

Chapter 1

Summary and Options

In the Sahel, we ~~walked on rock-hard crops~~ ^{soil that had grown} when the current farmers were children. Now the land seemed so infertile, the work to reclaim it so laborious, and the odds against success so high, that we wondered at the farmers' perseverance. Why not go south, like so many had already done? One peanut farmer in Burkina Faso answered,

We have a proverb. If a tree has strong, deep roots, it lives through the dry season, even when it loses all its leaves. I will stay and improve this land because my roots are in the soil. We dream that our children will return like the leaves when the land is better."

Chapter 1

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SUMMARY

Drought has long been a fact of life in the Sahel region of West Africa. When the rains fail, as they did for 5 years beginning in 1968 and again from 1980 to 1984, crops wither, livestock die, and people suffer. International relief efforts had funneled over \$360 million of emergency aid to the Sahel by 1974, but dealing with that immediate crisis would not prevent future problems in the region (37). The real challenge for both Sahelians and the international assistance organizations was to avoid future crises.

One important question that arose was how best to coordinate the multitude of assistance efforts, donors, and recipients. And what balance should be struck between relief, recovery, and development? Thus was born the Club du Sahel/CILSS framework (see box A)—the Club du Sahel being a loosely structured association of donors and Sahelians, and CILSS being an intergovernmental organization representing the countries of the Sahel. Together, donors and Sahelians agreed to commit themselves to a coordinated and sustained effort for development in the Sahel region, striving for a time when the region's people could be assured a stable and sustainable food supply. The United States has played an important role in this approach.

The Sahel Development Program¹ and the Club du Sahel/CILSS Framework

The Sahel Development Program (SDP) was created in 1977 by an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act. SDP institutionalized the

U.S. commitment to the unique Club/CILSS framework of development assistance—a coordinated, long-term, multinational effort by major Western industrialized nations in support of the CILSS group of severely drought-affected West African States.

The Club/CILSS framework evolved from international public reaction to a tragic series of drought years (1968 to 1973) in the Sahel that left tens of thousands dead, decimated livestock herds, exacerbated environmental degradation, and disrupted already fragile economies. Club/CILSS set goals to increase self-sufficiency in food under conditions of ecological balance and sustainable growth in the region and to reduce vulnerability to drought by improving agricultural production significantly and stabilizing the environment. The scale and complexity of the challenge required a commitment to a “generation” of cooperation and financial assistance.

Both CILSS and the Club have evolved over the past decade. However, the mandate and operations of CILSS have remained controversial. Although CILSS was created largely as a mechanism to increase aid flows, by the late 1970s it increasingly sought responsibility to implement its own regional projects. But CILSS performance often has been mediocre. Its effectiveness has been constrained by inconsistent member support, uneven leadership, and inadequate technical and managerial capabilities. In the past year, CILSS member states have agreed to limit its mandate to that of a regional think tank and to streamline the organization's structure.

The Club du Sahel has played a significant role in tripling the flow of aid directed to the Sahel. Donors have contributed \$15 billion in assistance since 1975. The Club also provided key sector analysis and helped bring the issues of the environment, recurrent costs, and cereal

¹In this study the phrase “Sahel Development Program” or “SDP” refers to the U.S. program authorized and appropriated under Sections 120 and 121 of the Foreign Assistance Act. SDP is the U.S. development assistance program affiliated with the Club/CILSS framework. Economic Support Funds (ESF) and Public Law 480 Food for Peace assistance to the Sahel are not considered part of this program.

Box A.—What Is the Club/CILSS Framework?

Club du Sahel	— An association of donors and Sahelians.
+ CILSS	— An organization of nine Sahelian nations.
+ Individual Donors' Programs	— Each individual donor, including the United States, contributes as it chooses to a regionally focused, coordinated, long-term assistance effort.

— The Club/CILSS framework

The phrase "Club/CILSS framework" refers to a loosely structured association of donors and Sahelian countries committed to a coordinated and sustained effort for development of the region in Africa. It is a philosophy that unites a variety of participants in purpose, planning, and approach to the region's development.

Also the Club/CILSS framework is a geographically focused international development effort coordinated by the Club du Sahel and CILSS. The Club has its secretariat located at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, France. CILSS (CILSS is the French acronym for the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) is an intergovernmental organization of nine countries in the Sahel. The CILSS member states are Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), Cape Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau (admitted in January 1986), Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It has its headquarters in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

policy reform to the attention of both donors and Sahelians. The Club still suffers from some lack of coordination but its role in fostering information sharing and coordination has been appreciable. While the Club's problems are less serious than CILSS's, the Club also suffers from fluctuating support from its sponsors, the un-

even quality of its analysis, and disappointing responses from donors and Sahelians following studies and discussions. Few Sahelians participate directly in Club Secretariat work. Despite the shortcomings of the Club and CILSS, the multinational approach embodied in their framework continues to be a unique and positive characteristic of the Sahel effort and this approach does increase the effective use of individual donor and Sahelian resources.

