

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Board for International Food & Agriculture Development (BIFAD)

SUMMARY: 139th BIFAD
Meeting held on October 6, 2003
1307 New York Avenue, NW
Ground Level Meeting Room
Washington, D.C.

BOARD MEMBERS attending:

M. Peter McPherson, Chairman
William B. DeLauder
Michael Deegan
Carl Lewis
Anthony Laos
Stewart Iverson, Jr.
Sharon Quisenberry

Call to Order/ Opening Comments – Peter McPherson, Chairman, welcomed the Board members who introduced themselves. The agenda was adopted without changes.

Agenda:

- Presentation and Recommendation of Sub sector Reviews and Recommendations by SPARE (Strategic Partnership for Agricultural Research & Education, a BIFAD sub-committee)
- Report: Sacramento International Science & Technology Conference
- Long Term Training Initiative and Needs Assessments
 - Mozambique Training Needs Assessment
 - Mali Training Needs Assessment
 - MSc Program for South and East Africa
 - AFGRAD/ATLAS impact assessment
- Agriculture Development & Economic Growth in post-conflict situations
 - Iraq
 - Afghanistan
- Comments from Floor
 - Sherper Report: USAID-University Relationship
 - Other

Item I: Presentation and discussion of Sub-sector Review and Recommendations by the BIFAD sub-committee – SPARE.

John Swanson, SPARE spokesperson, explained the sub-committee's main tasks for the year and presented their main recommendations. Three sub-sector reviews, i.e. IPM, sustainable agriculture and aquaculture, begun in January 2003, were carried out by separate

three-person panels of experts. The results were presented in several public meetings and recommendations incorporated into their reports. SPARE then identified common themes and developed cross-cutting recommendations. The main recommendations are:

1. Increased communications with our partners, both in the university community and the donor community, NGOs and other like-minded groups.
2. Seek innovative, efficient means to implement educational programs with other partners.
3. That the impact assessment task force, composed of USAID, IARC, and university staff from the CRSPs and other university representatives, try to design a standardized database/ program for use for better planning and implementation of our development programs. The objective is a better sharing of information.
4. USAID should take the lead in the integration of biotechnology efforts to solve development problems.
5. Include more marketing research with the “science” research, i.e. crop production, livestock, and policy.
6. That the Pond Dynamics/ Aquaculture CRSP be extended to complete its ten-year cycle.
7. That a panel of US and IARC scientists identify potential synergies between the IARCs and USAID’s bilateral programs in agriculture and natural resources management.
8. That CRSPs strengthen and improve linkages with IARCs, NGOs, and the private sector to expand the impact of research and to enhance capacity building.
9. That the official CRSP guidelines (1989) be revised to modernize and to reflect changes in Title XII legislation and Agency reorganization.
10. That an agriculture sector program review be conducted by USAID within the context of the Agency’s new agriculture strategy and guided by the amended Title XII legislation. Rationale: SPARE discovered, while conducting the sub-sector reviews, that due to the lack of a well defined broader context for CRSP research, it was very difficult to judge the relative importance of each sub-sector.
11. That all CRSP management entities be re-competed on normal ten-year cycles.
12. That the re-competition process begins with the IPM and the SANREM CRSPs using as the pilots for all the CRSPs -the Leader with Associate (LWA) cooperative agreement mechanism.

John Swanson made a point of clarification on the use of the LWA mechanism by stating that it was created to engage USAID field missions more actively and give them easier access to Washington and regionally based programs. SPARE felt this was an important consideration due to the fact that every year more and more of the Agency’s resources are channeled through field missions. The Agency sees the LWA as a more user friendly way of linking partners from the US with the field missions.

Mr. Swanson lastly shared remarks regarding SPARE's main accomplishments. During the last three years, SPARE has:

- Reviewed six CRSPs
- Organized and led completion of three sub-sector reviews
- Chaired an university stakeholder meeting on the USAID Agriculture Strategy
- Completed two special studies, i.e. Strengthening University & IARC relationships, and CRSP Transaction and Costs of Operations.

Some issues that were raised included:

- The heavy focus on CRSPs while the mandate is much broader
- The heavy workload of SPARE conflicted with part-time nature of the membership.
- Number of members vs. responsibilities of SPARE
- Need for continued transparency/ open meetings.

Important Future agenda:

- Need to conduct other type of reviews and analyses of field programs, research programs and linkages with all Agency agricultural programs.
- Need for increased interaction with other Agency partners such as the National Academy of Science, National Science Foundation, the State Department and many others.
- Need to re-evaluate SPARE's charter, i.e. its relation to BIFAD and the Board of Agriculture.

