

NUTRITION COORDINATION AND PLANNING IN LESOTHO

An Evaluation Of

Operational Program Grant AFR-G-1270 to

Planning Assistance, Inc. (PAI)

USAID Project Number 632-C066 (1976)

BY

NEW TRANSCENTURY FOUNDATION

- (James M. Pines, Consultant)

Field visit to Lesotho:  
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AID Contract No.-  
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RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter I-

1. USAID should view the PAI Project Proposal as a guide to action, not as a blueprint of specific activities and exact results to be attained.
2. USAID should encourage PAI use of current expatriate consultants, despite similarities to permanent staff.

Chapter II-

3. USAID should encourage FNCO nutritional review of AID-supported agriculture, health, and other activities with nutrition consequences.
4. USAID should, with PAI guidance, encourage GOL expansion of the FNCO staff. *5 positions.*
5. PAI should seek opportunities, with FNCO, to coordinate multi-sectoral projects, such as the UNFPA and World Bank activities now being planned, but should not execute any of the activities directly, working only through other agencies.
6. If AID is serious about nutrition in Lesotho, it should prepare for continued support of FNCO and other nutrition-related activities for many years to come.

Chapter III-

7. AID/W, USAID/L, ~~RHDO~~ and PAI should try to forget past history and concentrate on establishing new patterns of relationship consistent with AID requirements and PAI autonomy.
8. PAI should increase personal contact with AID staff, clear travel and unusual expenditures or activities well in advance, and submit a short monthly report, with copies of any documents going to USAID/L, the RHDO, and AID/W.
9. AID/W, USAID/L, and the RHDO should clarify their respective relationships and responsibilities with respect to the Nutrition Project and the Grantee.
10. GAO criticism of PAI performance was generally accurate, but performance has improved and AID should not, at this late date, jeopardize the Project by penalizing the Grantee.
11. PAI should immediately submit to AID/a detailed breakdown of past and proposed expenditures, with justifications, to support request for extra funds needed to fulfill the Grant. *With a copy to mission*
12. Future funding should flow from AID/W, but PAI should recognize that this does not diminish field monitoring responsibilities.

Chapter IV-

13. PAI should pay special attention to early detection and resolution of grievances within FNCO, before they escalate and become a threat to the technical assistance relationship.

14. PAI should make a special effort to prepare and support the FNCO Executive Director for the forthcoming major conference, since she does not feel fully prepared, her performance is critical for the Office's future, and many participants are skeptical about value of the meeting.

15. FNCO should focus on being of service to nutrition-related agencies, emphasizing practical help and minimizing special requests, to further credibility, reduce defensiveness, and prepare the way for eventual joint planning addressed to specific nutrition goals.

16. FNCO should gear requests for information to the systems and capacities of participating agencies, feeding back evidence to show that the information has been used, and offering to help the agencies with any problems raised by the requests.

17. USAID and PAI should begin discussions of Project extension with each other and, together, with FNCO and the Government of Lesotho offices involved in approval.

Chapter V-

18. FNCO should analyze the National Nutrition Status Survey results together with available studies and information on causal factors, to develop a better substantive framework within which to make project intervention choices.

19. DSE/W should send the latest draft Report of the Survey, all tapes, runs and available raw data from it to FNCO immediately.

Chapter VI-

20. PAI and FNCO should arrange more training sessions for key staff of those ministries involved in nutrition planning and coordination, to improve productivity of routine work together, reduce defensiveness, and institutionalize the common language and approach of the Office.

21. USAID should seek nutrition planning training opportunities for key people outside FNCO, with guidance from the Coordinating Office.

22. FNCO should improve substantive aspects of the national nutrition planning process by emphasizing goal-oriented linking of projects in regions and communities.

Chapter VII-

23. FNCO should improve impact of nutrition coordination and planning by urging collaborative focus on geographical centers of malnutrition and by giving priority to targetting of feeding programs on malnourished children.

24. FNCO should work closely with PMU and non-governmental agencies involved in food distribution to develop patterns and methods of distribution more directly related to patterns of malnutrition.