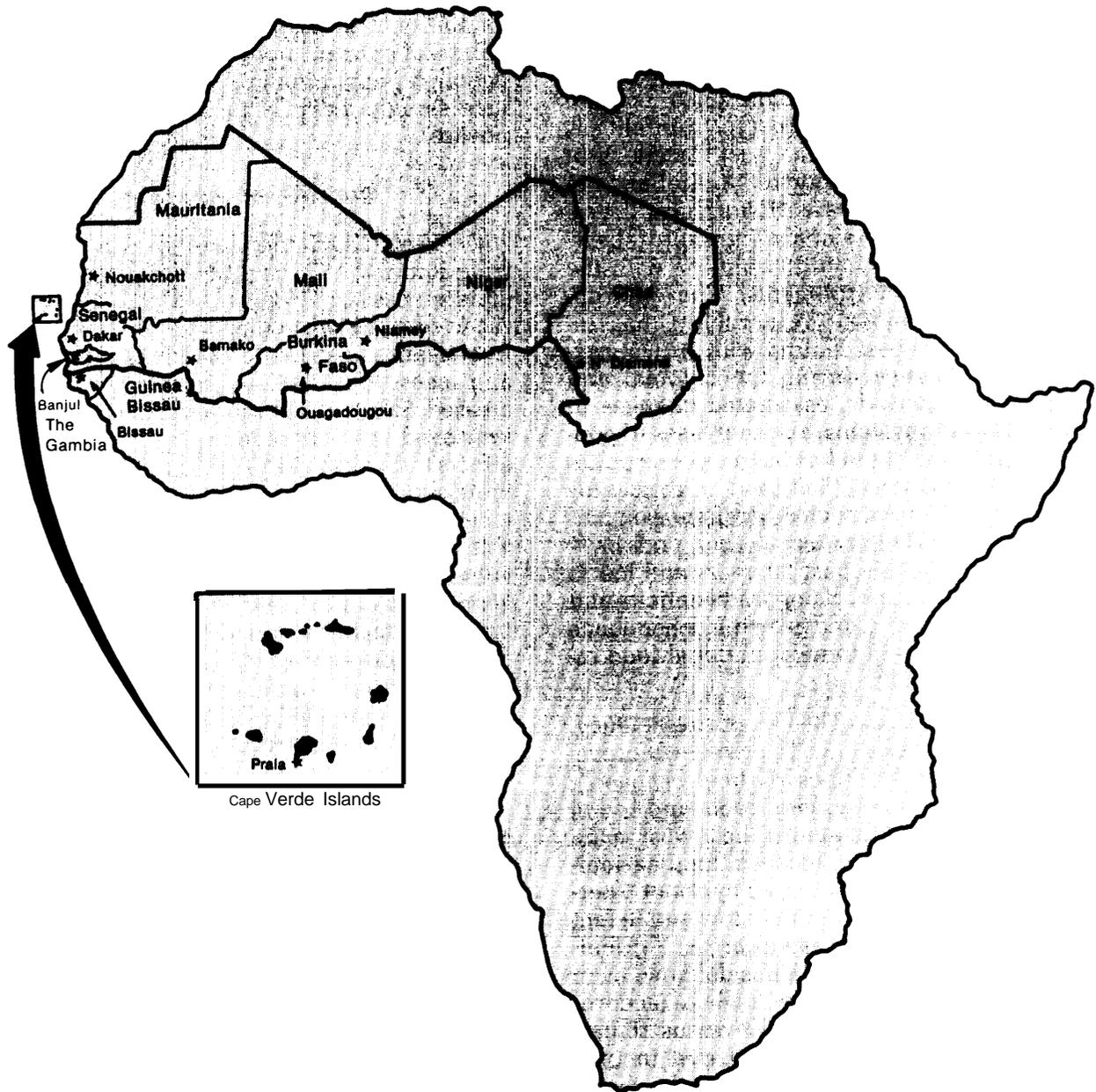
U.S. contributions to the Sahel development effort, through SDP development assistance funds, Economic Support Funds (ESF), and Public Law 480—Food for Peace, have amounted to \$1.4 billion between 1976 and 1986. SDP involves three distinct though related elements:

1. the distinct line item funding mechanism and Agency for International Development (AID) management structure created by the 1977 legislation;
2. U.S. support for the multinational and regional aspects of the Sahel effort through the Club/CILSS framework; and
3. the specific strategies that guide the development and implementation of U.S. assistance programs to the region.

U.S. humanitarian and political and economic interests in increased food security, development, and stability in the Sahel have changed little since the original SDP commitment. Although the region has few strategic resources and offers little prospect of commercial opportunity for U.S. business for the short term, it borders a strategically important and more turbulent North Africa. The majority of the Sahelian States are nonaligned, but take pro-West, moderate positions. They have growing political and cultural ties with the United States.

If the issue of food security in the Sahel is not addressed today, the future will bring continued problems and pain.

Figure 1-1.—CILSS Countries of West Africa



SOURCE: U.S. General Accounting Office, *Can More Be Done To Assist Sahelian Governments To Plan and Manage Their Economic Development?* NSIAD-85-87 (Washington, DC: Sept. 6, 1985).

Poverty and Increasing Vulnerability

The Sahel strategy was designed as a regional approach because the countries shared some important ecological, economic, historical, and cultural commonalities. Erratic rainfall has plagued the Sahel for the past decade. But drought has been a major reality in Sahelian life for at least 2000 years. Historically, the region's social, economic, and agricultural systems evolved in dynamic symbiosis with the region's harsh environments. The environmental and economic vulnerability has increased over the past century with growing external dependence during the colonial and post-colonial periods, associated changes in socioeconomic systems, and increases in population growth. There has been a corresponding, gradual erosion of "fall-back" strategies for coping with drought such as a reliance on natural systems and migration. These trends have accelerated over the past 20 years and led to economic stagnation, rising trade deficits and debt, financial crisis, and growing dependence on international aid to meet national food requirements.

While some indices of health, life expectancy, and education have shown impressive improvement, individual Sahelians, particularly people in rural areas, face income levels and living standards that remain among the lowest in the world. In the past two decades, total agricultural production has increased by about 1 percent per year but yields remain low and in fact may be decreasing in certain areas. Agricultural production per capita has declined even more than it has in Africa as a whole (according to one estimate, 24 percent versus 16 percent) (138). Annual production and income levels continue to be determined by the vagaries of rainfall, unstable government policies, and inappropriate market prices,

The Sahelian environment has also come under increased stress. Changing social, economic, and production systems as well as

drought, land degradation, and declining fuelwood supplies all contribute to the region's vulnerability. Unless there is appreciable technological change, environmental degradation and high population growth rates will make it increasingly difficult to reduce the region's poverty.

