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END OF TOUR REPOR

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CHAPTER I

GETTING THE PROJECT MOVING

I first became involved with the Project in October 1976 while I was still acting Peace Corps Director when the then RDO/Niamey, Al Baron, requested my participation with the re-drafting of the original project paper which had just been rejected by AID/W. I quickly became very interested in the project and after several work sessions with Al Baron he asked me in November 1976 if I would be interested in managing the project when my tour with the Peace Corps ended in February 1977. I responded that I was definitely interested in the job but that I would prefer a direct hire appointment in order to build upon the almost eight years of creditable U.S. Government Service that I accumulated while working with the Peace Corps. It was agreed that an effort would be made to bring me on as a direct hire employee but that in the meantime USAID/Niger would hire me under a Personal Services Contract.

It was from this point on, November 1976, several months before I left the Peace Corps, that Al Baron confided much of the pre-project work to me. This primarily consisted of representing the mission at various COTEDEP meetings and keeping the GON Project Coordinator, Ibrahim Tanko, and the Ministry of Rural Development's (MDR) Canadian Advisor, Yves Boulanger, abreast of work being done to revise the project paper (PP). Of course, I also provided the Program Officer, Herb Miller, and Al Baron with some of the information they needed to re-write the PP. I must give credit to both of these men. I was really impressed at the amount of overtime they spent in re-writing the rejected PP which had been prepared by Development Alternatives, Inc. the previous Spring-Summer (May-July 1976).

It is noteworthy that at the time this delay in the approval of the PP was considered catastrophic and unprecedented. Subsequent experience has demonstrated that the phase I PP experience was about par for the course. In many ways the Phase II PP preparation and approval experience was worse. A quick review of the chronological record of important milestones in the evolution of the Project which I have included in annex A to this paper prompts one to think that AID could do a much better job in terms of the time it takes to process its paperwork. In annex D I provide some candid impressions on this process and AID bureaucracy in general.

In February I left the Peace Corps and I returned to the U.S. to attend the delivery of my second child and to take a few weeks of leave. I was just getting settled down in Tucson and my wife had just finished her first pre-natal check-up there when I received a call from AID/W requesting that I commence my PSC immediately in AID/W where I was needed to assist with the processing of the NDD I PP. Consequently, I loaded my wife (eight months pregnant), my mother-in-law and my 3 year daughter into the car and drove back to Washington after an absence of only two weeks. Thus in March 1977 I began in earnest my employment with AID. I thought at the time that I'd only be in AID/W a few weeks. Certainly that's all the time which should have been needed to gain approval of the NDD I PP and to be sworn-in as a direct hire employee. Little did I know what I was up against. I never imagined that the PP would not be approved until May 31 and that I would not leave Washington until June 26 one day after being sworn-in as a direct hire employee.

I cannot begin to describe here what those initial four months in AID/W were like. I could write several volumes on this experience alone and I am sure they would all be heavily censored. In brief those initial four months with AID were a real "baptism of fire" for me and I was (and still am) astounded at the clumsy way AID does business. It was clear to me at the time that if I had not been working full time at getting the PP through the AID/W labyrinth that the PP would have never been approved. It was very upsetting to me to discover that there were more people interested in finding ways to hold up the project than there were who were interested in finding ways to get it approved.

If it had not been for the energetic intervention of Dave Shear, then Director of AFR/SFWA, the hard work of Chuck Musick, Deputy Director of AFR/DR/SWAP, and the "gutsy" way Jim Kelly, Director of AFR/DR/SWAP, spearheaded the final PP approval thrust, I am convined the project authorization would have been delayed for several more months. Given that the more time it takes to clear a document in AID/W the greater the likelihood that more things will crop up to obstruct it, such an additional delay would have probalby killed the project.

I am also convinced that I would never been hired as a direct hire employee if I had not been in Washington during this time to "work on my case". As it was, all my work on pushing through my direct hire employment came to nought on June 19, 1977 when I received a letter from the Personnel Office informing me that they did not have a vacancy for which I was qualified. This ocurred in spite of the fact that the SPAR for the position, NDD Project Officer, had been specifically tailored to fit my background and the mission and AFR/SWAP was actively pushing my candidacy for the position. The urgency of this matter became accentuated when Haven North, DAA/AFR, declared in one of the project review meetings that the AID manager for the project should definitely be a DH employee. Thus it appeared that unless the Personnel Office could be made to change its mind that I would be out of a job. Well, to make a long story short, Jay P. Johnson, at the time Deputy Director of RDO/Niamey, happened to be in AID/W at the time and he, Gordon MacArthur, OIC for Niger/Upper Volta/Chad/Togo, and other AFR/SFWA personnel were able to persuade the Personnel Office to change their minds. It never has been clear to me exactly how they did this but, the fact is, that once they did do it, it was like I was dealing with a different Personnel Office. Who would have ever thought that it would be possible for me to be sworn in an June 26 and to arrive in Niamey on June 28 and, just think, all this happened during the formidable hiring freeze of 1977.

