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FAVA/CA

THE FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FOR CARIBBEAN ACTION

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 David A. Pasquarelli

October 17, 1989

William Lehman
 U. S. House of Representatives
 2347 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Lehman:

I received an evaluation of FAVA/CA's Farmer-to-Farmer Program which was conducted by Winrock International in mid-1988 and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). As you know, FAVA/CA is one of several sub-grantees of Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA) for this program. I have enclosed the section of the evaluation concerning FAVA/CA, with pertinent passages highlighted.

I am pleased to report that our agency received outstanding marks. Administration, efficiency, and our credibility in the Caribbean were singled out. A strong recommendation was made that VOCA continue to support, on a multi-year basis, our Farmer-to-Farmer initiative.

In your role as advisor to FAVA/CA you will also want to know what steps we have taken to address other recommendations of the report. Principally they are: a) to reduce our administrative cost, and b) provide VOCA more elaborate documentation on volunteer missions.

On the first count, our 1989 indirect cost is 47 percent of salaries and benefits, down from 59 percent of total project cost in 1987-88. This, combined with our strategy to extend volunteer lengths-of-stay, has permitted us to reduce by 28 percent our daily administrative cost, down from \$340 in 1987 to \$246 today.

Secondly, we are now forwarding to VOCA all recipient evaluations of volunteer performance and other volunteer mission reports.

I am pleased to bring you this favorable report. Your support and encouragement are important.

With regards,

Sincerely,



Bob Hendry

restructured to increase effectiveness, gather and record useful information and evaluate the assignment.

Cost Effectiveness

- The short-term assistance provided by VOCA is, for the most part, of high quality and is cost effective. AID funds are used to cover all costs directly related to the volunteer assignment in addition to all direct and indirect institutional costs. The professional services are contributed to the program by the volunteers.
- The cost of VOCA's technical assistance has been from 40% to 50% less expensive than that provided by international technical services firms.
- VOCA's administrative cost per volunteer-day will be reduced as the number of volunteer placements increase each year and the program is managed more efficiently. Volunteer costs can be reduced by requesting host organizations using several volunteers to share local costs (e.g., food and lodging) of second, third or fourth volunteer.

Impact

- The overall impact of the Farmer to Farmer Program on host organizations, farmers and other collaborators has been positive.
- The recipients of the program's technical assistance have been host farmer organizations and local farmers. About one-half of the assignments reviewed (16 of 33) were related to livestock, poultry and beekeeping; one-fourth to crop production and farm machinery; and the remaining one-fourth cooperative development/marketing. The total number of host country farmers assisted by the 96 assignments completed through June 30, 1988 is calculated to be about 3,000.
- The monetary impact of the program on beneficiary organizations and farms could not be quantified adequately. Few volunteers, host officials and farmers responded to inquiries on this matter. Nonetheless, most respondents felt that there was a positive monetary impact involved -- up to 30% increase on farmers' income. Few indicated increases in income greater than 75%.
- Nonmonetary positive impacts on the environment, farmer well-being, work ethics, understanding of American culture and overall friendships were common.
- Gender of the volunteer appears to be a factor on the degree of impact on the target population.
- The overall level or degree of effectiveness of 33 assignments completed in Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire and the Philippines approached

- The cost per volunteer assignment for VOCA and subgrantees varied between \$1,181 and \$23,640.
- The total cost per volunteer-day was in all cases lower than the cost estimated for agricultural development firms. Thus, the subgrantee Farmer to Farmer Program is cost effective and in many instances more cost effective than VOCA.

Future Funding and Programming

- VOCA should continue to support all participating subgrantees -- ACIDI, BARA, FAVA/CA and WCRF -- until the current subgrant allocations are exhausted (December 31, 1988).
- Consideration should be given to funding BARA, FAVA/CA and WCRF's Farmer to Farmer Programs on a long-term basis -- three to five years -- with an initial financial commitment of two years. A collaborative relationship should be established with ACIDI for joint development and implementation of a VOCA Farmer to Farmer Program in the Philippines.
- AID/PVC should approve the continuation of Peace Corps' Farmer to Farmer Program for a second year with no additional funding and a reduction of total volunteer placements from 100 to 50.
- Communications between VOCA and subgrantees (and vice-versa) need to be improved. A retreat should be held in the not too distant future with all subgrantees, Peace Corps, AID/PVC and VOCA to discuss issues of importance such as: (1) VOCA's management, direction and philosophy; (2) future funding of VOCA and subgrantees; (3) farmer to farmer program definition; (4) program coordination between VOCA and subgrantees; (5) target regions and countries; (6) target populations to be assisted; and (7) many others. Yearly meetings should be held for all subgrantees, Peace Corps, AID/PVA and VOCA.
- VOCA should assign its Regional Representatives as liaison officers to interact, monitor and coordinate activities between VOCA and each subgrantee.

adequate. However, a section on future volunteer placements would be useful.

Volunteer Costs - The administrative and volunteer costs per volunteer-day are calculated below using information presented in the progress report for the period ending on May 31, 1988.

