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MEMORANDUM TO THE FILE

DATE: August 31, 1994
FROM: H.S. Plunkett, LAC/RSD/BBEG - *HS*
SUBJECT: Project Assistance Completion Report for the
Agriculture and Rural Development Technical Services
Project (LAC TECH I, 598-0654)

I. Introduction

The Agriculture and Rural Development Technical Services (LAC TECH I) Project was initiated on August 15, 1988, with the objective "to improve the intra-regional transfer and application of technology and information in high priority technical areas in order to improve the effectiveness of agricultural and rural development projects in LAC countries." A total of \$ 8,300,000 was authorized to the project, and \$ 7,839,192 of that sum had been obligated to project activities by the final PACD of February 15, 1994.

LAC TECH I services were implemented through three sources: a competitive contract with Chemonics International, resource service agreements (RSSAs) with USDA's Office of International Cooperation and Development, and a Basic Ordering Agreement with the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin through the ACCESS II Project. These three sources provided the services of eight long-term advisors representing various technical specialities within agriculture and rural development, and ongoing assistance from short-term advisors as needed. LAC TECH I advisory services were highly valued by LAC Missions and the LAC Bureau, as evidenced by the positive feedback received from semi-annual reviews and the project's mid-term evaluation, which included a survey of Mission satisfaction.

II. Status of Completion

Project activity was phased out of LAC TECH I and phased into the follow-on project, LAC TECH II, between the period spanning August 15, 1993, and February 15, 1994. All activity under LAC TECH I ceased as of February 15 -- i.e, all final procurement actions were concluded and services rendered prior to that date.

A small amount of funds remain as "unexpended" under the USDA RSSAs and the Chemonics contract in the Project Status Report as of July 31, 1994. However, these are for the most part committed funds which have yet to be billed. In the case of the Chemonics contract, the remaining funds in their account have been set aside to provide for a final audit. USDA also will be submitting quarterly vouchers against the funds remaining in three RSSAs and a PASA. The implications are that these funds should not be dereserved for at least a year to allow for final billings to make their way through USDA's and USAID's accounting systems.

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III. Project Accomplishments

LAC TECH I's design placed primary emphasis on technical assistance to LAC Missions. The project far exceeded the planned LOP objectives in this area. Through the course of the project, 1,935 person-days of TDY assistance were provided (285% of planned LOP), 20 seminars and workshops were conducted (125% of planned LOP), and 50 technical papers and analyses were produced and distributed (238% of planned LOP). In the mid-term evaluation survey results, Missions cited LAC TECH I's rapid response capability (i.e. the ability to respond without contractual processing) and the highly valued expertise of its advisors (who have long-standing relationships in the region) as key ingredients in the success of its interventions.

In addition, LAC TECH I advisors provided valuable experience and counsel to the LAC Bureau in the programming of agriculture and rural development activities in the region. LAC TECH I was integral in helping LAC/DR/RD to produce an ANRM strategy for the region ("Strategic Guidelines for Programming Assistance...", published in December, 1992). Toward the last year of the project, advisors also spent a considerable portion of their time synthesizing their "lessons learned" in the region into technical bulletins and papers which were widely distributed throughout the Missions and AID/W.

IV. Summary of Lessons Learned/Implications for LAC TECH II

LAC TECH I advisory services were known for quality and responsiveness. While the rapidity of its response to Mission requests for service was a key success factor under LAC TECH I, this capability was made possible by the provision of core LAC regional funds to support the costs of assistance. LAC TECH II, faced with a substantial cut in LAC Bureau core funds, may not be able to afford the same capability or range and level of technical services. The time involved in forging cost sharing arrangements with Missions will of necessity delay the project's ability to respond quickly, and scarcity of resources will impose the need for finer discrimination regarding the assistance which is undertaken. Regardless, LAC TECH II should attempt to maintain focus on Mission needs and flexibility in meeting Mission needs to the greatest extent possible.

LAC TECH I advisors found a good readership for and favorable audience response to the brief (4 page) topical syntheses produced in technical bulletin format, begun in the last year of the project. This emphasis on shorter technical pieces with broader readership and impact will continue under LAC TECH II.

The orientation toward use of advisory services for sector assessments and strategy formulation, rather than project design and evaluation, will also continue under LAC TECH II. This orientation maximizes the impact and effectiveness of regional advisory services, and will also serve to avert unnecessary contractor conflicts of interest under the follow-on project.

Attachments:

1. Final Report: USDA/OICD/IIP RSSA
2. Final Report: Chemonics International

Clearance: WNilsestuen, LAC/RSD WRT/Johnson Date: 9/24/94

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