

AN ASSESSMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM IN LIBERIA

Submitted To: USAID/Liberia

Prepared By: Dr. Emmanuel T. Acquah

December 20, 2001

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I thank the USAID/Liberia administrative and support staff for their cooperation during my stay in Liberia. I am indebted to the management, staff and collaborators of the Catholic Relief Services, World Vision Liberia, and Lutheran World Fellowship Service, who participated in several meetings and field visits with me during my stay in Liberia.

To Ms. Clarice Corbett of UMES, I thank you for your professional support in preparing the final report. I gratefully appreciate the support of Ms. Catherine Watkins and Mrs. Loretta Shaw of USDA for the logistical travel arrangements for the trip to Liberia.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN LIBERIA

Dr. Emmanuel T. Acquah

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the assessment of the agricultural program activities in Liberia was to determine the progress made by the three NGO-grantees (World Vision Liberia, Lutheran World Federation/World Service and Catholic Relief Services) towards accomplishing their objectives in the implementation of the “Rehabilitation of Liberia Food Production Capacity project” The specific scope of work of the consultant was to:

- A. Review reports and work plans of the NGO Grantees implementing the Agricultural Program and use the information from the project documents to provide inputs into the development of the Mission’s Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).
- B. Participate in orientation of the Mission’s new agricultural staff.
- C. Assess the agricultural program activities (using the reviews of reports and selected site visits) and prepare report with recommendation consistent with mission’s new agricultural strategic objective.
- D. Brief Mission Director and staff on findings and recommendations for improving activities in the agricultural program.
- E. Any other duties that may be assigned.

The assessment was done through review of quarterly and other project reports, discussions with each Grantee’s representatives, and field visits to project sites. The outgoing and incoming Mission Agricultural Officers and the Senior Agribusiness Advisor (AFR/SD/ANRE) participated in the discussions with the Grantee representatives and the field site visits.

Sections II, III, and IV cover the assessments for LWF/WS, CRS and WVL respectively. Section V provides suggested recommendations for Mission’s consideration.

II. REVIEW OF LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION/WORLD SERVICE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

A. Project Identification Information:

Project Title:	Rehabilitation of Liberia Food Production Capacity Project
Location/Project Area:	Bomi County
Cooperative Agreement #:	669-CA-0099-00303
Official Starting Date:	August 1999
Project Manager:	Mr. R. Jarsiah Weedor

B. Project Goal: To improve the general living condition of rural residents in project area

C. Project Objectives:

- (i) To establish the basis for increased production of diversified food crops and food processing through:
 - Local seed/vegetative planting materials production;
 - Food processing;
- (ii) To undertake the restocking of livestock involving 2000 farmers in 100 communities;
- (iii) Rehabilitation of tree crop plantations and establishment of nurseries benefiting 3200 farmers; and
- (iv) Support for 35 community based micro development projects in support of food security benefiting and estimated 15,000 rural residents.

D. Summary of Major Accomplishments

Objective 1: To Establish the basis for increased production of diversified food crops and Food processing.

Local Seed/Vegetative Planting Materials Production

- 100 CBOs engaged in food crop activities involving upland and lowland rice, root and tuber crops, legumes (peanuts, yams & eddoes). Of this number 60 CBOs are currently receiving technical support from project while the remaining 40 CBOs are receiving training and extension services.
- 3500 farmers have participated in food crop activities. A total of 9 metric tons of assorted seeds were distributed to these farmers;
- 300 hectares of assorted food crops were planted against a project target of 189 ha.

- A total of 12,950 farm families directly benefited from the food crop activities.
- A total of 132 training workshops were conducted in food crop production, and attended by 5130 farmers.

Performance Level: For this activity, the achieved milestone (300 ha.) exceeded the target (189 ha) by 59%

Food Processing

- Two food processing units (1 cassava & 1 rice) have been installed in Tubmanburg (Bomi County) and Lorplay (Nimba County) respectively. These mills are performing satisfactorily.
- One more rice mill will be installed by December 25, 2001 in Tubmanburg

Performance level: Actual milestone did not meet its target. The actual milestone (3 functioning processing mills) was only 30% of the target (10 functioning processing mills).

