarter call forward, it is unlikely that all of the approved FY 1985 foods can be used since a one to two months hiatus will have occurred in the program, the length depending on stocks available in the different regions.

For the months between October 1984 and March 1985, the latest months for which distribution reports were available in the FFP Office, average beneficiary levels reached and the rations provided compared with those approved, as follows:

Beneficiaries

Program	Number Approved	Number Benefiting
MCH	19,250	15,600
FFW	5,500	7,462
	24,750	23,062

Rations

Program	Pounds Approved	Pounds Distributed
MCH	5.0	5.6
FFW	50.0	53.0

18. The CRS/Caritas MCH program seeks to deliver supplemental food to the most vulnerable segments of the Honduran population, preschool children and pregnant/lactating women, many of whom are outside the health network, but its purposes are not solely health oriented. Other purposes include increasing family income and food availability (through home gardens, increasing water supply) and improving the home environment.

19. The goal to which the activity contributes is to improve the health and social status of the vulnerable segments of the Honduran population.

20. Beneficiaries are poor families identified by the Caritas network which distributes foods in six dioses, with beneficiaries distributed as follows:

Tegucigalpa	[illegible],500
San Pedro de Sula	4,500
Choluteca	6,500
Comayagua	4,250
Olancho	3,250
Yoro	1,750

21. None.

22. The CRS/Caritas Honduran program is, as the evaluation title "A Challenge to USAID" indicates, a challenge to adaptability of the regulations governing Title II programs to the situation of local PVO's. Voluntary agencies and programs must be accepted in many ways on their own terms and may not overlap fully with AID. Those like the Caritas Program, offering clear grassroots development benefits for the most deprived, merit an approach to compliance that seeks accomodation to their distinctive character.

23. Acceptance of the evaluation recommendations will not require changing regulations but a more collaborative and flexible approach to compliance.

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

AID - Agency for International Development

CARE - Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere, Inc.

Celebrador de la Palabra - Celebrator of the Word (lay preacher)

CSM - Corn-Soya-Milk powder blend

CRS - Catholic Relief Services

ESF - Economic Support Fund

FFW - Food for Work

FY - Fiscal Year

GOH - Government of Honduras

IQC - Indefinite Quantity Contract

MCH - Maternal Child Health

NFDM - Non-fat Dry Milk

OPG - Operational Program Grant

Patronato - Private community improvement group, mostly male, often registered with government

PL 480 - Public Law 480

PVO - Private Voluntary Organization

SANAA - National water and sewer agency

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

Vaso Nutricional - "Nutritional Glass", liquid mix of water, milk powder and either bulgur or CSM.

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation, requested and funded by the Honduras AID Mission (USAID) reviews the Honduras PL 480 Title II Program executed by Caritas, the counterpart agency chosen by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the U.S. PVO that receives the food and retains ultimate responsibility for the Program. The Caritas Program has varied between five and fifteen per cent of the total Mission Title II Program, with the balance administered by CARE, Inc.

The Mission emphasized that the Evaluation Report should provide guidance and recommendations about continuation or termination of the Program. Two evaluators, made available through IQC contractor, John Snow International, spent three weeks in Honduras (May 13-31, 1985) and visited more than twenty of the more than 300 sites included in the Program. They interviewed widely among Caritas paid staff and volunteers, beneficiary mothers, and the priests and others who assist Caritas with management and implementation. An informal discussion held at a meeting of all Caritas diocesan food program promoters, that also included national staff, provided an unusual opportunity for frank and open discussion.

Excellent cooperation from Caritas, CRS, and the Mission made possible very productive use of limited time. Little resistance or defensiveness occurred among Caritas staff or in communities. Juan Castillo, Mission PL 480 Coordinator, and CRS Coordinator Julio C. Montoya, participated in most field interviews, but left ample time for private discussion. They contributed substantially to the evaluation, though not in agreement with all conclusions and recommendations.

Before leaving Honduras, the evaluators presented to, and discussed with, Caritas, CRS, and USAID, a draft of this Report.

Method

The evaluators, who have viewed Title II triumphs and catastrophes all over the world, were prepared for the worst in Honduras. Initial document review, and interviews at USAID and CRS, emphasized alleged Caritas lack of interest, incompetence, resentment of AID regulations, and generally poor cooperation. A May 1984 Audit Report by the Honduran affiliate of Arthur Anderson and Company, presented a litany of long-standing administrative deficiencies alone sufficient to support termination of the Program. Though the Mission tilt toward termination was a made explicit, the Scope of Work also made clear the desire for an objective review to assist any final program decision.

The evaluation method evolved from these considerations. Knowing that any recommendation to continue the Program would have to overcome considerable resistance, the evaluators decided to look, more deeply than is customary in such studies, at the overall goals, concerns, and development performance of Caritas. The Audit permitted this luxury by reducing need for detailed review of (e.g.) storage and information practices. Absence of weight charts or other impact data also left more time for study of Caritas. The evaluation method assumed that, unless

assessment of the management and administrative implications of continuing the program.

The evaluation method also emphasized USAID and CRS participation in interviews. The risk of inhibiting responses, minimized by separate discussion as appropriate, seemed less than the benefits as shared experience, improved communication, and exposing the agencies to a less compliance-oriented approach.

Field visits emphasized exploration of diocesan differences, necessary because the autonomy of bishops allows wide variation in program operation. By concentrating interviews among field volunteers and participating mothers, the evaluators hoped to identify any divergence between field performance and both the rosy perceptions of senior Caritas decision-makers and the negative views of others. To avoid being shown only what Caritas wanted them to see, the team pressed successfully for access to sites not included in tentative schedules.

Without being apologists for Caritas, the evaluators sought to empathize with it, believing this to be the fairest way to support any recommendation to terminate. A recommendation to continue required similar insights.

The method also emphasized observation over documentation, substance over form, and performance over reports of it. The method exacted a heavy burden of proof from Caritas, in view of available negative evidence, and any favorable conclusions reflect this.

The Program Context

Understanding the Title II Program requires reflection on the political, theological and administrative context of the Catholic Church in Honduras. The difficult relationship between Caritas, the social development arm of the national Church, and CRS, the U.S. PVO that has provided guidance and support to it, for example, influences program operations. The CRS role in the Program, so easily perceived as inspection and policing, exacerbates tensions in a previously uneasy relationship that is now apparently much better.

Similar tensions affect the Caritas relationship with USAID. Many within the Church resent what they perceive as Honduran political and economic dependence on the United States. Others emphasize a broader, less political concern that giving food encourages dependence among poor people. The wide political spectrum within Caritas occasionally produces rhetoric more dramatic than conduct. In Honduras, some prefer not to be perceived as too sympathetic to U.S. policies. Diocesan and parish autonomy soften consequences of extremist positions. Bishops and priests who do not want American food are free to reject it.

The Caritas relationship to the Government of Honduras (GOH) also effects the food program. Though it accepts 100,000 Lempiras ($50,000) from the Ministry of Health, transmitted via CRS, Caritas appears reluctant to increase involvement with Government. Like many other PVO's, it values

independence highly and seeks to avoid partisan identification. Prospects for closer integration and increased support seem limited and the food program, if continued, will remain a non-governmental operation.

Caritas administration reflects differences in diocesan views. Although the national organization is governed by the bishops, they do not easily accept direction from it. Attempts to encourage compliance with AID requirements, for example, require considerable national office sensitivity to diocesan concerns. Relationships among the Church, Caritas and individual dioceses reflect a complexity that a brief evaluation study must acknowledge but can barely begin to understand.

PL 480 food is an incidental part of the broad, coherent social development effort undertaken by Caritas. Regulations and guidelines that are important to AID and CRS managers seem no more than additional burdens to overworked, often volunteer, Caritas staff. Even those who work most on the Program, the diocesan food program promoters, for example, emphasize the relation of food distribution to broader concerns, though all accept the need to improve compliance. Food-for-Work (FFW) goals of AID overlap more with broad Caritas priorities than do those related to maternal and child health.

The Caritas-assisted network of housewife clubs ("amas de casa") and mostly male community improvement groups ("patronatos") form a key part of the program's context. With the volunteer promoters who assist it, and the parish priests and others who provide added support, the network constitutes an outstanding vehicle for reaching and assisting the most deprived. The approach, heavily emphasizing motivation and self-help, conforms to widely accepted good development practices.

This Caritas context requires an approach different from that often used in more government-oriented efforts. Limited finances, coupled with the limited priority of feeding programs, means that improving Caritas logistics and supervision depends on outside funding. As an independent local PVO, Caritas requests, and is entitled to, relationships based on mutual trust and confidence. These are difficult, but not impossible, to build when expatriate agencies must simultaneously be concerned with monitoring compliance.