The Initiation

Given the experience I had with AID/W I thought all my troubles would be behind me once I arrived in Niamey. Of course, this was not true but, at least for the most part, the troubles I encountered once in Niger were more comprehensible. (After all it is easier to accept certain deficiencies on the part of a developing country than to accept them from a country like ours which is supposedly super-developed and ultra efficient by camparison. The fact of the matter is that I have had much more trouble from the AID side in implementing this project than from the GON side). My major task after arriving in Niamey was the drafting of the project grant aggreement (PGA) and negotiating it with the GON. I believe NDD I was the first project in Niger to use the so-called new PGA format; consequently, there was some novelty in doing this but there was certainly nothing new about the amount of time it took to sign the PGA.

The months of July and August 1977 were spent in almost constant negotiations with the then Secretaire d'Etat, Mahamane Brah, of the Ministry of Rural Development. The major question obstructing quick agreement concerned the exact make-up of the project's administrative structure. (This still remains today a principal, critical point of contention with the GON). With an August 30 obligation deadline facing us we finally decided to accept a compromise version of the description of the administrative structure. We accepted this with the knowledge that we would try to amend this passage in the PGA later on. (We did manage do to this later on and this led to a protracted battle within MDR and between the UNCC and project management which has not yet ceased) Again thanks are owed to Yves Boulanger, Canadian advisor MDR; without his assitance we would have never signed the PGA on August 29, 1977, one day before the AID deadline.

While all these negotiations were going on the famous vehicle waiver battle of the summer of 1977 was also taking place. Originally, there was a waiver in the PP for the local purchase of 25 vehicles. AID/W unilaterally deleted this waiver request from the PP in the belief that the PP would never be approved if it was maintained. The mission fought back hard by sending a hard-thumping series of cables (these still make for interesting reading) requesting that the waiver be restored. After much struggle we received a telephone massage from AID/W advising us that our waiver was being granted and we could go ahead and buy the Land Rovers that I and Sid Bliss had managed to keep reserved at Niger Afrique during this entire period. I had my P.O. in hand and after receiving GON approval I was on my way to Niger Afrique to purchase the vehicles but just as I was going out the door the Embassy called to tell me that AID/W had just called again and the deal was off. Evidently, the IH people applied presure in the right places and turned AID/W around on this one. This put me in such an embarrasing position with Niger Afrique that I haven't been able to show my face down there since. Of course, this meant we were locked into our sorry saga of woe with IH vehicles. The saddest thing of all is that we are no further now on this vehicle purchase policy than we were four years ago. This vehicle issue is such a burning one for project umplementation that it amazes me that so little can be done about it. Again outsiders might justly wonder about the seriousness of our commitment to development. May be its like one of the many IH representatives who visited me said: "AID exists to promote the commercial interests of U.S. firms and, if it doesn't do that, it shouldn't exist".

Following the signing of the FGA on August 29, 1977 we offered the GON the possibility of AID doing all the first year U.S. procurement before it satisfied all the conditions precedent. All the GON had to do was autorize us to go ahead and initiate these procurement actions. The GON(MDR) refused to allow this except for the ordering of vehicles. It preferred waiting until its Project Director was named before completing the remaining actions.

Early in November a director, Adamou Guisso, was named. This was a surprise because this was not the person we had agreed upon - and it was shocking because this man in no way qualified for the job. Apparently this action was taken without the knowledge of the Minister, Boulama Manga, who happened to be away on a trip when the nomination was made. When the Minister returned he put his Ministry in order and officially named on November 26, 1977 Saley Moussa (Commandant) as director of the project. Given that Saley Moussa is one of the most senior and most capable employees of the Ministry, this was considered a major accomplishment and a key determinant in the subsequent implementation of the project. It was an accomplisment that could not have been ~~obtained~~ ACHEIVED if I had not known Saley Moussa previously during my days with the Peace Corps and if Yves Boulanger had not engineered his nomination through the MDR. I am convinced that if almost anyone else had been named to the GON Project Director position that the project would be a year or more behind of where it is now. If my performance in managing this project has been judged good, this is to a large degree due to the outstanding performance of my Nigerien counterpart.

The Start-Up and Staffing

On January 2, 1978 Saley Moussa was finally able to leave his own job and come to work for the project. It was on this day that we found ourselves staring at each other in an empty office in the second floor of the small Rivoli Builging. We started from scratch. We had nothing. No office furniture. No secretaries. Nothing. We borrowed and begged and made do. We operated more or less like this until September 1978. Althoug we were resource poor during this period, I still consider it the most productive days of my tour in Niger. The foundation for the implementation of the project was laid during this time and the momentum which resulted from these initial, highly energized months helped carry us through to the end of Phase I.

