

edc / international

INCS EVALUATION

PDWAEIS

TO: Jean Baker, Tina Sanghvi

FROM: Ron Israel

DATE: October 8, 1985

SUBJECT: General Comments on Draft INCS Evaluation Report

You are to be congratulated for an excellent effort. You have produced a very comprehensive document given what I know to be a difficult project to evaluate. While much of what you have to say has been useful feedback for us to receive, there are a number of general areas and specific points that I think need clarification. In this memo I will touch only upon the general ones; Lan Pho is putting together a list of specific factual points in the text which we feel should be reexamined.

- o EDC's institutional capabilities have not been fully highlighted.

Your report failed to acknowledge the extensive work that EDC has done in the areas of health and nutrition education. Attached to this memo is a list of both domestic and international health and nutrition projects that EDC has managed over the last ten years. These projects run the gamut from direct social marketing endeavors to health professional training efforts. While it might be a fair criticism that more of our inhouse expertise should have been used on INCS, it is incorrect to say that EDC does not have institutional expertise and experience in INCS-related subject areas. Thus, I would like to request that your assertion on page 12 that EDC lacked sufficient institutional leadership abilities to merit a cooperative agreement be modified.

In addition, it is incorrect to say that the Office of Nutrition is the only source of EDC International funding. We currently have three other major AID projects and an international project funded by the Department of the Treasury (see attached list).

- o The concept of INCS as an international consortium was not adequately recognized.

In my role as Project Director over the past six years, whenever I go on INCS business, it is always INCS that I promote rather than EDC. That is because I view INCS to be more than one or two institutions, rather, a collaborative of both domestic and international agencies that pool resources in support of nutrition education in developing countries. Because nutrition education is such an interdisciplinary activity, it truly requires an institutional collaborative effort, i.e., no single institution that I know of has all the requisite skills. In that vein, it is also appropriate to appreciate the need for a managing institution for the consortium, a role that EDC has played. I believe also that it was in part due to our custodial role in INCS that the Cooperative Agreement was bestowed on us.

- o Greater emphasis could have been placed on the institutional growth and development of INCS, particularly since the Cooperative Agreement.

In my estimation, there has been a qualitative change in INCS during the last 2½ years (a time period that parallels but is not in all ways related to the onset of the Cooperative Agreement). As INCS has become more narrow in its focus, more targetted in its selection of field sites, more proactive in its development of activities, and more long-term in its technical assistance, I believe we have been able to realize our potential as an institution. I am referring to activities such as the Thailand Breastfeeding Promotion Project, Marcia Griffiths' work in the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, the Jamaican School Nutrition Promoter Project, our focus on lactation management training and nutrition education interventions.

Up until this new era, INCS was an efficient mechanism for responding to requests for technical assistance from the field. A great many of these requests, in fact, had little direct bearing on what INCS was supposed to be all about; yet we met the needs as requested by USAID Missions, et al., in most cases, I think, very competently. However, it took INCS and AID/Washington close to four years to realize that perhaps this was not the most effective mechanism for furthering the state of the art of nutrition education. The Cooperative Agreement was a recognition of a shift in direction. Your skepticism about the appropriateness of the Cooperative Agreement (p. 11) fails to recognize the institutional development that has occurred in INCS since the time of its inception.

- o The report does not fully recognize the character of the INCS management system.

INCS has never been funded to support more than a 1½-person full-time professional staff. Since we began, that is all the person-power that we have had. It is important to remember that people like Lan Pho and Chris Hollis (who has been with us for less than a year) only bill a percentage of their time to the project, as do I at this point. In that regard, I think we have done fairly well for ourselves efficiency-wise, and the comparison with PRITECH staff seems to be inappropriate.

- o The report could have more fully analyzed the nature of requests made for INCS services.

It is useful to analyze the nature of technical assistance requests made to INCS particularly during the first four years. It was during that period that, as directed by AID, our primary mode of operation was as an efficient response mechanism for the many and varied requests for TA that we were asked to undertake. Many of the requests were only tangentially related to nutrition education. While we honored each and every one of these, in retrospect, it may have been wiser to have prioritized what we responded to.

- o The report singles out INCS for inappropriately using junior-level consultants.