25. FNCO should begin to move into systematic review of nutrition consequences in "non-nutrition" activities, after adopting a methodology based on recent sources.

## Nutrition Planning and Coordination in Lesotho

This Report reviews Planning Assistance, Inc. (PAI) performance and progress under Operational Program Grant AFR-G-1270, also known as the AID Lesotho Nutrition Project (632-0066). The three-year Grant, signed in June, 1976 was extended to February, 1980 and given more funds by a modification in February, 1978, bringing total funding to \$ 405,000. PAI is helping the Government of Lesotho develop a structure for national nutrition planning and coordination. It also provides technical assistance in management of the planning.

The present Review meets the Grant requirement for an annual evaluation, is intended to assist AID in assessing a PAI request for \$ 50,000 more before February, 1980 and in considering extension of the activity, and responds to special recommendations for an evaluation made in GAO Audit No. 3-690-79-02, dated October 27, 1978. Although the Grant was made by the AID/W Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PDC/PVC), USAID/Lesotho and the Africa Bureau also have monitoring responsibilities. The evaluation responds to concerns of all interested AID offices.

### Method

The evaluation methodology distinguishes carefully among a) PAI execution of activities, b) PAI management and relationships with AID and the Lesotho Government, c) The institutional results of PAI activities, and d) The substantive nutrition planning and related outcomes of the activities. Chapters follow the Scope of Work given in State Cable No. 010612 from Africa Bureau to the Mission, dated February 19, 1979.

Reading, field work in Washington, New York Headquarters of PAI, and in Lesotho, concentrated on assembling the often-conflicting perceptions of participants and observers regarding the chapter topics, followed by an attempt to distill, with reasonable objectivity, a balanced view of this unusually controversial Project.

The Evaluation does not assign guilt or assess blame. It seeks, rather, to provide guidance for improving management and impact of what is, despite the problems, one of AID's outstanding nutrition planning support activities.

Connie Collins, the USAID Regional Health Development Officer (RHDO) and PAI resident Project Director Bob Learmonth provided important help and guidance during the work. Ms. Celestina Phafane, Director of the Lesotho Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO), also cooperated in every way and shared useful insights.

## I. Execution of Project Activities

The PAI Project Proposal, submitted in January, 1976 and in revised form the following May, outlines an impressive framework of goals and related tasks intended to institutionalize nutrition coordination and planning in Lesotho. To the first question of project evaluation, "Did they do what they said they would do?," the answer is a qualified "Yes."

Despite early delays beyond PAI control, that eliminated 1976 projected summer activities, and staffing problems that produced three project directors and a five-month hiatus in less than three years, the activities have occurred with reasonable congruence to the proposal.

GOL delays in staffing the FNCO have limited scope and delayed some activities, especially training, but the consistency between PAI's unusually detailed proposal and what has actually happened compares favorably with similar projects elsewhere. A letter from former PAI Project Director Chris Thorne to the Government, though contrary to PAI policy and threatening in tone, got things moving finally. Reasonable people can differ about the wisdom of such a letter, but it hardly merited the vigorous negative reaction of PAI Headquarters that contributed to Thorne's departure.

The Project Proposal and related Logical Framework must be viewed as guides to action, not accurate predictions, under the best circumstances. In a highly political institution-building project, flexible response and sensitive unanticipated initiatives are critical to achieving goals. Good evaluation requires more than counting "verifiable indicators" of the Logical Framework. PAI falls far short on the indicators alone. The evaluator must look at changing circumstances, contractor response, and experience elsewhere in assessing the quantity and quality of activities. On this basis,

the contractor has, since the last evaluation in August, 1977, produced a Project Director who is assisting the FNCO effectively and as contemplated in the Project Proposal.

Little purpose would be served by rehashing the checkered history preceding his arrival, which presents an unpleasant record of little credit to PAI and not a lot more to AID. Unless AID/Washington, the Mission, and PAI in both New York and Lesotho can rise above it, that history threatens progress of the Nutrition Project which is, for the moment, on track.

