BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

AID And Universities Have Yet To Forge An Effective Partnership To Combat World Food Problems

In 1975, the Congress under Title XII (sections 296-300) of the Foreign Assistance Act directed the Agency for International Development (AID) to improve and strengthen the involvement of U.S. land-grant and other eligible universities in solving food problems in developing countries. Progress in achieving this goal is slow.

U.S. universities and AID have yet to forge the development partnership necessary to effectively reduce world hunger. Policy and management actions are needed to overcome attitudinal and institutional barriers which limit the potential benefits of such a partnership. The quality of technical assistance provided to developing countries can be improved if AID takes the actions recommended in this report.

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OCTOBER 16, 1981

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-203211

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on AID implementation of Title XII, Famine Prevention and Freedom From Hunger (sections 296-300) of the Foreign Assistance Act. Title XII authorizes the Agency for International Development to improve involvement of U.S. land-grant universities in its agricultural assistance programs.

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and the Administrator, Agency for International Development.

Milton J. Socolar

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

AID AND UNIVERSITIES HAVE YET TO FORGE AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP TO COMBAT WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS

D I G E S T

Strengthened capacities and improved participation of U.S. land-grant and other eligible universities in solving developing-country food problems was the goal of the December 1975, Title XII--Famine Prevention and Freedom from Hunger amendment (sections 296-300) to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. To assist and advise the Agency for International Development (AID) in achieving this goal, a presidentially appointed seven-member board--the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD)--was established. GAO conducted this review to evaluate AID efforts to implement the provisions of title XII and to identify ways to improve AID/university ability to provide agricultural assistance to developing countries.

Although nearly 6 years have elapsed, AID and the university community have yet to forge an effective partnership to combat food problems in the developing world. Title XII has been instrumental in bringing new vigor and awareness to international work in the U.S.-university community. However, there is little evidence that title XII mechanisms have helped much to overcome problems in delivering assistance and in improving the quality of assistance.

IMPACT ON COUNTRY PROGRAMS

AID missions lack sufficient guidance on how to implement title XII activities. In addition, many missions see no change since title XII in their relationships with university contractors or in improved performance. As a result, missions are less than enthusiastic about expanding U.S.-university involvement in their programs. Costly and time-consuming project delays limit results and detract from the quality of assistance. Causes of inadequate university capability and commitment are exemplified by extensive use of outside hires; poor home institution back-stopping; and under-qualified

staffs. Other causes attributable to AID and host countries are

--time-consuming and other detrimental effects of AID contracting policies and procedures;

--inadequate planning and unrealistic project designs;

--failure of the host countries to provide specified support to university contractors; and

--blurred lines of authority and responsibility between the missions, host countries, and university contractors. (See p. 10.)

GAO believes these problems can be alleviated by the management improvements recommended in this report.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE U.S.-UNIVERSITY INTEREST, CAPACITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR AID NEEDS

U.S. universities currently possess limited capacity to meet AID program needs because of internal university constraints such as tenure, promotion, and salary policies which act as a deterrent for faculty interested in overseas assignments, as well as external constraints such as sporadic funding commitments by AID, U.S.-tax laws, and cumbersome and time-consuming AID contracting procedures.

AID, with BIFAD assistance, has attempted to build and strengthen U.S.-university capacity, interest, and accessibility through such mechanisms as a strengthening grant program, a collaborative research-support program, and a resource registry to match university expertise with AID needs. These efforts are increasing university interest and are raising university expectations to conduct international development activities.

AID has not adequately assessed how the 50 U.S. universities currently receiving strengthening grants (estimated to be $25 million for the first 5 years of the program), can be effectively used. AID and BIFAD officials believe that, although all recipients of strengthening grants will have some resources appropriate for

AID work, several of them may not have sufficient resources individually to undertake major contracts with AID and, therefore, unless arrangements are made to use these resources in combinations with other institutions, these resources will be largely lost to AID.

AID should work vigorously to assure the fullest use and best possible matching of university resources to its technical assistance and other program needs.

AID agricultural research activities, amounting to over $100 million in fiscal year 1980, are fragmented and without adequate direction. To more effectively use its research activities to fight world food problems as title XII states, AID needs to combine all research components into a systematic and integrated program.

Efforts to make U.S. universities and other institutions more accessible to AID needs have been hampered because its resource registry for identifying the best institution and individual resoures is not current, contains inadequate information on individual qualifications and capabilities, and is cumbersome to use. This situation should be corrected by a new automated registry being developed with BIFAD and scheduled for use in September 1981. (See p. 20.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AID and BIFAD efforts to more effectively involve U.S. universities in solving developing-country food problems have been hampered by a current lack of university capacity to meet AID needs; attitudinal and institutional barriers within the university community and AID; and inadequate policy and management guidance to AID missions in developing countries on improved project performance by university contractors. AID, BIFAD, and the university community are now addressing some of those problems. More needs to be done.

The Administrator, AID, in consultation with BIFAD, should develop a policy directive clarifying the role of, and the Agency's commitment to, the title XII approach. The policy directive should

--communicate its importance in relation to the AID overall agricultural development strategy;

--specify the extent to which its mechanisms are emphasized in research and technical assistance activities; and

--delineate the role of BIFAD in assisting AID operating units.

To insure the necessary follow-on management actions to the policy directive, the Administrator should develop a comprehensive and consolidated set of guidelines pertaining to U.S. universities and other title XII institutions, as part of AID handbooks and other formal instructions. Guidance should include such components as the definition of title XII activities; university procurement and contracting procedures; operational and management roles and responsibilities of university contractors and AID mission personnel on overseas projects; and other guidance necessary to facilitate an AID/university working relationship.

As a further measure, the Administrator should establish a better means of preparing and assisting university staff members for overseas assignments. To ensure its sizable investment in developing university capacity is beneficial to its needs, the AID Administrator should assess how the 50 universities receiving strengthening grants will be used by AID at the end of the initial 5-year funding period, and should consider incorporating the strengthening grant concept as part of a newly developed memorandum of agreement which more directly ties individual capabilities to AID needs.
(See p. 33.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

AID agreed that GAO conclusions and recommendations reflect the problems affecting more effective implementation of the provisions of title XII. AID expressed some concern, however, that the report gives an impression which understates the progress made during the first 5 years of title XII activity. Nevertheless, AID recognizes the need to address all problems

cited in the GAO recommendations, and indicates that it will act to improve management and implementation of title XII-related activities.

Tear Sheet

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
BIFAD	Board for International Food and Agricultural Development
CRSP	collaborative research support program
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
IDCA	International Development Cooperation Agency
GAO	General Accounting Office

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

World hunger is a long-standing and continuing problem. In recent years, several multilateral and U.S.-sponsored studies have provided overwhelming evidence of increasingly bleak food prospects for hundreds of millions of people. The Brandt Commission, the Global 2000 Report, and the recent Report of the Presidential Commission on World Hunger, are but a few of the many efforts detailing the urgency of the hunger situation.

The United States, through its bilateral development assistance programs administered by the Agency for International Development (AID), attempts to help solve world hunger problems. About $635 million, or 53 percent of AID fiscal year 1981 functional development assistance funds, are allocated for food, nutrition and rural development programs. Despite its emphasis on agricultural assistance programs, however, AID has been criticized for its inability to deliver quality technical assistance. For example, the March 1980 Presidential Commission on World Hunger report concluded that

> "during the past decade there has been a significant decline in AID's capacity to deliver high quality technical assistance to help recipient nations sustain self-reliant national agricultural systems."

The addition of Title XII to the Foreign Assistance Act is meant to help AID improve its capability to deliver quality technical assistance.

TITLE XII SEEKS TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION BY U.S. UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN FIGHTING DEVELOPING-COUNTRY FOOD PROBLEMS

In December 1975, the Congress enacted title XII--Famine Prevention and Freedom From Hunger amendment, adding sections 296-300 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. With this legislation, the Congress expressed the belief that through improved participation in planning and implementing food, nutritional, and agricultural development programs, U.S. land-grant and other eligible universities could be a significant motivating force for alleviating hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.

The Congress based this premise in part on the acknowledged success of the land-grant university system in the United States, on the vast technological knowledge that it possesses, and on the demonstrated ability of such universities to provide agricultural assistance to the developing world. The idea was to more effectively involve U.S. universities with AID as partners in agricultural development in the developing world.

U.S. universities not new to international work

U.S. land-grant universities have long been involved in agricultural development abroad. In 1949, President Truman set forth as the fourth point in his inaugural address the national goal of aiding developing countries. American universities were among the first to respond with enthusiastic support for this bold new effort which became known as the Point 4 program. Some of the first efforts abroad were university projects to help build agricultural training capacity where none existed before.

The Point 4 program is generally termed the beginning of the formal U.S. development assistance program. However, U.S. universities were doing agricultural work abroad on an individual basis well before that program. Earlier U.S.-university involvement with nations and universities abroad included the work of Massachusetts State College at Hokkaido, Japan, in 1876; the Pennsylvania State University student-exchange program with Canton University from 1929 to 1947; and the Cornell University work in China from 1924 to 1931.

There has been some long-term U.S.-university involvement abroad since the Point 4 program began. The following are some examples:

--Cornell University and the University of the Philippines cooperated formally in agricultural education and research over two decades, beginning in 1952, with informal relations continuing today.

