

# Assessment of the Sahel Development Program- Executive Summary

---

**The U.S. Agency for International Development's (AID) "Assessment of the Sahel Development Program" was developed by the Sahel Development Planning Team in Bamako, Mali, and published in March 1983. The Assessment identified the lessons learned from AID activities in the region and was the basis for the 1984 Sahel Country (Regional) Strategy Statement. Below is the Executive Summary from the assessment.**

## Executive Summary and Conclusions

### General

The present draft responds to a request from AA/AFR, F.S. Rudy, to AFR/SWA for an assessment of the Sahel Development Program which considers, inter alia, "how it relates to the original objectives and what changes should be made now in view of political and economic developments in the Sahel" since its inception. The assessment finds that, despite problems encountered in their pursuit, the original objectives of the Sahel Development Program remain sound and feasible. AID's contribution to the multidonor effort should be sustained at its present proportional level.

As a result of the drought emergency of 1973, the United States, other donors, and the Sahelians developed a comprehensive strategy which attracted a large and sustained volume of resources as well as a strong commitment to long-term development of the region. The international community spent an estimated \$1 billion on drought relief and post-drought rehabilitation from 1973 through 1974. From 1973 through 1982 the United States—through disaster assistance, Public Law 480, and the Development Assistance budget—has committed an equal amount of resources to the Sahel region.

The program in the Sahel is one of the best examples of international cooperation for development. A responsive organizational structure was devised to coordinate a large number of bilateral and multilateral development initiatives. The system is far from perfect, yet it has credibly addressed many of the basic problems of the region.

AID programs have been growing since the first reconstruction assistance of 1973 and 1974. The composition and orientation of AID's Sahel Development

Program (SDP) has evolved significantly. Most of its weaknesses are traceable to the urgency which impelled the early development of the program and the deployment of appropriated funds at a pace which strained AID and host government management systems. A number of projects sought to stimulate medium-term food production increases based on over-optimistic judgments about the availability of technical packages, the capabilities of cooperating institutions, and the financial capacity of Sahelian governments. In addition, the program spread rapidly into forestry-ecology, primary health, women's roles, various kinds of training, village water supply and several areas of the livestock sector. The emphasis was on responding as directly as possible to the basic needs of target populations. However, many of the initial activities involved institutional development aspects, and later projects have been primarily oriented to such objectives. Numerous studies and analyses were also carried out—especially within the CILSS/Club structure—that today influence policy. Early assumptions about technology were often hedged with investments in research. The results of these varied efforts have been mixed, but on balance highly positive. The quality and effectiveness of the program has steadily improved as we have learned from experience to better understand the Sahelian cultural, administrative, institutional, and physical environments.

AID's SDP constitutes an important and proportionally appropriate component of the expanding multidonor development program. If the current level of effort is maintained in real terms, the CILSS/Club strategy goal of food self-sufficiency with environmental stability and self-sustaining economic growth is an achievable goal. For this reason and because of the importance of AID's role

in the agricultural and rural development sectors, AID's contribution should increase proportionately with the overall donor effort. These resources must be coordinated within a regional, multidonor framework that allows for change and flexibility in response to the lessons of experience.

## Lessons Learned

1. Technical production packages are still inadequate for all but some areas in higher rainfall zones. Selected technological improvements such as animal traction or certain new crop varieties have found useful application within specific agro-climatic zones and in certain farming systems, but on the whole, the available technical packages have not provided a basis for large-scale efforts to increase food production. This indicates the need for more emphasis on agricultural research and that most area-focused food production and integrated development projects need to be phased out or substantially redesigned and reoriented toward economically and technically valid goals.

2. Agricultural research systems directed at developing new production technologies must be strengthened, refocused on farming systems, and selectively expanded. While it is important that international and regional crop-oriented research be strengthened, it is also essential that the development of adequate national systems be given priority. Promising cultural practices and crop varieties coming out of international work must be evaluated in the various regional agro-climatic zones and tested under farm conditions. The research networks must ultimately produce superior technical packages for each agro-climatic zone. This implies a great deal of increased attention and careful programming of additional resources for agricultural research.

3. Our efforts to date have not placed enough emphasis on the development of agricultural production systems and forging strong linkages between their crucial elements. This implies a need for careful assessment of existing systems and selective targeting of institutional development assistance to foster the development of adequate production support systems within a 10 to 15 year time horizon. There is a subsidiary need for agriculture-oriented education and human resources development strategies at the regional and national levels.

