

Chapter 2

AID's Sahel Development
program and the
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IN BRIEF . . .

Congress asked the Office of Technology Assessment to study development efforts in the Sahel as part of a larger assessment of low-resource agriculture in Africa. The Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world and it has been the focus of a concerted, multinational assistance effort. But after a decade of projects and financial aid, there comes a time to take stock: just how effective has development assistance **been** in the Sahel and what can be learned from those experiences?

The United States has played a major role in the Sahel. The Agency for International Development (AID), as mandated by a **1977** amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, manages the Sahel Development program, a comprehensive, **long-term approach to reaching** food self-sufficiency while accelerating economic and social development. Chapter 2 looks at key aspects of this AID program and the unique multinational Club du Sahel/CILSS framework of which it is a part. Highlights of the chapter include:

- AID's Sahel Development Program is unique among U.S. development efforts because it is a long-term commitment to a multinational effort with a regional focus and it receives separate line item funding within the AID budget.
- The multinational Club/CILSS framework has been controversial and its effectiveness has been constrained by inconsistent member support. CILSS in particular has been hampered by uneven leadership and inadequate technical and managerial capabilities. The Club/CILSS approach, however, has served as a forum to combine and focus the talents and resources of both donor and recipient nations.
- Despite some problems, the Club du Sahel and CILSS, with AID's participation, have made substantial contributions to improving the climate for development in the Sahel, especially in the areas of sector planning, improved coordination, and increased aid flows.

Beginning in 1968, 5 years of severe drought brought death and misery to the Sahel region of West Africa. Tens of thousands of people perished and up to one-third of the area's livestock was lost (14). Brought to the public's attention by the news media, this crisis stimulated unprecedented international relief efforts. Over \$360 million of emergency aid was funneled to the Sahel by 1974 (37).

In the aftermath of that tragedy, the concerns of both Sahelian and donor officials turned from relief to recovery and finally to long-term

development. Could future crises in the Sahel be prevented? How? And how much would it cost? Reflections on these questions gave birth to a unique experiment in international development cooperation—the Club du Sahel/CILSS framework. The nine countries of the Sahel and their major donors joined together in a cooperative “contract for a generation.” Its purpose: to increase the Sahel's dependable access to food and lay the groundwork for long-term development. The United States has been an active participant in the creation and operations of the Club du Sahel/CILSS framework.

THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO CLUB/CILSS: THE SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

By 1974, the United States had become the largest single food aid donor to the Sahel emergency relief effort, a commitment that was to grow into the U.S. Sahel Development Program (SDP) (136). Prior to the 1968 to 1973 drought, U.S. development assistance to the Sahel had been limited in accordance with the Kerry Report of the late 1960s (141). This report recommended that the United States confine its assistance program in Africa to a limited number of countries with political, strategic, or economic importance to the United States. But in the years following the drought, U.S. assistance to the Sahel rose steadily reflecting a continued humanitarian interest by the public at large and particularly by the Congressional Black Caucus.

In December 1973, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act (sec. 639. B) supported U.S. involvement in an international long-term development effort for the Sahel and provided \$25 million for emergency and recovery needs. In July 1974, Congress authorized an additional \$85 million and in late 1975 called on the executive branch to begin immediate planning for an international Sahel program with the participation of African countries. The proposed

plan, presented to Congress in April of 1976, outlined:

the substance and sequence of a comprehensive, long-term approach to development in support of food self-sufficiency in the context of accelerated economic and social development (133).

The proposal concludes:

... we are persuaded that the goals of this Sahel development program are attainable. From both the humanitarian and technological point of view, the long-term comprehensive development of the Sahel is a unique opportunity which lies before us today. And the world community can and should accept this challenge (133).

In 1977, a further amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act (Sections 120 and 121) formally created SDP within the Agency for International Development (AID), thus institutionalizing U.S. commitment to the Sahel and to the Club/CILSS framework. Development assistance to the Sahel under SDP (1978 to 1986) has totaled \$750 million (not including \$91 million in Economic Support Funds and \$421 million in Public Law 480 food aid). Total U.S. assistance to the Sahel from 1978 to 1986 has equaled approximately \$1.4 billion (see table 2-1).

