

Conquest of Hunger Review: Component IV*

The Food and Agricultural Policy component of the COH (component IV) was reviewed November 24, 1981. In addition to the committee members, MMS and LDS also participated. CKM presented an overview of this as outlined below. The background materials distributed prior to the meeting were the April 1981 component discussion paper "ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION-CONQUEST OF HUNGER: FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY" and the program budget for the Food and Agricultural Policy component outlining activities under three alternative budget levels.

Outline of Presentation by CKM

COMPONENT IV OBJECTIVE

To improve the production, distribution and consumption of food in low-income countries by funding ways to assist local personnel improve their food policies.

I. WHY THIS POLICY COMPONENT IN THE COH?

- Production in many poor countries is below its potential because of policies adverse to agriculture.
- Changes in policies affecting both food production and distribution in some low-income countries could reduce hunger.
- In many countries the capacity to analyze the effects of existing and alternative policies is weak. Better analysis would improve policy.
- Agriculture itself is poorly understood by many whose decisions affect it. Better understanding can improve policy: similarly with consumption and nutrition.

II. WHAT IS CAPACITY?

- Strategic Capacity - the ability to recognize significant food problems.
- Technical Capacity - the ability to analyze problems.
- Administrative Capacity - the ability to initiate and oversee activities which implement food policy decisions.

*Revised January 28, 1982 to incorporate suggestions received by CKM.

Programatically, it is useful to separate activities which deepen capacity within a particular subject matter from activities which broaden an individual's capacity to deal with and integrate a variety of material from different subjects.

Inadequate capacity is particularly evident in the:

- Link between macroeconomic policy decisions and specific agricultural policies.
- Relationship between farm or household level analysis and macro-economic policy analysis (micro-macro linkage).
- Understanding of agriculture - what realistically is possible.
- Understanding of the impact of foreign trade sector interventions on agriculture or on food consumption.

These problems are compounded by deficient communications across organizations and institutions within less-developed countries and by the lack of international networks linking professional colleagues.

III. WHAT CAN THE RF DO?

- Encourage the development of frameworks for the systematic analysis of important policy questions.
- Provide people who know both about the relevant issues and institutions involved.
- Support initiatives to improve policy analysis including short and long-term training.
- Provide intellectual and financial support for relevant research and for methods which bring together policymakers, scientists, and policy analysts.
- Provide leadership in the use of efficient analytical tools and communication techniques.

IV. ISSUES

A. Country Choice - What are some criteria?

- (1) Severity of hunger problem (transparencies on the locus of hunger).
- (2) Extent of past RF investment/contacts (EFD and national RF programs).
- (3) Countries where payoffs to policy changes are likely to be high. (Suggestive impressions as to price policy may be gained from the comparison of the amount of fertilizer which can be purchased with 100 kilograms of wheat in 27 countries: this ranges from 7 to 52.)
- (4) Countries demonstrating an aggressive search for improved policies.

B. Can we do anything in hunger disaster countries with which we would not establish direct programs? (eg. Uganda, Zaire, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Somalia, Haiti). "Arms length" activities could include fellowships for nationals and support for policy research at third country institutions.

C. Field Staff - Past RF experience and consultation with a wide range of individuals both suggest that a key ingredient in capacity development is a talented and well-trained individual in place for long enough periods of time to earn the respect and confidence of their host country colleagues; to understand the local culture and institutions well enough to play a catalytic and diagnostic role. Possibly this can be achieved by individuals in other institutions characterized by this operating style which is the approach upon which RF built its reputation in international agriculture. But, there are few such institutions. The RF may be able to encourage other institutions to proceed in this direction with the Foundation providing the base for a "network" of such institutions.

But, if the RF moves away from having field staff, there are substantial risks of becoming simply another donor agency of "development tourists with checkbooks." There is already more funding for local studies and research than can be effectively absorbed. There are training opportunities and fellowships. The scarcities are in the areas of intellectual leadership; in diagnosing the nature of the capacity weakness; and of working in local environments to help nationals implement these activities.

V. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

One can hope to mount an effective program only where the government does in fact wish to make some changes (GHT). The wide differences among country situations must be recognized explicitly and incorporated into program design (JEJ). Is it possible to develop indices of "amenability to change" - where is the program most likely to work? (MMS). The rhetoric of country development plans is practically identical across countries probably reflecting the input of a relatively small corps of expatriate advisors providing help in writing these plans (JLM).

Food policy is political. Before policies can be developed which help small farmers, small farmers must gain access to more political power. An important variable is the degree of political clout which the farmers have. However, the response to incentive pricing has been widely demonstrated (JLM citing Ted Schultz).

We should start in receptive environments with a clear identification of issues where we can train people effectively. We do not know whether we will succeed but we must take some risks in trying out various approaches (JAP).

In what way is this program different from what Harvard Development Advisory Service was doing and HIID is doing now? (LDS). CKM's response:

DAS-HIID

advisor
principally economics
produce analysis and
policy advice
need to satisfy many
institutions in con-
tract bidding process

single agency focus

RF

facilitator/catalyzer
strong interdisciplinary focus
develop indigenous capacity
for analysis and advice
independent
development of in-country and
inter-country networks

Over the years, the Ford Foundation has trained dozens of agricultural economists. Why has this large training investment "failed"? Response: There are two dimensions of failure: the difficulty of retaining highly-trained economists in government service due to low pay and failure of the training itself. On the latter, agricultural economics is under severe criticism from inside and outside the profession for its inability to link macroeconomic issues with the agricultural sector. (Looking at the overall contributions of the Ford-trained people, the investment may not have failed in that most are making useful contributions in the subjects in which they were trained, even if not in the original sponsoring institution.)

What is our "preferred model?". How would one explain to a country how an RF food policy project there would operate? (LDS) JAP explained that the first thing we would do is to analyze the process by which policy is made. Where is the power located? How are the people in institutions linked together? CKM and JEJ both noted that because local situations vary so widely we are trying not to fix upon any hard and fast model to be applied in each case. Present country programs (Turkey, Tunisia, Kenya and Thailand) represent quite different approaches. What is common are the general principles outlined previously (pages 1 and 2)

MMS stressed that even though the program is somewhat experimental we must stay long enough in a particular country to make a difference. While we may not have an ideal country model in mind, we should have a particular goal or set of goals clearly in view. The means of developing capacity may be best learned by working in these countries. All agreed that the word model means different things to different people.

LDS reformulated the wording of his comment, urging us to identify clearly the "essential ingredients" of our approach. JAP noted that a central ingredient of this is "building people" in local institutions which are dealing with the problems.

We should only go to a country where it is clear we can make a difference. (GHT) In this respect he questioned whether the RF could have an impact in Peru.

One theme of the food policy program unique to RF is the interactions sought between the biological and social sciences. Marginal lands and fragile environments are likely to become a major thrust of the RF program in the coming years. Should not the food policy component be a subset of this overriding emphasis? Indeed, does the whole concept of components make sense? (RWC)

JAP noted that over the RF history there have been the "clumpers" and the "splitters". The issue of components may be looked at again during the outside evaluation. Addressing the particular elements within the program, JEJ noted the usefulness of the collection of food policy documents we have assembled (Poli-Col). He expressed his strong reservations about the emphasis placed on both microcomputers and video-tape pointing out that these are simply tools and are not in themselves the program. CKM agreed that we must keep these within the perspective of the overall program objectives.

Returning to the concept of networking, several people suggested the usefulness of key individuals in the countries visiting other successful models. There is much to be learned from the numerous successes of RF Agricultural Science programs. Cross-fertilization among projects was proved useful in the past and should be continued.

In view of the impact of policies on overall agricultural performance and on development in general, attempting to improve policy performance is perhaps the most important challenge facing the COH program (JJM). There are a number of potential interrelationships among the four components of the COH which should be explored more than they have to date (JLM).

JAP suggested that it might be useful to have a group of three or four highly respected outside individuals review and evaluate the RF Food and Agricultural Policy program. It would also be useful to bring together our field staff people with this program with other outside thinkers to continue and improve program design. CAM in particular should be included in these meetings. (JAP)

CKM will modify the basic Food and Agricultural Policy component document paper to take account of the various issues, considerations and clarifications produced by this review.