THE PROGRAM

A. Vaso Nutricional

The Caritas program for pre-school children and pregnant/lactating women, known as Vaso Nutricional ("Nutritional Glass"), reaches these groups successfully, while simultaneously strengthening the clubes de amas de casa (housewife clubs) through which distribution occurs. Education for participating mothers, primarily in nutrition and child care, is a related goal, though achieved primarily through Caritas training activities that are funded outside the program and addressed primarily to broader goals.

Vaso Nutricional projects, especially in rural sites, primarily serve populations outside the health systems. Growth charts and scales are rarely found in these areas, most often private dwellings, where they operate. Weighing is occasionally done by others, during the initial census that precedes all projects, but the data are rarely used to benefit the program. It is misleading to think of the activity as an "MCH feeding program," though the demonstrated capacity to reach poor people in remote areas with prepared food on a daily basis, justifies high priority under some other classification.

The requirement that food be prepared and served at a single site for each project hampers more effective targeting. Children under two frequently cannot attend, because mothers are unable to bring them and siblings lack the ability. Vulnerable women also fail to attend in desired numbers, because of work or housekeeping conflicts, especially at urban sites.

Vaso Nutricional projects often reduce individual rations in order to share food among unanticipated visitors and feed over-aged, though usually very deprived, children. Geographical targeting, gained by concentration in poor areas, assures participation of at-risk participants, though more precise targetting to the most vulnerable is less certain.

Forerunners of Vaso Nutricional started about twenty years ago and the activity have had several different forms, with varying levels of nutrition-related activities. The housewife clubs, organized with help from Caritas volunteer promoters/social animators, view the food program as part of the broader Caritas social development program for improving family stability and the status of women. Better-off women often take the lead in starting a club, taking the required initial census, and requesting a food allocation from their diocese. The club provides wood, sugar, cooking utensils, and incidentals. Members obtain and prepare the food, distribute it and supervise participants.

In this low-cost operation, beneficiaries bring their own glasses, into which club members ladle cooked liquid mixes of milk with bulgur or CSM. Some clubs also cook and serve other items made with PL 480 and local food. Among the several sites visited were very poor homes with marginal facilities and sanitary conditions, though a happy atmosphere prevailed and the apparently dedicated volunteers appeared to take pride in their activity.

Most clubs observed treat Vaso Nutricional as a useful, but not critical aspect of their work. Club members took pride in showing gardens, wells, latrines and other outcomes that were conducted simultaneously with the food distribution program or preceded it. Some clubs sell part of garden production and use proceeds for club purposes, though most food grown is consumed.

Participation and membership in clubs by mothers of beneficiaries vary widely. Volunteer help may consist exclusively of well-motivated women leaders, though rotating participation by participants' mothers also occurs frequently. The clubs cover local transport costs of food and a share of Caritas wholesale transportation costs. Practices and magnitude of fees vary widely, the only obligation being a total stated payment or alternative arrangement for bringing the food from parish storage to site. Caritas reluctance to reduce the size of the net food subsidy, the benefit remaining after subtracting fees from value of food received, has resulted in low fees (e.g., $.03-.05 a pound) that too often leave clubs unable to pay for transport when required. This results in temporary suspension of Vaso Nutricional distribution until funds become available, an avoidable and nutritionally unfavorable outcome. More transport funds would eliminate the problem and increased rations would ease payment of the higher fees required.

Housewife clubs are affiliated with diocesan offices that prescribe and present a "social promotion" program emphasizing development of women, moral aspects of marriage and family, health, nutrition, child care and related matters. The diocese typically trains volunteer promoters, who then transmit their learning at club meetings. Active parishes (a parish includes several churches) also train, employing various materials and techniques, though addressing common subject matter.

Though the evaluators could not observe training at clubs, the Diocesan Director in Choluteca left a training course to meet with them. About thirty women were attending and the session appeared to be well organized. In La Lima, San Pedro Sula Diocese, a parish priest was using sections of Where There is No Doctor and materials on ovulation methods of family planning, to teach his group of local promoters. Near Tegucigalpa, mothers in Obrero reported that a doctor comes regularly to give them "courses" or "charlas" (chats) on Oral Rehydration Therapy and related matters. Vaso Nutricional volunteers seemed generally aware of the relation between diet and growth, with varying, usually reasonable ideas about balanced diet.

The rough and ready educational effort in the Caritas program reflect the resource and other limitations inherent in private community-based efforts. Though unsystematic by some criteria, it should not be assumed that the Caritas work results in less impact than more systematic programs. Even with the dilution of information by modestly-trained promoters, local women may be learning, and acting upon, as much. More formal programming of nutrition education in rural areas would be difficult to implement, with little assurance of increased positive impact.

Urban sites offer better possibilities for gradual progress toward more sophisticated MCH activities. Technical help is more readily available, supervision problems fewer, and there are more women with time and skills available. Though the Vaso Nutricional is easily justified in its present form, or with a few simple improvements, it would be even better if some simple nutritional monitoring and education, consistent with volunteer time, interest and capacity, can gradually evolve. Caritas acknowledges willingness to move in this direction, if funds can be made available.

B. The Food for Work Program

About 25 percent of the Caritas Program consists of food rations for the equivalent of 1100 person years of work. A typical project lasts three months, so the number of participating workers may exceed 4,000 per year. Since the worker receives food for up to four dependents, the total number of beneficiaries can exceed 15,000. A worker receives up to five pounds of food per day, but is limited to ten work days each month.

During the first quarter of FY 1985, there were 10,128 beneficiaries reported as receiving food under the FFW program (Commodity Distribution Reports, USAID). This works out to 2,026 work-days a month, or 6,078 work-days for the quarter. (Each worker receives rations for up to four dependents.) During the same period, 171 projects were completed, mostly in food production, school construction, community centers, self-help housing and various repairs. Each project received an average of 35.5 work days. Since Food for Work often represents only a small part of total project labor, attribution of specific physical outputs to it would be arbitrary. Nevertheless, the Food for Work Program clearly adds to total physical results of the Caritas development project effort. Lists of work projects completed during the first quarter of FY 1985 and the fourth quarter of FY 1984 appear in the Appendix.

Volunteer promoters working with women's clubs and Celabradores de la Palabra ("Celebrators of the Word"), volunteers working with patronatos, develop most projects. As patronatos register with local government, they become eligible for help from GOH agencies. The Ministry of Health and SANAA, the national water and sewer agency, rely heavily on volunteer labor and the Caritas network often cooperates with them.

The Program exhibits considerable variety and flexibility. An American priest in Las Flores, Comayagua diocese, for example, uses Food for Work to feed fifty very poor boys while they build their own shops, school and other facilities. In the same diocese, a water project at San Antonio de la Cuesta provided food temporarily to fourteen of the poorest workers, while others labored without pay, because of limited food allotment. Though difficult to document, the hard physical labor for this work could have easily taxed the capacity and energy balance of the most deprived, had food not been available.

Housewife club projects include wells, vegetable gardens and occasional income-generating activities. Because most projects are initiated and continue without food, identification of an "FFW project" is sometimes difficult. Though this complicates administration, it emphasizes the relative absence of disincentive effects. Caritas uses FFW to make larger and more effective a self-help community development program already under way. Although the agency shows little awareness of how food can be used as capital, the clubs are a good vehicle for building self-financing activities through FFW. A few observed had already initiated other activities with funds generated from sale of garden output, though most is consumed.

Because day-to-day operation is handled by volunteers, assisted by equally poor though better-trained volunteer promoters, most with little education, record-keeping is rudimentary. Those interviewed showed a keen sense of the need to account for food received and to link individual distribution to days worked. This program contribution to improved local management ability merits mention.

Caritas supervision of FFW activities suffers from staff shortages and financial constraints that hinder travel. Promoters reported spending more than half their time riding busses, or using slower methods, to reach rural sites. The unpaid Celabradores and housewife club local promoters, asked to cover more patronatos and clubs than are feasible, showed great commitment and considerable competence. Only the most hardy and dedicated remain with the program. Continued intermittent training by Caritas reinforces skills and motivation.

There are said to be some revolutionary promoters, including a few who have beed arrested, but the social philosophy and "concientizacion" (awareness) inculcated by Caritas fall well within the best traditions of democratic community development. The evaluators met neither promoters nor priests whose views could be characterized as "radical". Those with such views may be in activities other than food programs. Caritas FFW illustrates a positive, constructive and private approach to development that, though distinctive and independent, overlaps well with AID goals.

It became apparent, even in a brief visit, that the Caritas networks are ragged and uneven. Coverage and competence vary, misunderstanding and confusion abound, and opportunities for improved management efficiency often go unnoticed. Nevertheless the prevailing impression was not only positive, but outstanding. The fruits of more than fifteen years of work have produced local networks and institutions that daily generate development, as measured by both physical accomplishment <u>and</u> by group attitudes. Despite deficiencies in record-keeping, easily remedied by modest increases in training and supervision, the system already comes close to meeting minimum standards for administration. With continued help from CRS and reasonably likely improvements made possible by the new Caritas management structure, an expanded and well-administered Food for Work Program seems desirable and feasible.