Table 2-1 .—U.S. Bilateral Assistance to the Sahel, 1976-86 (millions of dollars)

Year	Sahel Development Program	Public Law 480 ^a	Economic Support Fund	Total
1976	\$ 35 ^b	\$ 24	—	\$ 59
1977	45 ^b	20	—	65
1978	50	32	—	82
1979	75	25	—	100
1980	75	40	—	115
1981	93	56	—	149
1982	94	45	—	139
1983	85	32	\$10	127
1984	103	55	18	176
1985	98	92	43	233
1986 (estimated)	77	44	20	141
Total	\$830	\$465	\$91	\$1,386

^aPublic Law 480 assistance data includes World Food Program and emergency food aid but does not include ocean freight costs in fiscal year 1985. freight costs totaled \$104 million

^bDevelopment assistance to the Sahel before SDP existed.

SOURCES Data on SDP and ESF supplied by: U. S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sahel and West Africa Affairs, "U. S. Assistance to the Sahel," unpublished data, April 1986

Public Law 480 data supplied by: U. S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Food for Peace and Voluntary Organizations, "Public Law 480, Assistance to the Sahel," unpublished data, April 1988

The phrase “Sahel Development Program” has three usages, referring to three interrelated components. From the administrative/management perspective, SDP is the separate funding line item within the AID budget and the distinct management unit within AID which administers it. Second, it is a novel approach for U.S. development assistance because it is ex-

plicit support for and participation in the multinational and regional framework of Club/CILSS process. And finally, it also refers to the specific goals, objectives, strategies, and programs that comprise U.S. development assistance to the countries of the Sahel as expressed in AID’s Sahel Country Development Strategy Statement (126). (See app. E.)

THE CLUB/CILSS FRAMEWORK

CILSS is the French acronym for the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, an organization of nine Sahelian States originally formed in 1973 to coordinate relief and recovery efforts.¹ CILSS has been an influential actor in the past decade’s effort in the Sahel, but its mandate and operations have been controversial from the start. It began as a mechanism to alert donors to the situation in the Sahel and to focus appeals for assistance but its charter also suggested that it could play a coordinating role for drought control efforts (37).

At its first official meeting in September 1973, CILSS presented donors with a list requesting over 300 projects totaling \$3 billion, an action that set the tone of the early years (75). Donors were noticeably cool to this “shopping list” approach, feeling that careful analysis of the problems should be done first as a foundation for a coordinated strategy. Between 1974 and 1976, while CILSS and donor countries negotiated to determine priority projects, the major donors—France, the United States, the World

Bank, and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)—commissioned a number of studies of Sahel problems and potential. The studies suggested that the Sahel did indeed have the resources necessary to be self-sufficient in food, or at least to improve considerably its food security, by the end of the century. It would require, however, a coordinated, long-term effort of 15 to 30 years and \$15 to \$20 billion in new support. Priority, they concluded, would have to be given to agriculture, especially food crops that had been neglected in the past (37,133).

The role and operations of the Club du Sahel side of the Club/CILSS framework was equally born in controversy. Both the chaos of disaster and recovery assistance flowing into the Sahel following the drought of 1968 to 1973 and the potential offered by the CILSS call for a concerted Sahel program clearly indicated the need for a mechanism for coordination among donors and between donors and Sahelians. Yet there was no common agreement on under what auspices that coordination should be accomplished. FAO had established an office for relief coordination as early as 1972 and the United Nations Sahelian Office (UNSO) began operations in 1974, with a focus on the environmental sector. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was also active and along with UNSO provided early support for CILSS. Despite the level of United Nations (UN) activity, several donors, particularly the United States, West Germany, and several Sahelian countries, were against a UNDP or UNSO coordinating role. The World Bank, another logical possibility, was not interested.

¹The original CILSS members included Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. The Gambia and the Cape Verde Islands were admitted in 1975. In January 1986, the CILSS Conference of Heads of State approved the admission of Guinea-Bissau.