The PAI approach, less clear in the Proposal than in discussion, also militates against relying too heavily on the verifiable indicators. It emphasizes "advising" rather than directing, giving maximum initiative to nationals, and resisting the natural urge to take over in order to meet the numbers. Though often frustrating and sometimes violated, the approach permeates the Nutrition Project. Learmonth works this way and, though the approach may contribute to delays and small numbers, it is widely accepted as more useful for institution-building than highly directive techniques. His constant references to "We," meaning FNCO, and rare raising of separate PAI identity, illustrate a style and relationship demonstrably more effective, in the long run, than the outside "expert." In Lesotho, at least in FNCO, any other style would soon render the adviser unwelcome.

The foregoing should not be understood as a general endorsement of PAI. It is, rather, a reassurance that, despite what has gone before, the Grantee is presently delivering the competent professional services promised. An information center exists and studies are proceeding, the next planning conference is imminent, training occurs in all contacts between expatriates and nationals, meetings with other agencies happen often, and the small PAI-FNCO staff generate activity remarkable for its size. Though behind

schedule, "progress in relation to specific tasks (Cable 040612)" is now satisfactory.

Two expatriate consultants, paid high local salaries (or low US) under the Grant, are an outstanding bargain. Their continuous involvement makes them seem like staff, but their assignments and work arrangements meet the customary indicia of consultant status. They work with nationals, fit in unusually well, and help stretch the very limited staff resources available in Lesotho.

PAI over-reacted during the Thorne departure and recovered slowly during the Pollard visit and assignment of Learmonth, but has remained faithful to the Project concept. If things get no worse than they are now, future results will involve fewer PAI headaches for AID and will be well worth the management time required.

## II. Progress in Relation to Goals and Objectives

Nutrition coordination and planning may eventually contribute to improved nutrition in Lesotho, as suggested in the Logical Framework goal, but not much by February, 1980, as also implied there. The two-person FNCO national professional staff will continue to make a modest contribution to effective planning and operation of some nutrition-related activities, but the impact of these activities on nutrition status remains undemonstrated. Effective integration of AID support of agriculture and health with FNCO, through nutritional review of proposed projects, would strengthen the Office and improve likelihood of significant impact. The coordinating office alone still lacks the political influence needed for affecting major nutrition issues.

This harsh-sounding assessment seeks only to bring perspective to AID consideration of the Project's future. With respect to "Institutionalization of sound planning and management.....," the Project Purpose, the outlook is more favorable. There is an Office, the Advisory Committee functions and attends training sessions, and the Food and Nutrition Council meets occasionally. While the Office's bureaucratic situation might be improved, as suggested in the 1977 Parlato evaluation, FNCO's location in the Prime Minister's Office seems to get it a hearing almost everywhere. It is not always listened to, a far more difficult step, but the institutional requisites for that now exist.

The Annual Planning Meetings, regular meetings with ministry representatives, and the continued building of an informal network can, with appropriate political support, produce important impact on nutrition-related decisions. Nutrition is moving into the Lesotho development

picture about as effectively as it is anywhere in the world! FNCO has not done this alone, as the historical record illustrates, but it has certainly influenced current progress in the classical step of "sensitizing decision-makers."

GOL financial support, totalling about \$ 15,000 for March, 1978 through February, 1979, is modest, but bureaucratic interest remains high. FNCO has requested funding for five more national staff during the fiscal year beginning in March, 1979, and favorable GOL response to this would be a strong indication of support. If staff does not increase but Government continues good political support of FNCO, this would still be an acceptable sign to be considered by USAID.

The literature on institution-building emphasizes linkages with other groups and institutions of the social system. FNCO has established many such connections, likely to be durable, favorable for survival. Press coverage and university relations are good, World Bank and UNEFA have invited FNCO to coordinate projects, various ministries and agencies accept assistance, and nutrition will receive more attention in the next five-year plan. FNCO studies and assembled information are shared with donors and others. FNCO makes and follows orderly work plans, incorporating linkages throughout private and governmental sectors.