--In 1952, the University of Illinois began a technical-assistance program in India which eventually involved six U.S. universities and by its end, in 1972, had also involved a partnership with nine Indian universities.

--From 1964 to 1973, the University of Wisconsin, with AID support, cooperated with a university in Brazil on a program training agriculturalists.

--From 1964 to 1977, with AID and other support, Kansas State University and a Nigerian university cooperated in a program to strengthen the university's work in agriculture and to build a new faculty of veterinary medicine. Colorado State University, Michigan State University, and the University of Wisconsin were also actively involved in Nigeria during this same period.

University participation with AID in development assistance activities was at a high level through the 1960s. Then through

the early 1970s, AID budget reductions were reflected in decreasing university activity abroad. Tables 1 and 2 (see p. 4) illustrate the decline in AID-financed university contracts and grants (for food and nutrition, health, education, and other) from 1970 through 1980. These tables do not include contracts involving AID grants and loans to host countries which then contract with universities for technical assistance. The number and dollar amounts of such contracts with universities is not readily available. We believe, however, such contracts would not significantly affect the trend shown in tables 1 and 2 because of 36 title XII projects reported in 1980 of which only 5 were host-country contracts.

By 1974, the number of university contracts and grants had fallen to less than half of those funded in 1970. University officials attribute part of the decline in activity to an overly narrow interpretation by AID of the 1973 New Directions legislation.1/ They claim that AID emphasized capital transfer activities at the expense of institution-building type activities in order to reach the poor majority in the developing world. The title XII sponsors sought to reverse the decline and to link a set of internationally experienced U.S. universities and the existence of a serious continuing world food problem.

The title XII concept

The Congress clearly intended title XII to meet the broad U.S. foreign assistance objectives to combat famine and reduce hunger in the developing world (22 U.S.C. sec. 2220a). U.S. universities were seen as a vehicle to carry out these objectives.

Congress declared that:

"To the maximum extent practicable, activities under this section (22 U.S.C. sec. 2220b (c)) shall--

(1) be directly related to the food and agricultural needs of developing countries;
(2) be carried out within the developing countries;
(3) be adapted to local circumstances;
(4) provide for the most effective interrelationship between research, education, and extension in promoting agricultural development in developing countries; and

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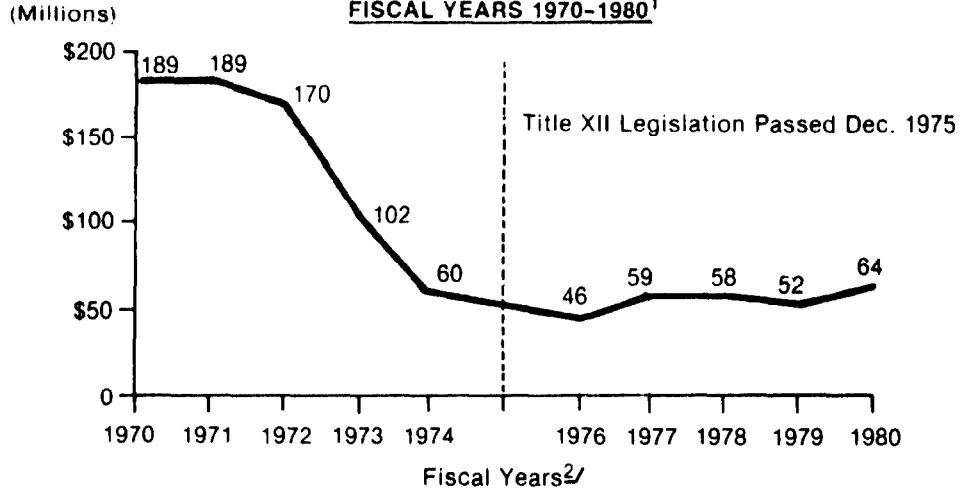
1/New Directions refers to legislation which emphasizes that AID development assistance activities should give highest priority to undertakings which directly improve the lives of the poorest people in the developing world.

TABLE 1

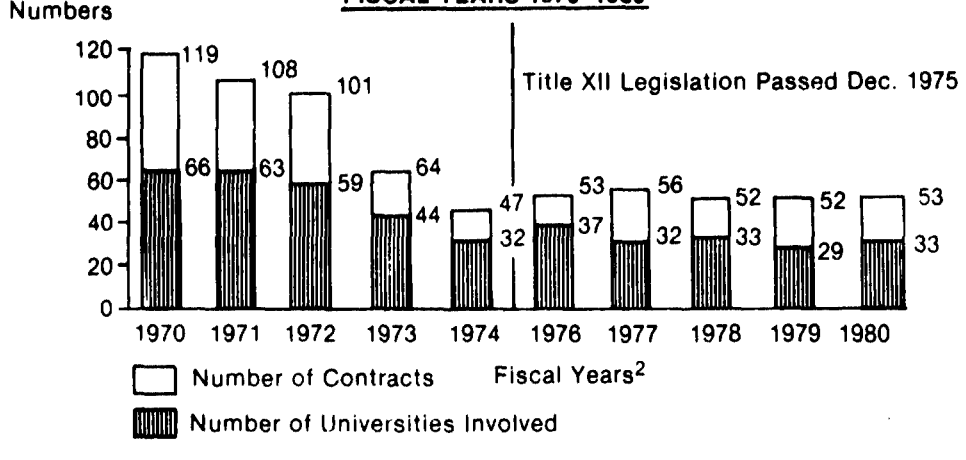
AID-FINANCED UNIVERSITY CONTRACTS AND GRANTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO HOST COUNTRIES — IN MILLIONS FISCAL YEARS 1970-1980[1]



1/Data does not include AID grants and loans involving host country contracts with U.S. universities
2/Data for FY 1975 is not available

TABLE 2

AID-FINANCED UNIVERSITY CONTRACTS AND GRANTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO HOST COUNTRIES — IN NUMBERS OF CONTRACTS AND INSTITUTIONS FISCAL YEARS 1970-1980[1]



1/Data does not include AID grants and loans involving host country contracts with U.S. universities
2/Data for FY 1975 is not available

(5) emphasize the improvement of local systems for delivering the best available knowledge to the small farmers of such countries."

Title XII (22 U.S.C. sec. 2220 b (a)) authorizes the President to provide assistance to

--strengthen the capabilities of U.S. universities in teaching, research, and extension work to implement programs developed under title XII auspices;

--build and strengthen the institutional capacity and human resource skills of agriculturally developing countries;

--provide program support for long-term collaborative university research on food production, distribution, storage, marketing, and consumption;

--involve U.S. universities more fully in the international network of agricultural science; and

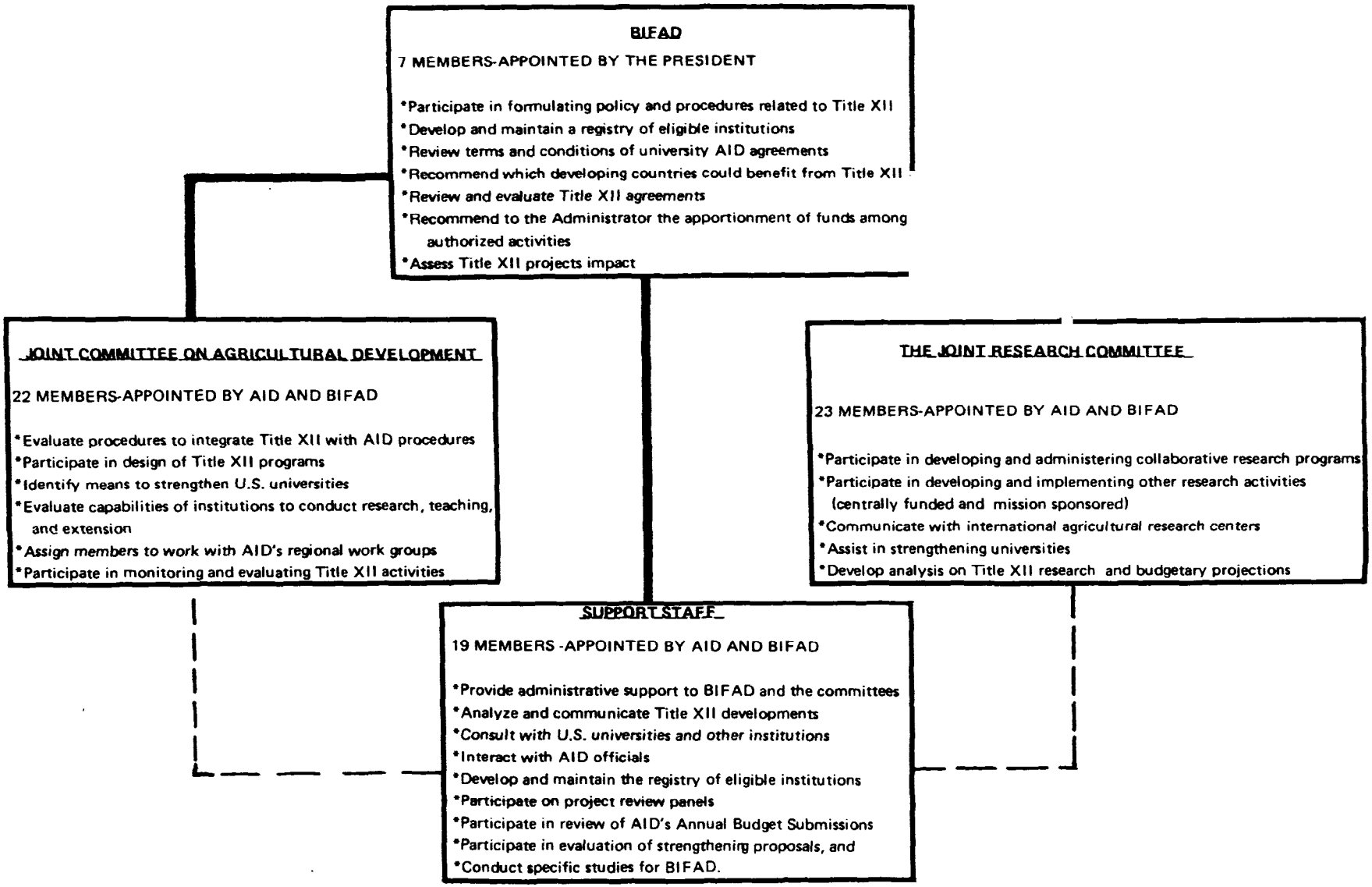
--provide program support for international agricultural research centers; research projects on specific problem-solving needs; and strengthening national research systems in the developing world.