Number of volunteers completing assignments = 26

Number of volunteer days = 298

Number of volunteer days per assignment $(298 \div 26) = 11.5$

Volunteer cost per volunteer day $(\$40,033 \div 298) = \134

Administrative cost per volunteer day $(\$105,865 \div 298) = \355

Cost per volunteer assignment $(\$145,898 \div 26) = \$5,611$

The volunteer cost includes all direct costs associated with the volunteer (including spouse if applicable) such as: (1) all international and domestic air travel; (2) lodging and meals; and (3) any expenditures incurred directly by the volunteer while on assignment. The administrative cost includes all expenditures not included in the volunteer cost such as administrative salaries, direct costs related to program administration and indirect costs (overhead) of the implementing organization.

Comments - Noteworthy features of the FAVA/CA/FTF Program are discussed briefly.

- The FAVA/CA/FTF Program is presently well organized and administered. There is very little bureaucracy built into the program so mobilization of volunteers can be done efficiently.
- The results of a short evaluation conducted by FAVA at the time the volunteers return from their assignment indicated that (based on 21 responses):
 - About one-half of the volunteers thought that the problem to be addressed was "well defined" before their visit. The other one-half thought it was "somewhat" adequately defined.
 - Approximately 85% of the volunteers believed that there was a "good match" of their skills and the project needs. The other 15% thought there was "somewhat of a good match."
 - All volunteers surveyed thought that the travel arrangements were adequate and all volunteers also responded affirmatively when asked if they would volunteer again.

- About 95% of 21 volunteers queried responded affirmatively to whether or not follow-up work would be required.
- A strength and unique advantage of the FAVA/CA/FTF Program are its Caribbean contacts and a favorable institutional image in the region. This facilitates project identification, volunteer placement and access to local logistical support.
- FAVA's administrative cost is high--\$355 per volunteer-day. Two factors contribute significantly to this cost. The first is the overhead rate, which, at 59% of the total project cost, is the highest of all subgrantees. Reducing the rate to about 30% (to bring it more in line with two other subgrantees that charge overhead) would reduce the per volunteer-day administrative cost by about 25%. Computing the present overhead rate of 59% on salaries rather than on total project cost will have about the same effect. The second contributing factor is the short duration of each assignment -- approximately 11.5 days per volunteer. Increasing the number of days per assignment will increase the total cost per volunteer, somewhat, but will result eventually in substantial reduction in per volunteer-day administrative cost, particularly if overhead is computed on salaries only.
- The current trend of the FAVA/FTF Program towards placement of volunteer farmers on projects that directly impact on host country farmers' income is more in line with VOCA's perception of the Farmer to Farmer Program.

Recommendations

It is recommended that VOCA continues to support FAVA/CA's Farmer to Farmer Program for at least two years beyond the December 31, 1988 termination date of the current subgrant. FAVA offers some unique characteristics that complement well VOCA's efforts in the Caribbean. Establishment of VOCA's own farmer to farmer programs in the Caribbean will require considerable effort, time and financial resources, which VOCA cannot spare at this time. Strategic collaboration in the region will be of substantive benefit for FAVA and VOCA. Specific recommendations for consideration in future collaborative efforts include:

- VOCA should negotiate with FAVA/CA an administrative cost per volunteer-day that is more in line with other subgrantees' costs. Although FAVA has already reduced the overhead rate from 59% to 47% in its recent proposal to place 11 additional volunteers through December 1988, further action is necessary to reduce the cost. An increase in the number of days per assignment should be considered since this action will not only lower the cost per volunteer-day, but can result in increased

effectiveness of the volunteers. A two-week minimum length of assignment would be desired.

- VOCA and FAVA/CA should jointly develop a two-year plan of action for a Caribbean farmer to farmer program that: (1) identifies target countries for each organization; (2) lists/identifies potential host organizations; (3) determines areas of assistance based on needs of farmers; and (4) sets goals for volunteer placements.
- VOCA's Latin America/Caribbean Regional Representative should act as liaison officer between the two organizations, coordinate regional activities with FAVA/CA, and monitor FAVA/CA's volunteer placements and financial processes.
- FAVA is encouraged to submit to VOCA all volunteer reports and evaluations along with the quarterly reports. This will assist VOCA in establishing an information resource bank to serve as reference for administrative and planning purposes.

World Christian Relief Fund

- Organization:** World Christian Relief Fund/Farmer to Farmer Program (WCRF/FTF). WCRF is a nonprofit, charitable organization founded in 1975. It's headquarters are in McCrory, Arkansas. The organization's "aim and desire is to help increase the production of food in needy places and at the same time be a witness for Christ." It's primary work is in the Central Plateau of Haiti where volunteers use a 70 acre farm as a training site for local farmers. Excluding the farmer to farmer program, WCRF received close to \$80,000 in donations to operate its voluntary programs.
- Agreement Type:** There are three basic agreements between VOCA and WCRF in the form of "Farmer to Farmer Program Application for Funding."
- Agreement Dates:** March 1, 1987 through March 31, 1988 for the three agreements.
- Contract Amount:** \$109,080 (\$36,360 for each agreement)
- Agreement Modifications:** Verbal extension of the agreements through March 31, 1989 to be followed by written confirmation. The extension will be at no additional cost to VOCA.