

# The Sahel Development Strategy Statement -Executive Summary

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**The U.S. Agency for International Development's (AID) Sahel Country (Regional) Development Strategy Statement, published in April 1984 for use in fiscal year 1986, was developed by the Sahel Development Planning Team in Bamako, Mali and the Washington Sahel Office and incorporated the lessons AID had learned in the region. Below is the executive summary from the statement.**

## The Sahel Development Strategy Statement

### Executive Summary

The multi-donor Sahel Development Program (SDP) encompasses the combined efforts of much of the world's donor community in eight countries: Chad, Niger, Mali, Upper Volta, Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, and Cape Verde. It was initiated in 1976, following several years of emergency drought relief and reconstruction in the Sahel. In 1978 Congress formally created AID's contribution and commitment to the program with the proviso that U.S. participation be limited to ten percent of the total annual donor commitment. The goals of the SDP are food self-reliance under conditions of sustained economic growth in a restored and stabilized environment. At that time, the program as termed "a Contract for a Generation," acknowledging a 20- to 30-year timeframe for the participants to achieve their goals. While AID is committed to these same objectives, the U.S. commitment is subject to continuous review.

The economies of the Sahel countries which border on the Sahara Desert are based predominantly on subsistence, dry-land agriculture. The fundamental obstacles to the development of this region lie in the determination and implementation of the necessary technical means needed to increase per capita agricultural production. To achieve this goal in the primitive conditions of the Sahel it is necessary to develop its physical, human, and institutional infrastructure. Most of the 35 million people in these eight countries are illiterate, widely dispersed, and dependent on low-yielding agriculture and pastoralism. There is as yet no available alternative technology which could be applied to rapidly improve food production.

Between 1976 and 1982, the Western and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries aid donors committed approximately \$8 billion to rehabilitation, budget, and balance of payments sup-

port, food aid, and development investment in the Sahel. (An appreciable quantity of Eastern Bloc resources, mostly for military purposes, was also contributed.) For its part, AID committed \$600 million in development assistance plus \$300 million in Public Law 480 food, and \$10 million in Economic Stabilization Funds (ESF).

During this interval, cereals and livestock production regained their pre-drought levels and the average quantity of cereals output modestly increased. Yet rainfall has continued to be markedly less than the annual averages experienced during the pre-drought decade of the 1960s. The absolute drought has persisted in certain places (Cape Verde and Mauritania) and returned periodically in others. In certain respects, the region's dependency is actually worse given the high rate of population growth (2.5 to 3.0 percent annually) and the major disruptions, e.g., the oil shocks and world recession, within the global economy.

The net effect of the experience of 1976 to 1982 has been, at best, very slow growth of average individual incomes, declining per capita production, and a net deterioration in the financial condition and short-term economic prospects of the Sahel countries. Sahelian external debt and annual debt service have increased; export earnings have declined; fiscal imbalances exacerbated; and the overall dependency of these countries on external, concessional resources has dramatically increased.

To cope with the harsh natural conditions of the Sahel combined with the distressing international economy of recent years has been an Olympian requirement; to have recovered from the devastation of the initial drought, to have developed the capacity to withstand continuing drought, to have achieved real per capita improvement, however limited, and to have undertaken substantial basic measures for development and future improved production are the achievements of the Sahel States and the donor effort to date. Much of the multi-donor aid to the Sahel has been directed toward current consumption and economic stabilization. This type of aid will probably be required for several years. But the

focus of the development effort has been to address the Sahelian production systems, some of the most primitive in the world and which are exacerbated by an exceptionally harsh environment extremely lacking in natural advantages.

AID's development effort initially had little information and understanding of the physical, institutional, and policy environment in which economic improvement was to take place. The acquisition of data was painful, costly, and time-consuming. However, systems were set up within the program to provide a continuous and increasing flow of data and to accumulate it as efficiently as possible. At the same time, AID mounted pilot investment initiatives to assure the availability of the variety of resources needed to achieve the program goals. It also began efforts to establish conducive official policies and public and private institutions, to provide training ranging from general literacy through all types of relevant technical specialties, to construct infrastructure, and to supply equipment.