Coordinating agencies are tempted inevitably to execute activities themselves and FNCO is no exception. It is often easier to do it yourself than to persuade and monitor others. The FNCO coordinating role implies that the Office may parcel out money to other agencies in accordance with a collaborative plan "orchestrated" by it. The role should not be construed to encourage FNCO implementation, since a main purpose of coordination is to strengthen other agencies. Worldwide experience suggests that ministries

and agencies expected to carry out national programs later resent being handed model "pilot projects," no matter how impressive, done by others. It will be harder for FNCO to do the UNFPA Better Family Living Project and the World Bank urban nutrition component through others, but better than doing the work independently. Both of these projects are outstanding chances for effective coordination and the donor offers to FNCO illustrate the Office's status and progress.

Institutionalization of nutrition planning will be far from finished by February, 1980. The national staff, vulnerable to transfer within the hard-pressed civil service system, has much to learn if they are allowed to stay. Any new staff will be novices at the work. PAI's management and planning approaches, though well received, are not yet part of FNCO or participating ministry procedures. Most important, although a planning process has been introduced, substantive output is still rudimentary. If AID is serious about nutrition in Lesotho, it should settle down for the long pull. Whether PAI or others provide the help, it will be useful for years to come.

Continuation of PAI depends not only on the Grantee's technical performance, which this Report assesses favorably. It also depends on AID judgments about PAI compatibility, style, and management, discussed in the next chapter. An outside evaluator, especially one from another FVO, cannot decide and should not recommend for AID. A buyer may like the product but prefer another seller for many reasons, most of which are beyond the scope of the Evaluation.

### III. Project Management, Grantee Relations, and Finances

This modest Project (less than \$ 150,000 funding annually) has consumed more Mission (including OSARAC), AID/W, and PAI management time than most projects ten times the size. The files are a study in bickering, pettiness, lost tempers, and poor management on all sides. The unfortunate coincidences of pre-project friendships of former Project Director Thorne and Mission staff, and successor Learmonth with AID/W Desk Officer Wrin, aggravated the situation. PAI Executive Director Patterson's reliance on the subtle differences between contract and grant to justify near-hostile attitudes to the USAID, for whom these differences were largely irrelevant, also contributed to the rancor.

Clearing the air, essential for continued Grant progress, requires forgetting bygones, calming down, and making some efforts to empathize. The Project is a modest but useful one, the AID requirements are reasonable and not worth trying to avoid, and the Government of Lesotho is occasionally demanding but generally obliging, within severe constraints. The GAO Audit, though perhaps a little alarmist, picked up genuine issues and served a useful role. PAI's Headquarters in New York has been little help, but now seems better prepared and willing to work together.

Differences between contracts and grants are important in relation to autonomy of those performing services. AID buys specific products or services from a contractor. A grantee makes a more general commitment. This affects a Mission's role as supervisor or monitor of activities, but in both cases there is a certain unavoidable minimum. The GAO Audit, for example, indicates a clear expectation that field missions are expected to follow OPG's closely, including those originating in Washington. Although the Grants are intended to take advantage of PVO flexibility, grass roots contacts, and relative

independence of Government, they are not unrestricted gifts. AID/W, as PAI's grantor, and AID/Lesotho, as grantor presence in the country of work, had monitoring responsibilities that PAI should have known.

More important than the legalities and formalities are the give-and-take of work overseas. Whether contractor or grantee, U.S. organizations receiving AID money are "in the system." With some forbearance and consideration from both sides, AID can be satisfied without threat to the integrity or autonomy of non-AID organizations.

The whole process works better when AID signals are uniform and clear. Though far from faultless, PAI has been caught in a three-way cross-fire among AID/W, AID/L and OSARAC (the RHDO) that should be eliminated. Clearer guidance from a higher level of AID on monitoring of OPG's would also help.

PAI could avoid a lot of turmoil by communicating more with AID. Understandably gun-shy, Learmonth has minimized contacts with the Mission. A one-page monthly report, for example, with early clearance of all proposed travel and unusual activities or expenditures, with an outgoing effort to inform AID personally, will take little time and avoid surprises without harm to PAI. Copying the Lesotho Desk and the RHDO will avoid difficulties from poor intra-AID communication.

The PAI Project Director needs to be involved with the Mission and vice versa, regardless of funding, if only because the links between nutrition and other AID-supported activities require it. The Nutrition Project relates to a broader AID strategy and, in turn, what AID does impinges dramatically on nutrition in Lesotho.