My experience during this period underscored my belief that adding more people to the project management staff does not necessarily increase its efficiency. A lean, alert and quick acting management unit is to be prefered to an overstaffed one where a lot of time must be given to discussing, clearing paperwork with other members of the staff and to supporting this staff. It was with this in mind that the project moved very cautiously in hiring expatriate personnel. There were eleven years of expatriate personal services provided for in the PP but the project only used about 5 of them. I believe that people should not be hired just because it is provided for in the PP and that it must be clearly evident that there is a real need for a person before he or she is hired. Of course, whoever is hired should be fully capable in a language, technical and cultural sense to begin carrying a full load beginning with the first day of work. It was with the latter in mind that the project finally engaged John Mullenax, project advisor-agronomist, in October 1978 for a period of 2 years 10 months. John's previous work experience with Africare/Niger and his long years of experience elsewhere in Africa made him an invaluable asset to the project. His African experience, technical degree and FSI-4 in French made him a rare find indeed. Of course, my previous association with John when we were both working with the Peace Corps in Togo certainly facilitated his recruitment. This was only one of many instances where I found that my previous nine years of experience with the Peace Corps proved to be extremely useful.

It was not until the last year of the project that two additional expatriates, Deborah Wagner and Thomas Shaw, were hired an one year contracts. Both Debbie and Tom were former PCV's in Niger and, thus were able to begin working immediately without any of the usual adaptation problems. We did receive some criticism when we hired these two people because they did not have previous professional experience and high level diplomas in fields considered appropriate for the positions for which they were hired.

There were a lot of people who would have preferred that we hire Ph.D's with at least 10 years of specialized experience in their field. Of course, finding people with this kind of backgroud who want to come and live and work in Niger for 2-3 years is not very easy. However this was not the reason the project did not try to hire these kind of people. The real reason was that our collective experience has shown us that these kinds of theoretically oriented people rarely do a good job as the development practitioners the project really needs to carry out the series of relatively simple tasks which have been assigned it. Yes, the tasks facing the project are simple ones - but they are made tremendously difficult because they have to be accomplished in large multiples across a wide area in a precise period of time and by the fact that there are inherent constraints and uncontrollable points of resistance built into the local working environment which are often impossible to overcome. No amount of training can guarantee that one will be able to cope with this environment in a successful manner. It's a rare person who naturally possesses the "right stuff" required to perform well as a manager of an AID Project in such an environment.

The Expatriates

In view of the foregoing paragraphs it should be clear that I was not too happy to see the number of expatriates to be recruited for Phase II expanded from the original 2 or 3 to 5. I realize that there will be plenty for these people to do but I believe that it would be better that some Nigeriens be assigned these tasks even though this might mean that the results would be inferior. There are real problems posed by bringing in a lot of high powered, sophisticated expatriates who will operate at the "space age" level when most Nigeriens are still learning to cope with nineteenth century innovations. The real danger here is that the expatriates will set up project implementation systems that the Nigeriens will never be able to maintain after their departure.

It would be better to minimize the number of expatriates and maximize the number of average Nigerian participants and build the system according to what these Nigerians can do. A real successful project is one which is able to accomplish its objectives through the use of mediocre local personnel. Our project implementation plans should be built on this reality. If the activities our projects are designed to implement are going to work over the long run, they must be able to be implemented by average caliber Nigerian personnel.

One of my immediate concerns about the large number of expatriates which are to be recruited for Phase II is how the GON Project Director will relate to them. Already in Phase one, I and the other expatriates almost had to stand in line to see the Project Director. How is he going to find the time to cope with the five active, alien minds which will surround him during phase II ? The current director may be able to cope but he is due to be replaced soon and It is very likely that this replacement will be swamped by all the work generated by the expatriates. The risk here is that the project will end up being one which is conceived, implemented, evaluated and re-designed by expatriates. The AID officials responsible for overseeing the project should take every possible measure to ensure that the project remains "Nigerenized" and does not become an artificially grafted creation of some outsiders. In this instance, it would be much better to have a lot of Nigeriens running around catching mice in the traditional way than have a lot of highly educated expatriates sitting around developing plans for a new mouse trap, and taking up all the Nigerien personnel's time with meetings, discussions, etc. on this new item while many practical job tasks are left undone. In summary, the Project Manager must be results oriented, but only to the extent that the results could be obtained by local personnel acting alone.