Title XII provides no specific funding authorization to carry out its objective. Instead, the President is authorized to use any funds made available under Section 103, the Foreign Assistance Act, for agriculture, rural development, and nutrition (22 U.S.C. sec. 2220d). In an April 1980 report to the Congress, the International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA) reported that approximately $410 million of AID's fiscal year 1981 request for section 103 funds were for title XII activities. IDCA reports that in fiscal year 1982 it expects that title XII activities will comprise a major share of section 103 activities as well as an important share of activities financed by other appropriation accounts, such as the Economic Support Fund and the Sahel Development Fund.

Board for International Food and Agricultural Development

To assist in the administration of title XII activities, a Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) consisting of a seven-member board, a support staff, and two subordinate committees called the Joint Research Committee and the Joint Committee on Agricultural Development, were established. BIFAD is to participate in formulating policy, defining problems,

MAJOR DUTIES OF THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (BIFAD), ITS JOINT COMMITTEES AND SUPPORT STAFF



and carrying out the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of AID food and agricultural development activities. In essence, its primary responsibility is to facilitate AID and U.S.-university efforts to forge a "partnership" relationship to fight world food problems. The specific duties of the BIFAD entities are delineated in the chart on page 6.

The Board generally meets monthly, while the support staff carries out the day to day activities of the organization. The Board held its first meeting in October 1976 and the Joint Research Committee and the Joint Committee on Agricultural Development held their initial meetings in July 1977. BIFAD's organizational entities are well represented by university personnel who comprise about 40 percent of its membership. The remaining members are mostly AID personnel and some representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, and the private sector. BIFAD reported total operating expenses for fiscal year 1980 of approximately $800,000.

Question of the BIFAD role and authority

In January 1976, an AID legal staff opinion determined that BIFAD was an advisory committee for purposes of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (5 U.S.C. App. I). Under that act, an advisory committee may be utilized only for advisory functions unless otherwise specifically provided by law or Presidential directive. The opinion examined the statutory language and legislative history of title XII, which established BIFAD, and concluded that title XII did not specifically authorize the Board to perform nonadvisory functions.

BIFAD officials contend that title XII spells out a long list of BIFAD responsibilities without giving them the requisite authority or resources to carry them out. BIFAD officials believe the failure of the act to provide operational authority to the Board has hampered its ability to implement title XII objectives. Despite this problem, BIFAD officials told us they believe the new AID administration is strongly committed to title XII objectives. They told us they do not plan to ask the Congress to clarify the legislation.

We find no reason to disagree with the legal conclusions reached by AID in its staff opinion. As an advisory body, BIFAD can make recommendations to the President that certain actions be taken in implementation of title XII, but has no authority to direct action itself.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our review assesses the progress in implementing title XII and how the management and impact of implementation can be improved. The review focuses on (1) the role and performance of

BIFAD in facilitating an AID/university partnership necessary to successful achievement of title XII objectives; (2) the capability and commitment of U.S. land-grant and other universities to successfully combat food problems in the developing world; (3) AID efforts to carry out the provisions of the title XII legislation; and (4) to the extent possible, whether activities conducted under title XII were having any beneficial impact in providing technical assistance to developing countries.

We performed work at AID and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) headquarters in Washington, D.C., and at 10 AID missions in Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guatemala, Peru, Botswana, Tanzania, Niger, Lesotho, and Egypt.1/ We also completed extensive work at the BIFAD staff offices in Washington. Through on-site campus visits and at several regional title XII-related conferences we met with university officials representing 32 universities or university consortia. 2/

At AID headquarters, we interviewed the former AID Administrator, officials from the four regional bureaus, the Development Support Bureau, the Program Planning Bureau, the Office of Contract Management, and other appropriate AID officials. We met with several Board members and BIFAD support staff. We reviewed records pertaining to AID and BIFAD efforts to implement title XII including

--documents and contracts on ongoing and planned title XII country projects;

--documents on ongoing and planned title XII research activities;

--AID policies, procedures, and other pertinent instructions;

--records of BIFAD and joint committee meetings;

--annual reports submitted to the Congress; and

--documentation provided by U.S. universities related to their capabilities, interests, and commitments to implementing title XII.

1/U.S.-university involvement on title XII projects in Egypt is discussed in greater detail in our report, "U.S. Assistance to Egyptian Agriculture: Slow Progress After Five Years," (ID-81-19, Mar. 16, 1981).

2/See Appendix I for listing of universities contacted.

Based on preliminary information and data gathered at AID and BIFAD, we chose 10 AID missions for on-site observations and review representing all four regional areas covered by AID. We attempted to select locations where title XII activities were ongoing for a period of time in order to assess impact. The 10 missions had title XII or other university project contracts involving a reported life-of-project funding of approximately $189 million.

At each country location, we interviewed high-level mission officials, university contractors, and involved host-country officials, and reviewed records and documents pertinent to in-country title XII activities. When possible, we made on-site observations of selected title XII development projects. We did not attempt to perform a detailed project-by-project assessment. Instead, we relied heavily on available mission and contractor reports, evaluations, and interviews with involved officials to assess the impact of title XII at each location.

Our work at U.S. universities provided us a view of what title XII impact has been on campuses and helped us determine whether the premise of U.S.-university capability is sound. Our work also helped us determine whether the objectives related to improved university involvement are being achieved. We met with representatives of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges to discuss our findings and to obtain their comments on implementation of the title XII legislation.

CHAPTER 2

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS NEEDED TO REALIZE TITLE XII OBJECTIVES

In Chapter 3, we comment on AID and BIFAD efforts to find ways to strengthen and improve U.S.-university involvement in AID research and technical assistance activities through such devices as strengthening grants, collaborative research-support programs, technical support to AID missions, and the soon-to-be-implemented updated resource registry and AID/university memorandum of understanding. Although these efforts offer promise and potential, they have yet to bear fruit in improving university performance on overseas technical assistance activities.

We found that many title XII projects experience delays and reductions in expected outputs which detract from the quality and impact of technical assistance and service provided to the developing world. Furthermore, many AID missions are not emphasizing title XII mechanisms and are uncertain about how to implement title XII within their country program. Title XII mechanisms have yet to have much impact in improving university contractor performance or in improving AID management of its agricultural technical-assistance programs. These problems appear to be caused by a lack of clear policy direction on title XII; poor communication and guidance between AID, its missions, and U.S. universities involved; inadequate university capability and commitment; and inadequate AID assistance to university contractors.

AID, with BIFAD assistance, can do more to overcome these problems which limit the effectiveness of university contractors and the overall quality of technical assistance provided to developing countries. We believe AID and BIFAD must focus attention toward improving the qualitative aspects of university involvement in AID development assistance activities. Attention to quality of technical assistance versus quantity--improving university performance rather than merely increasing the use of universities--should be the primary objective.

TITLE XII HAS YET TO GENERATE A SPIRIT OF PARTNERSHIP AT AID MISSIONS

Contrary to the information conveyed in recent title XII progress reports to the Congress, title XII receives no special emphasis at AID missions, and is not viewed as a unique mechanism or program to assist the AID overall agricultural development assistance objectives. In fact, most AID missions appear to have adopted a business-as-usual approach toward use and management of university involvement in overseas technical-assistance activities. Developing-country and AID mission interests in title XII projects were reported to have increased five-fold from requests of $66 million in fiscal year 1976 to $325 million in

fiscal year 1981, 1/ and 36 title XII contracts were reported to have been signed by the end of fiscal year 1979. IDCA stated

> "the rapid increase in rate of implementation of Title XII country technical assistance projects--is in response to an early, and continuously increasing emphasis on Title XII projects--by AID country missions."

Because of a lack of agreement among AID, BIFAD, and university officials on what constitutes a title XII project, we were unable to ascertain reasonably whether title XII has led to such an increase in interest. Our work does suggest, however, that the reported amounts are not solidly based. We obtained mission perceptions of the title XII concept and how it affected operations at the country level.

Differing views on what constitutes a title XII project include

--projects involving only U.S. universities and not other institutions, such as USDA:

--projects involving U.S. universities and other eligible institutions including USDA;

--projects where a U.S. university designs and implements a project;

--projects requiring a host-country contract; and

--projects with a long-term versus short-term focus.

