

BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOD & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

135th Meeting Notes

Oceanic Rooms A & B, Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, D.C.

Thursday, October 17, 2002

The meeting was convened by Chairman Peter McPherson.

Board Members attending:

M. Peter McPherson
Michael Deegan
Carol Lewis

William DeLauder
Tony Laos
Sharron Quisenberry

Chairman's opening remarks:

- Noted and appreciated the efforts of the preceding Board, chaired by Ed Schuh; and of Ed Price and others, for broadening and strengthening BIFAD legislation a year ago.
- Observed that the broader BIFAD mandate is built on the awareness that food production doesn't stand on its own: there is rural income, economic growth; agriculture and rural income are part of a broader picture underpinning and reinforcing family planning and children's health. AIDS now is an important factor, as are environmental concerns. Our statutory mandate is part of a mosaic that comprises a big picture of development: that is the approach of this BIFAD.

LONG-TERM TRAINING: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chairman's remarks:

- This memo builds off an earlier USAID draft of a training initiative; a group of university faculty working with the ALO has expanded and developed it. It has been circulated within the university community and USAID for comment.
- Training numbers have dropped steadily for a dozen years, as USAID, and Congress, shifted focus away from long-term efforts.
- The memo is consistent with Administrator Natsios' view that some components of the Agency's work require a longer-term perspective.
- The paper suggests that the Agency should set a target number for long-term training on an annual basis, and suggests a number of ways to go about it.

Remarks by Joan Claffey, ALO

- The paper argues that USAID should increase its investment in long-term degree education, primarily at the graduate level.
- The paper suggests instituting long-term degree training as a cross-cutting in most of the Agency's strategic objectives, and that the funding be at the strategic objective or activity level rather than a stand-alone activity needing an infusion of new funds.
- The paper notes changes in national security priorities, the global economy, and in global health (*viz.*, HIV-AIDS).
- The paper suggests choosing high impact, cost-effective implementation strategies:

- development problem-focused partnerships and networks of institutions related to mission and regional interests or strategic objectives.
- re-engage U.S. and developing country institutions in joint collaboration over the long term so that there can be some academic movement of students and faculty across institutions.
- join developing countries in institutional development and degree education in the United States (cf. CRSP and Leader/Associate Agreement models).
- expand distance education to better prepare developing country students for graduate work when they arrive -- also increasing the cost efficiency of the period of residence in the United States.
- make buy-in mechanisms available to smaller missions that would not be able to mount programs in a comprehensive way at the point of the mission.

Remarks by Emmy Simmons, Assistant Administrator, USAID

- Described how USAID resources, while not declining in toto have shifted in composition in response to international changes (e.g., the breakup of the Soviet Union) and changing Congressional interest.
- Described how USAID is perpetually reprogramming funds, balancing Congressional and Administration initiatives with Mission-level analyses of needs and opportunities, and an increased emphasis on results -- achieving sustainable and significant results in key areas over time.
- Noted USAID's commitment to developing alliances as an explicit programming element.

Remarks by Buff MacKenzie, Director of the USAID's Office of Education

- Noted current funding increases for the ALO program (USAID's university partnership program) as a result of Congressional interest.
- Referred to www.iawg.gov for an overview of USAID training: In 2001, USAID spent \$145 million and trained 236,000 participants, and in 2001 there were 1494 long-term training participants, a slight increase.
- Offered by way of perspective, a sobering note from the education sector South Africa, in Kwazulu-Natal, where, of 75,000 teachers in one of USAID's best programs, that between 64 and 68,000 will be gone by the end of this decade, from death, out-migration, and going for other jobs. This is the wave of AIDS that is hitting.

Concluding remarks by Emmy Simmons

Issues

The question of mission roles and choices. So how do we bring missions and their decision-making back into this issue?

The question of regional variability. There are varying numbers and qualities of universities. There is also a question about whether spending time in the U.S. accomplishes other professional or cultural objectives.

New approaches to capacity-building.

Does it make sense to set technical or sectoral targets to make it a short-term goal.

Can training be fit around USAID's earmarks?

Should USAID focus on partnerships with, e.g., the National Science or USDA?

Do we need to be concerned with brain drain, or “brain flow”?

What next?

Suggestion: that USAID, in terms of responding positively to this proposal from BIFAD, take steps to start a formal internal dialogue in AID/Washington as well as with field missions, seeking specific ideas in specific ways to address these issues.