C. The Current Program

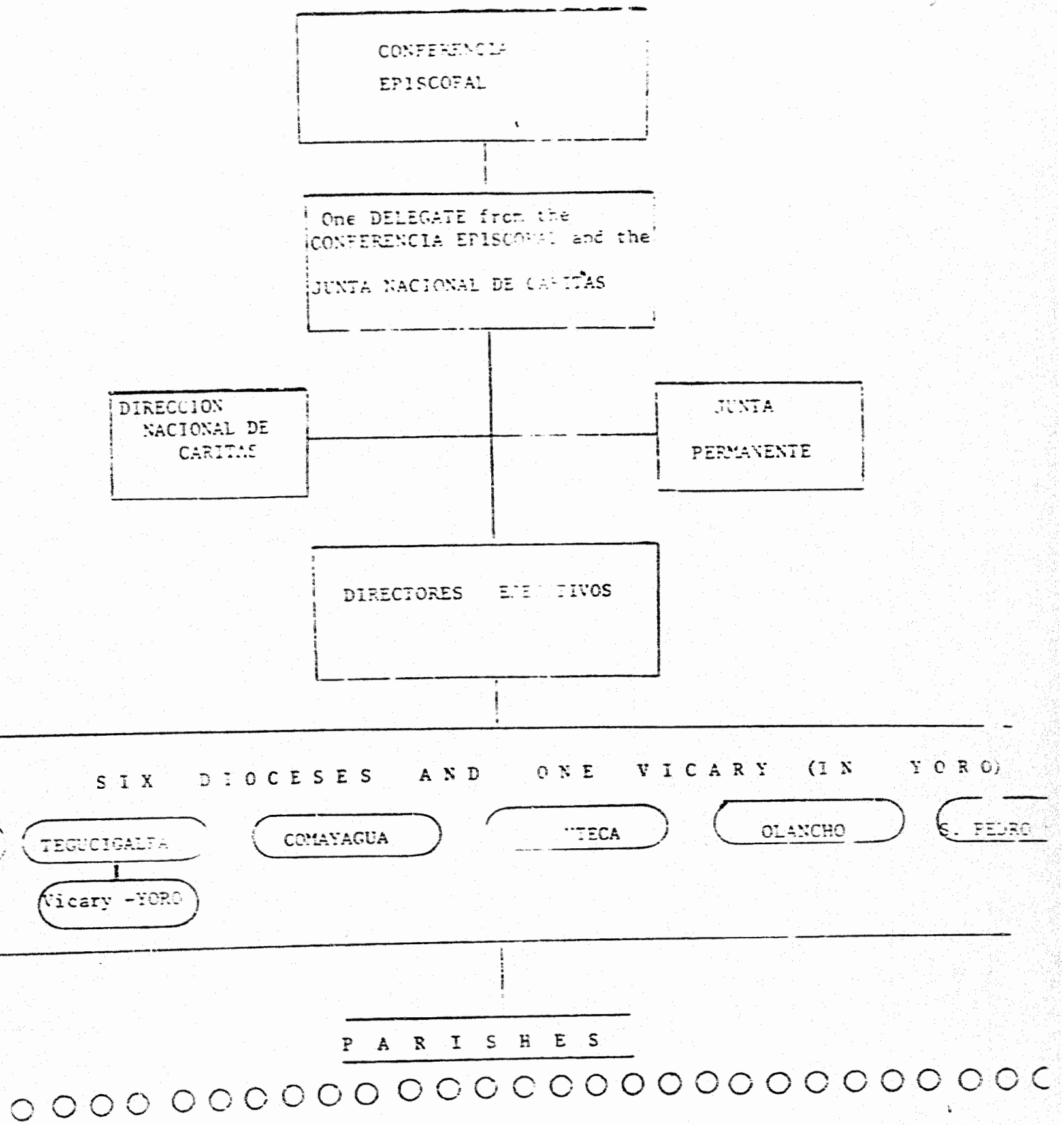
The evaluators encountered empty warehouses and suspended projects during the visit. Lack of definite information from USAID and CRS left Caritas unaware that the FY85 third call-forward, approved in Honduras, had been delayed by AID/W. Though the misunderstanding responsible has been cleared up and shipment will be made, the occurrence paralyzed operations and made orderly distribution impossible. Even as food remained available, in Choluteca for example, three clubs visited had been unable, at least temporarily, to collect the fees needed to move food from parish storage to sites. Though frequency and duration of inadequate local funding are difficult to assess, the problem needs attention. Monthly club transport costs can be as low as 20 Lempiras ($10).

Caritas seems reluctant to recognize the advantages of substitution for easing money problems. Even the poorest beneficiary families save on food spending when receiving distribution and this money can be used to pay fees. Though it is desirable that all food given supplement existing diets, worldwide experience indicates that this is rarely the case. Modest substitution, to make payment of fees easier, is certainly preferable to suspending distribution. Caritas staff, though expressing reservations about the collection of fees from poor people, also emphasize the frequent presence of similar nearby programs that make no charge for food.

It is difficult to assess how well the reorganized Caritas staff can cope with transport, storage and accountability in a "normal" situation, that is, without unanticipated cuts in beneficiary numbers and delayed shipments. Cautious optimism seems permissible, given the new bi-monthly promoter meetings and subsequent follow-up on related problems. All sites visited could easily maintain required records of daily attendance and food inventory, with a little help, and many already do in some form. Delivery of information to the parish is a requirement when picking up the next month's delivery, though not always enforced. Compilation and forwarding vary in effectiveness among parishes and dioceses, but systems are in place.

Leaving individual clubs to make separate transport arrangements complicates operations and increases costs. The clubs temporarily without the program, visited in Choluteca diocese, might well have solved their common financial problem through better coordination of delivery arrangements. Each club pays an individual to arrange the pickup and for a delivery vehicle. In this and other cases, sharing one person and one vehicle might do the job more efficiently. The specifics and validity of this example are less important than the failure of Caritas to attack the problem. Lack of staff, capacity, or interest may explain the omission, but it deserves mention.

When observed in operation, the Vaso Nutricional Program can best be described as "rough and ready" but impressive. Ration size varies, portions are diluted when unexpected beneficiaries arrive, numbers differ substantially from day to day, and food storage and preparation are often rudimentary. The Program is an auditor's nightmare, but a community developer's dream. Based almost exclusively on volunteer promotion, supervision and operation, it nevertheless (in the words of the Audit



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Prepared by Juan Castillo, FFP/USAID/H.
10/15/84

Report) "...has been effective in reaching a considerable number among the poorest segments of the country." The report adds that "...effectiveness of the program has been limited, definitely, due to lack of financial resources."

Although CRS and USAID describe the Vaso Nutricional as an MCH program, Caritas has always emphasized both the primacy of developing the clubs and its concern for feeding the hungry. The result is a program that often has difficulty distinguishing charity and relief goals from nutrition improvement. Despite the "feed the hungry" orientation, Vaso Nutricional involves little nutrient waste. " Though targetting could be sharpened, current geographical targetting and club practices assure that most food is consumed by those at risk.

It would clear the air if Caritas, CRS and AID could jointly acknowledge that Vaso Nutricional is not now, and is unlikely to become, a full-fledged MCH program. By recognizing that it falls within the guidelines for "other child feeding programs," though including at-risk women, and that some modest improvement in nutrition focus is possible and desired by Caritas, the agencies could collaborate more effectively to reach important nutrition goals.

Obtaining quantitative details about the current program required considerable exploration, because of uncertainty about divergences of amounts of food and beneficiaries programmed from what was actually delivered and distributed during various periods. The recent misunderstanding about responding to the FY85 third call-forward complicated matters further. The figures that follow give a fair picture of program levels, but include both numbers based on informed judgements and accurate information.

The 1984 Audit resulted first in a reduction of shipments under the approved FY84 AER and then in a cut of beneficiaries in the Mission-approved AER from 50,000 to 25,000, about half the numbers in former years. In FY85, AID has approved 523 metric tons of food for 19,500 MCH recipients and 292 metric tons for 5,500 FFW beneficiaries, including up to four dependents per family. The CCC value is $256,960.[1]

The MCH program provides preschool children and pregnant/lactating women with five pounds of milk, CSM, bulgur and oil monthly in a ratio of 2:1:1:1. The foods have a nutritional content of 440 calories and 19 grams of protein daily for the 24 feeding days per month.[2]

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[1] USDA-FAS price list, dated March 4, 1985, quotes per metric ton: Bulgur-$220, NFDM-$110, CSM-$298 and Tinned Oil-$886

[2] Source: Title II Commodities Reference Guide, nutritional value per 100 grams:

	Calories	Grams of Protein
Nonfat Dry Milk	363	35.9
CSM	380	20
Bulgur	354	11.2
Oil	884	

The local market value of each five pound monthly ration is estimated at $3.90.[3]

The Food for Work Program provides workers (with four dependents) with 50 pounds of CSM, bulgur, and oil each month in an approximate ratio of 20:25:5, containing 2959 calories and 102.5 grams of protein daily per 30 day month. Local market value is about $11.60.