Consequently, AID, BIFAD, and university officials told us that, according to their perceptions, many of the 36 so-called title XII projects listed in the IDCA April 1980 report to the Congress should not be labeled title XII projects. For example, of the 23 projects listed as title XII at the 10 AID missions we visited, at least 7 are not considered as such by mission or project officials. On the other hand, mission officials stated that other university projects do appear to meet title XII criteria, but AID/Washington has not designated them as such.

Most mission officials we met appeared to understand the broad objectives of the title XII legislation. However, we also found that considerable confusion exists about how title XII activities are to be implemented. This confusion appears to

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1/The fiscal year 1981 missions' request of $325 million accounts for about 80 percent of the $410 million requested for all title XII activities.

center on a lack of clear communication and guidance from AID/ Washington on what constitutes an appropriate title XII activity and, more importantly, what actions are to be taken by each mission to more effectively involve U.S. universities and other institutions in resolving developing-country food and nutritional problems.

Several AID mission officials expressed limited enthusiasm toward U.S. universities as major participants in their country programs, and they do not perceive title XII as a mandate to direct more of their agricultural development programs to institution-building activities in research, education, and extension. They said they were implementing institution-building type activities at levels they deemed appropriate for their country, and they had no instructions to increase U.S.-university involvement. They believe that mandating the use of U.S. universities would be inappropriate and could result in projects that do not address the most pressing problems and in less-qualified and less cost-effective contractors.

Attempts by BIFAD to get U.S. universities more directly involved in mission program activities have met with limited success. For example, in 1977, BIFAD developed a baseline study program which was approved by AID. The idea of baseline studies was to provide a comprehensive, country-specific study on the current state and future needs for country-specific assistance in developing research, education, and extension programs. The studies were to be undertaken by university staff members assigned to work with AID missions. The baseline studies were to be used as resource vehicles for planning future development projects with title XII applications. Three baseline studies have been completed in Peru, Ecuador, and Jamaica, and another in Guyana was underway.

Although the baseline studies completed in Peru and Ecuador have led to subsequent projects, most AID missions have generally not been responsive to this approach. Several missions looked upon this approach as an unnecessary and unwanted intrusion of universities on their country program prerogatives. BIFAD officials recently acknowledged their inability to gain support for baseline studies and no longer emphasizes them as a tool to provide university assistance.

Clearly, many AID missions do not view U.S. universities as "partners in development," nor as unique instruments for effectively delivering technical assistance, and they are not particularly inclined toward increasing the use of the U.S.-university community.

UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE AND AID MANAGEMENT OF TECHNICAL-ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES CAN BE IMPROVED

Based on our visits to 10 AID missions, title XII mechanisms have done little to improve U.S.-university contractor performance or to help AID better manage its activities involving U.S. universities. In most cases, inadequate project performance or project management has led to delays and scaling down of original project goals and objectives which were designed to meet country food problems. Poor university performance contributes to a prevalent attitude of resistance at many AID missions toward greater U.S.-university participation as development partners. Project problems can be attributed to instances of questionable university capability and commitment on one hand, and inadequate AID and host-country administration and management on the other. We believe AID with BIFAD assistance, needs to take stronger policy and management actions to improve university performance.

Questionable university capability and commitment

Several mission and host-country officials voiced concern about U.S.-university capability and commitment to long-term agricultural development assistance activities. They cited lack of university interest in some country projects; extensive use of outside hires to fill contract staff positions; poor home institution backstopping; and the assignment of less-qualified staff members as illustrations of questionable university capacity and commitment on title XII projects.

Lack of university interest

Potential title XII projects in Botswana, Paraguay, Zaire, Burundi, Egypt, Guyana, and Niger received little or no university interest. For example, AID mission officials in Niger cited a range and livestock project which received only one bid from a university consortium. Mission and host-country officials found the consortium proposal unacceptable because of the long time it would take to implement the project, and lack of qualified staff nominated to implement the project. All 20 candidates which the consortium submitted as potential long-term field staff members were judged by the mission as unacceptable due to inadequate language abilities, inappropriate technical qualifications, no previous experience, or other reasons. The Niger range and livestock project was eventually staffed with personnel service contracts. Mission officials in Niger told us that lack of university interest in undertaking title XII projects adversely affects mission and host-country attitudes toward using U.S. universities as contractors.

Use of outside hires

Extensive use of staff members hired from off-campus contributes to AID mission views that universities are not really interested in developing long-term institutional relationships in developing countries. For example, in one project in the Philippines, of 17 long-term positions, only 5 (29 percent) were filled by staff members from the university contractor. On four other projects which U.S. land-grant universities conducted, approximately 90 percent of the staff was hired outside.

Mission and host-country officials told us that the extensive use of outside hires by university contractors casts doubts as to its commitment to the project. They realize that most U.S. universities do not possess enough qualified and interested faculty members to staff most long-term positions on large projects. They also acknowledged that many outside hires are qualified to perform well on overseas projects. Nevertheless, they believe that most of the major positions on university contracts should be filled by members from the home campus to ensure good backstopping of the project; some project continuity; and to convince the host countries that the university contractors are committed to developing a long-term institutional relationship called for in the title XII legislation. Mission and host-country officials stated that they saw no advantage to using a U.S.-university contractor versus other contractors if the former was merely serving as a "hiring hall."

Poor institutional backstopping

Inadequate support by the home institution was cited by AID officials at four locations as a factor in poor performance and in project delays. Mission and AID project officials cited lack of timely replacement of key staff members; use of short-term consultants to fill long-term staff positions; limited top-level university involvement; and poor administrative and logistical support. For example, two AID evaluations of a title XII project in the Philippines identified major slippages in meeting scheduled project objectives partially because the university was slow in providing needed support, including replacement of overseas staff and poor administrative support.

Assignment of less-qualified staff

Mission, host-country, and contract officials indicated that some projects experience problems because qualified staff members are either unavailable or require considerable recruitment time which delays the project. Projects in Niger, Guatemala, Peru, Tanzania, and Indonesia were cited as examples where university contract staff lacked adequate language capability to work well in-country.

Many mission and host-country officials voiced concern that some project staff members lacked the technical qualifications or experience to work effectively in-country. At four locations, projects were delayed because qualified people were unavailable for certain positions.

Performance problems related to AID and host-country management

Many title XII and U.S.-university projects experience problems such as delays and reductions in expected results because of poor AID management and/or unsatisfactory support and performance by counterpart host-country institutions. Mission officials indicated that university projects are managed no differently whether labeled title XII or not, and that they experience the same types of problems as other long-term institution building projects. Commonly cited reasons for project delays and reduced results relating to AID management and host-country involvement are

--time-consuming and other detrimental effects of AID contracting policies and procedures;

--unrealistic planning and project designs;

--failure of the host country to provide specified support to the university contractor; and

--blurred lines of authority and responsibility between the mission, host country, and university contractor.

We believe these problems occur because AID has failed to develop formal procedural and management guidance relevant to the unique characteristics of U.S. universities; properly orient university contractors to its method of operating; or provide adequate staging and follow-up assistance to university contractors related to the unique characteristics of working in foreign locations. The critical need to develop formal guidance and to adequately prepare university contractors is made more urgent because of the lack of agricultural staff members within AID to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate agricultural assistance activities.

Contracting policies and procedures affect university performance and interest

AID, BIFAD, and university project officials cited AID contracting policies and procedures as a major factor hampering university ability to provide quality technical assistance on overseas projects. The officials voiced complaints about the lengthy contracting process, which often takes approximately 2

years from the time projects are submitted for expressions of university interest to the time contracts are signed, therefore causing project delays and hindering university efforts to recruit qualified staff members. Some university officials told us, for example, instances where staff members originally committed for the implementation phases of projects became unavailable because of the time AID spent reviewing the projects.

Before title XII was passed, AID had established two types of university contracting approaches--the standard university contract and the collaborative-assistance contract. The former was the most used method. The primary difference between the two approaches is that generally under the standard university method, a separate entity is contracted to design a project, and another entity implements the project. Under collaborative-assistance contracting, the same institution performs both project designing and implementation phases.

BIFAD and AID have supported the collaborative approach because it offered

--early university involvement in project planning and design;

--better continuity and lesser administrative burden dealing with single institutions; and

--stronger long-term institutional commitment to developing countries.

AID now claims that it emphasizes the use of the collaborative-assistance method for long-term country projects. As of April 1980, 36 percent of title XII university projects were reported as collaborative-assistance contracts.

Although many AID mission and university officials support collaborative-assistance contracting, some mission and AID officials indicated that no particular benefits could be derived from this approach in terms of reducing contract costs or in speeding the project design and implementation process. These officials also voiced concern that this approach not become the only university contracting method.

Some university contractors also complained about AID's host-country contracting policy wherein AID provides grants or loans to host governments which, in turn, sign contracts with a U.S. university to conduct a technical assistance activity, such as training local agricultural officials. Host-country institutions have primary project-management responsibilities under this type of contract. Problems with host-country contracts which were cited by officials on three projects include

--lack of logistic and administrative support from the host government and AID mission;

--difficulty in getting equipment, supplies, and personal effects incountry and out;

--delays in getting visas;

--lack of knowledge concerning the legal ramifications of working under foreign customs and laws;

--increased vulnerability to bribery and extortion; and

--increased tension between contractors, host countries, and AID missions.