Another concern of mine is the high cost and heavy administrative support requirements of expatriate personnel. All this may be attributed to today's high cost of development. (This in itself presents a delemma in that there are serious questions on whether or not such development can be afforded and, if it can, should it). However, I believe it behooves us to make every effort to minimize the percentage of project funds which are alloted to the financing of expatriate costs. During Phase I we prided ourselves in having the lowest expatriate cost to total budget rations of all the productivity projects while at the same time maintaining an output which, dollar for dollar, was probably equal to or better than of the other projects. One thing we have learned from Phase I is that we have little to learn from these other projects and that there is not much they are doing which is any better than what we are doing. Also, during the past few months, there have been certain hints made by the GON that it is beginning to appreciate our integrated management style and the efforts we have made to start up a project in a zone hitherto neglected by Niger's development program. This is a big turn around from previous years when all the talk was about the Maradi project. Many now think that the separate, SEMI-PRIVATE dominated management unit of the Maradi project with its classical accelereated concentration - saturation approach to development may, in the long-run, not prove any more effective than other approaches. In this respect there are those who believe that perhaps the biggest impact of the project has been in the way it has changed MDR thinking.

Another impediment to engaging expatriates is that it is almost impossible to satisfy AID contract regulations. My experience in this mission has been that without fail all contracts will be delayed, no matter how well they are prepared or how far in advance they are prepared. The contract preparation and clearance process is inordinately cumbersome and filled with an unending series of unforseen pitfalls.

Preparing and trying to clear contracts through this mission has been one of the most exasperating encounters I have had with the AID bureaucracy. This is particularly true for Host Country Contracts which are hampered by the fact that the mission has little experience with them (although according to AID policy host country contracting is to be encouraged) and that it is apparent that AID does not really believe in them. It is my opinion that host country contracts as now conceptualized by the mission are a farce. I base this on the fact that at present the mission is evidently unwilling to permit the GON any flexibility at all in the terms and conditions offered under its AID-financed host country contracts. It now seems that the mission is requiring that the GON go beyond a strict adherence to the usual "boilerplate" clauses demanded by AID by insisting that it follow by the letter every word and nuance which would appear in a similar direct AID contract. For example, this insistance has been carried to the ridiculous point of requiring that the GON use pounds instead of kilos for baggage weights.

All this is a real sore point with me because I pioneered the use of host country contracts in Niger. Throughout 1978 and most of 1979 I drafted and cleared many versions of an individual host country contract and after many heart wringing set-backs I finally came up with a model contract format that was approved by the REDSO contracting officer and proclamed by the mission as a standard format which should be used by other projects. The sad story is that this model was only good until their was a change in mission personnel concerned with contracting. Without fail everytime a new mission member arrived who was involved in the contracting process he or she would eagerly demonstrate bureaucractic one upsmanship by showing what was wrong with our contracts.

Some of the saddest chapters of mission history that have taken place while I have been here concern the contractors who have had to suffer through indaterminable periods of joblessness while the mission wrestled with the re-discovery of preferred contracting language and AID's contracting regulations. The must unsettling aspect of all this is that those responsible for these long delays in the approval of contracts (and other key project documents) seem to be oblivious of the needs of the project and the negative consequences their actions have on project implementation. AID could do a much better job of project implementation if it could some how streamline its procurement regulations and its internal clearance processes. I find it disconcerting that in this mission alone most key project documents (and many routine ones also) require six levels of clearances.

Local Personnel

I will not go into detail here on the many problems involved in the recruitment and management of local personnel. Let it suffice that critical problems exist in this area which present formidable obstacles to project implementation. I attempted to describe many of these problems in a special page entittled " A Brief Presentation on the Local Employment Practices and Problems of AID Financed Projects in Niger " which was completed and widely distributed within the mission on August 15, 1980.

In brief, it is very easy to list in the PP, all the local and expatriate personnel you will need to implement the project, but it is an entirely different matter when it comes to recruiting them. The available pool of qualified candidates in both groups is very small and the benefits the project can offer them are so limited by existing employment practices that it makes it difficult for the project to complete with other organizations which are often seeking these same scarce personnel resources. Whenever a position is mentioned in a PP it should be made

clear at the same time how the project plans to locate and attract a qualified individual to fill this position. I raised this question early in the review of the Phase I PP and I was told that "when you want a pound of nails you go to the hardware store". Well, experience has shown that the cupboard is almost bare when it comes to finding the "right" people for project jobs in the Sahel.

