1. Project Data:

- **OEDID**: C2042
- **Project ID**: P001546
- **Project Name**: National Agricultural Research Project
- **Country**: Madagascar
- **Sector**: Research
- **L/C Number**: C2042
- **Partners Involved**: USAID, CIRAD
- **Prepared by**: Jock R. Anderson, OEDST
- **Reviewed by**: Alain Barbu
- **Group Manager**: Roger Slade
- **Date Posted**: 06/25/1998

2. Project Objectives, Financing, Costs and Components:

The general objective of the project was to assist the Government of Madagascar in expanding and strengthening its national agricultural research program in order to help it meet its broader objectives of poverty alleviation amongst rural communities, and of increased food security. As well, the intention was to boost productivity in the sector generally, especially, in that part dealing with agricultural exports.

Originally, the project was expected to be implemented over seven years at a cost of about US$ 70 million. At appraisal, it was agreed that IDA finance US$24 million, the government US$30 million, other donors US$10 million, and the National Center for Applied Research for Rural Development (FOFIFA) nearly US$6 million. The appraisal estimates were, however, unrealistically ambitious and a restructuring of the project in April 1993 canceled US$12.3 million of the IDA contribution and significantly reduced the extent of government financial commitment to the project. The actual total project cost was approximately US$36 million.

The major components were: institutional strengthening, particularly in the areas of financial management, donor coordination and linkages with external organizations and domestic universities. The project involved increasing research quality, through better design, stronger links with extension, and through better monitoring and evaluation of an increasingly integrated research program; human resource development, particularly with long-term staff planning and training, and greater regional decentralization of staff; and rehabilitation of physical plant and equipment (some 2/3 of project cost), while consolidating a large, previously foreign-dominated research network to just eight regional research centers. The project's objectives were fully relevant as they fitted well into the new national agricultural strategy, which had a strong focus on diversification and improved agricultural technology.

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:

After a slow start, and the complication of a volatile political situation in the early 1990s, the project achieved most of its objectives. Implementation proceeded quickly and much more effectively after the 1993 restructuring. Project outcomes is rated satisfactory in spite of the continued (and continuing) problems of shortage of counterpart funding from the government and weaknesses in financial management.

4. Significant Achievements:

The main achievement has been an effective establishment of a decentralized research framework addressing the high-priority regional research issues in the agricultural sector. Training has gone very well and the targets for post-graduate training have been fully achieved. The staff retrenchment program that significantly reduced the annual recurrent budget worked well. On-farm problem diagnosis has become a standard approach to research problem identification and the performance of research work is well monitored through agreed indicators. Links to extension from research have been strengthened and regional research committees are now effective. The refurbishment of physical plant focused on improving the living arrangements for researchers resident in the regional centers, which was necessary to encourage them to reside away from the capital.

5. Significant Shortcomings:

The mentioned problems of counterpart funding have been the biggest difficulties with the project and the continuing inability of the government to meet its obligations for wages and arrears in social benefits and pensions, continues to make the situation problematic, but not severe enough to jeopardize project sustainability.
### 6. Ratings:

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<tr>
<td>Quality of ICR</td>
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### Lessons of Broad Applicability:

An agricultural research system can only be effective if it has high-quality staff with good training and an effective linkage system to the stakeholders, especially the resource-poor farmers who are one of the key targets. Decentralization is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a spatially relevant national research system. Effective implementation of such a project requires sound financial management.

### Audit Recommended?

- Yes
- No

### Comments on Quality of ICR:

Overall, good. Some of the "Lessons" claimed hardly qualify as such. For example, the item (a) on commitment is perhaps overstated but is very generic. Item (f) on gestation time for researcher capability is just a fact of life, and item (h) is just an observation on stage of achievement.