4. Government agencies, including parastatals, should restrict themselves to roles that cannot be appropriately allocated to the private sector. However, for historical reasons, and often in associa-

tion with AID, Sahelian governments are currently relying on parastatals to furnish goods and services which ultimately should be handled by the private sector. In such cases we need to help the governments to formulate plans for the orderly transfer of such functions to the private sector. On one side, governments and AID must disengage from paying parastatals' operating expenses and phase out subsidized provision of goods and services so that the private sector can compete. On the other hand, positive strategies are required to enable the private and cooperative sectors to take up input and produce marketing functions abandoned by governments.

5. Notwithstanding the success achieved in the CILSS/Club context in the pursuit of policy dialog, our programs at the national level have suffered from inadequate concern with the resolution of policy constraints to economic, and particularly agricultural, development. We should continue and reinforce efforts now underway to focus AID and other donor programs in ways that will induce essential reform.

6. River Basin and irrigation development must continue to be pursued on a steady basis so that river basin planning frameworks and socioeconomically sound irrigation models will be available to permit an acceleration of the pace of investment in irrigated agriculture over the next 15 to 20 years.

7. The forestry and environment component of the program continues to be inadequate and the decline of the woodlands continues. Most research, training and the conservation measures underway should continue and our level of effort in these areas should be increased substantially. We should, at the same time, seriously investigate the attributes of a major effort to establish plantations for urban fuelwood supply.

8. Further livestock production activities should be initiated only when we are sure of the technology being introduced, and it is clear that these offer economic returns superior to alternative agricultural investments. Other initiatives in the livestock sector should be limited to the development of socioeconomically and technically sound solutions to problems affecting productivity and producer incomes.

9. Notwithstanding all our good intentions to the contrary, AID has taken on too many separate projects and these have been too widely dispersed both geographically and sectorally. There is a need to limit project selection to the Sahel development strategy priorities of food self-sufficiency and ecological balance within the framework of suitably comprehensive long-term strategies.

10. The Sahel financial management problem as well as other difficulties we have had in implementing our program serve to remind us that we must plan and design our programs with scrupulous and realistic attention to the financial and administrative capabilities of Sahelian institutions and our own management resources. This means that we will have to select our institutional development involvements with great care, recognizing that human resource and financial constraints will often dictate long-term commitments and support of recurrent costs. We must find ways of facing up to the need to maintain adequate staff strength to manage our programs in the field.

## Recommendations

1. A CDSS-type strategy is required for the development of the Sahel as a region. Based on analyses of the broad options, it would lay out a program for the phased development of: a) the institutional capabilities and programs in the agriculture and forestry/ecology sectors; and b) the irrigated agriculture capacity required to help achieve food self-sufficiency, through trade as well as domestic production, by the year 2000. Unlike the present Regional Development Strategy Statement (RDSS), the new strategy would address resource allocation issues in light of economic and technical analyses of the various trade-offs such as that between rainfed and irrigated agriculture.

2. Project selection must be guided strictly by the dictates of bilateral as well as regional program strategies in pursuit of food self-sufficiency and ecological balance by the year 2000. This implies vigorous development of agricultural and forestry/ecology sector strategies, complemented by derived program priorities in human resources, health, and other supporting sectors.

3. The staff resources and the role of the Sahel Development Planning Team (SDPT) must be strengthened. To the present complement should be added an agronomist knowledgeable of irrigated

as well as rainfed systems, a river basin development specialist and a Deputy Director (Deputy Regional Development Officer or Program Officer). The latter is required to assure that the long-term planning and other functions of the team are consistently pursued despite the heavy travel schedules of the team members and Director. The SDPT should be charged with analyzing and commenting on the feasibility and priority of all PIDs and all strategy documents submitted by Sahel Missions. The persons responsible for AID liaison with the CILSS Secretariat and the Sahel Institute should function as members of the SDPT. The SDPT have PM&R budgetary resources sufficient to carry out or commission studies required for strategy development.

4. The SDPT should be transferred to Ouagadougou so that its long-term planning studies and analyses can be carried out in collaboration with the CILSS Secretariat and be fed consistently into the deliberations of sector working groups both at this regional level and at the national level.

5. We need to continue and strengthen our efforts in financial and program management. This requires:

- an assessment of AID Sahel program management capacities and requirements in the field;
- stricter review and criteria for financial management and accounting capabilities in every project, including the provision of technical assistance where necessary; and
- a second generation of initiatives to strengthen program management capacities at the regional and national levels;
- greater use of private sector accountants in design, implementation, and monitoring of the Sahel program and projects;
- increased audit coverage of the program.

6. A review should be conducted of the SDP project portfolio in order to identify projects which need to be revised or phased out in light of the assessment findings, the Mission's current program strategies and the current RDSS.