Project Implementation - The Record Speaks for Itself

I do not intend to go into a detailed description here of the incredible Phase I implementation story. There exists ample documentation on this phase and the reader who is seriously interested in learning more about the project can consult the list of major project publications which I've included as annex B. These documents and futher information contained in the project files (both the GON's and AID's) are available at the Project Management Unit Office. For those who are in a hurry to know what the project did during Phase ONE I have included as annex C a chart which lists the original project objectives as presented in the Phase I PP next to the actual accomplishments of the project. I believe that if one reads all the literature listed in annex B and graeps what had to take place to achieve those accomplishments listed in annex C, he or she should probably be awarded on honorary degree in rural development. Certainly, the only thing new about the project that you don't know is contained in its reports you have not read.

In view of the past Phase I implementation experience and the upcoming struggle to implement Phase II there are some things which I believe need to be again briefly described if we are not to repeat past mistakes. I have attempted below to succinctly present many of these items and it is my hope that those involved with the implementation of Phase II of the project, and similar efforts elsewhere, will bear the following in mind before acting on any of these items.

AREAS OF CONCERN

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Best Available Document

The biggest problem facing the project is the inefficient, poorly adapted administrative framework within which the project must work. Project managemen been given the very heavy responsibility of implementing a very complex, costly undertaking but has no control over the divergent GON service and administrativ personnel who it has to rely upon for the execution of its Project Activities. is like fighting a battle with soldiers who receive their orders from a foreig The exasperating conflicts posed by such an incongruent administrative system further aggravated by the rapid turnover among GON personnel. In brief, the p administrative situation critically hampers the project's progress to such an that I am forced to believe that we cannot have much hope for rural developmen Niger until the GON reforms its existing rural services delivery systems. Cer many of the development problems facing Niger would be solved if administrativ structures were firmly established.

There is no doubt in my mind that the existing GON service structure cann the job. They have proven themselves a failure many times over since their es ment. Consequently, I believe any further resources devoted to their reinfor to be wasteful. I am convinced that if the GON services had not existed we wo have been much further ahead in the implementation of the project. The GON mu decide on which way it wants to go. Either it maintains its sectorialized, in existing structure or it replaced it with a regionally, decentralized, coordinated, integrated structure which can better do the job required. It if decides to keep the former, there is no need for the project management unit to exist and all the resources previously channel through the project management unit can then be distrubuted directly among the services. Of course, I believe this would be a total waste and, therefore, AID should never finance such a scheme. It has been my hope that the different productivity project management units would serve to demonstrate to Niger the merits of an integrated development structure at the departmental level and that these units would

~~It is extremely depressing to me that in spite of the~~ obviousness of the situation I have outlined above that we were unable to do very much in the way of improving the project's Phase II administrative structure. Despite our attempts to include some small remedies in the language of the grant agreement, it is apparent to me that Phase II will suffer the same administrative humilations which afflicted Phase I.

TRAINING OF GON PERSONNEL

The lack of trained Nigerien personnel is often bemoaned as a major constraint to development in Niger. There are instances where this may be true but I believe that in all too many cases this is a false problem. Niger definitely does not need more cadre like most of the cadre it has now. The problem is not one of a lack of training or insufficient personnel numbers but one of conviction, discipline and close supervision. For example, there are more than enough salaried GON "bodies" in the NDD Project zone but there output is almost nil. Why is this ? In my ipinion it is primarily due to the careless, easy going work style which is deeply embedded in the minds of the GON fonctionnaire class. Of course, the socio-cultural origins of the Nigerien also play an important role in the lethargic, often times irresponsible (from our point of view) way they approach their jobs. Another factor is that most Nigerien cadre have only recently received a formal education and have had to start to work, often times at high levels, without any role model to follow or any idea of what putting in a full day's work really means. No amount of training can overcome these glaring deficiencies in the mental framework with which most Nigerien cadre approch their jobs. No amount of teaching can guarantee that GON personnel will automatically become disciplined, organized

workers dedicated to high job standards and committed to the objectives of their assignment. It is just not in the average "Nigerien" to be this way and it probably will not be for generations to come.

I realized that in many circles I will be condemned for some the things I've started in the foregoing paragraph. The subject is a perplexing, slippery one to come to grips with and it is easy to be criticized as being paternalistic when one attempts to breach it. This is unfortunate because it is evident that it is in this area of "mental intangibles" that reside many of the ~~implements~~ OBSTACLES to development. Certainly, high Nigerien officials have not hesitated to recognize this development predicament and they are fond of often making public statements which decry the need to convert the Nigerien mentality and to "responsibiliser" their civil servants.

Whatever the case it is irrefutably clear to me that we do not need more cadre in the NDD Project zone and that the existing cadre already in place do not need more training to be able to do their jobs correctly. An analysis of the tasks which project zone cadre are required to perform would readily show that these are basecally simple tasks which require a low level of effort, elementary planning and organization (many of which could be performed by uneducated peasants).

