The successful execution of these tasks is not a sufficient prerequisite to project success. The key ingredient will be the presentation of objectives that are perceived as profitable by the project participants. Without these objectives, even the most superlatively organized project will fail. But reforestation projects entail long-term inputs and follow-up for which there is no analogy in the case of the Furcy vegetable planting. That is, even with profit-generating objectives, the project's success will hinge more heavily on the institutional services enumerated above.

The final section of this chapter will briefly discuss the shortcomings which have been observed in these tasks during the course of the research.

5.3   Major Operational Shortcomings

Using the previously constructed task list, it will be possible briefly to identify the major shortcomings which were observed in project implementations under each category of task.

5.3.1   Research and Feasibility Assessment

1.   The one project which did systematic research never bothered to analyze the pre-project data. As a prelude to its general activities in four regions of the country, the USAID supported Projet de Developpement Agricole I .egre did an exhaustive socio-economic • survey covering hundreds of thousands of individuals.

This piece of research, in terms of its sheer quantity, was the largest piece of research ever done in Haiti besides the national census. But the reforestation projects began in the Acul Watershed and in the Jean Rabel areas before the data were even analyzed. And in recent months the Damien technicians charged with the analysis of the data decided that the questionnaire had been so poorly designed and so poorly supervised that the data were probably valueless. The data will thus not be analyzed, an open admission that vast quantities were wasted.

2. Virtually no other project observed has initiated its activities with even a brief study of the economy or social organization of the peasants in the project region.

3. Quite surprisingly there appear to be virtually no attempts made by project organizers even to learn about past soil conservation projects that have occurred in Haiti. In this sense each project to one degree or another attempts to reinvent the wheel. In their determination to avoid getting bogged down in "academic research" and move into immediate action, projects thus may neglect simple research that even common sense would dictate.

5.3.2 Planning

1. The main complaint heard was that planning tended to be centralized and authoritarian. We recognize that, by their very nature, soil conservation projects are decided on from without. But this does not mean that important operational decisions cannot be worked out in conjunction with the communities. Thus, project technicians were

in some cases ordered to plant trees on top of, instead of at the base of, rock walls, even though field experience had demonstrated disadvantages in this system.

2. Ths planning tends to be largely technical in nature--e.g. focusing on the nursery, or on the techniques of wall building. There is as a rule virtually no systematic planning that deals with the issue of integrating these activities into the economic life of the peasant, or even of seeking ways to at least avoid jeopardizing that life. On the contrary, more than one technician has been heard to say that soil conservation would be so much easier to achieve if we could simply remove the peasants from the hillsides to be treated.

3. The timetable set up by projects tends to be rigid, and project directors may start sending out heated directives if matters fall behind schedule. What looks like good, strict administration from a bureaucratic perspective, however, turns out to be institutional folly from the perspective of the field. If the community has still not agreed to build walls, for example, then an administrative directive to get out and build walls will simply trigger off invasions of land by work gangs whipped together under the stimulus of Food for Work.

5.3.3.   Community Selection

The main drawback here is that projects may follow the path of
least resistance and simply choose more conveniently located
communities for restoration rather than the more distant communities
in upper reaches of the watershed which, from a technical point of
view, should be the first to be treated. In the Jean Rabel project,
for example, the watershed was eventually abandoned, as the project
turned to the reforestation of the cemetery region contiguous to
the town, a decision which made little sense in terms of the water-
shed objectives of the project. When such retreats occur from earlier
objectives, it is frequently merely a symptom that, from the point
of view of the participants, the project objective has become that
of simply securing employment, so why not do it in a manner that does
not entail arduous trips up into inaccessible hills. Thus in Jean
Rabel the project reforested land contiguous to the town cemetery.

5.3.4.   Pre-Project Education and Motivation

1. In view of the anxieties which reforestation projects may evoke
with respect to possible eviction, this becomes one of the more
important phases of the project. The objective should be the elicit-
ation of an invitation from the community. But projects have on
occasion been in such a hurry to begin that this phase has been
skimpily carried out.

2. Quite specifically it is important to emphasize the point that the trees belong to the peasants, not to the State or to the "Compagnie Blan".

3. A very effective technique has been the bringing of peasants from one region to view soil conservation projects that have been implemented elsewhere in Haiti. A trip to Fort-Jacques not only taught the peasants of Aux Cayes to build walls, it also reassured them that the end result of projects was not eviction of the peasants.

5.3.5. Organization of Community Groups

1. The project administrators have generally given very little thought to the organization and internal structure of the groups that will execute projects. They have either hoped that functional groups will already be there, or they will leave it up to subordinates to worry about the formation of groups.

2. What has happened in too many cases has been the adoption of an organizational model that relies on the formation of simple work gangs, which may not even be composed of members of the same community. Soil conservation projects could be used as a vehicle for creating and strengthening dynamic community groups whose members have genuine common interests beyond the securing of Food for Work. But the Food for Work is in many cases the only bond linking the members of the implementing work gangs. The presence of the work gang could be symptomatic that the project has taken the path of least resistance and become a simple wage labor project.

3.?.6.   Technical Training

1. In some cases I have observed that project technicians have

provided no training when many peasants were literally clamoring for

technical instruction. This was true of the coffee growing community

of Baptiste. With the advent of fertilizer, many peasants want to

expand their coffee gardens but want to do so using modern seedbed

techniques. The agronomists in the colony were simply not providing

this information and peasants were going elsewhere. I saw one rather

large coffee nursery whose owner had learned the technique from

listening to Radio Soleil.

