

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF URBAN FUNCTIONS
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN UPPER VOLTA

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HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

In 1977, USAID/Upper Volta responded positively to a DS/UD invitation to participate in the Urban Functions in Rural Development project. The Mission invited a DS/UD site selection/project design team to come to Upper Volta in the Spring of 1977. A report was prepared during that visit proposing that the project be carried out in the Fada N'Gourma and Koudougou ORD's under the auspices of the Ministry of Rural Development. The report was presented by the Mission to the Government of Upper Volta which, in turn, accepted the proposal. A DS/UD project design team was invited out in July 1977 to prepare the Project Agreement and a scope of work for a U.S. contractor.

Through a series of joint design and negotiating sessions involving the DS/UD team, representatives of USAID and Firmin Baouar, Chief of the Planning Cell, Ministry of Rural Development, the basic design and structure of the project were formulated. The project was to have a Voltaic professional staff consisting of a Director (Mr. Baouar) and two Senior Researchers who, together, would cover the fields of economics, statistics, geography and rural development. The Deputy Director and Technical Advisor for the staff was to be an American who would be contracted by DS/UD. Other project staff included a bilingual Voltaic secretary, a regular Voltaic secretary, and four drivers. Each professional

in the project, including the American, was to have a vehicle, to be furnished through the project. All project expenses, excepting those for the U.S. contractor, were to be covered by a grant to the Voltaic Government which was to be administered by the project leaders.

The DS/UD team left in July 1977 and final negotiations were conducted by the Mission during July and August. The ProAg was signed by the Mission and Voltaic Government on August 31, 1977. The PIO/T was prepared in Washington shortly thereafter by DS/UD and it was submitted to the A.I.D. Contract Office in November. There followed a series of AID/W delays which should be noted here since they are responsible for the project getting off to a slow and shaky start.

These delays won't be covered in detail in this report since they are a story unto themselves and are not the subject of this evaluation.

However, briefly, they are as follows:

1. It took from November 1977 to January 1978 to clear Small Business and determine that the project was to be a small business set-aside.
2. It took from January to May 1978 to issue an RFP due to changes in contract staff and lengthy delays in GC.
3. It took from August 1978 to January 1979 to select a contractor, again, due to lengthy delays on legal questions.
4. The U.S. contractor finally was signed on in February 1979 and was in the field in March.

Meanwhile, by May of 1978, the Ministry of Rural Development, which had had a signed ProAg dating from August 1977, had reached the end of its patience and threatened to cancel the project. In response, DS/UD and the Mission decided to let the project commence without the U.S. contractor. Pending selection and arrival of the U.S. contractor, it was decided that technical assistance would be furnished through short-term DS/UD TDY's and through Purchase Order contracts with outside technical experts. A DS/UD consultation (Chetwynd) took place in June/July 1978 in which a work plan was developed with the Voltaic staff and preparations made for a second, more intensive technical consultation which was to take place in August/September (Perry and Southall). These two visitations succeeded in moving the project ahead technically. The Voltaic staff already had purchased vehicles and supplies, hired the full project team and begun the data collection process.

However, the delay between the departure of Perry and Southall in September 1978 and the arrival of the U.S. contractor in March 1979 was too long. The project floundered technically and Voltaic and Mission frustrations again mounted. We are fortunate that the U.S. contractor and the Voltaic technical staff were able to quickly generate new momentum. This has brought us finally to this mid-project review which finds the project going through a series of administrative difficulties but at the same time, making commendable progress technically and substantively.

PROGRESS TOWARD ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Statement of Objectives. In order to evaluate the success or failure of a project one must judge whether the project objectives are being met.

The project objectives consist of the following:

1. To carry out urban functions studies of the centers in Fada and Koudougou ORDs;
2. To develop a plan for strengthening the contributions of urban centers to rural development;
3. To include in this development plan a list of future project priorities which, based on project findings, are determined to be appropriate for strengthening urban facilities and services in rural development. These projects may include the upgrading or strengthening of existing facilities and services as well as the initiation of new ones;
4. To increase the capacities of the Ministry of Rural Development, the Agricultural Planning Cell and the Koudougou and Fada ORDs in the planning methodologies and processes of urban/rural development.

Statement of How Objectives are Being Met. During the first two quarters of the project, information was gathered concerning the services and facilities of each center in the two project ORDs. Based on this information, scalograms were constructed for all cantons in both regions and for each region. This provided the project staff with some preliminary idea of the relative importance and influence of particular centers. At this time, a preliminary selection of about twenty centers in each region

has been made and detailed studies conducted on about seventeen. The primary criterion used in selecting these centers for future consideration was functional complexity. However, other criteria, such as population, areal density, agricultural potential and receptivity of inhabitants to innovation, were used in selecting sites, as well.

The detailed studies are carried out through site visits. Visual inspections of the facilities and services are made and informal discussions held with civil servants responsible for these facilities as well as with canton chiefs, canton secretaries, village chiefs and private citizens. This not only provides information about the condition of the facilities and services recorded in the initial inventory but activates the participatory component of the project, as well. The reaction to this approach has been "uniformly favorable and sometimes enthusiastic" according to the American contractor.

The next six months will be spent in the following manner:

First, the detailed studies of the selected sites will be completed. According to the project staff, this should take approximately two additional months.

Second, market studies will be carried out in selected markets in both regions. These studies will provide information on the types of products bought and sold, the numbers of buyers and sellers and the distance from which they come. In general, the purpose will be to determine the area of influence of these places. In the Fada ORD the project may be able to benefit from ongoing research being carried out by the Michigan State University team. This will help cut expenses which

would normally come out of the special studies fund. It has been suggested that the market studies in Koudougou ORD be contracted out to a research institute such as SAED. If this is not possible, surveyors from the Ministry of Rural Development may be called upon.