The different types of AID contracting devices not only contribute to project problems overseas, but also adversely affect university interest and willingness to undertake projects. At three universities, we were told that interest in doing AID projects has waned because of AID's time-consuming and costly contract process. We also noted three instances of universities declining to bid on projects because they were to be done through host-country contracts.

Unrealistic planning and project design

We identified projects at six missions which appear to have been poorly planned and designed resulting in overly optimistic projected benefits and project completion dates. For example, a January 1981 AID evaluation report on a university project in Egypt concluded, "the project, as originally conceived, will not and cannot be expected to achieve all the purposes and goals for which it was originally established." The evaluation stated that AID must develop realistic project purposes and goals if such broad based development projects are to be successful.

An April 1981 AID evaluation of a universtiy project in Lesotho concluded the design of the project was overly optimistic in setting a 5-year timeframe for establishing a farming systems research institution. AID officials stated successful development of such an institution will take at least from 10 to 15 years. As with the Egypt project, the original outputs planned for the Lesotho project will not be met.

Inadequate host-country support

Mission and U.S.-university contractors complain that host-country counterparts do not provide services and support specified in project agreements which adversely affects the university ability to perform well. For example, a fresh-water fish hatchery in the Philippines was supposed to be built and completed by the host

government before the university technical assistance staff arrived in June 1980. At the time of our visit, mission officials told us the hatchery was not expected to be operating until May 1981 at the earliest.

In another instance, the Government of Lesotho failed to provide counterparts and extension agents to work with the U.S. university on the farming systems research project. After 8 months in the country, only half the U.S. team members had been assigned local counterparts. The lack of personnel support by the Lesotho Government contributed to the project being unproductive during the first growing season. In addition, housing, office, and other facilities were not ready when the contract team arrived in-country. We noted similar problems with U.S.-university contractors receiving inadequate support from host countries at four other locations.

Blurred lines of authority and responsibility and inadequate assistance to university contractors

Another contributing factor to implementation delays and down scoping of original expected results on university projects is an apparent lack of understanding and conflicting views by university, host-country, and mission officials on their roles and responsibilities in managing projects. Much of the problem occurs because AID has not provided adequate information and assistance to universities in preparing for long-term overseas assignments regarding (1) AID methods and procedures in contracting for university services and its role in managing and assisting the contractor once incountry and (2) the unique characteristics of operating in a foreign location. It appears that AID is not seeking university contractors to be partners, but rather to establish contracts.

AID could do much in assisting university teams to anticipate and overcome problems by determining if language ability is critical to the projects; ensuring the team knows each local situation, including political, economic, and work conditions which might affect the project; facilitating the relationships between team and host-country counterparts; ensuring that the teams know the role of the mission and the assistance it can provide when problems occur; helping the teams clear local customs, obtain adequate housing and other administrative details which can bog down project implementation. Problems, such as the following, existed at most of the missions we visited:

--In one country, disputes between the mission, host government, and university team over management roles on a project caused disenchantment by each party which contributed to a 2-year delay in final completion of the project.

--At another location, mission officials told us that a collaborative-assistance project has been put "on a back burner" because the university responsible for project design failed to understand how AID operates or the constraints under which a university must work. The failure of communication between the two parties has resulted in uncertainty about whether the project will be implemented.

--In another country project, delays were caused by AID's failure to adequately prepare and assist the university contractor. The university team and host-government officials who were to collaborate on the project did not clearly understand each other's role, or what tasks should be performed first. An April 1981, AID evaluation of the project characterized the relationship between the mission, host government, and university as one of negotiation--not collaborative problem-solving.

AID will continue to rely on U.S. universities

In a January 1981 report, AID concluded that it lacks sufficient numbers of adequately trained and experienced staff members to address agricultural development problems. AID reported that although over 50 percent of its program funding goes for agriculture, rural development, and nutrition, less than 10 percent of its professional staff has training in these disciplines. The report stated that of 244 foreign service agriculture positions, 30 are vacant, and 13 missions have no agriculture officers. According to AID, this lack of agricultural staff has hampered its ability to identify, plan, design, and manage agricultural technical-assistance activities, thereby, limiting the Agency contribution to fight world hunger.

Further, with its increasing growth in agricultural and food-development programing and its limited in-house agricultural staff, AID will continue to rely heavily on intermediaries, including U.S. universities to provide agricultural technical assistance to the developing world. Using U.S. universities for this purpose is appropriate, given the title XII authorization. In May 1981, AID acknowledged that U.S. universities are a special resource and indicated that it intends to make every effort to utilize them in accordance with title XII objectives. However, we believe AID needs to follow up with more specific policy and management actions if the AID/U.S. university partnership is to be achieved.

CHAPTER 3

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE U.S.-UNIVERSITY INTEREST, CAPACITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR AID NEEDS

Through the title XII legislation, AID, in consultation with BIFAD, has stimulated increased U.S.-university interest in becoming more involved in AID development assistance activities. A strengthening grant program, a collaborative research-support program (CRSP), and a resource identification registry to make universities and other institutions more accessible to AIDs country programs, have been important in stimulating this interest. These title XII mechanisms are also meant to expand and improve U.S.-university capacity to effectively undertake AID research and technical-assistance activities.

Although U.S.-university interest, capacity, and accessibility are being stimulated by these title XII mechanisms, we found that in the process of developing these mechanisms, AID has (1) not adequately assessed how university capacity to undertake title XII activities developed with strengthening grants can be effectively used, or the likely consequences if the developed capacity is not used; (2) not developed a systematic and integrated agricultural research program to include the new CRSP activities and other title XII research activities; (3) experienced problems in identifying and gaining access to title XII institutions for AID country program needs which has contributed to negative perceptions by some AID missions concerning the use of title XII institutions on country projects.

We believe AID, with BIFAD assistance, needs to clarify how it intends to use U.S. universities developing their international capacity under the strengthening grant program, and to develop a systematic and integrated agriculture research program which encompasses all AID agricultural research, including title XII programs such as CRSP.

AID and BIFAD have recently initiated some additional efforts to improve university capability, commitment, and accessibility to meet AID needs. These efforts include developing a new automated resource identification registry; developing a memorandum of understanding with individual U.S. universities; and establishing a program to provide technical support to AID missions. These new efforts, combined with our recommendations to AID to improve its strengthening grant and agricultural research programs, can lead to the AID/university partnership intended by title XII.

CURRENT U.S.-UNIVERSITY CAPACITY TO MEET AID NEEDS IS LIMITED, BUT UNIVERSITY INTEREST IS INCREASING

Title XII is based on the premise that U.S. universities have demonstrated an ability to perform development assistance in the past, and that such capability still exists. However, the decline of U.S.-university involvement in AID activities in the early 1970s has eroded U.S.-university capacity to meet current AID program needs. Nevertheless, title XII has stirred greater interest in the U.S.-university community to again develop the capacity to meet AID needs.

Evidence of limited university capacity

BIFAD published a study 1/ in October 1980, which concluded that U.S. land-grant and other agricultural universities are not meeting fully AID program demands in food and agriculture. The study listed several factors, which provide clear evidence of limited university international capacity, including (1) delays in initial staffing and staff replacement on AID contracts; (2) use of nonuniversity staff for a significant share of long-term positions; (3) limited numbers of agricultural university scientists with requisite language and cultural skills; (4) limited university interest in working in some countries; (5) a general pattern of extremely limited numbers of young faculty with tenure track appointments on long-term assignments; and (6) an "empty pipeline" of international agriculturalists. The report conclusion is supported in several papers and speeches recently given by high-level university officials and development assistance experts. AID and university officials we contacted also acknowledged that the university capacity to meet all AID development assistance requests was limited.

Reasons for limited university capacity

BIFAD and university officials cited many reasons why university capacity and commitment to international work has diminished. A principal reason for this decline was reduced AID funding of universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. BIFAD and university officials believe the AID interpretation of the 1973 New Directions Mandate to meet the needs of the poor majority in the developing world led to AID emphasis on capital transfer type activities which normally do not require much university input.

1/"Toward More Effective Involvement of Title XII Universities in International Agricultural Development," (BIFAD, Oct. 1980).

The October 1980 BIFAD study identified additional, more specific reasons for limited university involvement in international programs including

--university appointment, promotion, and tenure policies which discourage faculty interest in overseas assignments;

--priority on funding domestic programs versus international programs;

--deficient language and cross-cultural skills;

--inadequate salary incentives; and

--university organizational structure which accords international activities a low priority.

The BIFAD study also indentified external constraints such as uncertainty about the duration of AID programs; AID limitations on adjusting university salaries to attract candidates for overseas assignments; U.S. income tax laws which no longer provide financial incentives for overseas work; and cumbersome AID contracting procedures.

Our visits to AID missions and several U.S. universities and our discussions with over 100 university administrators and faculty members corroborate most factors cited in the BIFAD study as factors inhibiting U.S.-university capacity to meet AID title XII needs. It is clear that the level of U.S.-university capability and commitment to perform well overseas varies at each institution. The constraints identified above appear to affect university interests in doing international work; the ability to attract in-house quality staff members for projects; and the interest and ability to perform good backstopping support. The extent to which these constraints can be overcome appears to enhance the chances for better performance in AID overseas projects.