The idea of the *coordinated* Sahel program is to maximize the effect of all donor and indigenous efforts in development by first agreeing on priority objectives and then seeing to the most advantageous application of all available resources. By organizing in a variety of ways under the auspices of the cooperative institutions established to implement the program, i.e., the CILSS (The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought in the Sahel) and the Club du Sahel (organization of the donors), the efficiencies of coordination in the Sahel are being realized. It has worked to provide information and research, to share institutional resources and scarce personnel, to mount parallel actions where individual efforts would have been inadequate, to resolve issues which threatened the success of everyone's effort, and to minimize contradictions and redundancies. Thus, while this cooperation is far from perfect, it has yielded tangible and substantial benefits.

In early 1984 development in the Sahel is in its early stages, Economic transformation of this region will only be realized over an extended period and then only if systematic and deliberate support is assured. In 1982 to 1983 and extending into 1984, AID, the Club, the CILSS and individual Sahelian countries carried out a number of assessments, audits, and evaluations in order to identify progress, problems, and required adjustments. These have led to and will continue to yield improvements, for AID, in the type and extent of AID initiatives; for the program, in coordination and focus; and for CILSS, in the efficient use of resources. This introspection

has revealed that the Program has achieved recovery and prevented the recurrence of disaster and has made some progress toward intermediate development targets. But there have also been a number of false starts and some tactical approaches have had to be revised. It has become clear that the Sahelian governments, because of limited financial resources (the recurrent cost problem), are not able to contribute as much to development as had been expected. Moreover, many of the initial development actions were too diverse or not consistent with the program priorities that shortages of indigenous skills were undercutting all initiatives.

A number of corrective measures have already been taken to address these issues, most importantly, the community has come to understand that hopes for rapid improvement in production and incomes based on implementation of better technologies are not realistic at this time because effective techniques in the Sahelian environment are not known or are too costly. In addition, we have found that we are obliged to assist to a much greater extent than anticipated with current consumption, economic stabilization, policy reform, and human capital formation.

### The Strategy for the AID Program

We assume a continuing annual aggregate of donor assistance to the Sahel, in 1983 terms, of about \$1.5 billion and an AID program of about \$90 to \$100 million in development assistance (1983 dollars) plus Public Law 480 commodities and some ESF. We will have to help with the immediate problem at sustaining current consumption levels and financial and economic stability by applying some of our resources to help with balance of payments, budgetary support, and food imports. The economic stabilization measures will be used to affect substantial reform in official policies, institutions, and practices where such adjustments are determined to be required for effective implementation of economic development. We will use local currencies generated from stabilization aid and food sales to finance local costs associated with improved production.

Given AID's own institutional priorities and strengths, we will focus our overall Sahel program and individual country programs in a few selected areas, consistent with our management capabilities. Priorities will be agricultural research and production, policy reform, health and family planning, training, infrastructure, conservation, and environmental protection. Not all of these initiatives need

be undertaken in each Sahel country because of funding and management limitations.

Given the agriculture production priority, AID will devote a preponderant share of its resources to dryland and irrigated food cultivation and animal husbandry. Regarding the latter, livestock are a very important resource for the Sahel. After extended research and trial interventions, we have become convinced that traditional practices of pastoralism are well adapted to the Sahelian circumstances. However, there are significant opportunities for services and investments which will help improve the efficiency and aggregate output of livestock products. Animal health services can be improved through known technology and veterinary techniques. The pastoralists have proven their willingness to purchase these benefits when they are available. In addition, surveys have revealed substantial areas of underused range and fodder because of the absence of nearby water points. Hence, AID's interventions in the pastoral areas of the Sahel will focus on health delivery and water points development, as well as on assisting the institutions which provide these services and training. In the agriculture areas, AID encourages mixed farming and animal traction and will undertake selective research into the cultivation of fodder particularly in conjunction with farm management and crop rotation.

After many trials of a variety of technical interventions, we still do not know enough about alternative varieties, technologies, or systems of production to implement any broad-scale reform in rain-fed food cultivation in the Sahel. It is true that there have been limited successes with innovations such as animal traction; special varieties of cereals; and new crops, e.g., maize; and water management. These adaptations are implemented when they appear to be appropriate. In addition, there will be continuing attention given to paced training and expansion of extension services, food crop protection, supply of production inputs, improvement of marketing and distribution, and policy reform. However, because the knowledge required to improve agricultural production adequately to achieve the program goals is not yet available, the first priority must be agricultural research. This research will require training; close collaboration with the farmers themselves; and intensive biological and technical investigation of promising alternatives of varieties, techniques, fertilizers, and farming systems. Concurrently, we will undertake to develop training institutions, the agricultural infrastructure already installed, and that enabling infrastructure needed to open up production possibilities.

