PD-AAX-529

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

AGRICULTURAL PLANNING PROJECT (532-0061)

1. The Agricultural Planning Project Grant Agreement was executed on June 28, 1979 for the purpose of improving the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) capacity to identify, analyze, and implement policy initiatives supportive of expanded agricultural production and productivity, particularly as those initiatives might support increased incomes for small farmers. The original Project Assistance Completion Date (PACD) was June 30, 1984. That date was extended twice, once to June 30, 1985 and then again to June 30, 1986.

2. Life of Project (LOP) financing was authorized in the amount of US$5,891,000, of which US$2,878,000 was USAID grant funding and the balance, the equivalent of US$3,013,000, represented GOJ counterpart. At the PACD, USAID had disbursed a total of US$2,862,195 of grant funds obligated to finance the Project. GOJ support for Project activities has been institutionalized. The GOJ's FY 86-87 and FY 87-88 budgets included the equivalent of US$363,636 and US$467,900, respectively, to finance continuing Project related activities managed by the implementing entity.

3. Project financed inputs consisted of technical assistance, training, and commodities, which supported programs in the MOA's Training, Data Bank and Evaluation, and Planning and Policy Divisions. The Project was later expanded to include assistance for the MOA's Rural Physical Planning (RPPD) and Financial Administration Divisions.

   One of the Project's principal and lasting contributions was the development of an extensive training program for the MOA. With technical assistance provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Project sponsored a skills inventory survey of the MOA and prepared a master training plan for the MOA. The survey identified a critical need to train staff in data collection and analysis methodologies. This need was addressed by the master training plan which scheduled short term training activities both overseas and in Jamaica for MOA personnel in agricultural policy formulation and analysis and data collection procedures. A centralized facility was established to prepare learning material for the MOA staff in systems analysis, computer programming, data collection and management, and evaluation methodologies. The facility or Learning Resource Center was equipped with Project financed audio-visual equipment costing approximately US$60,000 at the times of purchase in 1982 and

1983. In addition to purchasing the audio-visual equipment, Project funds financed the renovation of three existing structures which now serve as permanent sites for the MOA's agricultural skills training program. During the LOP, 881 farmers received training at the sites in crop production practices, nursery practices including plant propagation, crop care, and farm management and planning.

Another of the Project's major contributions was the procurement of automated data processing equipment and vehicles for the MOA's Data Bank and Evaluation Unit. An IBM System 34 computer with software and ancillary equipment was purchased and installed in the Data Bank at a cost of US$359,000. Four sedans were purchased to provide logistical support for the MOA's Training Division, Data Bank, and Economic Planning and Evaluation Units. Five jeeps were procured and deployed to the MOA's data collection officers.

A series of planning documents and analytical reports formulating MOA policy in wide ranging areas were prepared under Project auspices. Topics included livestock, land use and tenure, training, agricultural research and development, export and industrial crops, domestic crops, beef and dairy cattle, small stock, veterinary services, breeding services and herd development, nutrition, inland and offshore fisheries, and poultry. These analytical activities provided background information for the preparation of a document entitled, Five Year Food and Agriculture Policy and Production Plan. The Plan was prepared in response to a PL 480 Self-Help Measure and covers the period 1983-84 through 1987-88. One of its goals is "the creation of a firm basis for ensuring sustained social and economic progress in Jamaica through .... increasing exports, reducing imports and increasing domestic supplies of food and agricultural raw materials." The Plan also included as one of its goals the statement that all Jamaicans shall receive adequate and nutritious food by 1988. The Plan is a lengthy, historically descriptive document with ambitious goals. Unfortunately, the plan does not support those ambitious goals with a thorough analysis of problems and constraints identified and recommendations proposed.

As part of the Project's data collection activities, the Data Bank and Evaluation Unit administered a food consumption questionnaire to a sample of 6,240 households located throughout the entire island. Data collected from cooperating households included family composition, income, food and other expenditures, and weekly household food consumption. Upon completion of the data gathering, the Data Bank and Evaluation Unit worked with the National Computer Center to compile, edit and publish the data. This proved quite opportune for USAID's

food assistance programming activities. Under a separate activity, USAID has contracted the services of the USDA's Nutrition Economics Group working in cooperation with the University of Missouri to analyze the data collected by the household food consumption survey pursuant to the preparation of the Jamaica Food Aid Assistance Study.