Following SPARE's report, the Board decided, that in this meeting, to deal only with the recommendations and issues relating to the call for re-competition at ten years and the pilot use of the Leader with Associate mechanism for the IPM and SANREM CRSPs. The remaining recommendations will be considered at future meetings.

The Chairman then asked John Yohe, as the representative of the CRSP Council, to speak to the issues on the table.

Dr. Yohe began by pointed out that in the 25 or so years of CRSP activity, there have been some changes in management entities (ME). An example was the internal decision to move the ME of the Soils CRSP. He stated that CRSP ME offices are usually very small so the transaction costs of moving the ME from one university to another should be considered. CRSP research budgets are very modest and it takes time to build collaborative research linkages and MOUs with host country institutions. The CRSP ME universities value the need for competition in the management of the programs, but cautioned BIFAD to consider the costs. Right now

throughout the land grant system, there is something like 50 US universities involved in CRSP activities. From these universities, there is a relatively small core group able to go out and develop the needed linkages with universities and institutions in the developing countries.

The Chairman opening the floor for discussion. Following quite a lot of debate and sharing of opinions, the Board voted and accepted the following resolution:

“In response to the recommendations received from the 1 October 2003 SPARE meeting, and in recognition of the tension between the need for continuity as well as the requirement of innovation, BIFAD resolved at their 6 October 2003 meeting:

1. That USAID will “pilot” the use of the Leader with Associate procurement mechanism for the IPM and SANREM CRSPs and will compete for the Management Entity (ME) for those two CRSPs. The criteria for selection of the ME will be completed and agreed to by the BIFAD before the competition is announced. Further, that the CRSP Guidelines will be revised with a presumption that all CRSP management entities will be re-competed in a ten year cycle. The concept of ten-year competition will be reviewed in connection with the revision of the guidelines. The competition every ten-year will be only for the ME and that consideration will be given for continuing promising research within the CRSPs. There is no presumption that the grants of the consortium will be changed solely because of change in the ME.
2. The above resolution, i.e. #1, is made with the recognition that USAID notes for the record that any Associate grant/cooperative agreement coming from USAID field Missions will be additive to the funds normally counted toward meeting Congressional earmarks for the CRSPs.
3. That BIFAD accepts the report and thanks SPARE for their hard work.

Item II: Report on Iraq: Peter McPherson briefly reported on his 5 months in Iraq working on economic policy. He pointed out that USAID has a significant opportunity to take part in meeting the huge training requirements, much of which needs to be done in-country or in neighboring countries. A proposal has been developed by a number of US universities to assist the universities of Iraq with several hundred million dollars of inputs. It is to be yet determined to what extent these proposals will be funded.

Item III: Observations by Tony Laos on the June 2003 International Science and Technology conference held in Sacramento, CA: The objective of the well-attended Conference was to assess the role of science and technology in raising the productivity in the developing world.

The wide range of topics ranged from soil and water management to food packaging and processing with a heavy emphasis on biotechnology. A main theme was that new, upcoming technologies must not be held hostage by special interest groups, but must be let free. Conclusions focused on the need to harness information making it assessable to all farmers at the working level. Other conclusions dealt with the need for additional research and the importance of building partnerships between NGOs and industry.

Item IV: Tony Laos' trip to Afghanistan: The trip was sponsored by the Future Harvest Consortium, a group working to rebuild the agricultural sector and restore food security in the country. Their goals are to improve rural livelihoods through community-based, market-oriented production interventions. They strive to enhance food production by harnessing the best science and utilizing widespread partnerships through seed production schemes and the introduction of new varieties.

Like all visitors to Kabul, Mr. Laos was struck by the nearly complete destruction and disintegration of the infrastructure that has resulted from 20 years of civil unrest, four years of drought and the war of liberation. The current situation is a complete depletion of productive capacity despite Afghanistan's long history of prosperous agriculture. However, activities are beginning, such as the \$150 million Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP) that will be addressing the constraints of lack of knowledge and financial resources and the deteriorated rural infrastructure. ICARDA, the international agricultural research center in Syria, has an ambitious farmer training program.

Comments from the floor raised the issue of poppy production. It was emphasized that donors need to remain engaged in assisting the country to rebuild its agriculture in order to give the farmers viable options to poppy production. There has been a recent meeting by the World Bank and IMF with a large delegation from Afghanistan on this very topic. The message was, "Donors must stay engaged and follow through with their promised resources - because of the poppy."

Other comments spoke of efforts by Afghanistan's neighbors assisting with roads and ports, establishing new border posts to facilitate exports and imports, thus demonstrating their interest in a stable Afghanistan.

Item V: Update on document on Review of the USAID-University Relationship.