Decade of Lessons

The Club/CILSS effort, and the U.S. SDP contribution within it, have provided modest tangible successes. Thousands of Sahelians have received technical and managerial training; infrastructure (especially roads) has improved; and access to health care and literacy have increased. Sahelian institutional capacity also has improved—as illustrated by the fact that relief efforts following the 1984 drought were much more successful in the CILSS states than elsewhere in Africa and relatively few lives were lost. Despite improvements, the Sahel is still vulnerable; even with 1.2 million tons of emergency food aid in 1985, the drought added to increased malnutrition and general economic decline. Increased agricultural production and environmental stabilization remain elusive goals even as the Club/CILSS framework is one-third of the way into the "generation" of commitment.

Despite this mixed record, Sahelians and donors say that they have learned important lessons that can serve as a foundation for more successful efforts. The physical and human conditions on which Club/CILSS goals were based remain valid. And while those involved sometimes do not agree on specific actions, some consensus has evolved regarding the nature of many fundamental issues. The following paragraphs highlight the lessons learned in the Sahel in the past decade.

Some of the past decade's failure to meet expectations may be the result of too much optimism regarding the existence of applicable technologies. Many agricultural technologies transferred from other semiarid regions to the

Sahel proved inappropriate to Sahelian ecological and social systems. Many of these errors were the product of an insufficient knowledge base regarding Sahelian natural and social systems and an ineffective integration of that knowledge into project design and implementation, Sahelian farmers and herders were inadequately consulted and their existing technologies and adaptive processes were overlooked. As a result of these setbacks, new guidelines are emerging for technology development and adaptation. These include:

- a focus on Sahel-specific solutions based on increasing the existing knowledge base and its effective use;
- increased farmer and herder input and a creative combination of indigenous and external research, technology, and management systems;
- more localized research strategies tailored to ecological and socioeconomic diversity; and
- a focus on the low-resource farmer and herder who comprise the majority of Sahelian agriculturalists.

Agricultural technologies appropriate for the Sahel must be low risk, low cost, sustainable, and create substantial production increases.



Photo credit: World Bank

Throughout the Sahel, families such as this one in Mali grow crops using low-resource technologies.

The need for sustainability is tied to the additional recognition of the need for a strong focus on conservation and improvement of the challenging Sahel environment, especially its tree cover, grasslands, soil, and water resources. An important complementary objective will be to slow population growth, although social resistance and a failure on the part of donors to understand that resistance lessen the prospects for short-term progress. Other areas of critical research needs that have been identified include: varietal and agronomic improvements for major cereal crops; small-scale irrigation technologies; soil fertility; agro-forestry; food processing; agro-climatology; and animal nutrition. In the social sciences, population dynamics, farming systems, marketing, and extension are key areas. The slow process of developing human resources, in particular, the building of institutional capacity, is essential to long-term sustainability. Overall, it must be realized that technology development, adaptation, and transfer will be slower and more complex than had been assumed. Thus research efforts in the Sahel must be better organized and coordinated among the multitude of international and national research institutions operating in the region.

How technologies are organized into programs and projects also has been a factor in the poor performance of development assistance. Too often, farmer participation has been more rhetorical than real. Environmental stabilization and institutional development have been poorly served by the short-term, production-related, discrete projects that have dominated assistance to the Sahel. Project design has been overly complex relative to both Sahelian and donor management capacities while the burden of recurrent costs has been too great for financially strapped Sahelian governments. New long-term, participatory approaches which focus on institutional development, are simple to manage, demand few recurrent costs, and give sufficient attention to delivery systems are essential for a more successful strategy for the future.

Misguided government policies are a further factor in poor performance in the Sahel. Cereal

pricing policies, artificial exchange rates, inflation, debt management, low investment in food crops, and a range of measures discouraging initiative have proven to be disincentives to increased food production and effective distribution. In recent years, major donors have engaged in a spectrum of dialog, incentives, and pressure to convince Sahelian governments to modify their policy structures. There is general consensus on the need for policy reform and promising major reform programs have begun in several countries. However, so far adequate analysis linking such measures to farmer decisionmaking is lacking and the ultimate impact is unclear. Which segments of society are most likely to benefit from what specific policies, and in what timeframe? How will political factors affect the outcome? Will policy reform alone accomplish as much as its proponents believe? Donor governments' policies on such issues as interest rates, trade, and international debt also affect Sahel development. The effects of large quantities of international food aid that have poured into the Sahel, even in years of relatively good rainfall, remain controversial. Although better steps to determine needs and coordinate donor response have begun under Club auspices, donor commitment to such efforts is tentative. If agricultural strategies are to be effective, the broad economic policy environment, in both Sahelian and donor countries, must be consistent with development goals.

Beyond technologies, modes of assistance, and policies, the multinational effort in the Sahel has suffered from a lack of clarity and agreement on the definition of food security goals² and the optimal means to obtain them. Fundamental issues with significant impact on the Sahel's future have yet to be addressed. What should be the balance between investment in rainfed agriculture and that in irrigation? What should be the priority given to expensive river basin development? How much effort should

²CILSS has considered this goal to mean food self-sufficiency for the Sahel, meaning ultimately growing enough food to feed themselves. Food self-reliance, the term more commonly used now by the Club, includes the concept of growing export crops to earn money to import some food. Food security essentially means providing the people of the Sahel with long-term, dependable access to food.

go into developing staple food crops relative to export crops? Despite the particularly poor results of past livestock efforts, is the current *de facto* abandonment of that sector by donors justified? How should more effective livestock approaches be organized? Should resources be directed toward the better-watered south or toward the more drought-vulnerable north? Which groups of people should be targeted—the poorest farmers, the most progressive, women? Each of these choices requires different strategies and has major implications for individuals or groups within each nation. Unless priority is given to addressing these issues, bilateral and multilateral assistance will be less than optimally effective.