The Project financed the installation of a geographic information system, the Comprehensive Resource Inventory and Evaluation System (CRIES), in the RPPD. Work began in 1980 in collaboration with Michigan State University (MSU) and by September 1983 the RPPD had established a land use, soil, and crop data base that facilitated land suitability analysis (analytical spatial overlay). A land use data base was compiled through the annual interpretation of black and white 1:50,000 scale aerial photography developed in 1979. The resolution of the land use data base was ten (10) acres and the number of recognized categories was 26. The soils data base was compiled from existing field and analytical information augmented by a number of new field observations. The crop suitability (crop rating) data base was compiled from existing research, field, and production data. The software developed by MSU for use in the system was a modification of the geographic data analysis system designed by Earth Data Analysis Systems, Inc. (ERDAS) of Atlanta, Georgia. This software operated on an ERDAS designed computer that allows for the analysis of satellite imagery thereby providing RPPD a definite advantage in terms of accuracy, time, and costs over the more traditional aerial photography methodology.

During the period from 1983 to 1985, the land use data base was updated through the manual interpretation of newly obtained color infra-red aerial photography. This land use data base has a resolution of 2.5 acres and comprises 46 different categories. Unfortunately, the RPPD has not received maximum benefit from the system due to limited access to suitable satellite imagery. While MSU's efforts to develop software that would produce a truly interactive system (spatial and analytical) were unsuccessful, they did produce a yield model, a multiple enterprise budget system, and the farming systems integration model.

In December 1980 USAID contracted the services of a U.S. based consulting firm to provide the MOA with technical assistance in support of the Project's various data collection, processing, and analysis activities. Contracted specialists provided expertise in the following areas: survey methodologies, systems data and policy analyses, evaluation methodology, training procedures, library systems, and audio-visual techniques. Their efforts helped the MOA to improve its ability to collect data. Efforts to institutionalize an enhanced capacity to

analyze the results of surveys and transform them into meaningful policy recommendations were not as successful. Although specialists identified training activities for their counterparts, the benefits have been limited as judged by the level of improvements within the MOA's planning and policy system. Recommendations put forth by the specialists led to the purchase and installation of computer technology, both hardware and software, which operate at a fraction of potential capacity due in large part to inadequate levels of skilled personnel and support.

In general, the specialists working on the Project had only limited experience with development projects and tended to function as quasi-staff members of the MOA rather than addressing specific assignments described in their contracts and transferring skills to their counterparts. The contract's team leader was not well versed in agricultural planning issues and methodologies and apparently failed to put the total needs of the Project and the MOA's planning agenda into proper perspective. USAID records indicate that specialists operated for almost two years with only minimal accountability to USAID and apparently resented requests for expanded reporting and increased accountability. As was indicated above, they encouraged relatively large investments in computer hardware and software without considering administrative and organizational weaknesses that would constrain the equipment's effective operation. Probably the most glaring deficiency in the technical assistance program was the failure of the specialists to recognize that surveys, data collection, training, library systems, computers, and evaluations are only tools to be used to support activities whose ultimate objective is to formulate sound policy. The cost of the technical assistance contract was US$1,328,315.

Throughout the LOP, the MOA encountered continuous problems retaining qualified staff. Budget constraints and a redundancy program combined to create an atmosphere in which the most qualified staff found it advantageous to pursue careers in the private sector or in statutory bodies with the budget authority to pay competitive salaries. At about the time the Project was entering a period of accelerated implementation, the GOJ inaugurated an aggressive agricultural investment information development and dissemination program as a state secretariat in the Office of the Prime Minister. Several of the MOA's most qualified professional staff members accepted positions with that organization. While their talents and expertise were not lost to the nation or to the public sector, the MOA did lose the services of experienced, qualified technicians for whom it does not have the resources to replace.

4. Recommendations for final adjustments in project design, the appropriateness of remaining conditions and covenants and Grantee reporting requirements. - None applies.

5. Definition of continuing and/or post-project AID monitoring responsibilities, including the timing and resources involved.- None applies.

6. A review of data collection results and evaluations remaining to be undertaken. - None applies.

7. Lessons Learned:

The Agricultural Planning Project made several important contributions to the service delivery capacity of the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture, but failed to establish a clear and definitive association between its planning efforts and good growth performance in the agricultural sector. The technical and administrative deficiencies of comprehensive planning are inherent in the process and are unlikely to be remedied by more strenuous efforts to strengthen the planning machinery. The Project's benefit stream would have been more impressive if more attention had been devoted to improving the system of prices and incentives and the performance of markets. Rather than preparing a long-term blueprint for sector development, complete with detailed quantitative targets for public and private investments and outputs, the Project would have been of greater utility if it had devoted its limited resources on programming public investment in the agricultural sector.

With respect to lessons learned from the Agricultural Planning Project, future activities endeavoring to strengthen the planning capacity of agricultural ministries or other public agricultural sector entities should keep in mind the need for public agencies to respond quickly to changing events by modifying their policies and programs. This requires a much improved information and data base and some centralized responsibility for policy coordination, points that were to a large degree overlooked in the design and implementation of the Agricultural Planning Project.