University officials told us that the tremendous pool of agricultural talent in the United States cannot be easily transferred to developing-country environments. They said that at state institutions, the primary responsibility is to meet state and domestic needs. Domestic responsibilities of individual faculty members, including teaching and research, make it difficult for either these individuals or institutions to quickly respond to AID needs. University administrators told us that most universities do not have faculty members "on stand-by" for AID. They said that scheduling someone for international assignments is often made difficult because of time-consuming AID contracting procedures. For example, they told us that staff commitments are sometimes changed because AID contracting delays preclude universities from holding to their original commitments.

Many university officials told us that the criticisms of constraints which the universities impose because of tenure and promotion policy, salary policy, and other institutional deterrents to long-term international assignments, are valid. Officials at many universities stated, however, that their schools are now addressing these problems.

University officials said that universities are willing to make greater commitments to development assistance work if AID makes a commitment for more stable and long-term financial and other support. They told us they are wary of gearing-up for a greater international involvement only to be left holding an unutilized capability. Many university officials said they have experienced AID fluctuations in support in the past and are not confident that the cycle will end. They said that AID will now have to help universities maintain an international capability by making stronger financial commitments in exchange for university commitments.

University interest in development assistance is increasing

Title XII has been instrumental in bringing new vigor and awareness to international work in the U.S.-university community and in reversing the trend to less international emphasis. University administrators expressed support for international programs and said their institutions are making an effort to increase participation in development assistance work. Some universities believe title XII has enabled them to undertake institutional commitments for the first time. For example, at one research-oriented university, we were told that there have long been individuals committed to international work but until recently no institutional commitment has been made.

University interest in AID agricultural assistance activities is being further stimulated by AID and BIFAD efforts to increase university capacity and involvement through CRSP and by establishing an effective resource identification system to make qualified universities more accessible to AID country programs.

STRENGTHENING GRANTS INCREASE UNIVERSITY INTEREST, BUT QUESTIONS ON USE REMAIN

BIFAD and AID developed a grant program to strengthen and increase U.S.-university interest and involvement in AID title XII programs. We found that the strengthening grant program has generated greater university interest in international work and has the potential for making universities more accessible to AID program needs. However, we also found that the strengthening grants may be raising university expectations beyond AID's ability to use them.

AID and BIFAD officials told us they plan to conduct a major evaluation of the strengthening grant program sometime in 1982. For this reason, and because programs are relatively new, we did not conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the strengthening grant program. Nevertheless, our review of grant documents, AID policy and procedure documents, and our extensive discussions with AID, BIFAD, and university officials, raises a concern about whether AID has adequately assessed (1) the extent to which AID will use those universities strengthened by these grants and (2) what the likely impact will be for the universities AID does not use.

Currently, 78 U.S. universities are eligible to apply and receive strengthening grants. Initiated in fiscal year 1979, the grants are intended to expand and strengthen university capability and commitment in undertaking international agricultural activities. For the first 5 years of the grant program, AID agreed to contribute a minimum of $100,000 each year to eligible institutions. At the end of 1980, 50 universities were receiving these grants at an annual cost of about $5 million. Most grants include a matching provision whereby AID matches university contributions up to a maximum of $300,000. 1/ To receive a matching grant, applicant universities must

--be designated a land-grant or sea-grant college, or be a university which has demonstrated capacity in teaching, research, and extension and ability to contribute to the attainment of the objectives under title XII;

--be interested in exploring their potential for collaborative relationships with agricultural institutions, and with scientists working on developing-country food problems;

--have agricultural science capability;

--be able to maintain an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and extension; and

--have capacity, experience, and commitment with respect to international agricultural efforts.

Strengthening grants are used to develop university capabilities to undertake title XII activities through such means as new

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1/Universities which AID classified as minority institutions may apply for a non-matching requirement. Of 50 strengthening grants, 6 were awarded to minority schools.

courses in international agricultural development; language training; international development seminars and lectures; international travel to orient faculty members to overseas environments; and research. Under the strengthening grant program, each recipient institution develops, administers, and manages its own program. Grantees are required to submit annual reports to AID, summarizing program accomplishments.

AID cited among other things

--133 new courses in title XII subjects;

--3,580 students enrolled in new or modified title XII courses;

--139 graduate students involved in title XII-related work, 99 of whom are doing research in developing countries; and

--149 faculty members involved in research in developing countries.

AID suggests that such evidence demonstrates the reorientation of attitudes, policies, and programs of U.S. universities toward meeting the relevant food problems of the developing world.

Each university must identify the extent to which its grants are related to developing-country needs; the likely use of these grants to meet AID development assistance programs; how the grants will strengthen university international capacity; and the interrelationship of various university programs to support grant objectives. The grants are not necessarily tied to specific AID project plans. Particular universities are not always preparing for particular AID needs. Instead, grant proposals are approved on the basis of containing general needs, such as improving French language capability, an ability to undertake water resource activities, and so forth.

Can university expectations be met?

Although the strengthening grant program has achieved the objective of generating greater university interest in international work, the program has also raised concern by some within AID and the university community that university expectations may be raised above AID's ability to use them.

AID and BIFAD consider grant proposals from all institutions which are currently eligible to participate in title XII activities. They believe it is in the spirit of the title XII amendment to allow eligible schools to apply and that there could be as many grants as there are schools eligible. Based on current funding levels, AID will have invested over $25 million over the first 5

years; however, BIFAD officials told us there is concern within BIFAD that the strengthening grant program may be unduly raising the expectations of universities in obtaining future AID contracts. They said many of the smaller schools will probably not have a capability to undertake major AID projects on their own even after 5 years of the strengthening grant. AID officials involved in approving strengthening grant proposals told us it is unrealistic to expect that AID will eventually have individual contracts with all of the universities which currently have strengthening grants because many universities will not have an institutional capability to effectively compete. They said unless arrangements are made to use these resources in combinations with other institutions, these resources will be largely lost to AID.

Universities are generally enthusiastic about the strengthening grant program, but many are concerned about whether AID will actually use them as they become geared up for development assistance work. At one university, which has a strengthening grant but not much international activity, the director of international programs told us he is leery of whether AID will actually use the universities receiving grants. He would like to see the grant tied to specific AID needs and thus have some greater assurance the universities will be used.

AID and BIFAD officials also told us they plan a major evaluation of the strengthening grant program in 1982. We believe that the planned evaluation should address the question of likely use of universities receiving strengthening grants. We believe AID should make a realistic determination on the likely number of universities which will be able to conduct AID title XII activities. Given the substantial AID investment in the strengthening grant program, it is important that university capabilities, once developed, not dissipate.

AID AGRICULTURE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES CAN BE IMPROVED

Title XII provides a broad authorization to more effectively involve U.S. universities and other institutions in AID agriculture research activities. The act calls for AID to bring together various components to increase world food production, including

- --institution-building programs for development of national and regional agricultural research and extension capacities in developing countries which need assistance;

- --support for long-term collaborative university research on food production, distribution, storage, marketing, and consumption;

--support for international agricultural research centers, contract research on specific problem-solving needs, efforts to develop and strengthen national research systems in developing countries; and

--involvement of U.S. universities more fully in the international network of agricultural science.

CRSP, developed by the BIFAD Joint Research Committee, is intended to establish collaborative links between several U.S. universities and developing-country institutions on major research problem-solving activities. The CRSPs currently in the implementation stage are showing some signs of success as reflected in developing-country financial contributions to the program.

Although the newly developed CRSP activities are beginning to make title XII universities and institutions more accessible to developing-country research problems, AID has yet to incorporate the agricultural research components cited in the legislation into a systematic and integrated program. We believe AID, with BIFAD assistance, needs to assess its agricultural research activities and develop a systematic and integrated agricultural research plan which brings together all the research components cited in title XII.

Research activities focus on CRSP

The purpose of CRSP is to link U.S. universities and other institutions with other research entities, such as the international agricultural research centers, private research organizations, and developing-country universities and research institutions, on a collaborative effort to solve common research problems. The research problems addressed are oriented toward the priority research needs of the developing world. CRSP activities involve a financial commitment by participating title XII institutions--a minimum 25-percent contribution matched to the AID contribution.

In 1977, the Joint Research Committee initiated the CRSP concept by asking AID staff members and other development assistance research professionals, including university officials, to design a CRSP research mode. AID missions were asked to identify research priorities appropriate for potential collaborative research between U.S. and developing-country institutions.

As of July 1981, AID had funded eight CRSPs at a projected cost of $31.5 million through fiscal year 1981. Five CRSPs have been funded for the planning stage of development. The following three are currently being implemented (1) small ruminants initiated in October 1978, (2) sorgum-millet begun in July 1979, and (3) beans and cowpeas started in October 1980. These 3 CRSPs involve 30 title XII universities and institutions. Each CRSP

activity is planned on a 5-year funding basis. The AID commitment to implementing all of the eight CRSPs appears uncertain. BIFAD and AID officials told us that several CRSPs now ready for implementation may not be funded past the planning stage.

Universities view the CRSP program as a major positive use of university research assets for technical assistance, and as an important approach to achieve title XII objectives to help remedy world food problems. They characterize CRSPs as a unique title XII mechanism providing for more effective use of university resources, more direct participation with AID in program planning, and a longer term funding commitment. University officials told us the CRSP mode of research affords universities the dual opportunity to strengthen the domestic research program and contribute useful research to developing countries.