Our investigations have convinced us that the most likely evolution of rain-fed agricultural production will not yield the output goals and schedule we have set for the program. This production will inevitably be hostage to periodic severe drought. It is therefore advisable and necessary to undertake a major effort in irrigation development to exploit the considerable volumes of river water which now pass through the Sahel unused. While much irrigation is currently practiced, only about 10 percent of the potential is being exploited. AID and others have hesitated to undertake major efforts in irrigation because of the expensive infrastructure required, the technical sophistication involved in the operation, and the dismal experiences with many initiatives to date. Yet, irrigation development is required to realize the region's production potential and assure food security and we are convinced that these problems can be overcome. We propose to proceed deliberately, to acquire the necessary knowledge in selected pilot investments, to rehabilitate infrastructure in place, and to gradually expand the activity as our competence improves.

Development of human resources is *sine qua non* for economic improvement. Overall literacy in the region does not exceed 20 percent. Unfortunately AID has neither the expertise (for this predominantly traditional French system) nor the resources to address the overall education requirement. But we do foresee devoting an order of 15 to 20 percent of our resources to a variety of training initiatives which will assure the expertise required by our own development activities to improve the capability of those who work with our and the overall development program, provide the knowledge required by the farmers and other target beneficiaries of our program and, selectively, contribute to general educational planning and education.

Activities in public health and the integration of family planning services into the public health systems contribute to the productive capability of the populace. They are also necessary humanitarian measures in a truly threatening and unhealthy environment, and address the demand side of the food sufficiency objective. The most effective interventions will be those which exploit the investment already made in institutions and personnel by helping organize the system better and by providing basic implements, medicines, contraceptives, infrastructure, and financial resources. The efficiency of purchase and distribution of pharmaceuticals will have pervasive systemic importance. Assistance and training to provide better planning and information in the health ministries will also have broad beneficial impact. The major service delivery inter-

ventions will be in the improvement or creation of maternal/child health clinics, the provision of services for oral rehydration (ORT), immunization against childhood diseases, and the implementation of rural health systems (pilot rural health worker projects). All the foregoing may include research and surveillance components. AID's health and family planning activities in any one country will comprise only one or a few of the above because of our limitations of personnel and resources.

Our contributions to environmental stabilization and energy conservation are through forest management, protection of the woodlands, reduction of fuelwood consumption, plus erosion control and soil conservation. There is continuing and accelerating degradation which stems principally from the cutting of trees and brush for fuel. There is yet no accessible solution to the fuelwood problem. Consequently, we are forced to employ measures which are useful in themselves but will only slow and not reverse deforestation. These actions include: 1) reform of official practices in management and regulation of the woodlands; 2) research to discover a means to appropriately counteract degradation; 3) training of researchers, teachers, and forest managers; 4) development and popularization of fuel conserving wood stoves (a process which has very promising near-term possibilities); 5) scientific management of natural forests; and 6) soil conservation and water management. While during the planning period there will be a constraint of limited absorp-

tion capacity in this sector, AID will press interventions to the optimum considering the fundamental importance of success in reversing environmental degradation.

### A Balanced Program

The variety of actions required for a competent program of agricultural production must be implemented as a coherent whole. First, we will have to identify and help bring about the necessary official policy and institutional environment to enable development to proceed. Training and education will be implemented as components of projects or will be designed to generate those talents required for the success of the production program. Public health interventions will occasionally be linked to agricultural initiatives or be located in those areas in which AID has undertaken other activities. Livestock and conservation activities are frequently integral to crop cultivation, etc. AID has learned in the Sahel to focus its efforts physically and sectorally to ease management and to exploit complementarities.

Comprehensive and coordinated agricultural development will be achieved through the coordination of all donor and Sahelian programs. This is accomplished through a system (still in evolution) of frequent discussion of activities, collaborative research, and information exchange at all levels through the Club/CILSS coordination efforts.