The less than expected performance was attributed to:

- (i) Technical operational problems of the first two mills installed;
- (ii) Uncertainty about readily availability of spare parts;
- (iii) Uncertainty about availability of local technician to repair the mills in case of breakdowns; and
- (iv) Uncertainty about whether the type purchased was the most appropriate for Liberian conditions vis-à-vis those produced by IITA and those in use in Ghana & Cote d'Ivoire. USAID advised delay of the purchase of the other 7 mills until they have enough information to make a final decision.

Recommended Action:

LWF/WS management was advised to complete its comparative analysis quickly and decide which model is to be purchased. It may be advantageous to purchase the additional 7 and the expected 20 in the extension phase from one source. This might lead to cost-savings, ready availability of spare parts and opportunity for maintenance training by the manufacturer.

Objective 2: Restocking of Livestock in 100 communities

- Seventy small ruminants purchased and kept at breeding paddocks at 10 communities (42 animals to 6 communities in Bomi, and 28 animals to 4 communities in Tappita).
- Two livestock management workshops conducted by Veterinarian Sans Frontiers (VSF) for 36 project staff and 12 CBO members (total of 48 participants).
- Two livestock awareness workshops held for 174 community residents.

Performance Level: *The achieved milestone (10 communities restocked with small ruminants) did not meet the target (100 communities to be restocked with small ruminants). The actual performance was only 10% of the target. None of the households selected to receive the animals has received any animals yet.*

Reasons for the low performance include the following:

- (i) LWF delayed in planning for the livestock management training;
- (ii) The strategy for restocking was not completed on time by LWF;
- (iii) Delays in transfer of funds from USAID to LWF;
- (iv) Difficulties in locating sheep locally in quantities needed for distribution to selected communities; and,
- (v) Heavy down pour of rain made movement of animals from project paddock to the communities difficult.

Recommended Action:

LWF/WS Management was advised to:

- (a) Explore the possibility of procuring breed of sheep that are adaptable to Liberia condition from neighboring countries.
- (b) Continue to use Veterinarians Sans Frontier to help train project staff and community residents involved in multiplication and rearing of small ruminants.
- (c) The current system of having a breeding stock of 6 females and one male per community will not yield the desired spread effect over the life of the project.

It is recommended that within budget constraints, LWF should supply each selected household with 1 female small ruminant for breeding or provide selected households with one pregnant goat or sheep.

Objective 3: Rehabilitation of Tree Crop plantation and establishment of nursery

- 34.5 hectares (30.5 ha – Coffee and 4 ha – cocoa) of tree crops rehabilitated.
- 31 tree crop nurseries established.
- 266,350 seedlings produced. Of this number, 246,350 seedlings have been planted on 276 hectares
- 895 farmers participated in 11 training workshops and field day demonstrations in project areas.

Performance Level: *The achieved milestone of tree crop nurseries established (31) did not meet the target (55 nurseries). The actual performance was only 56% of the target nurseries to be established. The achieved milestone of seedling produced (266 350) did not meet the target of 1560000. The actual performance was just 17% of the target numbers of planting materials.*

The 34.5 hectares of tree crops rehabilitated did not meet the established target of 55 (20 ha of coca, and 35 ha of coffee). The actual performance was 63% of the target.

Although the 11 training workshops constituted only 41% of the targeted 27 training workshops, the total participants (895 farmers) exceed the target of 540 farmers by 66%.

The 41 field day demonstration did not meet the targeted 48 field day demonstrations. The 840 participants were only 58% of the target (1440) and did not meet the established target.

Deletion of Marketing Activities:

A major concern in the implementation of Objective 3 is the conspicuous absence of “Marketing” activities under this objective. The original proposal, as well as the approved work plans, had this objective listed as “Revitalization of Cash Crops and Marketing”. According to USAID, LWF changed it to “Rehabilitation of Tree Crop Plantations and Establishment of Nurseries” without the approval of USAID. The current role and function of the Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC) makes it even more imperative for the project to provide marketing advice and services to the small tree crop farmers. The deletion of the Marketing activities by LWF is a mistake and every effort should be made to reactivate those Marketing activities, if Objective 3 is to be successfully completed.