My definition of a junior-level consultant is someone who either (a) lacks relevant substantive experience or (b) lacks relevant overseas experience. In reviewing the more than 160 technical assistance missions that INCS has carried out, I have been able to find no more than 6 such individuals. Perhaps you can find more. If not, however, I think it may be overstating the case to emphasize our use of junior-level people.

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- o The report does not address the deliberate effort that was made to synthesize lessons learned in integrating nutrition education into PL 480 programs.

Because of the disparate nature of INCS activities, it has been difficult to synthesize lessons learned from our experience. However, one area in which a deliberate effort was made to develop an overall TA strategy for INCS was nutrition education and food aid. Over a two-year period, a series of technical assistance missions were carried out to assess the need for nutrition education in food aid programs run by CARE, CRS, and SAWS. Certain generic needs were identified, and a one-day conference was held in Washington with Vol. Ags. to disseminate the results of the INCS experience. (Attached is a paper that I wrote that was distributed at this meeting.) INCS has made subsequent outreach efforts to follow up on our recommendations with each of the Vol. Ags. While PVO representatives at the meeting endorsed the recommendations and are extremely sympathetic to incorporating the lessons learned from the INCS experience into their own agency structure, adaptation will ultimately depend upon the approval of decision makers within each Vol. Ag.

RCI:bla

Attachments

cc: Maura Mack

Chloe O'Gara

Lan Pho

CLASSIFICATION  
PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY (PES) – PART I

Report Control  
Symbol U-447

<b>1. PROJECT TITLE</b>  Nutrition Education Field Support	<b>2. PROJECT NUMBER</b> 931-1065	<b>3. MISSION/AID/W OFFICE</b> S&T/N
<b>4. EVALUATION NUMBER</b> (Enter the number maintained by the reporting unit e.g., Country or AID/W Administrative Code, Fiscal Year, Serial No. beginning with No. 1 each FY) _____  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR EVALUATION <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL EVALUATION		

<b>5. KEY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION DATES</b> A. First PRO-AG or Equivalent FY <u>79</u> B. Final Obligation Expected FY <u>86</u> C. Final Input Delivery FY <u>80</u>	<b>6. ESTIMATED PROJECT FUNDING</b> A. Total \$ <u>2,691</u> B. U.S. \$ <u>2,691</u>	<b>7. PERIOD COVERED BY EVALUATION</b> From (month/yr.) <u>9/79</u> To (month/yr.) <u>5/85</u> Date of Evaluation Review <u>9/13/85</u>
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**8. ACTION DECISIONS APPROVED BY MISSION OR AID/W OFFICE DIRECTOR**

A. List decisions and/or unresolved issues; cite those items needing further study. (NOTE: Mission decisions which anticipate AID/W or regional office action should specify type of document, e.g., alrgram, SPAR, PIO, which will present detailed request.)	B. NAME OF OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION	C. DATE ACTION TO BE COMPLETED
1. Preparation of a follow-on Nutrition Education and Training Project Paper	Maura Mack Sallie Mahone	9/86
2. Nutrition Education and Training RFP	Sallie Mahone	10/86
3. Award of contract(s) for Nutrition Education and Training Project	Sallie Mahone	2/86

<b>9. INVENTORY OF DOCUMENTS TO BE REVISED PER ABOVE DECISIONS</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation Plan e.g., CPI Network <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Plan <input type="checkbox"/> PIO/T <input type="checkbox"/> Logical Framework <input type="checkbox"/> PIO/C <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Project Agreement <input type="checkbox"/> PIO/P	<b>10. ALTERNATIVE DECISIONS ON FUTURE OF PROJECT</b> A. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Project Without Change B. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change Project Design and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Change Implementation Plan C. <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue Project
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<b>11. PROJECT OFFICER AND HOST COUNTRY OR OTHER RANKING PARTICIPANTS AS APPROPRIATE (Names and Titles)</b>  Maura Mack Nutrition Officer, Office of Nutrition Bureau for Science and Technology	<b>12. Mission/AID/W Office Director Approval</b> Signature _____ Typed Name Martin J. Forman Date _____
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## SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 1979, a group of organizations called International Nutrition Communications Services (INCS) was selected by AID through a competitive process. The consortium consists of Education Development Center (EDC) as prime contractor and Manoff International and Save the Children Federation as subcontractors. INCS was asked to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Provide technical assistance in response to field requests, to a variety of nutrition education activities in developing countries for the purpose of improving the quality of these activities, to promote more widespread use of nutrition education as a program component across sectors, and to help develop LDC capabilities in nutrition education.
2. Promote breastfeeding and improved infant feeding practices through sensitization of policymakers and health practitioners, training of health professionals, strengthening mothers support groups, campaigns for the lay public and field research to better understand patterns of infant feeding.