The Program operates in six of seven dioceses (including Yoro Vicarate) and is expected to reach the following numbers of beneficiaries:

Diocese	MCH	FFW (workers and dependents)
Tegucigalpa	3,500	1,000
San Pedro Sula	3,500	1,000
Choluteca	5,000	1,500
Comayagua	3,250	1,000
Olancho	2,750	500
Yoro	1,250	500
	19,250	5,500

Source:

CRS FY85 Program Plan (FFW numbers are person-years)

CRS food goes directly to diocesan warehouses from the point of entry at Puerto Cortes, then on to parishes, and then is picked up monthly by local feeding centers. MCH food is cooked daily by volunteers or a group-paid cook, and consumed on site. The FFW program distributes dry rations of five pounds for each day worked, with a maximum of fifty pounds per family monthly.

The program operates under a CRS-Caritas contract dated August 10, 1982. An operating manual for both programs, approved by the two organizations, contains complete guidelines and reporting forms.

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[3] Local market prices are for January, 1985 at BANASUPRO (GOH price stabilization program) stores, expressed in Lempiras per pound and converted to $US at 2:1.

Food	Lempiras	$US
CSM	.36	.18
Bulgur	.36	.18
Nonfat Dry Milk	2.85	1.42
Oil	1.40	.70

CRS handles about ten percent of the Title II program with CARE managing the rest. About 425,000 beneficiaries, including 120,000 preschool children and pregnant/lactating women, are reached by the two agencies. With an estimated Honduran population of 3,800,000, coverage of vulnerable groups, though rising over the last two years, remains modest. Available data do not permit accurate estimates of preschool malnutrition in Honduras, but figures as high as 70 percent receive serious consideration. With the deteriorating economic situation giving little cause for optimism about nutrition status, continuation and expansion of Caritas and other food programs seems indispensible for protecting the health of the country's most deprived groups.

ADMINISTRATION

A. Caritas

Organization and administration of the Caritas food program involve a set of complex relationships among national, diocesan and parish staffs, some of whom are employed by Caritas and others, mostly priests and nuns, who are not subject to Caritas authority but are nevertheless a critical part of Program administration. Heavy reliance on volunteer workers, both promoters of housewife clubs or patronatos and those who carry out activities of these groups, further complicates administration. The table of organization ("organogram") on the following pages describes formal lines of authority and responsibility, but does not convey a sense of the practical accomodations evolved by Caritas over many years. The collective effort represented by the food program and other Caritas activities reflects solutions of many different management problems. As Caritas staff acknowledged without defensiveness, there remain other problems for which the validity of current responses is not yet clear.

Although the bishop in each diocese retains ultimate authority over the food program, operating responsibility rests with a "Diocesan Director", sometimes a priest or a nun and always a person with many other duties. The Caritas national office can not direct either bishops or diocesan directors and many past problems stemmed from this gap between national responsibility and authority. In addition, until September, 1984, the national office had no individual with full-time responsibility for the program. Appointment of a national food program director coincided with provision of subsidies to the dioceses to employ a "Diocesan food program promoter" who is to link national and diocesan program efforts. With normal attrition and replacement of diocesan directors, new ones are likely to be more comfortable with the current arrangement, since they will lack experience of the prior one.

Forty parish priests form an integral part of the program network. Like the bishops, they vary in country of origin and in attitudes toward the program. Some participate actively and raise funds for program support, with others ranging from passive acquiescence to near hostility. No diocese or parish gives the food program the attention that would be possible in a better-financed program with more limited goals than the Caritas social development effort.

Volunteer or poorly paid promoters, relating to parishes in various degrees that often depend on access, are the primary program staff level. Most have been trained in a social development approach that is a basic tenet of Caritas and share strong motivation for service. Because they are volunteers, however, it is difficult to hold them to standards of performance that can be exacted of paid staff.

In the clubs and patronatos, volunteers carry out most activities. Except for a few low-paid cooks, the entire Vaso Nutricional activity depends on volunteers. Some mothers of beneficiaries assist in operations as a requirement for receiving food for their children, but many other women work exclusively for other reasons.

Because the number of volunteer promoters is small and they organize more clubs than they can assist comfortably, the need for supplementary supervision and support from parish and diocese staff is great. National Caritas staff estimate, for example, that each diocese should have at least three more full-time people to work with promoters and clubs.

Within this remarkable network the food program is frequently seen as a modest part of a much broader social development effort. Given this priority, and the corresponding allocations from limited Caritas funds, it is not surprising that administration of the food program exhibits many deficiencies. Looked at from a different perspective, some would marvel that it works as well as it does. Additional resources for staff, training and supervision, for example, are essential if USAID expects much more from the network than the current reorganization and revision of information systems are likely to produce.

Present Caritas staffing and plans can achieve the control and reporting needed by USAID, but they will do it a lot faster if given more money. The new national director understands the need for, and forms of, control and reporting systems. He recognizes too, that the information is valuable for Caritas and is not some arbitrary USAID requirement. The bi-monthly meetings of diocesan promoters now review information flow and content in productive ways.

The issue is not whether Caritas is" good" or "bad". As such organizations go, its network is better than most and worse than a few, judging from the evaluators' experience. Few organizations have the priorities, skills and resources to manage a food program effectively, even with expatriate help. The issue then becomes whether USAID is prepared to pay the price required for continued, and eventually independent, operation of Caritas/Honduras and other private groups in the PL 480 Program. That price appears modest in comparison with the support required for government programs but monitoring is often a greater burden.

In assessing the Program's future, it is important to judge Caritas by present words and appearances. The past record left little reason for confidence, but the post-Audit conduct shows actions that illustrate important progress.

It is also important to recognize that an evaluation report emphasizing the strengths of Caritas, or any other private group, need not, and this one does not, deny the existence of weaknesses and deficiencies. Development experience suggests, however, that dwelling on the latter serves little purpose after they have been acknowledged. Current Caritas conduct in relation to the food program should not be viewed as an admission that "we were wrong and you were right", but should be treated as an important step toward effective collaboration in order to address common goals.

Response to the Audit

The May, 1984 Audit presented Caritas with fourteen recommendations covering most aspects of program management, reporting, control and facilities. Those requiring major expenditures, such as improving local storage and preparation areas, have received little attention, but other responses support the conclusion that Caritas seeks, in good faith, to accomodate to PL480 requirements. A summary of the fourteen recommendations appears in the Appendix.

Caritas cut the program in half, despite considerable trauma, as recommended. Here it had little choice, but other voluntary actions also impress. A master list of FFW projects now exists and is being maintained. Three quarterly reports, deemed acceptable by USAID, the first for the July-September period immediately after the Audit, were prepared on time, though delayed in transmission because CRS found some inconsistencies that required attention. FFW projects caught distributing food without work, and others where food sales have been detected, have been cut off, though numbers are not readily available. The quantity and timeliness of information transmitted from sites to parishes to dioceses to national office improved measurably since the audit, though it remains uneven. It is difficult to attribute the causes of this among staff shortages, adverse field conditions, poor systems and lack of training. New staffing patterns should bring steady improvement.

The Caritas national office now has two staff people with responsibility and mandate to improve data collection. They relate closely to six "diocesan food program promoters", subsidized by the national office and assigned to participating dioceses (including the Vicarate of Yoro). Bi-monthly meetings of these promoters and national staff provide an excellent mechanism for program coordination, technical guidance, review of work plans and improving information flow. The promoters link the autonomous dioceses with the Caritas national office in what has so far been an effective solution to a difficult management problem. The promoters work for their dioceses, but the subsidy from the national office gives it necessary influence over their work.

Inspection of records at the San Lorenzo, Choluteca regional warehouse revealed an adequate system for food control, if operated correctly, though assuring first-in-first-out distribution, as recommended by the Audit, needs further attention. Caritas' explanation of current food shortages in parishes, which included diocesan differences in administering program cuts and AID delay in responding to the last call-forward, seemed reasonable. Funding shortages that delay shipments from warehouses also contribute to what can easily be perceived, incorrectly, as the result of poor management. With the diocesan food program promoters now organized to monitor needs and shipments, the modest tonnage involved in the Title II Program should be manageable.

Major thefts from the Choluteca warehouse in two successive months during 1984 added to an already poor Caritas reputation for security. Vague explanations (e.g., "lost during cleaning") of other losses give a sinister impression to what CRS indicates are often unavoidable costs of

doing business. The Material Resources Subdirector, familiar with all CRS Title II programs in Central America, stated that Caritas performance in Honduras is acceptable. The Choluteca warehouse has been closed and no other serious food thefts have been reported elsewhere.