According to LWF, the very low performance rating was attributed to:

- (i) Delay by farmers to underbrush their farms for rehabilitation.
- (ii) Termite attack on tree crop nurseries throughout project areas.
- (iii) Reluctance of farmers to engage in tree crop production (especially in Bomi) due to low prices for cocoa and coffee, coupled with the fact that cash crops are not major features of their farming systems.
- (iv) Tree crop rehabilitation activities were discontinued in Bomi County.
- (v) Some farmers wanted to get into oil palm production but since oil palm nurseries were not included in the original plan, it took some time before seedlings could be produced.

However, the reviewer believes that reasons (i) and (ii) could have been avoided by appropriate technical advice, and regular field visitations. Reason (iii) should have been anticipated from the base-line studies and alternative strategy developed.

Recommended Action:

- (a) LWF/WS Management was advised by USAID to intensify their activities in oil palm as alternative cash crop.
- (b) The Marketing activities under this objective should be reinstated.

Objective 4: Support for 35 community based micro development projects in support of food security

- 25 micro projects were completed as follows:
 - 12 blacksmith workshops for local farm tools production (target was 20);
 - 10 metal rail bridges on farm – to market roads (target was 7); and
 - 3 community markets rehabilitated (target was 8).
- Six CBOs leadership & management workshops were held with 210 CBO members in attendance.

Performance level: The achieved milestone (25 projects) did not meet the target (35 achievement for the projects). The actual performance level was 71% of the targeted milestone to be completed. The achievement for the blacksmith workshops was 60% of the target; the performance for bridges on farm- to market roots was 43% above the target; and the performance of markets rehabilitation was only 38% of the target.

An analysis of the M&E Plan indicates that the lower levels of performance have been occurring since the first quarter of Year 1. This suggests that LWF has not been using its M&E Plan information effectively in making management control function decisions.

Recommended Action:

In future activities LWR should more effectively use information from its M&E Plan to make management control function decisions.

E. Lessons Learned

1) Food Processing

The project experimented with two CBOs to manage processing facilities in Bomi County. The experience gained working with this group provided the following lessons that are being used to reshape the direction of food processing in the project areas.

- a. Prior to engagement, the management capacity of the CBOs was over estimated and later found to lack such virtues as literacy, record-keeping, cash management and organizational management skills.
- b. There was lack of good leadership, exhibited by lack of transparency in management, and manipulation of the group by the only educated member of the group (a male) resulting in a drop in group membership from 10 to 5.

Lesson Learned: In organizing individuals into producer organizations, it is necessary to assess the management, leadership skills, and capabilities of individual members and the group as a whole before assigning leadership roles to individual members.

2) **Rehabilitation of Plantation Nurseries**

- a. The project originally envisioned the development of commercial nurseries established and run by CBOs for the production of coffee and cocoa seedlings and plantain suckers for sale to other farmers. This strategy did not prove very successful as CBO members showed a clear preference for planting the seedlings on their own farm.
- b. In Bomi, the rejection of coffee and cocoa was aggravated by the reluctance of farmers to engage in tree crop production. It was noted that once the CBOs absorbed the seedlings into their individual farms, they discontinued their involvement in the CBO nurseries.

Lesson Learned: Community based organization(s) may not necessarily work in all places. Therefore, other factors (social-cultural) should be considered before adopting CBO as the mechanism for effective group organization(s).

As a result of the lessons learned, the project has shifted from centralized commercially run CBO nursery to a community-owned nursery approach. In this approach, a group of farmers with interest in cultivating cocoa, coffee and/or plantains is supported on a one-time basis with required inputs to produce seedlings for planting on their individual farms and the necessary training to continue their activities in the future.

F. General Recommendation For USAID

Although considerable progress has been made by LWF in the implementation of their activities, the following concerns were observed:

1) **Objective 1: Establishment of the basis for increased production of diversified food crops and food processing:**

- (a) Ineffective advising on improved management practices/transfer of technology:

The visit to the rice production site in Tubmanburg/Zekekai clearly showed that LWF technical staff is not providing adequate production management advices that would help increase production and productivity. The farmers are not using proper water management techniques and are not taking advantage of available scarce water resource from the river near the farm. By constructing canals to divert water from the river to the 10 hectare lowland area, production yield from the farm could easily be increased from 3.6 tons/ha/year to 5.2 tons/ha/year in the lowland area.

These observations reflect poor planning and seemingly lack of technical knowledge on the part of the grantee-LWF.