Progress in implementing CRSP activities was slowed by problems in clarifying the relationship of CRSPs to AID country programs and in establishing links betweeen title XII and developing-country institutions. For example, it took approximately a year and a half for the sorgum-millet CRSP, managed by the University of Nebraska, to establish firm links with developing countries.

An official from the beans and cowpeas CRSP said that CRSP is not incorporated as part of AID host-country agreements and this causes problems in gaining logistical support, such as clearances, and other assistance from AID missions. Some AID officials reported they had limited knowledge of CRSP activities. They indicated that the CRSP activities should be integrated within mission country programs.

Despite these initial start-up problems, AID, BIFAD, and U.S.-university officials believe CRSPs have great potential for solving world food problems. They cite recent commitments by some developing countries including Peru, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, and Morocco in contributing funds to CRSP activities as evidence of program success.

Need to develop an integrated agricultural research plan

In a 1978 report, 1/ we recommended that AID develop a more specific long-range strategy to carry out its overall agricultural research activities. AID replied that its agricultural research is an integral part of the Agency's overall agricultural development strategy. Yet, information obtained during our review of

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1/"U.S. Participation In International Agricultural Research," (ID-77-55, Jan. 1978.)

title XII research activities reinforces our previous conclusions and suggests that AID has not developed a systematic and integrated plan necessary to incorporate all research components called for in title XII legislation.

The development of the CRSP approach received greatest attention by the Joint Research Committee and AID. However, CRSPs are just one part of the total AID agricultural research effort. In fact, the CRSP mode primarily addresses only one of the research components cited in the legislation. AID agricultural research is divided between centrally funded and managed activities, such as CRSP, and mission-funded and managed research. A breakdown of AID agricultural research in fiscal year 1980 shows

--$65 million spent for mission-level research,

--$29 million to support the international agricultural research centers,

--$6 million in AID centrally funded contract research other than CRSP, and

--$7.6 million for CRSP activities.

In October 1978, BIFAD reported that AID agricultural research components--CRSPs, the international agricultural research centers, centrally funded contract research, and country program research--were not integrated into an overall Agency program necessary to resolve critical food problems in the developing world. BIFAD cited the following as reasons to justify an integrated program:

--no existing outreach mechanism at the international agricultural research centers;

--current imprecise CRSP objectives/statements on how to assist developing countries;

--centrally funded research which fails to assist AID missions;

--duplicative mission research; and

--the inability of AID to disseminate results.

BIFAD recommended that AID undertake a major study to restructure and finance an integrated program of research. According to BIFAD and AID officials, no study was undertaken.

In January 1981, the Technical Program Committee for Agriculture, comprised of top AID agriculturalists, similarly reported that substantial AID investments in research through national

research systems, the international agricultural research centers, CRSPs, and other central research, are not integrated under a comprehensive or systematic plan. The committee reported that many of these research efforts are being managed without regard for the others. In a February 1981 paper, BIFAD agreed with the committee views that AID agricultural research is not well coordinated. BIFAD again recommended that AID reexamine its research portfolio, set research priorities, and bring together its agricultural research components.

Based on these recent assessments by AID and BIFAD, it is clear that AID has yet to develop a systematic and integrated agricultural research plan to effectively meet title XII objectives. We believe our recommendation in 1978 to develop such a plan is still valid.

EFFORTS TO MAKE UNIVERSITIES MORE ACCESSIBLE

A major objective of title XII is to make universities more accessible to AID country program activities. BIFAD and its Joint Committee on Agricultural Development, identify and match universities with AID projects. The primary tool which BIFAD used to carry out this important task--the BIFAD registry of institutional resources--has several shortcomings which have limited ability of title XII institutions to participate in some AID country activities. The resource registry is (1) not current, (2) limited in terms of specific individual qualifications and capabilities, and (3) cumbersome to use. These shortcomings result in costly time delays, errors in reported data, and potential errors of omission.

BIFAD officials acknowledge that their ability to identify and match potential title XII institutions and individuals with AID needs is hampered by its present registry. However, they point out that BIFAD is now developing a new automated registry designed to overcome all of the present weaknesses. The new registry was scheduled to be operating fully in September 1981.

Why a new registry is needed

In late 1979 and early 1980, AID and Joint Committee on Agricultural Development officials visited 23 AID missions to facilitate understanding of title XII and to learn of field problems related to title XII. One problem identified at several missions was the accessibility of title XII talent, especially on short-term assignments, to the missions. Among the problems cited by the missions were

--inadequate listing of universities which possess potential talent;

--difficulty in putting together teams from several title XII institutions; and

--scheduling difficulties, such as getting university experts on short notice.

During our visits to AID missions, we heard similar complaints regarding the accessibility of title XII institutions. Some mission officials told us they were upset that title XII institutions express little interest on some mission projects. They indicated that lack of interest on such projects tends to create negative views by host-government officials and themselves regarding the merits of U.S.-university contracts.

Some U.S.-university officials told us they are not totally satisfied with BIFAD performance in making universities more accessible to AID projects. A major complaint is the lack of time universities have to respond to AID requests of interest on particular projects. They told us that with such short notice, it is often difficult to determine who might be interested and available for overseas assignments.

The new resource registry which BIFAD is now developing is designed to generate an extensive and current listing of title XII institutional and individual capabilities. The new registry will aid in matching specific project needs with title XII institutional and individual talent for both long-term and short-term assignments.

RECENT ACTIONS BY AID AND BIFAD TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY CAPABILITY, COMMITMENT, AND ACCESSIBILITY

AID has recently initiated some additional measures to improve U.S.-university involvement in AID activites. For example, AID funded a study to determine the incentives needed to attract qualified university staff members to overseas AID projects. Another measure, initiated as a result of the BIFAD study on university constraints, is an initiative to develop a memorandum of understanding between AID and eligible title XII universities to make a mutual commitment to meet a long-term development need. The new memorandum contemplates a commitment by a title XII university to adopt and implement policies to overcome the many constraints which limit effective university involvement in AID overseas programs. In return for such a commitment, AID is considering some type of reciprocal arrangement to provide university assurance that its international abilities will be used. According to AID officials, the initial memorandums will be entered into in the fall of 1981.

AID has also initiated another effort to provide U.S.-university expertise to assist AID missions. The new program,

called Technical Support to Missions, seeks to establish an institutional relationship between a particular university and an AID mission on virtually any aspect of mission country programs. This mechanism envisages university staff members being assigned to missions for short or long periods to help carry out such duties as analyzing country needs; developing, designing, and evaluating projects; and providing other assistance, as required. Currently, AID missions in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic have been selected as test sites. We believe these efforts will improve U.S.-university capability and commitment to AID overseas activities. As shown in chapter 2, however, greater efforts are needed if AID is to establish a strong development partnership with the title XII community.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AGENCY COMMENTS

In the nearly 6 years since the passage of title XII, the Foreign Assistance Act, progress in expanding and improving U.S. university involvement in AID agricultural development activities has been slow. AID and the title XII community have yet to forge a partnership to fight world food problems. AID, BIFAD, and the U.S.-university community efforts to improve university involvement in AID technical-assistance projects through such programs as strengthening grants, collaborative research, baseline studies, and other mechanisms, have yet to manifest better project performance abroad. University projects continue to experience costly and time-consuming delays which limit project results and detract from the quality of assistance provided.

If AID intends to make every effort to use title XII instruments to carry out a significant amount of its agricultural development activities, it must take stronger actions to clarify and improve its relationship with the U.S.-university community, and to provide the assistance necessary to improve the quality of development assistance to fight world food problems.

We recommend that the AID Administrator, in consultation with BIFAD, initiate the following actions to improve AID/university implementation of title XII objectives:

1. Issue a policy directive clarifying the Agency position on, and commitment to, implementing the title XII concept to combat world food problems. The policy directive should

   --communicate the importance of, and establish the priority of, title XII in relation to the overall AID agricultural development strategy,

   --specify the extent to which title XII mechanisms are to be emphasized in Agency research and technical assistance,

   --delineate the BIFAD role to assist Agency operating units in carrying out these activities, and

   --be widely disseminated within the title XII community.

2. Review all current Agency guidelines and instructions pertaining to U.S. universities and other title XII institutions, and develop consolidated guidelines in the Agency's operational and procedural handbooks and instructions which

--define title XII activities,

--establish university procurement and contracting procedures,

--lay out the operational roles and responsibilities of university contractors and missions on overseas projects, and

--provide other necessary guidance to facilitate an AID/university working relationship.

3. Develop better means of preparing, orienting, and assisting university contract staff for overseas assignments. University contractors should

--receive a complete orientation on the unique, cultural, social, political, and economic characteristics of each foreign location;

--be able to anticipate the expected or potential problems in working with foreign-country counterparts;

--be made aware of the AID method of operation in each location; and

--be given adequate assistance to overcome administrative and logistical problems, such as clearing customs and obtaining adequate housing.

To ensure that AID's sizable investment in strengthening grants meets a clear need and will be fully used, we recommend the Administrator, AID, include as part of the planned 1982 evaluation of the grant program, a provision to assess the likely and appropriate level of AID utilization of universities in its program activities. We recommend the Administrator, AID, consider incorporating the strengthening grant program as part of the proposed individual AID/university memorandum of agreements.

We also believe AID needs to develop a more effective agricultural research program by combining research components into a systematic and integrated program.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR RESPONSE

AID acknowledged our report to be a thorough study of the problems involved in implementing the provisions of title XII. Furthermore, AID agreed with our conclusions and recommendations, and indicated that the report will be useful in its efforts to overcome the several problems cited to improve management and implementation of title XII activities.