Without additional funds, food preparation and storage are unlikely to improve. Data collection and reporting, already better, should improve even more, partly because they are less influenced by financial limitations. CRS and Caritas state, and the evaluators agree, that the program will soon reach acceptable levels of control and reporting.

Availability of more money for transport costs would also improve the relation between the amount of food programmed and that actually distributed. It is not clear how much Caritas overprogramming, a previously common occurrence, stemmed from financial limitations and from poor management. Much improved management should reduce the problem, once transportation money ceases to be a limiting factor.

B. The CRS Role

Catholic Relief Services hired, in mid-May for September arrival, a new expatriate director for the Honduras program, thereby ending USAID uncertainty about the agency's continued presence in Honduras. During the hiatus of more than seven months between directors, the CRS office had no full-time expatriate staff, though an interim director worked for part of the period and intermittent visits from the Regional Subdirector for Material Resources also helped. A local program coordinator and supervisor, well-respected after thirteen years with the program, maintained relations with USAID and Caritas throughout.

Although the Title II Program is only a small part of the new director's responsibilities, his presence will add measurably to CRS capacity for prompt and effective response to management problems. Work projects, a refugee program, distribution of medical supplies and other activities also occupy CRS, but the food program, despite some previous deficiencies now seems likely to receive adequate attention.

Under a written agreement with Caritas, CRS takes responsibility for preparing annual food requests and obtaining free entry of all material aid. It obtains and transfers a GOH program support grant, provides some equipment and materials for FFW projects and gives Caritas technical assistance in technical and administrative matters.

Although relations have not always been smooth, CRS and Caritas acknowledge their current satisfactory state. Earlier CRS frustration over having responsibility without authority, because of inability to impose directions on Caritas, has abated and the agency now shows more trust and confidence in Caritas' ability to operate the program. The Material Resources Subdirector agrees that turning over all responsibility to Caritas, once food reaches the first warehouse, will soon be feasible. Other comments by him made clear that this view stemmed less from CRS desire to be rid of a headache than from increased confidence in the national agency.

CRS formerly transferred the GOH subsidy to Caritas against submission of itemized vouchers, but now turns over the entire sum as received. The new arrangement works well and Caritas has managed and accounted for the funds effectively.

CRS could have done more in the past to help Caritas increase USAID and other support. Reference to an outreach grant in the FY1985 Annual Program Plan showed good intentions, but received little follow-up. Reasons for this and other omissions remain unclear, but the agency is now prepared to work more effectively to build Caritas support.

CRS staff requested this evaluation and joined in preparing the scope of work. If persuaded by this Report and other information that the Program is worth saving and expanding, Catholic Relief Services seems likely to play an increased and more effective role. CRS/New York, like USAID, has been so concerned with monitoring compliance that it lacks information about the Title II Program. This Report seeks to redress the

balance.

Though acutely aware of the need to improve program controls, CRS staff show better recognition than suggested by earlier documents that this can best be done through sensitive collaboration instead of rigid imposition. They acknowledge increased interest, cooperation, and effectiveness of Caritas staff, but emphasize that the extent of future improvement depends heavily on availability of more funds. Cautioning that absorptive capacity limits need to less than $100,000 additional per year, the Material Resources Subdirector identified transport, supervisors, and support for FFW projects, as priority needs.

Caritas acknowledges the CRS program coordinator's contributions to program effectiveness, but some staff described him as an "inspector." This emphasizes the problems of combining the control and technical assistance functions in one agency. Despite these difficulties, CRS and Caritas appear ready to join in a shared effort to improve program management, controls, and performance.

C. USAID Monitoring

USAID files reveal a history of mistrust and insensitive enforcement that, though perhaps appropriate in the past, bear little relation to current impressions of Caritas. Though Mission concern for compliance is easily understood, and objective appraisal of past Caritas performance gave considerable reason for worry, a little more effort to understand Caritas would have been helpful. Sharing in the evaluation process may have improved USAID understanding.

There are real differences between Caritas inadequacies that flow from lack of resources and those that reflect poor management systems and capacity, though lines between them are blurred. USAID has not always recognized that correction of many deficienes observed was unlikely without corresponding added funds. Holding Caritas to standards achieved by other agencies only after receiving substantial grants, but without increased support, was bound to produce frustration and tension.

The worst may be over. The reorganized Caritas now has the capacity and systems to meet AID requirements. It needs financial help to do a better job, but even without it there should be gradual improvement to acceptable standards. More important, as the evaluators discovered in discussion, Caritas new has staff who are interested and able to improve administration and control, capable of discussing management problems intelligently, and not afraid to acknowledge deficiencies. If CRS and USAID can seek compliance by working collaboratively and showing increased trust in Caritas, instead of conveying an impression of policing and rigidity, prospects for acceptable performance look good. Having shown by the 1984 Audit that it can carry a big stick, thereby encouraging the good Caritas response discussed in this Report, USAID can afford to speak softly.

D. Relation to the Government of Honduras

The Food Program PES dated June 8, 1984, includes a section on the CRS/Caritas Program that emphasizes desirability of increased support from the Government of Honduras. Mission and CRS efforts to encourage Caritas solicitation of more help from Government produced little result. The PES suggested that conversations with the Ministry of Health emphasized need for better impact information as a condition for a larger grant. The costs of generating such information are high in relation to likely benefits from obtaining it, even assuming that Caritas would try to do so and encounter significant positive results.

An increased role and greater support by Government are also unlikely because Caritas, like many other US and national PVO's, seeks to avoid dependence on, or the appearance of identification with, governmental agencies and interests. Since resolving some political problems in past years, mentioned but not explained by staff, Caritas has been especially careful to avoid political and governmental involvement. There should be ample room in Honduras for effective private programs, and USAID should not be reluctant to support this Caritas example.

The Caritas posture sometimes produces an unfortunate lack of coordination with Ministry of Health programs having goals similar to the Food Program. Occasional exchange of information and Caritas participation in Ministry training activities seem unlikely to compromise Caritas. Ministry nutrition monitoring and surveillance work also offers opportunities for Caritas to increase skills without cost. The private and governmental collaboration demonstrated in many Caritas Food for Work projects should also be possible in nutrition, without surrender of Caritas priorities and prerogatives.

The Options

A. Program

The evaluators urge continuation and gradual expansion of the Caritas Title II Program, but emphasize the value-based nature of this recommendation. Others, valuing costs and benefits differently, may reach a contrary conclusion. This Report seeks primarily to provide a more balanced and informed basis for judgment than has previously been available to the Mission and AID/W.

As the Audit confirmed, Caritas fell far short of what USAID and CRS required. Even allowing for excellent progress since then, it is still below standards, especially for things (supervision, weighing, storage, etc.) that cost money. If AID or others provided funds, Caritas priorities would still make it unlikely that Vaso Nutricional could become the more sophisticated MCH program contemplated, and given priority, in Handbook 9.

Against this, USAID must weigh the benefits of supporting a grass roots development program that meets well the long-term goals of the agency. Possibilities for accommodating the constraints of the Caritas field situation and goal differences, in order to continue supporting an effective private development program with PL480 Title II food, merit serious consideration. If, for example, the program can be modified to reduce tension between USAID requirements and Caritas positions, possibilities for accommodation increase.

The evaluators reviewed and rejected the option of paying Caritas to build an MCH feeding program more acceptable to AID. The costs, time, and complications involved exceed any likely benefit. They rejected, too, the option, favored by a few within Caritas, of handing over food with only good faith that the agency will use it well. If USAID can accept the Vaso Nutricional activity for what it is, despite what MCH proponents would consider deficiencies in (e.g.) nutrition surveillance and education, a major difference in approaches would disappear. The evaluators suspect, though neither they nor anyone else can easily document it, that any loss in nutritional impact from Vaso Nutricional, compared with other MCH feeding programs, is more than compensated for by its mush lower cost. Attempts to impose the nutrition views of others on Caritas, however valid they may be, will fail, though CRS should be encouraged to restore earlier technical assistance on nutrition matters if requested.

The gap between AID and Caritas is less in Food for Work. Limiting formal programming of MCH feeding to urban centers, where compliance with AID preferences is more accepted and more feasible, while increasing FFW activities among housewife clubs in rural areas, offers a possible compromise. Substituting FFW for Vaso Nutricional frees USAID of MCH monitoring, while leaving Caritas and the clubs free to continue Vaso Nutricional in their own way. To the extent that they do, the Program will link nutrition and Food for Work more effectively than most other Title II programs.