The selection and use of Suakoko -8 rice variety in the area is not appropriate without provision of adequate supply of water, as the field is planted now. The WARDA variety being used may also not be very appropriate due to problems of lodging and too low a height for current harvesting methods.

It is obvious that technical advice and field monitoring by LWF agronomists are not adequate.

Recommendation:

Technical assistance in farm management should be improved and monitoring by production agronomists from LWF's headquarters increased.

2) Objective 1: Food Processing discussions with the SUWATIG group members involved in the processing of cassava revealed that:

- (a) The group currently does not have the capacity to determine if the enterprise is profitable or not. They are not aware of all the resource requirements needed for efficient operation of the processor. They need training on how to determine economic profit, by including all cost items, both out of pocket expenses and the value of resources that they own and are used in the processing activities. Currently they are not including an estimated cost of their labor, fuel, management and capital in assessing their profit. If the costs of the inputs that they own and used are included in their current operational cost, they will have negative profit.
- (b) A complete system for efficient production of gari is not in place. The current set up lacks the press for draining water from the grated cassava; and the method of frying the gari is very rudimentary. For the facility to serve the community in addition to the SUWATIG group there is a need to have an improved system of producing gari. Such complete component systems (grater, presser and fryer) are available on the market. The IITA food processing unit prototype and other prototypes in use in Cote D' Ivore and Guinea could be ideal candidates to be considered for adoption.

Recommendation:

- (a) USAID should ensure that procurement of processing facilities should be stopped now; and, LWF should do a thorough assessment of alternative systems appropriate for Liberia, and decide on which system to acquire before additional procurement is made.
- (b) LWF/WS should be requested to update its "State of the Project Report" (October 1, 1999 – November 30, 2001) with section on "Impacts". The milestone indicators data should be analyzed and information obtained used to derive the impact statements. The project impact statements should focus on how project accomplishments are impacting on problems being addressed, i.e., availability of food, access to food, and food utilization; gender related issues; domestic capacity building of farmers, LNGOs & INGOs.
- (c) The revised "State of the project report" should be thoroughly reviewed by USAID to streamline the activity of LWF/WS and delete those activities that are not meeting acceptable performance levels and bring in those with good opportunities of attaining acceptable performance levels (i.e. delete upland rice and emphasize lowland rice technology, de-emphasize the poultry component, but intensify the inland fishery component). The review should ensure that current technical personnel capacity is in line with retained activities.

The reviewer and the USAID team were very impressed with both the physical and human resources capacity of the LWF/WS' aquaculture facility at Klay, Bomi County. It has great potential to influence LWF/WS' USAID activities.

- (d) It is recommended that all tree crop activities in Bomi County should be discontinued, but they should be continued in Nimba County.

III. CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

A. Project Identification information:

Project Title: Rehabilitation Of Liberia Food Production Capacity Project
Location/Project Area: Bomi County
Cooperative Agreement #: 669-CA-0099-00303
Official Starting Date: 1999 – September 2001
Project Manager:

B. Project Goal : To facilitate a sustainable increase in household livelihood security in Bong and Upper Lofa Counties through improved access to sources of income.

C. Project Objectives:

- (i) To increase rural income-earning opportunities through the rehabilitation of up to 3,000 acres of household cash crop plantations to productive levels by June 30, 2001.
- (ii) To increase the stock of tree crops in the project area, and thereby increasing household stocks of productive assets, by improving access to cash crop seedlings through the establishment of 100 nurseries by June 30, 2001.

D. Summary Of Major Accomplishments

Objective I: To increase rural income-earning opportunities through the rehabilitation of up to 3,000 acres of household cash crop plantations to productive levels by June 30, 2001.

- Six hundred tree crop farmers sub-divided into 55 kuus were identified and selected in five districts (Zota, Panta, Kpaai, Kokoyah and Sonoyea) in Bong County. The participating tree crop farmers received a package of tools and extensive on-farm technical assistance in plantation rehabilitation techniques. They also participated in workshops on best tree crop management practices.
- By the end of April 2000, the beneficiaries had under-brushed a total of 1,407 acres of cash crops as follows: Cocoa (623.6 ac,) (coffee – 700 ac.); and Oil Palm (83 ac). Additionally, approximately 50,000 cocoa seedlings had been planted in various rehabilitated plantations (in-filling) and 37% of the seedlings were used to extend the plantations.
- Five acres of existing coffee plantations were “back-cut” for plantation rejuvenation. The 5 one-acre sites were used as demonstration plots to encourage reluctant farmers to adopt the rehabilitation technique.