2. In other cases the technicians supplied by the project may

themselves not be qualified to teach the peasants the required

techniques. One sees many young Damien agronomes who have no field

experience. And the description of one of the project earlier in

the report alluded to the foreign soil conservation advisor whose

degree was in sociology and who had to learn wall-building from the

peasants of Fort Jacques.

3. In yet other cases the technicians may try to peddle inap-

propriate techniques which they may have seen work elsewhere but

may be less suitable for mountain environments or may not take

into account the technology and diversification habits of Haitian

peasant agriculture.

5.3.7.   Supplying of Project Inputs

The most frequent complaint in end of service reports of technicians
is that the implementing agencies either have not provided them with
transportation or have not made adequate allowances for the maintenance
and repair of the vehicles. This matter almost let to the premature
resignation of the first forestry technician working in Jean Rabel
under HACHO. The understanding had been that HACHO would supply
the VPI technicians with transportation. But when the young forester,
after several months of frustation, asked about his vehicle, he was
told bluntly to get a horse. When he threatened resignation, he
soon found himself in possession of a motorcycle—a rather unsatis-
factory compromise from the point of view of facilitating the
transportation of seedlings up into a watershed.

5.3.8.   Payment and Food

1. These matters will be discussed on some detail in the following
chapter. For present purposes it is important to point out that,
when money is paid, it is generally several months late. This leads
to forced debtor relationships between worker and foreman or worker
and local lender and opens the door to numerous sorts of maneuvers
to separate the workers from a substantial part of their wages.

2. An argument will be made for supplying cash inputs. But there is no need to disburse this "encouragement" in the form of daily or piecework wages. Other models could be employed. One of the more creative models observed was that used by the Oriental Mission Society outside of Cap Haitien. Peasants enter into a contract relation with the cooperative and are paid so much per year for the maintenance of each tree. This is construed as a loan, the peasant being obliged to share part of the proceeds from the tree with the cooperative. One need not endorse the specifics of the plan but can still approve of the effort to disburse money in creative fashions that go beyond the standard model of the traditional work gang and its monthly payroll. It is not money or food itself which destroy community initiative, it is their use in unimaginative fashions. Properly pumped in, money could be used to strengthen local groups.

5.3.9   Supervision

Some projects are careful in the supervision of delicate technical matters, but others appear haphazard. It seems that some nurseries give out trees without really knowing whether the groups that will plant them have been properly trained in planting techniques. And it became clear from conversations in the coffee community of Baptiste that most peasants had been given only the scantiest instructions in the proper application of fertilizer. Ideally the first time a peasant applies fertilizer to a coffee tree, it should be done under the supervision of a trained technician.

5.3.10   <u>Formative Evaluation and Mid-Course Corrections</u>

1. Virtually every project observed, but especially the longer projects, manifested a tendency to change directions in mid-stream. Unfortunately the changes were frequently made as a result of the departure of one technician and his replacement by another, not as a result of intelligent self-corrections by project technicians in the course of their own work. The exceptions to this rule tended to be field technicians in contact with peasants. Foreign office-based technicians were frequently criticized for being rigid.

2. I have talked to creative field technicians who have good ideas but who literally feel it would be out of place to mention these ideas to their town-based supervisors, that it would be an implicit criticism, one that could jeopardize their jobs. This is obviously an unhealthy communications climate, and project directors should encourage feedback from their technicians and from community members themselves.

3. The very residence of project directors in Port-au-Prince or in towns militates against the field sensitivity which would permit creative mid-stream course corrections. Technicians in <u>implementing</u> agencies should get out to the field and stay in the field as long as possible.

4. By the same token field technicians, in evaluating their activities, should try to sensitize themselves to phenomena that fall outside the scope of their immediate technical specialty.

I asked one forest technician, who had been involved principally with the growing of nurseries, why the peasants didn't seem to want to plant the trees. His answer, given in all seriousness, was that there was too much inbreeding going on in the community, resulting in the emergence of an unusually high rate of mental retardation. This was one of the technicians who was advocating removal of peasant communities as a strategy for achieving soil conservation. In addition to biological systems, whose operation produces healthy nurseries, there are also social and economic systems, whose operation produces rational, coherent behavior on the part of participants. Community rejection of projects is frequently the result of technicians focusing exclusively on the biological systems with little interest in, or sympathy for, the social systems with which projects are supposed to mesh. If projects are not working, only intelligent analysis--not cracker--barrel theories of retardation--will permit the design of appropriate mid-course corrections.

5.3.11   Maintenance of Trees and Structures

1. The policy of most projects has been to wash their hands of responsibility once trees have been planted and walls have been built. The implicit hope is that the community will have been educated sufficiently to induce them to maintain the trees and struc-tures--a hope that is uncalled for in projects whose principal payoff has been Food for Work.

2. Projects have to begin systematically exploring the notion of a "maintenance" phase, a phase that should concentrate on the trees rather than the walls. This phase must last at least the two or three years that will be necessary to see the trees beyond the stage where livestock can destroy them. The above mentioned OMS project has such a phase.

3. Too many projects rely on simply threatening farmers with fines or incarceration if they intentionally destroy what the project has created. Thought should be given to the design of positive inducements.

4. The implementation of a maintenance phase would entail the gathering of information on the ownership of the land and the trees. No record is generally kept of whose land trees are planted on and some project organizers have been quite honest about their total lack of information on whose land their projects are being implemented. The design of a maintenance phase, in short, will force program implementers to start examining the generally ignored question of land tenure.

In addition to discussing the different types of groups which become involved in soil-conservation projects, this chapter has attempted to analyze soil conservation projects into their major constituent tasks and to discuss the major shortcomings which have appeared at each link in the chain. This chapter has focused on the role of implementing agencies. The following chapter will examine projects from the viewpoint of the community groups themselves.