There will continue to be differences between AID and PAI, but with the approach suggested above they should be manageable. Relations are already

better than after Thorne's resignation and can easily improve.

Cable 040612 requests appraisal of "Project management, staffing and coordination, including.....project staff, relations.....and GOL." The record speaks for itself. The Thorne resignation was handled poorly, interim project direction was inadequate, and the Government of Lesotho was annoyed. USAID/Lesotho remains eloquent on the subject. Fortunately, the hiatus in Project direction was not critical, Learmonth's performance is excellent despite his poor paper qualifications and messy selection, and the Government now seems more content. PAI and AID have emerged with far more than either deserved or informed observers would have predicted.

The GAO criticism of PAI performance, though partially true, is outdated. To penalize now, when the damage has been corrected, would only kill off a promising activity. AID has until February, 1980 to decide whether the current improved situation is permanent. Negotiations should begin immediately for extension of the Project and, unless new problems develop, PAI should have first opportunity to propose.

PAI states, though formal request has not yet been detailed to AID, that it needs \$ 50,000 more to carry on the Project until February, 1980. The differences between contract and grant may be relevant here, since a contractor could more easily be held to completion. Failure to fund PAI will end the Project or, at least, guarantee another damaging interval. The Grantee has some strong explaining and justifying to do.

Grantees inevitably overestimate the ease of keeping staff in the field and PAI fell into the trap. It is, however, a low-cost grantee and the over-run

results from underestimation and leanness as much as from the stormy history with related long cables and dubious trips.

PAI suggests that future funding continue to be from AID/W. Patterson and Learmonth think that funding from AID/Lesotho would appear as excessive US Government involvement and reduce advantages from using the PVO mechanism. This seems reasonable, provided everybody understands that the Mission and the RHDO will still be heavily concerned with monitoring.

#### IV. The Government of Lesotho and the Project

The Government of Lesotho is more strict with donors than, for example, Latin American governments. The PAI Project Director is expected to conduct himself as a member of the Civil Service assigned to FNCO. The Director of FNCO, despite her generally favorable attitude toward Learmonth, does not hesitate, for example, to express her misgivings about the PAI vehicle not being treated entirely as Government transport, about a PAI trip to New York not serving FNCO ends as she sees them, or about PAI failure to discuss and explain all financial matters clearly.

This is healthy and the way technical assistance should be managed by receiving countries, but few governments have the nerve to do it and few grantees will take it for long without reacting. PAI is, so far, keeping out of serious trouble since the Thorne resignation turmoil. Constant attention is required to keep new problems from destroying hard-won relationships.

Higher levels of Government, including Permanent and Principal Secretaries, are not as close to the Project as Ms. Phafane, but take similar strong positions. Their unwillingness to allow the Survey Report to be released, for example, reflects an independence encountered infrequently in other countries. When they endorse the Nutrition Project, as they have by word and conduct, their attitudes suggest that they are doing more than keeping a donor happy, the common explanation of many AID disappointments.

Within the Government, attitudes vary toward FNCO. The Food Management Unit, for example, wants "something practical" in the form of evaluation help and sees FNCO as still unclear in methods and desired outcomes. The

Ministry of Agriculture keeps appointments and supplies requested information, with prodding, but is not yet a full supporter of FNCO. The Coordination Office has wisely refrained from pulling rank or mobilizing political power to press agencies, so the hostility to nutrition coordinators and lost battles so common elsewhere are still absent in Lesotho.

FNCO is at the critical point where it must demonstrate that it can be useful to individual ministries and that it brings to national development something previously lacking. The annual planning conferences offer a good opportunity to show FNCO wares and skills, but also involve major risk to credibility if not handled well. Participants interviewed gave mixed marks to previous conferences and seem vague about what they will get out of the one starting on March 26.

Agencies also express qualms about the volume of information requested by FNCO, a common complaint in most countries starting nutrition planning. The FNCO needs to integrate information needs with existing systems of responding agencies, helping them to organize data collection so that FNCO requests do not involve more work.