Acreage of Plantations Rehabilitated

Year	Crop	Target	Milestone	Achievement Level
1999/2000	Cocoa	600 acres	624 acres	104%
1999/2000	Coffee	600 acres	700 acres	117%
1999/2000	Oil Palm	N/A	83 acres ²	N/A
Total		1,200 acres	1,407 acres	

Performance Level: The achieved milestone (1407 ac) exceeded the target (1200) by 17%.

Rehabilitation Of Less Productive Plantations

The target was to bring 560 acres of older less productive plantations back to productive levels through back-cutting, under brushing, sanitary pruning and shade reduction. Farmer training was conducted for an estimated 150 farmers. To date, the total acreage, which has gone through rehabilitation, is over 580 acres. This figure represents an excess of the total target.

Older Less Productive Plantations Rehabilitated

Year	Crop	Target	Achievement	% Achievement
1999/2001	Cocoa	280 acres	360 acres	129%
1999/2001	Coffee	280 acres	280 acres	100%
Total		560 acres	580 acres	

Performance level: The achieved milestone (580 acres) exceeded the target (560 acres) by 3%.

Objective 2:

- To increase the stock of tree crops in the project area, and thereby increasing household stocks of productive assets, by improving access to cash crop seedlings through the establishment of 100 nurseries by June 30, 2001.

Achievement in Year 1:

- Six hundred tree crop farmers received nursery tools, polythene bags, seeds and extensive technical assistance in nursery establishment and management.
- Six hundred farmers established 63 community-based nurseries with a combined production of approximately 118,562 seedlings (cocoa – 66,380; coffee – 51,134 & Oil Palm – 1048).

Achievement in Year 2:

- Five hundred farmers established 38 community based nurseries and produced 82,500 seedlings (cocoa – 75,000, oil palm – 7,500).
- Year 1 & Year 2 combined accomplishments:
 Total number of acres rehabilitated: 1987
 Total number of acres planted 642
 Total number of acres back cut: 150
 Total acres brought back into production: 2,779

Performance Level: The target of 100 nurseries to be established was met.

E. Lessons Learned

The following observations during the implementation of the project provide some important Lessons.

1. During the period when the poro/sande cultural activities are taking place, farming activities come to a virtual stand still.
2. Farmers are involved in multiple farming activities thus limiting the amount of time they can spend on project activities.

Lesson Learned: Introduction of new management and production practices should be guided by analysis of labor calendar, which incorporates socio-cultural dimensions.

3. Farmers are hesitant to back-cut coffee and cocoa plantation due to loss income in first 3 – 4 years.

Lesson Learned: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

4. It was not easy to introduce new ideas and innovations which are different from traditional practices.
5. For the first year of the program, the target was to rehabilitate 1,200 acres by June 30. Targets were exceeded (1,400 acres) but after the June 30 deadline.

Lessons Learned: Target dates should be realistically planned and set.

F. Implementation Strategies That Influenced Performance

- 1) To ensure that cultural practices, multiple farming activities and reluctance to adopt new practices do not hamper implementation, CRS/Liberia fully involved the beneficiaries during the development of the implementation plan for year II. This ensured that the plan was in accordance with farmers' priorities and respective of farmers' multiple engagements.
- 2) The criteria and selection procedures were modified to ensure greater supervision from CRS/Liberia's staff during the registration of the beneficiaries.
- 3) CRS/Liberia increased sensitization meetings and explained to beneficiaries that prices fluctuate and that today's efforts in rehabilitating the plantations and increasing the number of productive trees will be rewarded by tomorrow's prices.

G. Overall Comments and Recommendation

Comments

- a) CRS is commended for their outstanding performance, despite several problems encountered during the implementation of the project. The ability of the management team to make quick and effective corrective decisions made a significant difference.
- b) CRS should be requested to produce a final project report with a section on "potential impact".