Applying the Lessons: The Agency for International Development

AID's effectiveness in applying the lessons of the past decade in the Sahel faces constraints in four areas:

1. the ambiguity of AID's regional Sahel strategy,
2. internal institutional characteristics of AID,
3. the nature of AID's relationship to Congress, and
4. the role of development assistance in overall U.S. foreign policy.

These problems are not unique to the Sahel—they diminish the effectiveness of many AID activities—but they are particularly acute in the Sahel because of the level and special multinational characteristics of the U.S. commitment there.

The evolving strategies, experiences, and lessons accumulated by AID have paralleled those of the other countries participating in the multinational effort in the Sahel. The most recent AID SDP strategy statement (125)³ is grounded in basic Club/CILSS goals but it also has incorporated many of the lessons learned in the past decade. It places priorities on agricultural research and production, policy reform, health

³See app. E containing the Executive Summary of AID's 1986 Country Development Strategy Statement for the Sahel.

and family planning, training, infrastructure, conservation, and environmental protection and it calls for a balanced and focused program “to identify and bring about the necessary policy and institutional environment to enable development to proceed.” The strategy supports “coordination of all donor and Sahelian programs . . . through the Club/CILSS coordination efforts” (125).

But AID’s SDP strategy is ambiguous in several areas and its implementation sometimes is not consistent with the past decade’s lessons and existing congressional mandates on foreign assistance. The document does not provide guidance for the strategic choices necessary to allocate resources most effectively. The changing focus toward policy dialog, institutional development, and infrastructure—though consistent with the lessons learned—could signal a retreat from direct assistance to the poor, depending on how that focus is implemented. Despite the high priority given to agricultural research, AID has no Sahel-specific research strategy. AID has not seriously addressed the issues of effective farmer participation and attention to the specific role of women in Sahelian production, processing, and distribution systems. Although the United States is the largest single donor of food aid, there is little effective integration of food assistance into overall assistance strategies. During recent years, AID has reduced its multilateral assistance in the Sahel in favor of direct country-to-country assistance, AID has dismantled its Sahel regional planning team and taken a less active role in Club/CILSS activities.

AID’s effectiveness in implementing its strategy also is constrained by internal institutional characteristics. The numbers and skill levels of AID’s staffing in the Sahel have not been commensurate with the level of U.S. commitment. Although French language and Sahel-specific technical skills have improved, they are still inadequate. The proportion of managers to technicians is high and too few personnel have appropriate skills in agricultural sciences, macro- and micro-economic analysis, and human resource development. The use of outside contractors, particularly from U.S. universities,

has increased the talent pool, but quality is still uneven, turnover is high, and institutional learning is limited. Sahelian staff are often underused and AID contact with beneficiaries and counterparts is often inadequate.

AID’s program and project design systems are cumbersome, slow, inflexible and often directed toward short-term, physical objectives rather than longer term development goals. Sahelian input, be it governmental or local, is often *pro forma*. Sectoral analysis, project identification, design, approval, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are poorly linked and the latter two ineffectively used. The incentive system is biased toward the designer and obligator of funds rather than those who effectively implement projects. These factors contribute to a lack of accountability for program results.

AID’s subregional management structure for the Sahel adds a layer of management that sometimes complicates relationships between the AID-Washington office and the field missions and between the Sahel management unit and other offices within AID. However, the measure of autonomy granted to SDP because it is separately funded insulates it somewhat from short-term policy shifts and internal struggles over allocation of resources. The separate management structure within AID also facilitates regional coordination with the Club/CILSS.

The third institutional constraint affecting AID’s performance in the Sahel concerns AID’s relationship with Congress. Congress played an important role in the original U.S. commitment to the Sahel and has continued a high level of interest and support. Nonetheless, aspects of the Congress-AID relationship actually constrain the attainment of foreign assistance goals and the implementation of the SDP. Congressional policy mandates to AID under the Foreign Assistance Act and other legislation are cumulative and without priority. While each may be desirable in itself and the impact of many (e.g., basic human needs, the environment, women in development, child welfare) has been at least partially effective, their number and frequency of changes hamper the de-

velopment of consistent, long-term strategies. Consequently, these mandates may not be taken seriously and may result in creatively written justifications rather than effective programs.

In another area of concern, procurement and financial controls are often unrealistic relative to West African realities, and they do more to increase costs, create delays, and tie up both AID and Sahelian management time than to accomplish their intended purposes.

The Sahel Development Program is only one of a number of U.S. Government activities that affect the Sahel. Food aid, agricultural price supports, policies on international debt, trade and interest rates have impacts on the Sahel that many experts consider more significant than development assistance. Each of these policy issues is dealt with by different committees of Congress and different executive agencies. Resulting policies are often inconsistent with SDP goals.

The exercise of congressional oversight responsibilities has added to AID's already inordinate paperwork. Further, it has not been effective in meeting congressional information needs and it has had only limited impact on AID's performance. Congress' over-attention to management detail—for instance, requiring notification of minor project funding or timing changes—not only increases paperwork, it also limits the agency's flexibility to respond to evolving needs and opportunities. The working relationship between Congress and AID does not reflect the spirit of partnership with which SDP was begun and which is essential to justify continuing levels of U.S. commitment to the Sahel.