The Black Caucus of the U.S. Congress, along with interested AID officials, is given credit for the idea to create a new coordinating structure outside the UN system (37). Their only condition, included in later legislation, was that U.S. contributions would be limited to no more than 10 percent of the combined effort. The major problem encountered was overcoming the wariness of the French Government, whose continuing post-colonial economic, political, and cultural ties led them to consider the Sahel as their special sphere of influence. Eventually, however, the French Government agreed, motivated by changes in internal politics and the growing economic burden of the Sahelian States on the French treasury. Thereafter, the French began to play a leadership role in the Club du Sahel while the United States continued a catalytic but low key approach. Other donors greeted the proposal with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Canada and West Germany were particularly cautious and until recently the World Bank maintained primarily an observer status. As the Club has clarified its role and proven its value, donors have increased their support.

The Club du Sahel is set up as a loosely structured, informal arrangement, without formal membership—more of a forum than a development organization. More than 25 major multilateral and bilateral donors join the CILSS member states in Club activities. It is made up of a small Secretariat located at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris, irregular general meetings (six have been held so far), and a common working group (organized jointly with CILSS) of technicians broken up into sectoral working groups whose responsibility is to map out medium- and long-term strategies and organize ad hoc meetings on technical issues. Both donors and Sahelians participate in its meetings and working groups.

The Club's first meeting was held in Senegal in 1976 where its purpose and mandate were set :

- to support CILSS, the principal agency for regional cooperation in the Sahel;

- to inform the international community on development prospects and needs in the Sahel;
- to encourage cooperation between donors to implement projects requested by Sahelian governments and CILSS and facilitate the mobilization of resources; and
- to be a forum for Sahelian nations to outline their policies and priorities for medium- and long-term development and discuss them with donors (37).

The strategy that evolved out of the working groups and that was endorsed by the 1977 general meeting was based on the primary importance of food self-sufficiency and ecological balance for the Sahel. It emphasized agricultural



Photo credit U S Peace Corps

Increasing food security was one of the primary objectives of the Club/CILSS effort and it remains a major goal of development assistance in the Sahel. Here a Sahelian millet breeder works with a Peace Corps agronomist,

production; ecology and forestry; fisheries; and the integration of new themes such as recurrent costs, cereals pricing, marketing, and storage. Its action program combined infrastructural improvements, human resource development, medium-term production projects, and longer term approaches to develop irrigation potential, particularly in the major river basins. Subsequent meetings refined the strategy in the light of experience. A 1978 meeting focused attention on the crucial fuelwood crisis and encouraged an increase in support for the forestry and ecology sector. A revised strategy adopted in 1980 again emphasized the environment and its link to food self-sufficiency goals. In subsequent meetings, the recurrent cost issue, the role of policy reform, continued coordination problems, and the lack of progress of agricultural programs have been added to the agenda.

The 1984 revised long-term strategy, adopted by the Club and the CILSS Council of Ministers, reflects these changes. Its main elements are:

- to encourage private initiative and limit the extent of government intervention in the development process;
- to emphasize the need for policy reform and the establishment of sound economic foundations as a precondition to development;
- to link the food security objective to overall development of the agriculture sector; and
- to recognize that environmental stability is based on appropriate, integrated planning in agriculture, forestry, and livestock sectors (123).

EVOLUTION AND CONSTRAINTS

Once donor support increased through the Club du Sahel, CILSS began to expand its mandate and its Secretariat in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Through the Club working groups, CILSS participated in important studies and in preparing the 1977 Club/CILSS strategy document and subsequent revisions, CILSS increasingly played a more direct role in developing and implementing regional projects such as a large Integrated Pest Management project. With donor support, it created two specialized institutions, AGRHRYMET (Sahelian Regional Center for Agro-meteorology and Applied Hydrology) in Niamey, Niger and the Sahel Institute in Bamako, Mali. The latter was set up to facilitate information sharing among Sahelian researchers and to coordinate appropriate research projects. Repeating the pattern of its parent organization, the Sahel Institute also began research efforts of its own,

The performance of CILSS, particularly in project management and coordination, has been mediocre. Like many regional organizations in Africa and elsewhere, it has suffered from a lack of member support; political tension among members; and uneven leadership,

managerial, and technical skills. In the past, member countries have not insisted on strong accountability. From the beginning, CILSS member countries have been slow to provide financial assistance while the personnel assigned to CILSS had uneven qualifications.