Food for Work projects would allow clubs to generate revenues that

might then be used to make Vaso Nutricional activities self-financing. Modifying the current FFW ration to include milk, and tailoring FFW projects to generate local distributions comparable to current Vaso Nutricional food quotas, would make it easier for clubs to continue the activity. The current three-month limit of FFW projects could be modified, using food currently designated for the Vaso Nutricional program. Clubs visited had no shortage of useful projects suitable for FFW assistance, including gardens and other nutrition-related work.

Food for Work offers little promise among urban mothers in Honduras. Few attended the Vaso Nutricional centers visited, with volunteers explaining that prevalence of single-parent families and demands of work limited participation. At the same time, the urban centers had enough better-off volunteers, and access to health services, to make upgrading of Vaso Nutricional more feasible than in rural sites.

Substituting FFW for Vaso Nutricional, thereby reducing record-keeping burdens, conflict between AID and Caritas priorities, and complexity of distribution, serves both USAID and Caritas well. Increasing FFW and reducing formal Vaso Nutricional programming simplifies distribution, since the ration to a single worker also benefits dependents. The option presented here allows Caritas to do what many other PVO's already do well, that is, accepting USAID resources to do things that donor and PVO both approve of while using the savings for activities where goals and priorities diverge. This approach, regardless of the option chosen, seems preferable to the fighting over differences that has too often characterized the Caritas/CRS Title II program.

B. Administration

Additional financing for Caritas is essential, unless USAID can accept the current state of staffing, transport limitations, and physical facilities. Use of FFW activities to improve storage and preparation facilities can help, but Caritas cannot alone generate funds required for increased supervision and other needs. If the the Ministry of Health ends support of the Program, always a possibility, the financial burden will increase. There is a direct relation between provision of funds and improved administration. USAID must decide what are acceptable and consistent levels of both.

This Report's emphasis on collaboration to improve compliance, with corresponding reduction of policing and attempts to impose, requires no changes in administrative arrangements. CRS seems better prepared than previously to meet both management and technical responsibilities, while enforcing necessary controls in less conventional ways. Current arrangements between the Caritas national office and individual dioceses, though they can never be free of tension, seem adequate for management and control requirements. USAID, though understandably concerned with assuring compliance, will give more consideration to the legitimate concerns and financial limitations of Caritas while monitoring the Program, if this Report is heeded.

CRS, Caritas, and the USAID PL 480 Coordinator expressed considerable

interest in furthering a more direct relationship between the Mission and the local PVO. In the dioceses, this more direct relationship includes the possibility of diocesan programs or development of regional offices that would negotiate collectively with USAID.

Eventual disappearance of CRS from the Title II Program, except for minimum involvement required by law, conforms with good development practice. Caritas should be encouraged to take on new responsibilities as performance improves. The Program needs a lot more seasoning, however, before making any dramatic change in current relationships. Mission perceptions of the Caritas tract record, often accurate, will improve if the Program improves as contemplated by this Report. Caritas competence, and capacity to deal effectively with USAID, should also gain, especially if CRS shares its skill effectively. Gradual transfer of responsibilities to Caritas, beginning with encouragement of direct communication between it and the USAID PL 480 Coordinator, should follow without difficulty if all parties adopt the collaborative approach urged here.

C. Financing Improvement and Expansion

The money needed to strengthen the Caritas program can come from several different sources. The simplest way to increase resources quickly is to encourage indirect monetization of PL480 commodities. A Food for Work project designed to finance physical improvements, for example, requires no special approvals or waivers, though the effect resembles that obtained by selling commodities and using the proceeds to finance construction. More formal monetization, requiring AID/W approval would ease transportation and supervision problems. Ten per cent of a 1,000-ton program would yield about $40,000, if monetized, enough for Caritas to operate much more effectively.

Long-term capital expenditures, as required for vehicles and warehouses, might be funded through an Outreach Grant. This should be distinguished from the more modest, but [illegible], amounts needed to upgrade current practices. The implications for recurrent costs of equipment obtained through an Outreach Grant require special attention, because Caritas has little money for meeting them.

Caritas' needs for technical help and material support of FFW activities lend themselves well to funding through an OPG. The housewife clubs are accustomed to mobilizing funds collectively and revenues from their activities often serve community purposes, giving Caritas an advantage over typical individual income-generating projects. A well-designed OPG would come closer to realistic projections for self-sufficiency than most.

As Caritas becomes more comfortable with the food program, it may recognize and take advantage of, the multiplier effects of increasing agency and community contributions to the program. Money raised for transport costs, for example, brings donated food worth several times as much. Substituting FFW activities for money now used to finance projects (e.g., vocational training, building schools), while using the savings to pay PL 480 program expenses, increases resources available.

Some initial financing by USAID may help Caritas see the potential for more creative use of FFW to reduce financial stringency. This is part of the broader transition of Caritas from a traditional social welfare role to being primarily a development agency. Though well along in this process, Caritas still has difficulty accepting the idea that poor people, too, benefit more from investment than from receiving free goods that are consumed. Using donated resources to mobilize capital, by charging modest fees, helps poor people move from relief toward self-supporting development. The Title II Program offers Caritas the oportunity to accelerate this process.

Some approximate figures illustrate the potential for generating resources by increasing fees to cover transport costs, if no other funds are available. The 814 tons now programmed have a market value in excess of $1,000,000. The CRS Program Plan estimates average transport cost to be $.08 per pound or $160 a ton. Even with a conservative figure of $1,000 as market value of a ton, every dollar spent for transportation, if that is the factor limiting shipping and distribution of additional food, brings five dollars of additional resources.

Whether additional food is distributed to beneficiaries, used for FFW projects that save Caritas, diocesses, and parishes expenses that would otherwise have been undertaken, or programmed to establish capital funds, it allows Caritas to pursue goals more effectively.

D. Measuring Impact

Little weighing of babies occurs in the Vaso Nutricional Program. Though an occasional initial census includes weighing by others that could serve as baseline data, Caritas priorities allow little spending for this purpose. Almost no data relevant for assessing impact are collected during program operations.

Despite the current lack of information, the program offers a good opportunity for benefit-cost studies. It is not clear that the much higher costs of other MCH programs, incorporating systematic nutrition monitoring and education for example, produce correspondingly higher nutrition impact. The rough targetting of the Caritas program and the spotty distribution may have high nutrition payoff in relation to the modest cost. Allowed a more flexible approach to reach children under two more effectively, the Vaso Nutricional would do even better. Using volunteers and relying heavily on participant contributions, Caritas operates the program with only $50,000 of GOH funds. Government might well find this a more attractive investment than the larger amounts required for Ministry of Health MCH food distribution.

Caritas is in no position to finance a benefit-cost study and has other priorities, but might cooperate if approached sensitively and assured that findings would not be used destructively. AID needs to know whether lean private programs, despite different primary goals, merit support because of their comparable effectiveness in achieving nutrition impact.

Subjective impressions of impact offer little help, but may provide some insight. Caritas community outreach and supervised consumption, for example, suggest that supplementary intake may compare favorably with that of take-home programs, thereby improving likelihood of nutrition impact. One suspects, too, that some of the most deprived beneficiaries receive extra rations because volunteers give them individual attention. This may be true even when, as sometimes happens, portions are diluted because attendance exceeds programmed numbers. In some of the urban centers visited, program volunteers appeared to play a social worker role, trying to meet both health and the needs of the most deprived families.

Available studies agree that little positive nutritional impact can be demonstrated from current feeding programs in Honduras. CONSUPLANE, the national planning agency, issued a Report, in April 1985, entitled Analysis of Food Programs Operating in Honduras that states (page 45);

> ".....the evaluations made of programs and projects destined for maternal and child feeding, show that the effects of donated food are of little significance. " (free translation)

A 1977 Study by Clapp and Mayne, Inc., entitled Evalution of PL 480 Title II Feeding Program in Honduras, concluded that available information made measurement of nutrition impact from existing sources basically impossible. A modest primary data collection effort, with 203 in the experiment group and 20 in a control group, conducted as part of the same study, found no difference between the two groups.

While the difficulties of showing impact on nutritional status do not bar presence of this and other kins of impact, they caution against casual dismissal of less formal programs for failure to meet more formal standards. The Caritas Program offers some valuable opportunities to identify the minimum requisites for achieving nutrition and other results.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Program

1. The precarious Honduran political and economic situation complicates food program administration and reduces available material support from Caritas and communities.

2. The Caritas networks of housewife clubs and patronatos provide an outstanding vehicle for moving food to poor people and using it to support community projects.

3. Through an excellent example of self-help and communal concern, the Caritas Vaso Nutricional Program falls far short of PL 480 guidelines for an MCH feeding program and can be better justified under other categories.

4. Targetting in the Vaso Nutricional program directs food primarily to at-risk groups, though perhaps with less rigor than in some of the more sophisticated MCH feeding programs.

5. Caritas Food for Work goals are more consistent with AID development goals than are those of the Vaso Nutricional Program.