The role of foreign assistance within U.S. foreign policy creates a fourth set of constraints in attaining more specific development objectives. The SDP was born of the U.S. commitment to humanitarian concerns and long-term social and economic development. A long-term, multinational approach was deemed to be the most effective U.S. strategy to achieve those results. The exercise of short-term foreign policy objectives (e. g., political or commercial objectives) can and has conflicted with the long-

term perspective. Increased bilateralism, the use of conditionality with respect to political stances rather than development performance, and assistance tied to U.S. commercial interests limit the effectiveness of U.S. commitments not only in the eyes of Sahelians but also those of other donors.

Sahelian and Donor institutions

Building on the lessons learned during the past decade to improve the development and application of technologies and make strategic choices will not happen automatically. Development efforts in the Sahel will continue to be shaped by individuals and also by the characteristics of both the Sahelian and donor institutions that implement the multitude of programs and projects. On the Sahelian side, despite some progress, institutional capacity remains a major constraint to effectiveness in governmental agencies. Sahelian nongovernmental organizations, including the private sector, have diverse strengths but most have low management capacity and only local impact. Strategies that call for these groups to take over functions that are now imperfectly carried out by governments should be based on a realistic assessment of their abilities. Increased attention to institution-building of all types will continue to be an essential component of donor assistance programs.

Among multilateral and bilateral donors, diverse strengths, weaknesses, types of assistance, and methods of operation are also realities. Given the complexity of needs in the Sahel, an appropriate role should be sought for each. For example, the World Bank has begun to take an effective lead role in policy reform; France, the United States, and the World Bank are involved in agricultural research; the French, Americans, and Germans are active in forestry; and the OPEC countries, the World Bank, and the European Economic Community have provided substantial resources for transportation and infrastructure projects. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Dutch, and a multitude of private voluntary organizations are particularly geared to local

action with low-resource producers. A degree of specialization, possibly along the lines attempted by the Coordination for Development in Africa group (CDA)⁴ for Africa as a whole, could improve efficient use of resources. To be effective this would require much higher levels of coordination than are currently the case.

Each organization has its own internal characteristics that affect its ability to participate in the strategic directions called for by the past decade's experiences. Therefore the United States needs to make a more careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of its various institutional partners in the Sahel in order to identify the comparative advantages of each in relation to AID's development strategy. This analysis must be ongoing and flexible because strengths and weaknesses change over time, as will elements of the strategy. U.S. funding and coordination efforts need to be based on this analysis. For example, the United States has strong technical skills that give it an especially important role in supporting Sahelian agriculture.

Other U.S. Actors in the Sahel

In addition to AID, a multitude of public and private U.S. organizations operate in or affect the Sahel. The Peace Corps, the African Development Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and a wide range of American private voluntary organizations have programs in the Sahel. Despite the level of overall U.S. commitment to the Sahel, few of these other actors have developed Sahel-specific strategies. And while the independence of each is essential to preserve their uniqueness and complementarily, better coordination of strategies and appropriate collaboration in implementation would increase the overall impact of U.S. assistance.

⁴The CDA is a coordinating mechanism consisting of seven large donors representing over half the development assistance to Africa. Within the group, the United States has been assigned the lead role in coordinating donor activities relating to agricultural research and health.

Other U.S. Government departments and agencies (e. g., Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Export-Import Bank) are also involved in decisions that affect the Sahelian nations in ways that can complement or contradict AID strategies. The level and special nature of the U.S. Sahel commitment again justifies additional efforts to maximize consistency.

U.S. private sector investment currently plays a minor role in the Sahel. The reasons for this low level, such as the current risks of investment, language and cultural barriers, and competition posed by the better geographically and historically placed Europeans, especially France, will continue to limit the potential for the short to medium term.



Photo credit: U.S. Peace Corps

The United States provides various types of assistance to Sahelian countries and future options are equally varied. Rose Bray boy is a Peace Corps volunteer from Massachusetts; she is helping Senegalese women make composted fertilizer from local materials.

FINDINGS AND OPTIONS

Is Further support for the Sahel Development Program Justified?

Finding: A continued Sahel Development Program has the potential to provide greater food security, sustained economic growth, and a restored environment for the people of the Sahel. **In doing so, it also can serve U.S. long-term interests. These objectives can only be reached by modifying both the strategy and its implementation. Current relatively high funding levels and U.S. commitment can be justified only if such modifications are made.**

Option: Congress can continue the SDP as a discrete element within AID's authorization and appropriation and as a separate management structure within AID contingent on modifications in its strategies and their implementation. In the event that AID does not modify the program effectively, Congress can end SDP's special status and/or reconsider its funding levels.

The Sahel receives among the highest per capita levels of U.S. development assistance of any of the regions of the world. The SDP's separate congressional appropriation and its distinct management unit within AID underscore the U.S. commitment, favor more consistent funding, encourage congressional and AID attention, focus on long-range strategies, and foster coordination with other donors. But they also increase workloads for both Congress and AID, add to management (complexities, and reduce flexibility for managing the reduced resources available. The performance of SDP over the past decade raises legitimate questions as to whether this special status and commitment to the Sahel continues to be justified. What is the likelihood of its future success?

The past decade in the Sahel has resulted in modest tangible accomplishments. But major successes have been less obvious. The past decade's experience has revealed a more difficult path than originally foreseen, although it has also revealed an unexpected resiliency in the region's natural and human resources. Technologies to significantly improve Sahelian agricultural production do not now exist so there

is little likelihood of a Sahelian "Green Revolution." But payoffs are beginning to be realized and the foundation that has been built in the Sahel provides cautious optimism for the future—a future where higher levels of Sahelian food security can be achieved and where environmental degradation can be reduced. But it is a vision of the future that is attainable only if the lessons of the past decade are heeded.