Suggestion: idea is to conduct an assessment of various approaches with regard to the way that training links with programs and the way it supports programs, as well as cost-effectiveness (*USAID action?*).

Suggestion for BIFAD: that BIFAD take the initiative to develop one or several concrete pilot proposals for innovative long-term training, particularly in Africa, because that's where we see the need is the greatest, the difficulties are the hardest, the costs are the highest, and it's a bureau where we think that funding for a pilot proposal is possible and a showcase could be made of a new initiative.

Board Comments.

- Adequate needs assessments, by country, focusing on the post-training jobs to be done, are required
- Role of partnerships
- Importance of capacity-building to empower self-improving of educational systems
- Need for opportunities for graduates
- Need for some system of tracking
- Build on CRSP collaborations
- Promote university to university relationships
- Databases can be shared – USDA is a source
- Rewards and incentives are issues
- Capacity-building to be cost-effective
- Suggest “sandwich programs,” where students come to the United States in turn while other students return to do specifically research that is relevant and pertinent
- Propose that BIFAD develop a proposal and goals quickly to show quick success
- Suggest involving the U.S. extension system, to add on-farm training to the curriculum

Chairman’s remarks:

- USAID-funded trainees cannot (and do not) stay on in the U.S.
- Need to ensure that there will be opportunities following return --thinking about this will cause missions to think about problems and solutions
- USAID’s history shows that having something off to one side and not integrated with everything else, even if it's got real money behind it, remains to the side. Environmental work, Women in Development, and Training are cases in point until missions and the Agency determine to fit them into project or country goals. You have to take the longer view, beyond the tenure of a particular mission director or AID administrator or assistant administrator, recognizing that training is an integral part of institution building.
- We can do a lot of virtual education in Africa, for example, with professors in both places. But, there are infrastructure issues, for example, getting the technology so students can take the courses.

USAID BUREAU REPORTS ON AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMING & INVOLVEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES, & COMMENTS ON TRAINING

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN - MIKE DEAL

- Agree that the need to integrate training into institution-building is key, lessons learned from our training programs over the years suggest that a stand-alone training initiative can be extremely effective.
- Tailored programs are more effective than off-the-shelf programs. Recruitment, selection and follow-on programs are key, as are involving employers and local communities contributing to the trainees' job performance upon return.
- Active monitoring by an independent contractor is the best way to measure progress.
- Absent additional resources, restoring training would mean reducing or eliminating other important initiatives. But perhaps we better integrate long-term training into our programs.
- Training offices may no longer exist, or are inadequately staffed, so that implementing the key processes, coping with INS regulations, and following up is not immediately practicable.

So what do we do about it?

- long-term commitments on the part of university community
- LAC's new rural prosperity strategy is one example of understanding our programs and identifying relationships with university programs
- An example of a new model of fellowships, scholarships and long-term partnerships is the unique collaboration of the LAC Bureau and the Mexico mission, called TIES -- Training, Institutional Partnerships, Exchanges, and Scholarships

About agricultural work generally in Latin America:

- The MLBs are leading ag. research funding
- LAC is focusing on rural prosperity and how to put more emphasis on agriculture in helping to address, e.g., the drought, the coffee crisis, and alternative development programs in the Andes. LAC has taken a trade-led approach.

BUREAU ON ASIA AND THE NEAR EAST - GORDON WEST

- Asia-Near East divides fairly conveniently into really three geographic regions: Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. A lot of these regions share a fairly common history of major investments through the fifties through the eighties in basic institutions, certainly the ag research institutions, government institutions of extension and services, into storage facilities, particular emphasis on the grains, averaging, at least up through the eighties, perhaps \$300 million a year.
- In Southeast Asia, the advancement of the more formal urban economies progressed more rapidly than the other two sectors and we shifted out of agriculture.
- South Asia has been the major focus of our agriculture programs over the entire existence of USAID. The India success story of the earlier years was a benefit to the whole world; our presence in India now, although it's not token, it's a drop in the bucket compared to a massive economy and a massive population
- The Middle East has been a unique agriculture environment just because of its own ecosystem. We do have substantial ESF funding still available in that region; resources have dwindled from the roughly \$300 million a year that we were spending in the eighties down to roughly 120, 125 million as of 2002.
- Asia has clearly been a success story. I think we have come down to basically getting the prices right in the input sectors and a total package that certainly includes infrastructure.