Recommendations

1. Although CRS field officers and monitors spent considerable amount of time preparing the farmers for follow-up activities that they would have to do on their own without CRS support (i.e. nursery maintenance, out-planting, and plantain establishment for oil palm, there is a need for more technical assistance through 2003. It is important to note that all the oil palm seedlings are still in nurseries. To protect and ensure that investments made in this project are nurtured to attain full benefit in the future, it is strongly recommended that CRS and or its local NGO, partners be funded (within USAID limited budget) to continue monitoring and providing advise to the farmers involved in this project for up to two years.
2. The actual impact from the investment made in this project will be depended on the participating farmer's capacity and readiness to handle post harvest/marketing issues related to cash crops (cocoa, coffee, and oil palm). There is a need for some follow-on activities to determine the anticipated future income. Activities under this follow-up phase should concentrate on management capacity building, post-harvest and marketing issues. To take advantage of the investment made in this project, USAID may want to explore follow-up activities with CRS.

IV. WORLD VISION LIBERIA

A. Project Identification Information

Project Title:	Rehabilitation of Liberia Food Production Capacity Project
Location/Project Area:	Grand Cape Mount County, Bong County (Suakoko & Fuam Districts), Margibi County (Lakayta Township), and Peri-urban area of Montserrado County
Cooperative Agreement #:	669-CA-0099-00303
Official Starting Date:	1999
Project Completion date:	September 2002
Country Project Director:	Jonas Njelango

B. Project Goal: To improve the socio-economic welfare of residents in the project area.

C. Project Objectives:

- (i) To improve Community-based Production Capacity – through community based lowland production, provision of diverse planting materials, community-based capacity development, community-based extension services, and provision of small animal to households.
- (ii) To strengthen technology transfer system – through training and capacity development.
- (iii) To improve value of agricultural products – through introduction of post-harvest processing facilities.
- (iv) To increased farmers income – through developed marketing systems.

D. Review Of Project Accomplishments

After reading the four quarterly reports, it was concluded that an adequate review could **not** be performed due to:

- The format and contents of the quarterly reports are not consistent.
- The first three reports do not have any information on objectives 3 (post-harvest processing facilitates) and 4 (development of marketing systems).
- The information on objectives 3 & 4 in the fourth quarterly report lack technical substance and depth. It is clear from this reviewer that WVL does not know what to do to achieve these two objectives. WVL appears not to have the requisite technical capacity to accomplish objectives 3 & 4, or it has reneged on these activities.
- Despite verbal guidelines and written suggestions (see attachment 1 & 2) from USAID to WVL, the third and fourth quarterly reports are still not adequate and unacceptable.
- Although a recommendation was made that the first and second quarterly reports be updated, they have still not yet been updated.

- Project accomplishments consistent with annual work plans, and the monitoring & evaluation plan with milestones and indicators are grossly missing in all quarterly reports.

E. Recommendations:

- a) It is recommended that a “State of Project Report” should be submitted to USAID within two weeks. The report should address issues raised above as well as those in attachment 1&2, plus a detailed section on impact assessment.
- b) If the “State of Project Report” is not received by the requested deadline, USAID should consider taking an appropriate non-compliance action.

Comments

- The reviewer’s perceptions and recommendations were shared with WVL officials (Dr. Sizi Morris, Mr. James Keih and Mr. Jones Njelango).
- Upon receipt of the “State of Project Report” the consultant will complete and submit assessment report to USAID within 5 days.

V. GENERAL RECOMMENDATION FOR USAID'S CONSIDERATION

The NGOs have some difficulties in analyzing their performance indicators (from their M & E plan) and using the information to derive impact statements. Given the new USAID reporting requirements, it is very important for the Mission's Agricultural Development Specialist (ADS) and NGO project managers to synchronize and link the NGO's M & E P indicators with Mission's PMP.