The accomplishment of Club/CILSS goals will not be determined by donors. Development in the Sahel is the task of Sahelians. They, however, have neither the financial resources nor the skills to do it alone. The manner in which Sahelians and donors have worked together is a unique and increasingly promising feature of the Sahel effort. In that partnership, many Sahelian leaders have recently made difficult and politically risky decisions in such areas as policy and fiscal reform and the improved allocation of limited investments. Sahelians have shared and learned from the lessons of the past decade. Such an atmosphere is a necessary condition to obtain positive results from external assistance.

While donors as a group can facilitate the efforts of Sahelians, no single donor can have such an impact. In the Club/CILSS framework, each member possesses a portion of the responsibility and a portion of the potential. The United States has strong technical skills and development methods particularly appropriate for the strategies essential for the next decade in the Sahel. They are different skills than those assumed in SDP's earlier days. Rather than capital-intensive agronomic techniques, range management methods, and irrigation technologies, the needed expertise now include agricultural research methodologies, farming systems and economic policy analysis, management and organizational development, and data collection and management. The experiences of the past decade have revealed weaknesses in the application of U.S. resources and skills. Changes are being made in policy statements but it is

unclear whether changes are also occurring in implementation.

The nature of the challenge and level of commitment implicit in a determination to realize Club/CILSS and SDP goals call for more than “business as usual.” The unique aspects of U.S. commitment to the Sahel can only succeed if they are accompanied by realistic and focused strategies, using approaches appropriate to the Sahel, and human and technical resources commensurate with that commitment. Both Congress and AID have essential responsibilities in any effort to modify existing strategies and approaches.

Finding: U.S. support for the Club/CILSS framework and other multilateral approaches has increased the effectiveness of U.S. and other donor assistance to the Sahel.

Option: Congress can continue U.S. support for the coordinated, multinational approach to Sahel development of the Club du Sahel/CILSS framework. It can encourage AID to increase its catalytic role and active involvement in these and other appropriate coordinating mechanisms including those within Sahelian countries (e.g., donor roundtables, consultative groups, ad hoc policy groups).

Option: Congress can continue to fund and actively influence the multilateral organizations and special initiatives that have potential for significant impact in the Sahel (e.g., The World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development’s (IFAD) special funds for Africa).

The link between SDP and the multinational Club/CILSS framework has been one of its unique features. The effectiveness of CILSS continues to be problematic but on balance it has increased donor coordination and shared analysis, and opened a forum for discussion between donors and Sahelians that has enhanced the use of U.S. resources. Multilateral approaches and coordination have proven effective and will be essential to continued progress on critical aspects such as policy reform, coherent food aid policies, and focused agricultural research. The World Bank, IFAD, and others have set up special funds for Africa with

strong potential for effective programs in the Sahel.

Coordination will be equally important to address the critical strategy choices yet to be made, U.S. costs specifically related to the Club/CILSS activities are minimal (approximately \$1.2 million per year) relative to the benefits gained. Any decision to alter commitment to SDP should consider not only the effects on the Sahel but also on U.S. allies who joined in establishing this effort. The United States has been actively involved in both the Club and CILSS, maintaining a low profile but playing an important and catalytic role. Future efforts to improve the performance of these institutions need to be consistent with this long-term partnership. Support for CILSS should be conditional on its making progress toward needed reforms, but such conditionality should not jeopardize the ability of CILSS to build its managerial and technical capabilities. While support for the Club/CILSS framework can continue without a separate SDP management structure in AID and distinct funding line item, these two arrangements can increase effective U.S. support of the regional framework.

Can a More Effective Partnership
Be Created?

Finding: The relationships between Congress and AID are factors that limit the effectiveness of U.S. efforts in the Sahel.

Option: Congress and AID could work together to improve communications on the Sahel and make their operating relationship closer to the partnership envisioned in the original Sahel commitment. Increased informal contacts, the possibility of reciprocal intern programs in Washington or the Sahel, congressional participation in AID workshops on strategies and technical themes, and increased contacts between Congress and AID field missions are all possibilities to more effectively share information, coordinate decisionmaking, build trust, and enhance congressional policymaking.

Option: Congress can examine the Foreign Assistance Act in an attempt to limit and prioritize its policy guidelines and modify provisions that may

be contradictory or inadvertently hamper AID effectiveness. The Sahel could offer an opportunity to establish a short list of long-term policy guidelines, streamlined operating procedures, and new procurement, management, and reporting mechanisms. The Sahel also could be used as an opportunity to test multi-year appropriations for the SDP budget and for modifying congressional notification requirements.

Option: Relevant congressional committees can undertake an analysis of reporting requirements for regular written reports, special written reports, and for various hearings. They can eliminate those that do not serve a justified information function and streamline those that do. They can provide AID with more specific guidance on their information needs and thus increase the match between what Congress needs to know with what AID actually provides. AID's annual report to Congress on the Sahel could be given particular attention in this regard.

The unique commitment implicit in U.S. support for the Sahel provides both the opportunity and the justification to attempt to address the complex issue of congressional/AID relations. The current relationship between Congress and AID has been described as quasi-adversarial by both sides. The result has been a lessening of effective communication and a retreat to a focus more on the form than on the substance of policies and strategies. Poor communication has inhibited the development of a better informed Congress on relevant Sahelian issues. This problem, however, is not unique to discussions of the Sahel but broadly affects AID/Congress relations.