In almost every instance, GON cadre in the field are already overtrained for the jobs they have been assigned. The problem is not that can't do their jobs but that they don't do them. An initial remedy for this problem would be a structural reform which provided for tighter employee control and supervision. There needs to be a solidly reinforced system of rewards for those who perform well and sanctions against those who perform poorly and most of all a well-disciplined, competent corps of administrative "leaders" who are unafraid to be tough with those employees who fail in their duties. These "leaders" should not be recruited on the basis of what diploma they have (another curse upon the development effort in Niger) but on their ability to do their job and to get others to do theirs. Above all they should be above all suspicion of corruption, given the large number of Nigerien cadre (estimated of 20%) who have been in jail for one reason or another and the even larger number who should of been in jail, this latter requirement will probably be difficult to fill.

Selecting Nigeriens for Training

The system for selecting Nigeriens for training is weak in that it is academically oriented instead of being based on past employee performance and his/her future potential. The current selection by an essay exam system adiministered by the GON's Ministry of Public Service is fair in that those who do best on the exam are those who are selected for training. The problem is that those who are selected are not always the best candidates in terms of performance, number of years of statisfactory service, proven competence, leadership qualities, etc. These factors should also be taken into consideration when selecting candidates for training. The problem is that these criteria are not considered and the result is that AID has financed - and will continue to finance - the education of many Nigeriens whose performance after training will be nc better than before training. This situation must be changed if we are not to continue to waste the U.S. taxpaper's money.

The present GON selection system is definitely biased toward younger GON personnel whose recent formal education makes it easier for them to pass the selection exam. Older, tried and tested, personnel with a proven track record have more difficulty passing such academic type exams and, thus many of the best Nigerien personnel, find themselves unable to accede to those positions which according to their performance record, should be justly theirs. For example, AID financed scholarships were recently awarded to two successful exam takers, Adamou Guisso and Amadou Dodo. If you recall, the former was originally named as the NDD project director but was rejected for reasonss of probable incompetency and lack of experience. Following this, he quickly passed through three different assignments in little more than a year. Evidently his job performance was so poor that efforts were made to re-assign him as soon as it was discovered how poor a worker he really is. However, somehow M. Guisso has a knack for passing exams and be was selected for M.S. level training in the US. This means he wil

will be back in Niger in a couple of years with a higher civil service grade which will require that he be assigned to a position where he will probably supervise employees more senior and competent than he is. The case of M. Dodo is similar, except that he had previously obtained a scholarship (after years of trying) to study in Canada, but went on to flunk out of this program. On returning to Niger, M. Dodo began again applying for scholarships and was able to score high enough on a selection exam to obtain an AID financed scholarship for study in the U.S. How Dodo will do any better studying in English in the U.S. than he did studying in French in Canada is beyond me. Unless AID can have more say over the kind of people who are selected for training, it should stop funding these kind of programs which do nothing more but increase the public payroll burdens and complicate public administration by providing a lot of overgraded, poor performing personnel which are hard to place.

I realize I have been knocking training pretty hard, and I will be condemned by those people who are adherrents to the "teach a man to fish and he'll eat well the rest of his life" philosophy. The point is that you don't need highly sophisticated, costly training to learn how to fish and no amount of training will make someone fish who is disinclined to do so. A big danger in all this training and educational institutional building is that it creates a large recurrent cost burden which does nothing to improve conditions at the grass roots level of the country. The case of Mali which has a plethora of trained cadre supports this point. Mali is currently unable to fund its overblown civil servant payroll and, if it could do so in a reliable fashion, this would not make any difference in its development except that it takes money away from more effective development efforts. Perhaps one should do an evaluation in Chad on how the life of the average peasant was changed when public services were stopped during the recent war there. In brief, I believed we have overvalued the importance of training and that we are doing too much training for the sake of training when we should be concentrating our efforts elsewhere. If we gave the best possible training to every adult Nigerien, this would not automatically mean that Niger would then be "developed".

Adult Literacy

Before anyone envisions undertaking any king of literacy program, he or she should evaluate NDD I's experience. This experience clearly proved that mass literacy programs are hardly worth the trouble and expense. Out of the thousands of people enrolled in the project's literacy centers, only a handful graduated with sufficient knowledge to be considered minimally literate in their native language. The costs in terms of successful graduates are enormous and the weak results certainly do not justify the funding outlay and the recurrent costs created by the establishment of the Literacy Service. There are those who believe that if there were better instructors, better supervisors, better planning, better everything, etc., that the problems obstructing the success of literacy programs could be overcome. I don't buy this. It is like saying that if Niger was like Switzerland, everything would be as it should. I believe that all efforts being made to make better literacy programs will only result in creating an increased recurrent cost burden and in saddling Niger with a greater number of dismally unproductive fonctionnaires.