6. Many Caritas Food for Work goals are more consistent with AID development goals than are those of the Vaso Nutricional Program.

7. The Ministry of Health program contribution of 100,000 Lempiras ($50,000) annually has not increased since 1967 and seems unlikely to change in the near future.

8. Heavy reliance on volunteers, with resulting low cost per beneficiary, and the modest impact found in more expensive Title II programs, suggest that the Caritas Program may have a benefit-cost ratio, for nutrition, comparable to more sophisticated programs.

B. Administration and Control

9. AID/W delay of the third FY85 call-forward of food, without timely notice to CRS and Caritas, damaged program administration and execution severely.

10. Current Caritas operations exhibit better than adequate response to findings of the 1984 Audit, though resource limitations continue to restrict other needed improvements in preparation, storage, and transportation.

11. The Caritas network of diocesan food program promoters, established after Audit, offers good potential for continued improvement of program management and compliance.

12. Relations among Caritas, CRS, and USAID have been characterized by compliance-oriented and confrontational approaches that limited severely the possibilities for effective collaboration to improve program and compliance.

13. Though Caritas reporting of losses needs improvement, there is no evidence that actual losses, and agency responses to them, differ significantly from those encountered in other PL480 programs.

14. Current Caritas plans for improving the accuracy and flow of information will, with reasonable execution, provide timely fulfillment of CRS and USAID requirements.

15. Caritas staff and procedures now in place are adequate for support of gradual increase in the current Title II Program, though increased supervision would improve performance considerably.

16. The lack of funds for transport costs seriously impedes timely food distribution and Caritas has not explored adequately the alternatives available to alleviate the problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Program

1. USAID should continue providing food, at a gradually increasing rate, and take immediate steps to provide other support, to the CRS/Caritas PL480 Title II program.

2. USAID should acknowledge that the Vaso Nutricional cannot, in the near future, meet guidelines for an MCH feeding program, urging acceptance of continued activity under other PL480 program categories.

3. If continuation of Vaso Nutricional, as presently conducted, is not accepted, USAID should encourage CRS and Caritas to modify the Program by expanding Food for Work projects among housewife clubs and promoting continued Vaso Nutricional activities with FFW rations.

4. If FFW projects among the clubs expand, milk should be included in the ration, to encourage and facilitate continued Vaso Nutricional activity among the clubs.

5. Caritas should explore ways to increase participation of weaning age children (six to thirty months old) and vulnerable women in Vaso Nutricional, especially for urban projects, and USAID should encourage flexible programs likely to improve participation of these groups (multiple sites for any club, varied timing).

6. Caritas should expand use of Food for Work to improve food storage and preparation facilities.

7. Caritas should explore ways to introduce nutrition monitoring, tailored to time and capacity of current volunteers, in urban Vaso Nutricional projects.

8. USAID should help CRS and Caritas obtain funds for providing technical assistance and material support to non-governmental FFW projects.

B. Administration and Control

9. USAID should encourage informal communication in monitoring the Program and should tailor enforcement of compliance to the practical possibilities.

10. CRS should encourage direct communication between USAID and Caritas, as a step toward increased assumption of responsibilities by the national agency.

11. USAID should acknowledge adequacy of steps taken by Caritas to date in response to the 1984 Audit, that have improved organization and administration of the Program, while recognizing that the open-ended Audit recommendations require continued action by the national agency.

12. CRS should review with Caritas current information procedures and agree on the minimum practical time achievable for assembling information and transmitting it through community, parish, diocese, and national levels.

13. USAID should recognize practical limits affecting Caritas ability to deliver reports and should accommodate to them by, for example, accepting timely oral information temporarily.

14. CRS, Caritas, and USAID should together agree on a minimum acceptable information requirement for the Vaso Nutricional activity, such as complete lists of sites, enrolled beneficiaries , and numbers served daily.

15. CRS and Caritas should give high priority to generating the minimum acceptable information agreed upon, and USAID should recognize that Caritas staff limitations make it likely that full achievement of this goal will require considerable time.

16. Caritas, CRS and USAID should share information about the Caritas program with the Ministry of Health and support coordination of private and governmental feeding activities.

17. CRS and Caritas should share information about beneficaries with CARE to avoid duplication of services and food received by beneficiaries in the Title II programs.

18. CRS and Caritas should take immediate steps to seek support for the CRS/Caritas Program, following consultation with USAID, through

Outreach Grant, monetization of commodities, OPG, ESF support or any other sources mutually agreed upon.

19. USAID should provide additional funds to Caritas for improving supervision and control, recognizing that desired standards of compliance and the level of assistance should be mutually consistent.

20. CRS and Caritas should explore ways to reduce financial constraints on orderly food distribution by increasing participant fees, recognizing that increasing rations can maintain net food subsidy value content if desired, and USAID should support higher rations.

21. Caritas should explore possibilities for reducing transport costs by coordinating food delivery arrangements among neighboring clubs.

DETALLE DE PROYECTOS
DATOS DESGLOZADOS POR DIOCESIS

NOMBRE DE LA DIOCESIS	Apertura de pozos	Horrailzas	agua potable	Instalacion latrinas	Granos basic.	Construccion escuelas	Reparacion escuelas	Centros Com.	Apertura de carreteras	Construccion viviendas	Granja avicola	Proy. manualidades (Ruac.)	Proyectos de alfareria	Proyectos Hornos	Cultivo del melon	Cultivo de Yuca	Reparacion de carreteras	Muros de retencion	GRAN TOTAL
ARQUIDIOCESIS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
COMAYAGUA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SAN PEDRO SULA	-	3	-	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
CHOLUTECA	14	76	5	6	29	-	19	19	3	2	1	1	8	7	-	-	17	4	-
OLANCHO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VICARIA DE YORO	-	5	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
T O T A L E S	14	84	6	7	33	-	19	23	3	2	2	2	1	8	7	2	1	4	
GRAN TOTAL																			236

ESTOS DATOS ESTAN BASADOS EN LOS INFORMES
ENVIADOS POR LAS DIOCESIS (EN ESPECIAL:
SAN PEDRO SULA, VICARIA DE YORO, CHOLUTECA)

NOTA: Comayagua y Arquidiocesis no presentaron informes. Olancho no aparece con proyectos, pues su primer informe sera del primer trimestre/85.

INFORME TRIMESTRAL DE PROYECTOS REALIZADOS CON ALIMENTOS POR TRABAJO

4to. Trimestre/84 : Julio a Sept/84

TIPO DE PROYECTO	no. de proyectos	no. de aulas	no. de latrinas	no. de llaves	no. de Mts. pozos	no. de casas	no. de Mts. 2	no. de animales	no. de Kgs.	no. de escanas	no. de hornos	no. de personas	no. de muros
Apertura de Pozos	14	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	224	-0-						
Hortalizas	84		20.5										
Agua Potable	6				103								
Letrinas	7			155									
Granos Basicos	33		158										
Muros de retenc.	4												4
Repar. de escuela	19	34											
Centros Comunales	23												
Apertura carrete.	3								10				
Const. viviendas	2					24							
Repar. Viviendas	2					20							
Cria de gallinas	2							450					
Proy. Manualidades (Guacales)	1										15		
Alfareria	8										96		
Hornos	7									7			
Cultivo de melon	2		7										
Cultivo Yuca	1		1										
Reparac carretera	18								36				
Total	237	34	186.5	155	103	224	44	450	46	7	111	4	

Preparado por Gonzalo Caballero Enero de 1985

INFORME TRIMESTRAL DE PROYECTOS REALIZADOS CON ALIMENTOS POR TRABAJO CORRESPONDENTE AL 1er. TRIMESTRE/85

(Oct.-Dic. 1984)

TIPO DE PROYECTO	No. de proyectos	No. de aulas	No. de mananas	No. de latrinas	No. de llaves	No. de Mts. pozos	No. de casas	No. de muros	No. de Mts.2	No. de animales	No. de Kms.	No. de pers
Apertura pozos	4	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hortalizas	38	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agua potable	6	-	-	-	227	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Instal. letrinas	5	-	-	137	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cult. granos basic.	39	-	9.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Const. Escuelas	8	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reparacion Escuela	6	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Centros Comunales	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-
Apert. Carretaras	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Reparac. Carretaras	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-
Const. Viviendas	8	-	-	-	-	-	7x200	-	-	-	-	-
Cria de gallinas	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	290	-	-	-
Cultivo de cana	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Construccion de muros de reten.	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	-	-
Alfareria	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-
Reforestacion	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cultivo ajonjoli	3	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cultivo pataste	1	-	1/3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reparacion caminos de cerradura	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Reparacion												

DETALLE DE PROYECTOS
DATOS DESGLOZADOS POR DIOCESIS
1er. Trimestre/85

DIOCESIS	Apertura de pozos	Hortalizas	Agua potable	Instalacion latrinas	Cultivo de granos basic.	Construccion de escuelas	Reparacion de escuelas	Centros Comunales	Apertura de Carreteras	Construccion viviendas	Reparacion de viviendas	Cultivo Cana	Construccion muros de retenc.	Alfareria	Reforestacion	Cultivo de anjonjoli	Cultivo de patasta	Rep. Camino cerradura	Reparacion centro comunal	GRAN TOTAL
ARQUIDIOCESIS	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
COMAYAGUA	3	10	3	3	9	6	-	-	1	1	7	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	47
CHOLUTECA	-	21	-	2	25	1	3	6	-	9	-	17	-	-	5	2	1	3	-	95
SAN PEDRO SULA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OLANCHO	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALES	4	38	6	5	39	8	6	7	1	11	8	17	2	3	6	2	1	3	1	2	1
GRAN TOTAL																					167

1.) El cultivo de granos basicos en Comayagua es tecnificado.
2.) El Proyecto de viviendas en la Vicaria de Yoro consiste en 200 champas de un asentamiento campesino.
3.) La Diocesis de Comayaqua. Su informe presentado no cubre todas las Parroquias.