The following suggestions are made for USAID's consideration:

- a) Training workshop for NGO partners (local & international) in analysis of M & EP milestone indicators and their use in developing impact statements should be organized in Monrovia. A three-day intensive hand-on workshop is recommended.
- b) Collaborating NGOs should be advised to study the approved Mission's strategy (2001-2003) and use it as a guide to amend their current activities or develop their extension proposals.
- c) Given the level of staff at post, Mission and NGO partners should jointly develop a plan for semi-annual and annual program reviews with assistance from the Senior Agribusiness Advisor from Washington, D.C.
- d) Hiring of new selected candidates for future technical positions under the current program must be approved by USAID.
- e) Mission ADS should collaborate with collaborating INGOs to develop a strategic plan for more direct involvement of LNGOs in approved Agricultural SO (2001-2003) activities.
- f) Mission should conduct a needs assessment for capacity enhancement of collaborating NGOs (I & L) in key areas in Mission's New Strategy (Marketing, Agribusiness Management, Micro-enterprise Development, etc).
- g) World Vision appears to be doing well but not properly reporting its activities. However, WVL appears to be doing too many things. The addition of the proposed micro-credit component will require more specialized manpower and a possible re-orientation of the project, thus there is a need to reduce some of the other activities. It is suggested that the micro-credit effort concentrate on vertical integration type of activities, which will add values to farmers' produce. This means that geographic coverage will be limited to areas already covered by Mission's current interventions; and program activities must emphasize post-harvest loss prevention.
- h) There is a need to increase information flow among the INGOs, as well as between/among INGOs, LNGOs and community groups. Networking should become an integral part of the ADS' management strategy. Sufficient resources (time and budget) should, therefore, be allocated to facilitate meetings and site visits.
- i) Encourage implementing partners to collaborate with field technicians of the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure project continuity when USAID funding phases out.
- j) Given that most of the NGO staff has not completely graduated from humanitarian mode to development mode, it is recommended that mission staff site visit be intensified.

- k) It is suggested that the Mission explores the possibility of using performance base grant awards with all its grantees.
- l) Given the new Mission Strategy (2001 – 2003), the new USAID reporting requirement, the structure/level of USDH at the Mission, and the classification of the Mission as a third tier post, it may be useful for the mission to make some streamlining decisions, if it were to successfully accomplish its agriculture strategic objective. The following ideas are suggested for consideration:
- (i) **Project Focus Area:** The agriculture program should be limited to Bomi, Bong, Margibi, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount Counties and the Peri-Urban areas of Montserrado County.
 - (ii) **Manageable Mission Oversight:** Effective management of three different grantees with the current level of one position (ADS) is unrealistic. It is suggested that one INGO, with a better chance of successfully accomplishing the new agriculture SO is selected to serve as an apex organization for implementing the agriculture program. Such an organization should be given the task and responsibility to sub-contract with other interested individuals and organizations including INGOs, LNGOs, and Community Groups.
 - (iii) **Potential Apex Organization Candidates:**
 - LWF/WS: Their current performance is about average. Does not have full complement of technical expertise in: a) post harvest/marketing and product development areas; b) rapid multiplication of planting materials; and, c) farm management. It has good expertise in a) community group formation and development, b) general extension service, and c) aquaculture.

The evidence available does not show that LWF is a strong candidate.

- CRS: Its current performance is outstanding. It has technical expertise in: a) multiplication of planting materials for tree crops, b) farm management, c) community group formation and development. The reviewer does not have enough information to assess CRS on: a) post harvest/marketing/product development and b) Food crop production.

Available evidence suggests that CRS has a good potential to be the apex organization.

- WVL: Its current performance in technical food crop production and management is outstanding (even though they do not write good reports). It has a unique individual with outstanding experience in technology development and transfer, and rare ability to work with farmers. It has full complement of technical expertise in: a) rapid multiplication of planting materials/seeds; b) farm management; c) group formation development; d) general extension service; and, e) food crop production. It lacks expertise in: a) post harvest/ marketing/product development; b) animal/aquaculture production; and, c) market development. The reviewer does not have enough information to assess WML on tree crop production.

The evidence available suggests that it could be a strong candidate for the Apex organization. However, given their current shutdown strategy and the loss of their agricultural program manager, (who is the back bone of most of their current technical capacity) it would not be a strong candidate.

- **Other Candidates:** It may be in the best interest of USAID to encourage other INGOs with proven track records in agricultural development in Africa (i.e. ACDI/VOCA, UMCOR, and **Africare**) to compete for the Apex Organization position.
- (iv) **Selection of Apex Organization:** The selection process should be opened up to all interested candidates including the current NGO partners. The RFA/RFP should be driven by the new Agriculture SO.