On the congressional side, the lack of trust has blocked consideration of multi-year appropriations for the long-term research portion of AID's program, limiting flexibility and adding a bias toward less appropriate short-term approaches. It has led to increased reporting requirements and strict enforcement in the Sahel of stringent financial control procedures that are unrealistic given the capacities of most Sahel countries. The burden has fallen disproportionately on already overloaded Sahelian managers. Low-level program or project funding changes require time-consuming congressional notification. Poor communication keeps

Congress from accumulating enough detailed knowledge to make effective policy decisions on vital development issues.

On the AID side, the problems of its relationship with Congress translates into too much time and energy devoted to congressional relations, and the overselling of its program, leading to unrealistic expectations in Congress, overreaction to reporting requirements, insufficient understanding of the information needs of Congress, and the failure to use effectively the flexibility it has over such things as procurement regulations and the use of "no-year" funds.

Official U.S. policies guiding foreign assistance are contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and its subsequent amendments. Over the years, Congress has added new priorities and mandates (e.g., basic human needs, environment, women in development, capital-saving technology) through policy directives, earmarked funds for special purposes, and required issue-specific reporting. It has rarely removed previous mandates nor ranked the importance of existing ones. The rapidity with which new mandates are added and their cumulative weight provide AID with little consistent guidance on U.S. objectives and priorities, limit flexibility to respond to specific local needs and opportunities, and work against the long-term consistency required for Club/CILSS goals.

Finally, other actions taken by Congress can indirectly affect the effectiveness of AID development efforts in the Sahel. The influence through Congress of domestic interest groups whose particular "interest" may or may not be consistent with effective development strategies can at times restrict or even conflict with AID objectives. One example is procurement requirements, so-called "tied aid" that requires U.S. sources of equipment and technical expertise. In the Sahel these measures dramatically increase the costs of operations, provide little long-term commercial benefit to U.S. businesses, while foregoing opportunities to encourage local productive capacity and skill development. They also deter donor coordination

since each donor has distinct requirements responding to its own interest groups, and thus increase the administrative burden on Sahelian governments.

Is the Strategy Commensurate With the Commitment?

Finding: AID's regional strategy statement for the Sahel is largely consistent with the lessons of the past decade as well as with the central thrust of the Foreign Assistance Act, which directs AID to focus on the direct alleviation of poverty. In several respects, however, the strategy statement is ambiguous and questions remain regarding its interpretation and implementation. Congress has the responsibility to ensure AID's clarity in implementation of the strategy. Means of congressional oversight need to be modified to fulfill Congress' intent when it created SDP.

Option: In setting policy directions and conducting oversight of SDP, Congress can select a limited list of policy priorities. These choices would set the principal agenda for Congress discussions with AID. Congress could also address specific areas unresolved in the SDP strategy, such as allocation of funds to livestock and gender issues.

Option: To exercise its oversight authority on SDP, and to recognize the desirability of a more effective working relationship with AID, Congress can adopt a graduated approach to such an "issues agenda." It could start by clearly communicating congressional policy priorities and issues to AID. It can then use that agenda to focus hearings and reports. If Congress judges AID's response as adequate, it could respond by relaxing procurement, reporting, and other requirements. In the absence of effective AID implementation, Congress could request additional special hearings, special reports, more specific policy mandates, and strict earmarking of funds.

Option: To encourage AID to address key issues and develop essential missing components of SDP, Congress can request AID to explore such actions as: reestablishing a Sahel Development Planning Team, undertaking issue- or sector-specific studies by AID's Science and Technology Bureau along the lines of the current Water Management Synthesis Project, and organizing international workshops/conferences on specific issues similar to

its 1985 conference on river basin development. Congress can encourage AID to do analysis by limiting new project starts until these strategy issues are addressed, while maintaining current appropriation levels necessary to fund the analysis process and ongoing programs worthy of continued support.

AID has learned a great deal from its experiences in the Sahel. Its 1984 Sahel strategy document effectively outlines the disappointments of the past and discusses new approaches that promise better results in the future. The results have moved AID in directions espoused by a broad spectrum of Sahel authorities who identify the lack of a conducive environment for development in the Sahel as a major factor in the poor results obtained so far. The unfavorable Sahelian environment is understood to include such elements as policy disincentives, institutional and infrastructural weaknesses, and the lack of appropriate technologies. Increasing portions of AID's portfolio are being directed to address these constraints. Nonetheless, concerns remain regarding AID's strategy:

- Depending on how it is implemented, AID's Sahel Regional Development Strategy could retreat from a focus on direct assistance to the poor. Selection among alternative measures and approaches and the mix between "constraint removing" and "direct assistance" will determine the probability and length of time required to benefit small farmers.
- The strategy fails to address several key issues essential to the future direction of the Sahel, such as the allocation of resources between irrigation and rainfed agriculture, between food and export crops, between ecological zones, and between categories of farmers. These are not questions that can be resolved easily or quickly yet AID has not given priority to resolving them.
- In its strategy statement and in the implementation of the strategy, AID fails to adequately disaggregate its analysis on the basis of gender nor does it put adequate stress on long-term, environmental sustainability.
- The strategy needs to go further in the process of focusing U.S. assistance to the Sa-

hel on the basis of U.S. capacities and strengths in relation to the needs revealed by the past decade.

Ž Missing from the U.S. Sahel program are a Sahel-specific research plan, a strategy for the livestock sector, and a consistent approach to population issues. Although mentioned in the strategy statement, in practice AID has yet to implement effective methods for increasing farmer and herder participation and institution building.

Is AID Working Against Itself?

Finding: Institutional characteristics internal to AID are constraints to optimal development and implementation of the U.S. Sahel strategy.