Nota: En todos los Proyectos realizados intervienen los Alimentos por Trabojo. Algunos de los Proyectos tambien apoyados por varias Instituciones.

Summary of Conclusions of Audit Report Prepared in May 1984
by Morales, Palao, Williams and Associates at the Request of AID/Honduras

(Attachment to USAID PES Report)

b. CRS/Caritas

1. CRS is expected to handle about 20% of the project commodities arriving in country. It relies on Caritas for overall project management. Because CRS does not receive sufficient financial assistance from the GOH to support Caritas' implementation of the project, record-keeping and commodity control systems within Caritas are very defecient. In fact, within Caritas there is serious paucity of reliable inventory and distribution. Caritas' lack of resources greatly affects project implementation inasmuch as the Mission generally approves only about 40% of the annual volume of commodities requested by CRS.

2. Both inventory control and handling of commodities at the central warehouse are inadequate. This is also true for the warehouses at the different distribution/consumption centers visited. Only in 50% of those centers had control mechanisms been adopted. Even in those cases, however, record keeping with respect to merchadise coming in and going out of the warehouses was deficient, there were no mechanisms instituted to ensure that merchandise was distributed on a "first in-first out" basis, and warehouses were not properly maintained. In addition, there was no efficient system to control either the eligibility of beneficiaries or the size of rations distributed. AID/Honduras has requested CRS to submit for Mission approval an overall program to deal with these problems.

3. Contributions on the part of the GOH and the parishes are insufficient and usually arrive too late for smooth project implementation. This greatly affects transportation of commodities from distribution to consumption centers. Four-month delays in arrival of commodities are common. These delays may cause loss of commodities, either by damage or deterioration, and they negatively affect the accomplishment of the project's nutritional goals.

4. CRS/Caritas does not have sufficient staff to supervise project implementation adequately at the distribution centers, and parishes unfortunately are relying on voluntary help to supervise activities carried out by project beneficiaries. Involved parishes should be required to prove that they are committed to implement the project as designed. Supervision needs to be improved at all levels.

6. There is diversion of commodities. As in the case of CARE, however, it was difficult to identify the exact origin of commodities being illegally sold at visited market places.

7. At the different distribution centers visited, there are no visible signs to inform beneficiaries that commodities being distributed are USAID donations. Commodities are associated with the Catholic Church and the different parishes where distribution takes place.

Father Emil Cook, Grey Franciscan, Las Flores, Comayagua.
Father Juan Matias Caballero, Lima Parish, San Pedro Sula.
Mr. Jose Pablo Aleman, Celebrador de la Palabra (lay preacher), Mata de Platano.

Mrs. Juana Francisco Linares de Osorto, Promoter, Choluteca.
Mrs. Maria de Jesus Osorto de Ortiz, Promoter, Choluteca.
Mrs. Ana Maria Enriquez, Promoter, Morazan Parish, Yoro.
Mrs. Sandra Zelaya, El Progreso Parish, Yoro.

CONSUPLANE

Mrs. Maricela Zuniga, Nutritionist.

CARE

Mr. Justin Jackson, Director.
Mr. Bruce Lustman, MCH Program Manager.
Mr. Ubaldo Cantarero, MCH Assistant.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Mr. Arnulfo Bueso, General Director.
Dr. German Hernandez, Head of Nutrition Division.

Mrs. Melba Padilla, Social Worker, El Chileno MCH Center (CARE)
Mrs. Mese, Social Worker, Las Cruzitas MCH Center (CARE).

PERSONS CONSULTED

AID/Washington

Mrs. Hope Sukin-Klauber, Evaluation Office of Food for Peace, AID (phone).
Ms. Chloe O'Gara, Nutrition Office, AID/Washington (in Tegucigalpa).

USAID/Honduras

Mr. Tom Park, Health and Population Officer.
Mr. Juan Castollo, Food for Peace Coordinator.
Mr. Orlando Hernandez, Agricultural Officer

CRS/New York

Mrs. Lennie Vargas, Central America Office (phone).

CRS Regional Office, Costa Rica

Mr. Palmari H,. de Lucena, Regional Director.
Mr. Dan Moriarty, Sub-Director for the Region.

CRS/Honduras

Mr. Miguel Mahfoud, Acting Director.
Mr. Julio Montoyo, Mational Supervisor.
Miss Martha Thompson, CRS Refugee Project.

Mr. John Contier, former CRS Director, now head of Norwegian aid agency.

CARITAS/Honduras

Mr. Francisco Meraz, President.
Mr. Juan Ramon Velazquez, Supervisor.
Mr. Jose Luis Espinoza, Food Operations Manager.
Mr. Gonzalo Caballero, Statistics Manager.

Mr. Ledys Lopez, Diocesan Promoter, Tegucigalpa.
Mr. Mauro Discua, Diocesan Promoter, Comayagua.
Mr. Carlos Gallardo, Diocesan Promoter, San Pedro Sula.
Mr. Victor Baca, Diocesan Promoter, Choluteca.
Mr. Nicolas Bonilla, Diocesan Promoter, Olancho.
Mr. Francisco Amay, Diocesan Promoter, Yoro.

Mrs. Sebastiana Bonilla de Mejia, Women's Program Promoter (Promotora Feminina), Comayagua

Monsignor Jaime Brufau Macia, Bishop of San Pedro Sula Diocesis.
Father Jose Mulet, Diocesan Director, San Pedro Sula.
Mr. Fausto Ordonez, Diocesan Director, Choluteca.
Father Leo LaChance, Pespire, Choluteca

DIOCESIS City/Town	Type of Program	Number Censused	Number Attending	Status of Program Operating	Suspended	Remarks
TEGUCIGALPA						
CALVARIO	VN	75	20-73		0	Bible Club Support
Las Brisas	VN				0	Evangelical
Primavera	VN		63		0	Oil taken home
Obrera	VN	100	75 (20 women)		0	Supported by Public Health
Mata de Platano	FFW Portable Water Health Center Community Center	56 workers			0	Managed by lay preacher
CHOLUTECA						
Pavana	VN		60 children some mothers		0	bee project clothes-making
Santa Cruz de Yarile	VN		56 children 19 women		S (cannot pay transport)	Oil taken home Club continues activities.
Pavana	FFW Gardening-Women Purchase of land plot Pump				0	Coop. with Sanitation Dept. (pump and concrete)
Buena Castilla	VN		45 children and mothers		S (cannot pay transport)	Religious sect other than Catholic attends. Club continues.
	FFW Pump - women		six months work.			
El Papalon	VN		43 children 15 women		0	Many improvement projects, latrines, gardens, wells.
Lujosa	VN		50 children 20 mothers		0	
La Joyada	VN				S (cannot pay transport)	Hope to start again soon. Club continues.

DIOCESIS City/Town	Type of Program	Number Attending	Status of Program Operating	Suspended	Remarks
COMAYAGUA					
Las Flores	FFW Boys' Training School (chicken-raising, carpentry, fish ponds, etc.)	50 boys	0		American Grey Franciscan
San Antonio de La Cuesta	FFW portable water for village	20-60 workers	0		Food given to 14 poorest families Cooperation with Sanitation Dept.
San Antonio	VN		S (no milk)		Good system of names and ages. PH weighs
SAN PEDRO SULA					
Chamelcon Colonia San Jose	VN	300 children 15 mothers	0		Feed in outside pavilion constructed by them.
Chamelcon Colonia Savillon	VN	300 children some mothers	0		
Montevista	FFW gardening, some marketing of chilis	9 families rotational habits	0		Formerly VN project. (125 children) "More to eat now"
YORO					
El Progreso	CERN	20 children, capacity 30	0		Paid church staff. No medical assistance. (No maintained weight charts but regular weighings)