In general, most rural people are not very interested in learning to read and write in their own language. Why should they be ? There is little profit to be gained from going through the time consuming, mind-numbing process of picking up a rudimentary knowledge of their language. In the majority of cases, they don't need to be literate to be successful in what they do. If by some act of God they do become literate, there's not much they can do with this new luxury. There is almost no literature available to read and if there was, no poor peasant is going to part with a few precious CFA to purchase such literature. There is no one they can write to. In Niger, almost the only letters ever written are those needed to take care of some GON administrative problems - and, in

this case, letters in the local languages are not acceptable because almost ~~none of the GON administrators can read them. If Niger is really~~ serious about literacy, it should start by requiring that all its public servants learn it first, and by requiring it in the formal education system. Once it is able to easily do and afford all this and all these people are able to profitably use their additional language ability - , then it should start worrying about the poor rural masses.

Radio Clubs

During the first 2 years of Phase I, the project experimented with the use of playing audio cassettes to village groups as a way of stimulating fruitful discussion and learning about pertinent development topics. This program was carried out by the National Radio Club Association (ACRN). This activity was terminated after one year because the poorly staffed (2 cadre, 1 secretary and 1 driver) ACRN did not have the capacity to implement this activity to the satisfaction if the project. In particular, it was unwilling to record the reactions of villagers to the recorded programs and to re-incorporate these into cassette programming. Also a program like this requires a lot of means if it is to be carried out on a widespread basis. It is again just another activity which is nice, but one which futher disperses project resources in a way that makes it hard to concentrate on those other activities which have to be done if its major goal of increasing crop production is to be accomplished. This activity, like literacy, it is to be done at all, should be done only on a limited, easily controllable scale. My recommendation is that it only be done at the CPR's and at a selected number of village cooperatives - and that it be carried out by the Literacy Service, which is better equipped to do this than ACRN. This would give the Literacy Service more of

a raison d'être - and permit the project to use the important stock of cassette recorders, loudspeakers and cassette duplicating equipment it has on hand.

TREE PLANTING

One could never plant too many trees in Niger and consequently, every effort to seriously do so should be wholeheartedly supported by AID. However, AID must recognize that the simple activity of tree planting in Niger is fraught with difficulties and hidden costs. The typical para-statal way the GON approches tree planting usually ends up with a high tree mortality rate - and, consequently, an intolerably high cost for each tree which survives. Also this para-statal approach leaves the villagers in the lurch not knowing whether the trees planted are for their eventual use or if they remain the property of the GON. In any event, our Phase I experience clearly demonstrated that the Eaux et Forêts (E and F) Service is incapable of successfully carrying out a tree planting activity on a significant scale. The shocking truth is that the E and F service cannot do the job the way it should be done even if it has all the resources it needs to do it.

The only way to plant trees in a meaningful way is to involve villagers on a very large scale. The surprising problem with this is that the villagers do not seem that interested in planting trees. Although we continue to decry the critical decline in Niger's forestry resources and we bemoan the difficulties caused by dwindling firewood sources, not once during my five years in Niger and in all our project zone surveys has any villager commented that this is one of their priority problems. The fact is that as long as the villagers don't sense this as being one of their priority problems they'll be disinclined to do much about it. If they really felt threatnened by diminished tree resources, there is a lot they could do without waiting for GON intervention. However, the fact is that they are doing nothing. The dilemna here is that by the time the villagers recognize this as being a major problem it will be too late to plant the trees needed to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing population.

The upshot here is that the GON must find a way of getting the villagers to plant and care for new trees. The project has often thought that one way of accomplishing this would be to offer each villager a modest bonus for each tree planted and cared for. Of course, such a program would involve monumental administrative detail. Also, the practical problems of tree protection from marauding animals and of drought would not be entirely solved. A major problem here is that it is hard to plant a large number of trees without relying on imported barbwire fencing. (There is just not enough brambles and thorn bushes to go around). This dependence on barbwire complicates program execution and radically increases costs. Perhaps these costs can be overlooked if one considers the almost priceless worth of a full-grown, mature tree in Niger; especially, those slow growing, local species which many villagers prefer over the fast growing imported species.

Like a lot of the activities the project is involved with, the Forestry one contains many implementation headaches that do not readily meet the eye. Hopefully, the AID financed Forestry and Land Use Planning Project will be able to come up with some pratical solutions to some of these difficult issues.

RED GOATS

If it is true that the number of goats must be reduced if the number of trees are to be increased, then the project's passing involvement with the introduction of Maradi red goats was detrimental to the natural environment. The purpose of the Red Goat component of the project was to provide farmers with a species of goat which is known for its hardiness. the quality of its hide for making leather and the high frequency with which the female of the species (nannies) gives birth to two or three kids at once instead of the one or two normally produced by other

varieties of goats. Given that goats represent a major source of wealth for many farmers (among them a significant number of women) and herders a like, it would appear on the surface that any effort to increase the numbers of Red Goats would be worthwhile. Of course, there's nothing simple about any project activity when it comes to the practical implementation of that activity.