Third, mapping of population densities, agricultural potential, functional complexity of centers and other information would be quite useful to the project. In all likelihood this will have to be done by a trained cartographer from the Institut Géographique or SAED.

Fourth, based on criteria yet to be specified by the project team, projects and project sites will be selected. Projects should include the provision or upgrading of such services and facilities as storage facilities, agricultural credit, merchandizing of agricultural inputs like tools and fertilizers, and health and education services.

Fifth, the development of a more long-range plan, encompassing centers at all levels of the urban hierarchy, will be concluded.

Sixth, the continued transmission of skills and competence from the American contractor to the Voltaic staff. Although there is no formal or systematic training, the project team shares an office and discusses all phases of the project. The two project researchers, with the project Deputy Director, have become an effective team through this mode of operation. The relative strengths of each team member are being developed and exploited effectively and this is evidenced in the rapid technical progress that is being made, the internal efforts to improve project management and economies and the apparently excellent relationships the team has developed with local officials in the two project regions. The two researchers seem to have a strong personal commitment to the project and are contributing virtually 100% of their time to project business (80% is called for in the Project Agreement and Implementation Letters).

Criticisms: Technical. Under, at times, very difficult circumstances this project has made remarkable progress. However, one technical criticism is that the criteria for final site and project selection are not well developed or specified. While needs have become evident in the course of the special studies, it is unclear which projects should take precedence and at which locations. It is suggested that a model for the development of the two regions be designed.

PROBLEMS CONSTRAINING PROJECT PROGRESS

Administrative Problems. Owing to the accidental wreck of one of the project vehicles and to an issue that developed between the Ministry of Rural Development and the Mission over the amount of time the Voltaic Project Director was able to contribute to the project, the third quarter's project budget funds were held up by the Mission. This could have been a very serious constraint to the progress of the project. However, using project savings from the first two quarters the project was able to continue uninterrupted. The project team should be commended on their ability to surmount this problem. These administrative problems have now been resolved and the third quarter's funds advanced. Details of these administrative matters are contained in the project files. (See PIL No. 6.)

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF PROJECT

An important objective of the Urban Functions in Rural Development project is to provide a portfolio of projects to enhance rural development in the two project regions and plan for their implementation. This corresponds to the general program direction taken by the Mission on rural development. However, at the present time we can only speculate as to the outcome of these projects. Evaluation of the planned pilot projects, yet to be designated by the project team, will indicate the true impact on rural development.

Perhaps, even more important to development are the process aspects of the project. As stated earlier in this report, one of the objectives of this project is to increase the Ministry's and ORD's capacity for understanding the processes of urban/rural development and for employing planning methodologies. The evaluation team feels that this objective is being met within the Agricultural Planning Cell of the Ministry of Rural Development. However, more effort needs to be made to involve the ORDs. A recommendation is made in the next section of this report for dealing with this problem.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Technically the project appears to be moving ahead smoothly. As the project now stands, the first phase will be completed by the end of

March 1980. Due to this early completion, other administrative savings and the limited need for special consultants which had been planned, there may be as much as \$100,000 remaining in the project budget. This should be used to implement some of the recommendations of the project on a pilot and demonstration basis, if an appropriate program can be worked out with the Voltaic Government.

From an administrative standpoint the project has performed less well. However, it is felt that the major problems have been resolved and that administration will be much improved for the balance of the project.

Recommendations. There are several basic recommendations that emerge from this evaluation, namely:

1. That seminars be held at the end of the study, planning and project identification phase of the project in March 1980 to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Rural Development, the ORDs and other governmental organizations to use the planning methodologies introduced in this project and to understand the processes of rural development and its relationship to urban development. These seminars would be organized and presented by the project staff.
2. That the final evaluation be carried out not only by DS/UD but by representatives of the Ministry of Rural Development and the Mission, as well. This would reduce greatly the danger of conflict of interest and provide a greater diversity of inputs.
3. That the pilot and demonstration or follow-on phase of this project be designed with extreme care

with respect to administration, finance and project monitoring and evaluation. Perhaps an accountant can be employed to help establish the accounting/administrative system.

LESSONS LEARNED

A number of lessons have been learned from this project that may be valuable to the administration of other similar projects:

1. It appears essential to have a Voltaic Project Director who can look after administrative matters. More routine matters such as bookkeeping should be delegated to other members of the project staff.
2. It also appears essential to have American technical assistance in projects where concepts and techniques are new or unfamiliar.
3. More communication is required between the Mission and DS/UD. This evaluation team arrived from Washington to find that this project had serious administrative problems. The only indication of difficulties was a cable stating that there were "urgent problems." Had the situation been made clear sooner, DS/UD could have acted with the Mission at an earlier date to find a solution.
4. One cannot depend on complicated analytical tools in a situation where the data base is weak and the urban structure simple. This is the case in Upper Volta and we feel that the project team has done well to employ more qualitative measures.
5. A formal system of accounting should be established at the beginning of a project. This is extremely important to avoid, from the outset, any misunderstandings about how funds are to be accounted for and managed. If possible, a professional accountant,

auditor, or controller should be employed in this task. To this day the project's accounts as presented in this project do not reconcile with its bank statements.

6. The Project Director should have no major responsibilities besides those to the project. Also, he should be paid only the project salary and not the project salary plus his normal salary from the Ministry. The project salaries, however, should be set at a level adequate to draw talented personnel.