Within FNCO, relationships illustrate the best aspects of technical assistance. The PAI Director, two sensitive part-time consultants, and the two dedicated national professionals form a team in which frank and productive interchange is common, feelings and tensions are managed well, and people move easily from discussion to decision and action. Their meetings show how advisers should fit into a national group. They will need all their shared skills and mutual reinforcement to cope with the problems and frustrations of becoming a serious part of development in Lesotho, but they are off to a promising start.

It is not too early for AID and PAI to begin working on extension of the Project and the Grant. Experience with the Government of Lesotho suggests that early introduction of the subject will contribute to more timely decisions. This is also true in AID, where delays in processing have hindered past continuity of the Grant. A meeting of Ms. Phafane, Learmonth, and appropriate USAID participants would serve to establish the context and identify open issues. During the worst days, the Government did not indicate serious unhappiness with PAI and it is probably appropriate for PAI Headquarters to participate in the formalities of sounding out GOL desire for continued help in nutrition and, specifically, for help from PAI. These politically sensitive matters are beyond competence of a brief evaluation, but the need for attention to them should be noted.

The PVO mechanism seems particularly appropriate to Lesotho, where Government is especially sensitive to outside interference or the appearance of it. USAID may receive little direct credit, but should be content with the findings of this evaluation that the Grant has provided welcome and useful support to a GOL initiative and is contributing to institutionalization of structures and approaches that will influence national development favorably, from the perspectives of both the United States and Lesotho.

### V. The Survey Mess

The sad fate of the Lesotho National Nutrition Survey illustrates once again the perils of "outside" research. UCLA, under auspices of AID's Nutrition Office (now DSB/N), supervised field work in June, 1976 for the Survey, planned as an important tool for the concurrent AID Nutrition Project. PAI knew of it, saw the value, but had no responsibility and little participation in it.

To an outside observer nearly three years later, the Survey history presents a tragic story of misunderstandings, emotional reactions, and developmental ineptness. The Survey results have been used rarely, the Report has yet to receive Government approval, and mere mention of the Survey generates sneers in many quarters at this late date.

UCLA did not do a bad technical job. Reading the Report, a list of objections presented on behalf of GOL, and the responses cabled back through AID by UCLA, one is struck by the harsh tone of the criticisms and the branding as "condescending" of UCLA's generally reasonable replies. It is obvious that the exchanges mask feelings that go far beyond concern for scientific accuracy.

The likely explanation is UCLA's failure to make the Survey truly GOL property. The Government never "bought in" and UCLA apparently failed to realize it. Had nationals and other critics been dealt with continuously and as equals, they would not now still be lamenting UCLA's admitted substituting of a few accessible sites for some impossible to reach, its use of foreign reference standards, and other relevant, but not critical, points.

Even if all the Basotho and expatriate critics are right, the Survey is still a useful, quick, low-cost, assessment of national nutrition status and

the best available. The critics seek a reliability that, while desirable, is not indispensable to the kind of decisions that the Survey was intended to facilitate. Baseline data collection for specific projects would soon identify lack of representativity, but the Survey could be a good first approach.

The "recommendations" requested by GOI and some critics could not flow from a survey limited to nutrition status. UCLA should have made clear that more exploration of causal factors would be needed and that recommendations could evolve from analysis of Survey results together with the FNCO studies and other available information.

Learmonth, whose excellent survey background led him too readily into identifying the Survey's weaknesses, wrote to UCLA in December and visited DSB/N in early March, seeking to salvage the Survey Report. Ms. Phafane, who missed a month at UCLA because of illness, is perplexed but not hostile. Had she been able to make the visit, things might have been different.

With UCLA staff dispersed or discredited, the best solution would be for DSB/N to collect tapes, forms, and all other raw material of the Survey and ship them to FNCO without comment. Learmonth plans to do validity tests and otherwise satisfy himself and others enough to make good use of most of the information. He might as well be given the chance, since the alternative is for the Survey to remain a useless monument to good intentions.

The Survey is the keystone for identification of nutrition goals and for identifying research priorities. FNCO coordination of research on causal factors and deepening of knowledge about nutrition status can start from the Survey data.