Option: There is little opportunity for specific congressional options in this area because most of the constraints are internal AID/executive branch management issues. But Congress can help to bring these concerns to AID's attention. These criticisms are not new, yet little visible progress has been accomplished. Once again, however, the uniqueness of the Sahel effort and its manageable size provide the opportunity and challenge for AID to test new program and project design, management approaches, and more effective systems of monitoring and evaluation. The contradictions inherent in a regional strategy of largely bilateral programs could be diminished by more regular Sahel Mission Directors meetings, the reestablishment of the Sahel Development Planning Team, the establishment of a separate regional technical support unit either within the Regional Economic Development Support Office in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast or independently in the Sahel, and even the option of moving regional management, currently in Washington, out to the field. AID's willingness to be more innovative could be enhanced by better Congress/AID collaboration on the Sahel, by congressional restraint in its direction and oversight of AID, and by congressional responsiveness to the costs that the development of alternative approaches could involve.

OTA identified three sets of institutional factors that limit AID's effectiveness in the Sahel: staffing, AID's programming and design systems, and its management structure.

Although staff numbers have increased dramatically since SDP's early days, they are still low and have recently been dropping relative to the number of projects because of budget reductions. Ten years of programming in the Sahel have increased the proportion of staff with Sahel-specific experience. Still, French, local language, and cultural skills largely are lacking. The proportion of high level technical staff is low and the skill mix has not changed with changing strategies. Turnover is high relative to the time it takes to program, design, and implement projects so people who begin a project rarely are held accountable for results. The *de facto* incentive system is biased in favor of the designer and obligator and not the effective implementor of the project. In many posts, local staff—the AID missions' local "institutional memory" and source of vital cultural, economic, political, and technical knowledge—are underused.

AID's systems of designing programs and projects are cumbersome, mechanical, and ineffectively applied. They rarely link analysis between sectors or between the national economy and small-scale producer. The separation of the component parts of the AID project system (i.e., identification, design, approval, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) limits consistency, programmatic accountability, and institutional learning. It is a system that is geared toward discrete, production-specific projects rather than long-term programs with more process-related goals. The system can move with impressive speed to obligate funds but paperwork requirements and procurement bottlenecks leave gaps of up to 3 years between design and project starts. The monitoring of AID projects is limited by staff number and is poorly integrated into project management. AID does perform significant project evaluations but they tend to be narrow, focusing on limited objectives instead of wider impacts and goals. Evaluation is ineffectively fed back into project re-design.

AID's efficiency suffers from the size and complexity of its operations. Separation and poor coordination between program offices,

budgeting, technical support, and evaluation units constrain effective AID operations. Division of authority between Washington offices and the field and between the field missions and contracted project personnel is often unclear, overlapping, and inconsistently applied. The problems inherent in this lack of clarity are amplified under SDP because it has a relatively strong regional management unit based in Washington. Mission directors, under the supervision of the U.S. Ambassador and responding to the requests of their particular host government, have resisted the efforts to enforce a regional strategy. At the same time, the special nature of the Sahel effort actually requires a much higher degree of regional perspective and coherence than elsewhere.

Can Diverse Actors With Diverse Strengths Work Together?

Finding: Greater coordination and collaboration between various U.S. actors operating in or affecting the Sahel would increase the effectiveness of the U.S. effort.

Option: Congress could request that all relevant U.S. Government-funded agencies establish Sahel strategies that would highlight coordination with AID. These could include: the Department of Agriculture (its Public Law 480 component and its technical assistance and research programs); the Department of Treasury (debt and lending policy); Department of Commerce (tariffs and trades) and its National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (drought and famine warning system, technical assistance and meteorological research); Peace Corps (village-level technical assistance and organization); and the African Development Foundation (local organization support). Within Congress, an informal group of staff from relevant committees could meet periodically to discuss the consistency of actions under consideration by their respective committees and how these actions affect overall U.S. objectives in the Sahel.

Option: Congress could request AID to take a more active leadership role in fostering coordination among all U.S. publically funded development efforts in the Sahel. Some activities that might be appropriate include: interagency task forces, conference/workshops on technical themes, and in-country coordinating committees. Such an effort

will work only if a means is found to ensure informality, voluntary participation, and respect for the diversity and independence of participants.

Option: Private voluntary organizations (PVOs) offer special potential to contribute to the type of strategies that are essential for future Sahel development. Thus Congress could request that an appropriate PVO group such as INTERACTION, PACT, CODEL, or others study and develop a PVO Sahel strategy stressing coordination with AID. The strategy could help PVOs already working in the Sahel and others considering such activities to think strategically and to increase coordination and collaboration with AID, Peace Corps, and others. Such an effort would have to ensure the voluntary participation and desired autonomy of each private organization.

In addition to AID, numerous other U.S. agencies (governmental and nongovernmental) are either active in the Sahel or their actions affect the implementation of SDP strategies or broader Club/CILSS goals. Few of the U.S. public and private organizations working in the Sahel besides AID have a Sahel-specific strategy. The current level of their coordination and collaboration with AID is variable. The diversity of their strengths, weaknesses, approaches, and activities provides both opportunities and risks. As resources become more limited, it will be increasingly important to avoid contradictory actions or duplication of efforts. Thus improved coordination and collaboration are critical.

Other U.S. governmental agencies have a more indirect impact, either through their executive branch actions or by policies set by Congress. In policies and actions as diverse as U.S. farm support, U.S. positions on international debt burden relief, the funding of the various components of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations affecting the Sahel, support for U.S. investment, etc., decisions are made that have considerable impact on the Sahel. These actions can counteract or complement U.S. development programs. There is no mechanism for and only limited consideration of the consistency of these diverse actions, and decisionmaking responsibility is scattered among various agencies and multiple congressional committees.