But other problems related to support from member nations have been more fundamental. While welcoming the increased aid flows that CILSS has helped foster, member governments have been reluctant to give CILSS a coordinating role that might interfere with their sovereignty or direct access to donors. CILSS strategy and policy decisions have been poorly reflected in the actions of member States. Nor is the CILSS planning process integrated with those of its members. Donors have found that many projects contained in the CILSS "first generation" program were not part of national development plans or were considered low priority. Many of these coordination and follow-through problems are explained by the fact that the CILSS Council of Ministers is for the most part comprised of Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development or Natural Resources; these ministries typically play minor roles in policy

decisions in most Sahelian States. Also, in-country CILSS national coordinating offices have been poorly staffed and have limited local power,

Donor support also has been inconsistent. The original growth in the CILSS mandate was partially supported by donors of the Club du Sahel. Over time, major donors such as the United States have concluded that while there is a role for regional analysis and dialog, institutional weaknesses within CILSS and political realities make national governments the more appropriate focus for most projects and programs (125,132). For several years, CILSS ignored donor criticisms but in 1985, following a change in CILSS leadership, growing member State dissatisfaction, and increased donor use of conditionality in their financial assistance, CILSS agreed to revise its mandate to become more of a regional think tank and streamline its operations. Although too early to be certain, it appears that CILSS has begun much-needed reforms,

The overall positive impact of the Club du Sahel is also not without some qualification (137). The studies performed by the Club working groups are not all of equal quality nor have the Club/CILSS strategies had much impact on the strategies and sector allocations² of either Sahelian governments or donors. For example, although assistance to rural development and rainfed agriculture has grown 7.1 and 16.1 percent each year, respectively, less than one-quarter of all donor assistance is going into rural development and less than half of that supports rainfed agriculture (25). Similarly, assistance to forestry and ecology is growing at an impressive 31.5 percent annually, yet it is still only 2 percent of total aid. (For trends in assistance to the Sahel, see app. A, table A-5.)

While coordination has been the hallmark of Club activities, its lack remains a major obstacle to effective use of development assistance. The partnership between the Club and CILSS is an impressive step in development cooperation, but the Club can be criticized for taking

the initiative and leadership away from CILSS at times and because it has few Sahelians directly involved with the work of the Club Secretariat. There has been difficulty translating agreements into action because of political and organizational pressures. For example, the organization has been unsuccessful in encouraging donors to take action to use simplified, standardized project documents to reduce the burden on Sahelian governments.

It has also proven difficult to translate Club-sponsored agreements about donor coordination into clear mandates for field representatives to work more closely together. The extent of the in-country coordination problem is indicated by the sheer number of donors and projects. In 1983 in Burkina Faso, 29 major donors were working on 119 separate projects, including 13 donors active in agriculture (27). In-country consultative groups or donor roundtables organized respectively by the World Bank and UNDP have so far proven to be of limited success due to a lack of clear support from donors' home offices. Over the past 3 years, however, some improvement has been noted. In Senegal and Mali, donors have effectively coordinated strategies in working with the respective governments on the sensitive question of policy reform. Work sponsored by the Club on food aid coordination, though still in embryonic stages, shows signs of progress (27). Club/CILSS-sponsored antidesertification strategies and in-country meetings to consider how to implement strategies and deal with other coordination issues also have promising potential.

CILSS was created to tackle common problems within a group of countries with historical and cultural commonalities and shared ecological and economic constraints.³ But shared problems are not necessarily enough to be conducive to mutual solutions. The similarity of Sahelian economies and production systems means that there is very little they have to offer each other in trade to increase mutual food security. Some authorities feel that the subregional focus on the Sahel should be grad-

²In a development sense, a sector is an area of public investment, e.g., the forestry sector, the livestock sector, etc.

³The extent and relevance to technology development of similarities between Sahel states has been qualified following the development experiences of the past decade. See ch. 4.

ually shifted to include the coastal economies to the south of the Sahel, which provide better economic complementarity with the Sahel.

Coordination with other multilateral and regional organizations remains a problem for both the Club and CILSS. Overlapping memberships and mandates with UNSO, UNDP, CEAO, ECOWAS, the Conseil d'Entente, (the last three are subregional economic coordination bodies), the NBA, OMVS, and OMVG (Sahelian river basin development authorities), and the Organization of African Unity create duplication and lack of coordination, Institutional rivalries have also led to lost opportunities.