## VI. Training and the Planning Conference

The GAO Audit criticized alleged PAI training deficiencies in isolation from interrelated aspects of Grantee performance. As far as it goes, this part of the Audit is correct. PAI is far short of the ambitious training targets related to "the level of self-sufficiency" that appear in the Proposal. FNCO has two Basotho professional staff to date, not the more than 20 contemplated in the Proposal. If PAI gave them much more formal training, the Office would get little work done. Learmonth and the consultants link training inextricably with their daily contacts among nationals, have done some formal training of Advisory Group members, and will use the coming Planning Meeting for training purposes.

The Audit doesn't say how PAI should have obtained counterparts to train. The training deficiencies flowed inevitably from GOL delay in organizing and staffing FNCO. PAI might have arranged some formal training for representatives of the ministries, while waiting, but the intervening turmoil and Project Director gap prevented that.

Patterson and Learmonth underestimate the difficulties of institutionalizing their nutrition planning process and substantive approaches among nutrition-related agencies. They seem to think an Annual Planning Meeting and regular work encounters suffice to disseminate the common language. Interviews with those involved confirm that more is needed. A few formal training sessions would speed and facilitate the introduction process, reducing agency defensiveness and building skills needed to make regular encounters more productive. Ms. Phafane and her deputy acknowledge need for more training in the PAI approach, so it is not surprising to find others equally insecure.

USAID should make special efforts to get key people from outside FNCO to AID-sponsored and other training in nutrition planning. FNCO can identify appropriate candidates. If more people understand what FNCO is talking about, national nutrition planning will be more effective sooner.

If the PAI Proposal is taken at face value, the Grantee has fallen far short of goals in training and other aspects of performance. If it is viewed as the outline of a process, PAI looks better. The process is underway and, though slower than planned, is now proceeding reasonably well. If and when GOL furnishes more staff, PAI will train them well, but it does not control the situation.

Much difficulty with the Grant, including the training critique, arises from AID acceptance of PAI representations about likely GOL actions as fact. The Grantee was too optimistic, not unusual among dedicated PVO's with good ideas. AID should, by now, recognize that project proposals incorporate a lot of hopes, dreams, and wishful thinking. If they still look good, after appropriate discounting, approval will bring less disillusionment. Banks understand this principle clearly. The PAI Grant is now about where realistic appraisal of the initial situation would have predicted. AID has not received what it expected, but it has not been taken advantage of either.

PAI's vision of the coordination and planning processes remains intact. The Second Annual Planning Conference is scheduled for March 26. Publicity is good, more than 100 invitations are out and being accepted, and the agenda follows the PAI collaborative model, with phased movement from global strategies to detailed project planning. FNCO needs to make the meeting more practical, by responding to agency interests, if interview comments are heeded.

PAI and FNCO assistance is still primarily in planning and project design techniques, not in substantive planning for achievement of specific nutrition goals. The identification of causal factors affecting malnutrition (called "problems") led to ministry selections of priority project areas during the previous Planning Conference, but it is not clear that the assembly of projects, however useful individually, will reduce malnutrition. It is politically difficult to get the project modifications and linkages needed to assure nutrition impact, but FNCO should have a clearer substantive framework for guidance.

It is not enough to identify projects in production, distribution, consumption, and utilization. Nutrition planning requires goal-centered choices based on analysis of causes in relation to specific goals and expected project consequences. There are good reasons why PAI has not moved more in this direction, constraints of current activities and defensiveness of agencies for example, but if FNCO is to be "first among equals" in nutrition planning, it needs a more concrete framework for choosing among projects. Some participants in the planning conferences complain that FNCO is "too much in the air" or "trying to do everything." These criticisms will diminish when discussion of projects emphasizes their relationship to specific quantified nutrition goals.

## VII. The Future

Nutrition is not a high priority in Lesotho. The country's limited resources and heavy dependence on South Africa make nutrition problems only slightly susceptible to the incidental interventions the nutrition planners can forge. Nevertheless, the Council and FNCO can make an increasing contribution to development in Lesotho, tilting it toward favorable nutrition consequences, preventing damage from "non-nutrition" activities, and improving the micro-application of resources within the broad nutrition context flowing from the general development pattern.