This report summarizes an evaluation of INCS' activities conducted between May and September 1985. The findings are based on site visits to two countries and a training center; questionnaire responses from 26 USAID missions; interviews with USAID mission staff, AID/W Regional Bureau, S&T, and FVA staff; interviews with INCS consultants and communications experts and INCS leadership in EDC; review of AID project design and contract documents; and review of approximately 100 out of the approximately 160 reports produced by INCS.

Results of the evaluation indicated that INCS met AID contractual obligations in terms of responsiveness to field requests for short-term technical assistance, conferences and training. Given the inadequate funding for clearinghouse functions, INCS could only minimally support field needs in this area.

### Outcomes included:

- 35 countries given TA;
- 30 conferences, training workshops held;
- Approximately 120 person months of training provided;
- At least 20 projects designed, improved, expanded or evaluated of which at least ten have shown preliminary indications of sustained changes;
- Breastfeeding promotion initiated, expanded or improved in about 12 countries of which two have demonstrated reduced diarrheal morbidity and increased breastfeeding prevalence;

- Improved information collected and analyzed on infant feeding practices in four countries of which two countries have proceeded to intervention design and implementation.

As a result of the above field support activities, new methodologies and techniques appropriate for wider dissemination and utilization in current AID field projects emerged, including:

- A refined social marketing methodology appropriate for changing nutrition behavior;
- Application of the above in utilizing growth monitoring to strengthen behavior change;
- In-service training curricula and sensitization forums for changing hospital practices and health policy to support breastfeeding.

The chief constraints in achieving a larger impact were identified as being:

- Lack of continuity or follow-up in providing technical assistance. Key factors were the unavailability of highly experienced consultants, inadequate communication with clients; inadequate promotion regarding INCS role through key AID channels; and inadequate resources in the contract relative to the broad waterfront of requests required to be covered. This included areas where methodology development or field testing were needed prior to dissemination.
- Inadequate awareness, knowledge, credibility and commitment in USAIDs and PVOs regarding the best use of INCS. In addition to problems noted above, a key factor was the insufficient nutrition programming background of USAID and PVO staff who must develop, supervise and utilize opportunities for short-term TA across a range of sectors.
- Project management was adequate to meet contractual obligations. However, greater use of technical strengths among subcontractors and consultants for setting priorities, development of conceptual models and strategies may have increased effectiveness.

Recommendations for future technical assistance include:

- No major change in the goal or purpose of the Nutrition Education Project;
- Continuation of a mechanism for field support to USAIDs and PVOs through short-term technical assistance (tier 1 projects) but with more flexibility to provide seed funds and longer-term technical assistance especially to high priority activities (tier 2 projects);
- Stronger role of key AID/W staff in S&T and other Bureaus in identifying opportunities and supervising TA quality, outcomes and other AID programs;

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- Develop a few intensive field sites for the purpose of improving methodologies or techniques in high priority areas and to develop a larger pool of experienced consultants for the future (tier 3).

Criteria recommended for prioritization include:

- Content areas or behavior with greatest likelihood of demonstrating high impact on child survival and nutritional status (a) breastfeeding, (b) increased use of growth monitoring, and (c) infant feeding practices during infections, especially diarrhea;
- Communications approaches proven to be effective in changing behavior, i.e. social marketing with stronger monitoring/supervision and evaluation mechanisms;
- Program context which provides at least a minimal level of commitment, infrastructure, and resources that can be used for sustaining activities. AID projects that participate in buy-ins in the first two years should receive top priority.

Projections based on past utilization rates and factoring in expanded field needs due to child survival projects as well as new or expanded centrally funded TA indicate that over the next five years approximately 250 person months of TA will be needed in about 40 countries. The cost of a three tiered program is estimated at \$ 4.8 million over a five year period with an estimated 30 percent in buy-ins.

The report is divided into eight sections. Findings, conclusions and recommendations are covered in Sections VI and VII. The evaluation objectives and methodology are described in Section II and III respectively. Section IV covers the program strategy. Volume III contains brief reviews of each consultant report.

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