Key Question: How can the project launch, implementation, and supervision processes improve project delivery and help sustain positive change in the nutrition status of project beneficiaries?

Tasks for project implementation/supervision

1. Support project implementation
2. Supervise the project

Task 1. Support project implementation

This stage signals the end of intense Bank staff involvement with the project as the borrowing country proceeds with construction (if part of the project) and start-up activities. Generic implementation guidance is available in Sigurdsson and Villatoro’s Implementing Projects at an Arm’s Length (draft version, 12/95) and in The Task Managers Handbook. Specific guidance to task managers of nutrition components and projects will cover the project launch workshop, the implementation manual, and best practices of the implementation process gleaned from earlier projects.

Project launch workshop. Previous experience with project launch workshops varies from contributing to the smooth beginning of a project to little more than a hollow public relations exercise. Often task managers are pre-occupied with the details of staffing, budgets, and initial start-up of resource flows to the various individuals and programs within a project, and the project launch is lost in the crunch.

One task manager suggests three possible purposes for the launch workshop: 1) a public relations event, intended mainly to familiarize key players in-country with the objectives and plan for the project and to build support
and cooperation, 2) a detailed planning session to ensure the smooth start of the project and agree on such things as the project process and impact targets/indicators, or, 3) a training session for project managers, or even for the full range of project implementors.

The FY93 Food Security and Nutrition project in Madagascar credits the widely-attended project launch workshop with contributing to the project’s speedy success. Workshop participants ranged from cabinet ministers and representatives of NGOs to poor farmers, instilling a sense of common purpose, commitment and the importance of the project from the outset of implementation.

By contrast, the project completion report for the Malawi Second Family Health project points to the absence of a launch workshop as contributing to the project’s performance difficulties. One of several "standard practices lessons", “…a project launch workshop (which includes all line managers) should be held in order to define responsibilities and bring managers on board; if line managers are unclear about project objectives, and their role in achieving them, it will be more difficult for them to be motivated to carry out activities." Much the same criticism was leveled at the Nutrition and Community Health II project in Indonesia. Project staff were not familiar with Bank procedures and “…the training provided in the start up workshop was inadequate."

In the case of a nutrition component, it is advisable that only those involved with this part of the project attend and participate on the designated nutrition day or days of the workshop agenda. Again, previous experience suggests that this will ensure focused involvement by workshop participants, and avoids the problem of disinterested, extraneous individuals who can impede progress toward the desired objectives of the workshop.

Past experience with project launches suggests the following:
1. A prerequisite for success is being clear about the workshop’s purpose and ensuring good communication of that purpose to all participants.

2. The workshop must be well planned. The implementing ministry or agency’s staff should be involved in planning the workshop.

3. Consider hiring a skilled facilitator. The Bank training course “Planning and Facilitating Meetings” teaches useful skills for workshops.

4. Use a launch workshop to preempt problems that have emerged in other projects (whether financed by the Bank or not). For example, the Zimbabwe nutrition unit staff had many concerns regarding their component budget and needed assistance with navigating the project’s bureaucracy in order to get things underway. In retrospect, it would have been useful for the launch workshop to cover how component managers should go about getting something procured—what information to give to whom, when (how long before the input is needed), and to clarify who had authority to make decisions about project fund use.

Implementation manual. If project preparation has yielded detailed plans for all aspects of the project—technical components, delivery services, communications, monitoring and evaluation, organizational flow charts, estimated costs and budgets, personnel requirements and training/supervision needs—the implementation manual can be a comprehensive and effective tool for the implementation process. The exhaustive, 1980 TINP implementation manual is credited with contributing to the project’s success. Beginning with the most peripheral worker, every detail of work routines, supervision and training protocols and curricula, procurement arrangements, project costs, and intervention guidelines were planned and incorporated in the implementation manual.

More recently, the FY93 Madagascar Food Security and Nutrition project implementation manual contributed significantly to the smooth launch of the project. The detailed manual was completed as a prerequisite to negotia-
tions. It was supplemented by model contracts between the project and NGOs in charge of implementation, between the NGOs and the communities requesting nutrition centers, and between the NGOs and their supervisors. Agreement to the details of project implementation and relationships between involved agencies and individuals occurred during negotiations so that the project began with clarity about procedures, communication pathways, and job descriptions/responsibilities.

We strongly suggest that the task manager require the pre-appraisal and appraisal mission team to produce contributions for the implementation manual as part of their terms of reference, or to have a post-appraisal mission to prepare the manual in-country, in collaboration with those who will be using it. Keep the manual practical and clear.

Lessons learned: Tamil Nadu. In the first Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition project (PCR Report #9259), smooth implementation was attributed to a separate project coordination unit staffed by a senior administrative service (IAS) officer; project management was top priority and not one of several competing tasks. In addition, the project was piloted in only one administrative block during its first year allowing for experimentation and design change. The project then expanded rapidly in subsequent years. Instead of the usual semiannual supervision missions, interdisciplinary Bank teams visited the project three or four times during the crucial first year. A Project Management Fund was also established from which the project coordinator could access resources for studies and operations research at her own discretion. Sixty-three small studies were financed during implementation, resulting in significant service delivery improvement. Finally, interested community members were recruited—prior to the start-up of services—to act as project advocates and educate the community about the purpose and methods of the project. They set the stage for a community-wide appreciation for the cost-effective strategy of “food as medicine” (potentially a difficult concept that would alienate households whose children were not receiving the food supplements) and solidified project ownership by the community.
A review of the TINP by the Cornell Food and Nutrition Policy Program characterized project implementation strengths as: attention to detail in task specification, pragmatic worker selection criteria, quality of training, and some midproject design modifications based on program management data. “Attention to the very minutest of details in planning the project is so intense that its contribution to the successful implementation of TINP cannot be overestimated. However, what is indeed remarkable is the fact that this kind of detailed planning has not detracted from the built-in flexibility in program implementation (Shekar, 1991).”

**Task 2. Supervise the project**

Baum (1982) writes: “Supervision is the least glamorous part of project work, but in several respects it is the most important. [It] is primarily an exercise in collective problem solving, and, as such, is one of the most effective ways in which the Bank provides technical assistance to its member countries.” Experience with nutrition projects supports this view.

Both in India and Kenya, task managers assembled teams of outstanding, senior technical nutrition consultants and used them for supervisory missions over the life of the project. This ensured consistent quality of the technical assistance and allowed the supervision team to assess project changes over time. Perhaps even more important was the development of an ongoing relationship and constructive dialogue between project staff, concerned government officials and the Bank.

Maximize personal relationships that develop on supervision mission through frequent phone and fax contact with project staff. Extra efforts at communicating (e.g., arranging for electronic mail hook-up with the project) will help to compensate for inadequate supervision time. Earmark funds for supervision; experiment with using locally based technical assistance (such as technical staff in a UNICEF office) for local project supervision. Gauge supervision needs on the basis of institutional capacity within implementing
agencies. When there is a choice between projects for investment of supervisory resources, select the more complex or innovative project.

Designing new projects requires significant investment of Bank staff time, creativity and financial resources. It is virtually imperative that supervision is of excellent quality to assure the success and sustainability of the project. Tool #12, Management and Supervision: Strategy for Project Success, elaborates on lessons learned and discusses in greater detail the components of effective supervision missions.