It was announced that the final draft of the report authored by Kenneth Sherper are available for download from the BIFAD website. The BIFAD Chair proposed that the Board University members (minus the Chair) would work with USAID to review the multiple recommendations in the report and be ready to report at the next BIFAD meeting.

Item VI: Agricultural Long Term Training Proposal: Art Love advised the meeting that bound hard copies of the revised proposal titled Renewing USAID Investment In Global Long-Term Training and Capacity Building In Agriculture and Rural Development were available and electronic copies can be downloading from the BIFAD web page. The Proposal recommends that early efforts to encourage the Agency to increase support for higher education can be accomplished by partnering with Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA) programs in their target countries. This has resulted in BIFAD working with IEHA contractors to put together Training Assessment teams for three of the target countries. The two teams, who have completed the field work for their Assessments, i.e. Mozambique and Mali, presented their reports:

Mozambique: Ms. Ann Skelton, Development Associates Inc, who led the four person team effort that included BIFAD member, Mr. Tony Laos, to Mozambique, gave the report. Ms. Skelton stated the objectives of the study as, “to conduct an assessment of human capacity needs in the agricultural sector, to review both agriculture and agro-business, and to review the graduate level agricultural education needs.” The team tried to coordinate their assessment findings with a local stakeholder group and to remain constant with the strategy of the USAID Mission to Mozambique. Both Ms. Skelton and Mr. Laos emphasized that, in Mozambique, Portuguese is widely spoken and English is not - a fact that must be considered in the recommendations. Some of their impressions/ findings were:

- The stakeholder group expressed concerns that recommendations must be applicable to the realities of Mozambique.
- Due to the limited communication current among the staff of agricultural extension, agricultural research and the NGOs; a more formal mechanism for sharing the research results is needed.
- The agricultural input supply by the private sector is nearly non-existent.
- In the government research agency, there is a low level of formal training and education. Only about 4-5% has masters and PhD degrees.
- Because of the predominance of Portuguese, training programs may consider Brazil or Portugal as sites.
- Another option for a training site is the EARTH University in Costa Rica, Central America as they have a well recognized course in “Community outreach and extension”.
- For quick starts, new programs with US Agricultural Universities that have already established linkages may be considered.

Although the above comments appear somewhat negative, all in all, despite the many problems and low conditions in Mozambique, the team came away feeling very positive with the potential for strengthening agricultural institutions.

Mali: Dr. William DeLauder, BIFAD member who served on the Assessment team to Mali, presented a brief commentary on the Assessment stating that he had only just returned two days ago from Mali. Mali is a poor country, landlocked and in the midst of the relatively dry Sahel. Mali has only had about 12 years of democratic rule but is considered a very stable country politically and committed to the free enterprise system and to democratic principles. The Team was composed of two Americans and two high level Malians, a fact that opened many doors for the team. Many Malian government officials, staff from the major units involved in teaching, research and extension and representatives from the private sector were interviewed. Also the Team held a stakeholders forum with about 50 people from the same groups. Some of the impressions and findings were:

- Biotechnology and irrigation/water resources are near the top of the list of training priorities.
- There is clear division among those trained in English speaking institutions and those trained in French or Soviet institutions.
- Any English training that would need to be done could be accomplished in Mali.
- USAID has made some investments in terms of internet access – Cyber cafes are throughout Bamako, the capitol of Mali.
- The Team will recommend that the Government of Mali put together a blue-ribbon committee to study the Malian higher education structure.
- At the Team's meeting with the AFGRAD graduates, the problem was raised that the US graduate degree is not valued as high as those from Europe or from the Soviet system.

The speaker concluded by stating that the Team came away convinced that Mali has great potential for rising to the next level and investments in higher education and capacity building will be key. Mali is doing good work in the areas of plant breeding, veterinary medicine and in GIS. Another promising area is malaria research which is supported by a sort of sandwich program with the Univ. of MD. This group is turning out some outstanding high-quality work.

Item VII: Curt Nissly introduced the following two program presentations that are potential partners and/or provide lessons learned for the BIFAD training initiative.

East/Central/South African M Sc program in Agricultural Economics: Ms. Rajul Pandya-Lorch from IFPRI described this program that is driven by, developed by, and owned by a consortium of 16 national universities in 12 countries in east, central, and southern Africa. It is basically a collaborative master's program in agricultural and applied economics. Over the past year, the 16 departments came together to plan and validate at the national level this innovative program. IFPRI is a facilitating agency along with Rockefeller and several other donors, including USAID. The program will attempt to address the problems similar to those outlined in the BIFAD report, i.e. to build up the human resource capacity to a level that high-level economics training can soon be offered in the region.