A logical progression from the current emphasis on "better projects" is an effort to focus nutrition-related interventions on malnourished groups and areas. This is still coordination rather than imposition or joint planning. The sharper focus increases likelihood that, for example, efforts to increase food production will actually benefit the malnourished and water systems will go where they are most likely to reduce malnutrition. This is the Philippine model, a useful compromise for the coordinating agency that does not yet have the resources, power, and persuasiveness to induce joint planning for shared goals.

A related direction involves closer relations between FNCO and FMU, the Food Management Unit responsible for logistics and management of donated food. With close to ten per cent of national food supply coming from this source, and the highest PL 480 per capita contribution in Africa, it is probable that targetted distribution of supplementary food could virtually eliminate child malnutrition in Lesotho. If FNCO can influence FMU patterns of distribution, rations, and related aspects of feeding projects, the theoretical possibility could be approached. Food production planning then becomes design of the eventual replacement

of donated food with local production. Colombia and Peru have had some success with this approach.

FNCO also needs to improve goal-centered regional and community nutrition planning. Instead of talking about "food self-sufficiency" or "rehabilitation centers," it should be planning use of these and other tools to free specific areas or communities of particular manifestations of malnutrition. Nutrition planning in Lesotho, though far ahead of many countries, still looks too often like the traditional "bundle of interventions" that is assumed to do some good. The excellent planning process would have more impact if accompanied by more clarity about goals and the relation of projects to them.

FNCO needs to work more on "nutritional review," the assessment of nutrition consequences flowing from activities undertaken for other purposes. The Office recognizes this need and will try to include among new staff the skills to improve capability in review. It should draw on World Bank, DSB/N of AID, and other sources to take advantage of new analytical techniques developing rapidly in this field.

Nutrition planning has a long way to go in Lesotho. If FNCO does not grow in credibility and influence, or drowns participating agency representatives in paperwork and uncomprehended directions, the entire Nutrition Project and PAI Grant would fade away. The structure is still fragile, but it exists and deserves encouragement. USAID can do as much by arranging FNCO review of other AID-supported activities, and channelling money through FNCO for distribution and coordination, as it can by direct support of the Office. FNCO will need some modest support and technical help beyond 1980. If the present promising picture continues, future investment will yield attractive returns. At the very least, FNCO influence on PL 480 activities will more than compensate for any support received.

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Government of Lesotho

Mr. J. Mosholugu- Deputy Senior Principal Secretary  
Mr. Michael Walton - Chief Planning Development Officer  
Mr. D.J.A. Briggs- Executive Director, Food Management Unit  
Mr. Peter Khadia- Deputy, Food Management Unit  
Ms. Seipobi - Health Planning Unit  
Ms. Borotho - Health Planning Unit  
Ms. Jonathan- Home Economics, Dept. of Agriculture  
Ms. Mpeta - Home Economics  
Ms. Ramoholi -Home Economics  
Mr. J. Hurst -Ministry of Rural Development  
Ms. Williams - Rural Development  
Ms. P. Makhaba- Ministry of Education  
Mr. D. Mosebo - Ministry of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO)

Ms. C. Phafane - Executive Director  
Mr. C.S. Chobokane - Deputy

Agency for International Development

Frank Campbell - Mission Director  
John Figueira - Officer  
Connie Collins - Regional Health Development Officer  
Bob Wrin - Lesotho Desk  
Al Harding - Project Officer  
Arthur Braunstein - Africa Nutrition Adviser

Planning Assistance, Inc. (PAI)

Charles Patterson - Executive Director  
Darshan Gedhu - Associate Manager  
Bob Learmonth - Project Director  
Chris Thorne (by phone) - ex-Project Director  
James Anderson - Consultant  
Karen Wilkin - Consultant

Other

Mr. Hussein Rahman - World Food Program  
Mr. Dennis O'Brien - Director, Catholic Relief Services  
Ms. Rhonda Sarnoff - Catholic Relief Services

The field visit also included interviews with staff of Ministry of Health Clinic on Airport Road, Maseru.