AID indicated that the general tenor of the report creates an impression which seriously understates the substantial progress made during the first 5 years of title XII. In particular, AID disagreed with our observation that AID efforts to strengthen and improve U.S.-university involvement in AID research and technical assistance have yet to bear fruit.

We acknowledge that AID and BIFAD have made considerable efforts to improve university capacity to engage in more effective overseas development activities. Nevertheless, it is also clear from our work at 10 AID missions that many of these efforts, although offering promise, have yet to help much to overcome the problems in delivering assistance and in improving the quality of assistance. We believe ongoing AID and BIFAD efforts, combined with actions recommended in our report, will do much to ensure success of title XII provisions.

UNIVERSITIES INCLUDED IN THE GAO REVIEW THROUGH DISCUSSIONS WITH FACULTY OR STAFF

Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama
California State University, Chico, California
California State University, Fresno, California
California State University, Pomona, California
University of California at Berkeley
University of California at Davis
Colorado State University
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
University of Illinois
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
University of Kentucky
Lincoln University, Missouri
University of Nebraska
Michigan State University
Montana State University
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
North Carolina State University
Oregon State University
Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
South Dakota State University
Texas A & M University
Texas Tech University
Tuskeegee Institute, Tuskeegee, Alabama
Utah State University
Washington State University
Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina
University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
University of Wisconsin, River Falls, Wisconsin
Consortium for International Crop Protection - (CICP) - Berkeley, California
Consortium for International Development - (CID) - Tucson, Arizona
Southeast Consortium for International Development - (SECID) - Chapel Hill, North Carolina

APPENDIX II

TITLE XII AND OTHER UNIVERSITY PROJECTS
INCLUDED IN THE GAO REVIEW

Country		Project title	Institution	Project Cost (millions)
INDONESIA	1.	Eastern Islands Agricultural Education	Washington State University	7.5
	2.	Graduate Agricultural School	University of Wisconsin	7.4
	3.	Western Islands Agricultural Education	University of Kentucky	5.0
PHILIPPINES	4.	Integrated Agricultural Production and Marketing	Kansas State University	12.0
	5.	Freshwater Fisheries Development	Texas A. & M.	1.5
NEPAL	6.	Resource Conservation and Utilization	Southeast Consortium for International Development	7.9
PERU	7.	On Farm Water Management 1/	Utah State University	.5
	8.	Soy and Corn Production on Small Farms 1/	Consortium for International Development/ Colorado State University	11.0
	9.	Soy and Corn Production on Small Farms 1/	INTSOY/University of Illinois	.8
	10.	Freshwater Fisheries Development 1/	Colorado State University	.1
	11.	Baseline Study	North Carolina State University	.2
GUATEMALA	12.	Small Farmer Diversification System	Michigan State University	9.3
	13.	Integrated Area Development Studies 1/	Iowa State University	.4
	14.	Food Productivity and Nutritional Development 1/	Texas A. & T.	.5
BOTSWANA	15.	Botswana Agricultural College Expansion	South Dakota State University	4.0
TANZANIA	16.	Agricultural Education Extension 1/	Utah State University	2.4
	17.	Agricultural Manpower Development 2/	West Virginia University/North Carolina A. & T.	4.6
	18.	Livestock Marketing 2/	Texas A. & M.	4.4
NIGER	19.	Applied Agricultural Research 3/	Michigan State University	4.0
	20.	Niger Cereals Production 2/	Consortium for International Development/ Texas Tech.	14.6
	21.	National Range and Livestock 3/		5.4
LESOTHO	22.	Farming Systems Research	Washington State University	6.6
EGYPT	23.	Agricultural Development Systems	University of California/ Davis	14.8
	24.	Water Use and Mangement	Consortium for International Development/ Colorado State University	7.0
	25.	Major Cereals	Consortium for International Development/ New Mexico State University	47.0
	26.	Rice Research and Training	University of California/ Davis	9.8
			Total	$188.7

1/Projects reported as title XII by IDCA but not considered title XII projects by the AID mission.
2/Projects not labeled title XII but with title XII characteristics.
3/Projects reported as title XII but no design or implementation contract ever signed.

APPENDIX III

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20523

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

August 21, 1981

Mr. Frank C. Conahan, Director
International Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

Thank you for providing the draft General Accounting Office report, "Policy and Management Actions are Needed to Improve U.S. University Involvement and Performance in AID's Agricultural Assistance Activities," for comment. The report has been reviewed with interest by the responsible offices. Provided herewith is the Agency comment provided by the Acting Assistant Administrator for Science and Technology, whose bureau has primary responsibility.

We would appreciate your consideration of these comments in preparing your final report.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert L. Beckington

Enclosure: AID Comments on the GAO Draft Report

Agency for International Development
Comments on the GAO Draft Report
"Policy and Management Actions Needed to Improve
U.S. University Involvement and Performance
In A.I.D.'s Agricultural Assistance Activities

A.I.D. is in agreement with the three recommendations made in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of this draft report, and with its characterization of many of the problems attendant upon a more effective implementation of the provisions of Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act. The present administration recognizes the need for attention to the problems addressed by these recommendations and elaborated in the draft report, and is determined to address them building upon the foundation established during the first five years of Title XII activity. A.I.D. believes that this Report will be very useful to its efforts to accomplish these improvements.

A.I.D. does feel, however, that much of the detail and the general tenor of the report create a general impression which seriously understates the very substantial progress made during the first five years of Title XII. Much of the criticism is based upon an anticipatable lack of unanimity of view or agreement on definitions among a very large group of interviewees, which in itself is not necessarily indicative of total performance under Title XII. In particular, A.I.D. considers the assertion in the draft report that our efforts to strengthen and improve U.S. university involvement in A.I.D. research and technical assistance have yet to bear fruit, to be very much an overstatement.

Also, although A.I.D. agrees with the first item in recommendation 3, that "university contractors should receive a complete orientation on the unique, cultural, social, political and economic characteristics of each foreign location," it is necessary that this be applied within reasonable limits of feasibility and cost. Strengthening Grant funds are being currently used by many universities to provide some of this orientation; some of it can only, or best, be acquired on the job. A.I.D. will examine feasible means of meeting the residual requirements.

Although as stated above, A.I.D. is in agreement with the three principal recommendations of the draft report, there are several corrections of fact and modifications and revisions of text that we believe would enhance the quality of the report and its effectiveness in improving the implementation of Title XII.

1. The draft correctly emphasizes the need for attention to quality of technical assistance. However, the statement in the draft report that "quality versus quantity--improving university performance rather than increasing uses of universities is the primary objective," may obscure the total set of purposes of Title XII.

While striving to improve the quality of university involvement in A.I.D.'s development assistance activities, Title XII clearly calls for a greater and more extensive role for universities in A.I.D.'s activities. Accordingly, in our proposed re-emphasis of Title XII we are committed to improving both quality and quantity. Further, concerning quality, we believe that progress has been made. Universities have received Title XII grants, faculty members have been trained in such subjects as language, area studies and A.I.D. procedures. A number of such faculty members have already served overseas on A.I.D. contracts or are doing so. BIFAD has specifically intervened with universities in specific instances to assist in improving their performance when this has been brought to question. Also, the knowledge base for U.S. technical advisory services to developing countries is being expanded and made more directly relevant. Research networks have been forged among U.S. universities and foreign institutions to attack specific problems critical to improving agricultural production in the less developed countries. While much progress remains to be made, especially in tying this research even more closely to mission research and technical assistance projects, we believe that our efforts have begun to bear fruit. As recommended in the text of the draft report, A.I.D. intends to effect an even closer integration of central and mission research, and of research with technical assistance and other "outreach" functions. From participation in this type experience, U.S. universities develop a greatly enhanced capacity to engage in more effective overseas development activities. Thus, the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 10 is inaccurate and should be deleted.

A.I.D. does not agree with the statement that "only 25-30 U.S. universities will likely have an institutional capacity to sufficiently undertake an A.I.D. program at the end of the 5-year period." This depends, of course, upon the size and characteristics of the projects they are asked to undertake. It is highly probable that the most effective approach to many technical assistance and research needs is through fewer, larger, integrated projects which will require the combined services of more than one U.S. institution. In this sense, the smaller U.S. institutions may not individually have the resources adequately to undertake an entire A.I.D. program. Virtually all universities which are recipients of strengthening grants will, we assure, have developed significant resources for participating in Title XII projects. After the first five years, none of them will receive strengthening grants in excess of 10% of the institution's volume of business with A.I.D. [See GAO note]

The sentence in the last paragraph on p. ii should read therefore: "A.I.D. and BIFAD officials believe that, while all strengthening grantees will have some resources appropriate for A.I.D. work, several of them may not have sufficient resources individually to undertake major contracts with A.I.D. and, therefore, unless

arrangements are made to use these resources in combinations with other institutions, these resources will be largely lost to A.I.D." This should also be reflected in the discussion on p. 24-26. [See GAO note]

A.I.D. considers the draft report to be a thorough study of the problems involved in implementing the provisions of Title XII. The report will be very useful to us in our efforts to overcome these problems and to increase the involvement of U S. universities in A.I.D.'s development activities.

GAO Note: This report includes technical changes which Agency officials suggested.

(471910)

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