On the policy side, most of the countries we are in have pretty much got it right. The challenge is how to keep that going.

On Training:

- In terms of larger investments in higher education, the Agency as a whole has blessed this re-engagement.
- We need to learn from the lessons. The anecdotal evidence that many of the leaders in country X, Y, or Z used to be USAID or U.S. government or U.S. university graduates and the benefits of that is nice, but really the engine has to be institutions and not individuals. So I would hope we can look at an institutional approach rather than an individual approach and I think build on that and relationships. Maybe that's university to university relationships. But I think a lot of the track is right.

BUREAU ON EUROPE AND EURASIA - LINDA MORRIS

- In terms of agriculture we view ourselves less as in the sustainable development, poverty alleviation business than we are in the market transition business. We view our objectives as assuring that the countries that we assist are able to engage the rest of the world, join the World Trade Organization, get accession to the European Union.
- Our investment levels in agriculture have been fairly low -- at about the \$50 million a year. Our focus has been on land privatization and privatization of public enterprises, including those in agriculture, building associations and financial services, including for the agriculture sector, and partnership-building for technology transfer, policy reform, and investment.
- Universities will play a key role in the competitiveness agenda.
- Encourage looking at regional approaches for building university linkages. There are diaspora groups that are very active.

BUREAU FOR AFRICA - CONNIE NEUMAN

- Africa is the only region in the world which saw absolutely no increase in the average agricultural productivity per capita between 1980 and 2000.
- The Africa Bureau's allocation for agriculture in '95 was 76.9 million; up in 2000 to 90 million and in FY 2002 we're up to 115.1 million
- With regard to training, over the last 30 years the ATLS program (Advanced Training for Leadership and Skills) has trained over 20,000 Africans.
- About the future: This administration has an initiative to address hunger and poverty through agriculture by advancing scientific and technological applications, improving the efficiency of agriculture trade and market systems, strengthening community-based producer organizations, building capacity, assisting vulnerable groups, and then working also to conserve and foster production of environmental goods and services. We're concentrating on three countries at the outset, one in each region: Uganda, Mali, and Mozambique.

BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, AGRICULTURE AND TRADE - TOM HOBGOOD

- The Office of Agriculture provides technical and strategic leadership for the Agency in agriculture and managed central mechanisms to assist missions in analysis and implementation.

- A paper called "Future Directions in Agriculture" lays out the directions for the Agency in agriculture. There are four elements to the strategy.
 - First is technology development and outreach
 - Second is linking farmers to domestic, regional, and global markets
 - Third is environmentally sound management
 - Fourth is bridging the knowledge divide

Chairman's Concluding Remarks:

Obviously, my colleagues and I haven't fully conferred on this, so they'll want to augment or subtract as they may feel appropriate. Let me respond in general to what we've talked about today.

- It seems to me that we would all agree that it's pretty hard to achieve sustained economic growth unless you do something about food production and rural income.
- We also know that the human resource, including long-term training, is critical.
- Let me go to next steps. I appreciate the comments from Emmy and Tom. We would very much welcome the opportunity to look at three countries or so in Africa. You've got the millennium account effort. One assumes that if there was a little bit more activity and money in some of those countries, that those would be ideal countries.
- I was thinking that we may get Julie Howard, who is in the partnership, an academic herself, to spend a little time working with BIFAD and AID staff, since this is in Africa, and contribute ideas.
- We need to keep in mind that we're working at building institutions as well as people. I frankly have thought for a long time that specific institutions in the United States having some linkages with specific institutions in developing countries has a sustainability that you don't quite have unless you get it focused.
- We have to think about doing this differently, with the web and so forth, and worry about the resources. The universities would not want to cost-shift, but would think about aggressively how to handle these things together.
- I do think that ultimately we need something that's measurable. I think, as a manager, that unless you can measure it you don't know whether you've got there. So even though we have some experiments here, I'm going to want to continue to focus on a number or some other measurement.

In January we'll have our next meeting, and let's get together so we can present things to each other and come together on where we're going. This has been a very good start -- we need to follow up: working with the Agency on the three African countries to use as tests or trials, and on opportunities in the other bureaus.

It would be good to figure out some way to solicit everybody and maybe look for everyone that has ideas...to do this better. If we don't do that we won't succeed, despite new technologies, and the ease of world-wide communications -- not to drive this would really be a mistake. My view is it's not just the numbers, it's the targeting and it's the cost and it's the sustainability.