The future success of the Club/CILSS may be jeopardized as the flow of assistance to the Sahel diminishes. Aid to the Sahel peaked in 1981 and then declined through 1983, Increases in 1984 to 1985 are largely a reflection of emergency food aid, International economic difficulties, government budget cutbacks in most major donor countries, the drop in oil prices, and competing demands for aid from Eastern and Southern Africa all combine to make future levels of assistance to the Sahel uncertain. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which also participates in the Club, supplied \$425 million (over 20 percent of the total) in 1981. This fell by more than 50 percent to \$200 million in 1983 and is expected to fall further (25). New U.S. commitments for Sahel development assistance have fallen from a high of \$103 million in 1984 to a projected \$77 million in 1986. The Administration has requested \$80 million for 1987. Although the Canadians, Dutch, and Italians have been increasing assistance to the Sahel, it is unlikely that these increases will compensate for the overall decline in aid.

Despite these problems, the contributions of the Club/CILSS process have been substantial. The Club has had a significant impact on the international development program in the Sahel through its regular meetings, the technical analysis and strategy proposals of its working group (which includes both donor and Sahelian technicians), and the ongoing process of reflection,

information collection, and dissemination. Its major accomplishments include:

- **Sector Planning and Strategies:** Sector analysis and strategy discussions have had substantial impacts on the content and conduct of both donor and Sahelian programs. The Club has assisted in increasing attention on the priority of agriculture and food production, the fuelwood crisis, the key role of cereal policies, and the problem of recurrent costs. Commissioned studies, and the collection and sharing of knowledge about the Sahel, have provided a solid beginning for an effective database on the Sahel,
- **Aid Flows:** Club activities have played a key role in tripling aid flows to the Sahel. Between 1975 and 1984, total assistance to the Sahel totaled \$14.1 billion. (See app. A, tables A-1 through A-3.) Per capita assistance to Sahelians has averaged \$44 per person yearly, more than double that for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and four times that for Asia (25). Increased aid for agriculture and forestry can be at least partially attributed to Club sector analysis and strategies. (See app. A, table A-5.)
- **Coordination:** The Club has had a dual impact on coordination, helping foster coordination between various donors and between donors and aid recipients. Although there is still need for improvement, the Club has fostered an improved dialog in development assistance. The non-threatening, less formal, "partnership of equals" atmosphere of Club/CILSS meetings and the fact that the dialog has continued for over a decade have built an atmosphere of trust regarding sensitive topics such as recurrent costs, cereals pricing, and the reforms of CILSS. The Club has taken the lead in discussing the coordination of food aid and desertification and has begun organizing in-country progress review meetings of donors and host country officials to take stock of their efforts toward Club/CILSS goals.

The Club/CILSS experience has brought to light some important lessons (37):

- the advantages of subregional cooperation,
- the importance of strategic thinking,
- the value of donor coordination, and
- the necessity for a “contractual” framework.

The failure to heed the latter—to implement agreed upon mutual obligations—has been perhaps the greatest weakness of Club/CILSS during the past decade. Progress in the Sahel depends on the common actions of all—Sahelian farmers and herders, Sahelian governments, and donors. The role of each must be identified and commitments carried out in action. Greater “conditionality” in relationships between all partners is an essential part of improving performance in the future (38). Progress on policy reform and the reform of CILSS are examples of what such an approach can accomplish.

On balance the Club/CILSS approach is an important part of U.S. and international efforts in the Sahel. It has relatively low costs and has made an overall positive contribution in the region. The evolving Club/CILSS mechanism has the potential to improve the effectiveness of the combined contributions of donors and Sahelians. The realization of that potential is, however, far from assured. It will require continued high levels of active participation by donors and Sahelians. Some observers feel, however, that the U.S. commitment has diminished in recent years. While the United States was active in the beginning of CILSS, of late it has turned from catalyst to critic. These criticisms have been significant in identifying needed reforms of both CILSS and the Club du Sahel, but some people have questioned whether the United States is willing to provide the resources to support implementation of the suggested reforms.