This initiative has developed a plan with a demand driven approach, one that is driven by the client's needs and with client orientation.

The program will take five semesters, with the first two semesters as home courses being offered in the home institution. The third semester would basically be focused on specialized courses, offered at a shared facility, perhaps in Malawi or South Africa. The last two semesters then focus on the student thesis work at the home institution. If all goes well, the Program can be launched in September 2004.

The USAID AFGRAD/ ATLAS training program: Ms. Cristin Springet, EGAT/ED presented information on the follow-up activities of this 40 year long training program that targeted sub-saharan Africa. The programs have trained over 4000 Africans in long-term training and 1000s more in numerous short-term programs and in-country programs. An impact study to evaluate aspects of the program has been designed and will be implemented and completed by May 2004. Among its other objectives, the study will look at the value of US based training to the individuals and to the US itself. Also, the professional enhancement and alumni association building aspects of the program will be evaluated.

Dr. John Yopp, who was involved with the program from 1989 to 2000 while serving as a member of the executive graduate dean's committee of the African-American Institute, management entity, presented the main and important lessons learned:

- 1) A recount of the positive features of the programs from 1963-2002. Here was emphasized the unusual accomplishment of the programs in having a 95% return rate; 60% of the graduates in post-secondary educational posts; the presence of the over 3400 alumna/alumni in virtually every ministry, every government post, every business, and the agricultural and health professions; the high number of distinguished graduates; the 48% women and increased number of non-majority recipients. In addition, 52 countries in Africa were involved, making this alumni/alumna population a tremendous asset for future programs. No other fellowship program compares in scope and impact.
- 2) The professionalism and dedication of the African-American Institute (AAI) staff was exceptional in the program and the AAI reps in country (of course, there were some exceptions). These too, are resources to be tapped. They include Michelle Roberts, Elizabeth Ward , Yolande Zahler, and Bella Endeshaw.
- 3) It is felt by the academic community that one of the greatest assets of the programs was due to the agreement with the council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in having an Executive Committee of hand-picked Graduate Deans dedicated to making policies, interviewing students, assessing in-country needs, and providing essential assessments and evaluations of the applicants so that an objective determination of their success probability in the graduate programs could be determined. This was an essential feature in the success rate in completion and graduation of the fellows. It should be retained in any future program. Also pointed out was the provision of about 20% of the funding in the form of tuition scholarships to match the funding from AID. It took the support of the deans and the larger advocacy of the Council of Graduate Schools to achieve this. This has not been fully appreciated. A partnership with the academic community for objectivity is essential.
- 4) Recommendations for any future program were given. many of these are opinions derived from association with the deans for 12 years, across both programs. These included:
 - a. There should be an emphasis on English language training because of the utility of this language in the world of today. The success of the AFGRAD/ATLAS programs in identifying

these ESL programs in the major universities and placing the recipients in them before their academic programs was a key feature of the program.

b. A partnership with CGS's membership component that includes the NASULGC land-grant universities would be positive. The expertise of agriculture deans from these CGS schools that are also NASULGC universities would be a great asset. The RFA should make certain that this expertise is objectively and efficiently used, of course.

c. There should be a component of longer range higher education infrastructure building in a future program. Educate future faculty so that Africans can educate their own workforce or we will be forever be playing teacher. The program should return to education as well as training in agriculture. There is a need for entrepreneurs and innovators as well as trained workers, so that the supply can be continuous.

d. it would be advisable (again, an opinion) to create a structure that includes the mechanism and model of the University Business Incubator to spin off small businesses from the agricultural programs supported. This would ensure an economic spin-off, which is greatly needed. Agri-business, then, should be a component.

e. related to the component in d., there should be a requirement to partner with business, so that the program could have economic support relevant to the economic as well as agricultural outcomes. There are models that exist with partnerships between Universities, Government, Business, and coordinating agencies. This could increase matching funds for support of the program and facilitate economic growth as well as agricultural education and innovation.

f. More emphasis on building a virtual university component that would include access to libraries (e.g. National Agricultural Library) and internet delivery of courses for continuous upgrading of the education and skills acquired by the fellows. here linkages with CGS/NASULGC universities could be of assistance.

g. Do all that can be done to preserve the network of AFGRAD/ATLAS alumna/alumni in these countries? This identification is a "passport" to support and identification of future opportunities.

Dr. Yopp responded to a question about the value of short-term vs. long-term training. He explained that under Atlas, because the USAID Missions saw the value to targeted short-term training that supported their own objectives and due to the fact that the resources under Atlas were under their control, the program did move more to focus on short term training in the later years.

Item VIII: The Chairman accepted a motion for adjournment. Motion was seconded and the 139th meeting of BIFAD was adjourned.