First, one has to find and purchase the red goats. This is not an easy task and it is one which usually requires going to the eastern part of Niger and spending a considerable amount of time going from market to market rounding up a respectable number of red goats. This requires some careful selection as only male goats (bucks) capable of impregnating mature nannies of other species are desired. It is very easy to end up with a lot of goats who are too young, to sick - or just plain unable to do the job. There are always problems of finding someone qualified to do the selection who can also be trusted with the money required to purchase, transport, feed and for the caring and guarding of the goats. Without even mentioning the difficulty of acquiring the advance funds needed for such an operation, it is easy to see that the administrative details alone provide plenty of possibilities for the failure of such and activity.

If by some miracle you are able to return to Niamey with a reasonable number of your goats still alive, you'll probably wish you'd never made the effort because it is only at this point that your troubles really begin. First you have to find a place for the goats to stay while they pass through a required health quarantine period and a decision is made on how and to whom they will be delivered. During this several week period they must be fed, watered, vaccinated and watched night and day. Now suppose you have 300 goats (this is about the number the project distributed in its first and last experimental effort with this activity). How do

you distribute these goats to 300 different farmers spread over an area as large as Maryland and Delaware combined and located in often inaccessible villages or worse yet camped out somewhere with thei herds or near their seasonal farms. If this boggles the mind, just think of what is required if somehow you do efficiently deliver these goats, who, by this time, are in no shape to suffer another journey crammed in the back of a trucks.

After delivery you now have to maintain a systematic follow-up of these animals. Woe be to you if you forget to put some distinguishing marks on them and, pray tell me, were they given to the farmers on a cash or credit basis? If on a cash basis, how much did they pay? Of course, you can't make them pay the real cost of delivering these goats to them, but at least they should pay something. Or should they? Some "experts" say if you make them pay that they'll then consider the goats their own property and will not heed any of the technical advice given to them by those agents who are running all over the country side, tearing up vehicles, collecting per diem, running afoul of village officials, using thousands of liters of gasoline in their efforts to keep track of their assigned handfull of "project goats". Also they'll be very reluctant to castrate the other bucks of their herd as is required to obtain the maximum benefi of the red bucks is to be achieved. All this helps the red goat to become as susceptible as any other goat for sale or the spit.

It's pratically impossible to operate the goat program on a credit basis. The administration per goat requires a frightful amount of red tape and never is done very well by GON officials, and the farmer doesn't understand well the credit conditions; especially if they have the means and want to buy the goat outright. In view of all these adminitrative problems, if a credit system is used, it is not unusual for the farmers to escape repayment altogether. One idea is to get them to repay their loans in kind by offering one kid from the first offspring produced by the red buck. This sounds good, but these going to take care of

the hundreds of baby goats produced? In view of all this the Livestock Service decided, in spite of the project's decision to the contrary, to give the goats away-and, subsequently, turned its back on the whole affair. Where these goats are today and the nature of their impact is anybody's guess.

In light of the Phase II PP teams decision to eliminate this acivity because of the red goat's superior talents for destroying the natural environment, the abandonment of this red goat program was probably a wise move. In any event, it appears that if any farmer really wanted a red goat, he or she could probably obtain one on their own. This same statement could probably be said for many of the activities of the project and the pratical implementation problems briefly outlined above could also apply to many other of the project's components.

ON-FARM CATTLE FATTENING

Most of the problems described above under the red goat program also apply, to the on - farm cattle fattening program. The big difference is that the problems are exacerbated because of the larger size and value of cattle, and to the more precise planning which is required if the farmer participants are to optimize their earnings. Again the same problems are faced: funding the animals, paying for them, delivering them, caring for them, The multitude of tasks are so great that such a program could not be executed at all if there was not a project especially created for its implementation and, even at that, the obstacles are so great that the number of animals which can be fattened is limited.

NDD's Phase I experience with about 300 animals demonstrated that this activity can be profitable for the farmer and that it is desirable from the standpoint of further integrating farming with livestock raising. However, as indicated above, the organizational demands are almost impossible to satisfy. Complicating all this is the

fact that participating farmers must be selected far in advance so as to allow them sufficient time to store away sufficient fodder. This usually means that the animals must be delivered right after the harvest when sufficient feed is available. Systematic follow-up by livestock service agents is required and, as this is a credit operation, the appropriate forms must be completed. This latter requirement is usually sufficiently cumbersome to stymie the entire operation.

The purchasing and later the re-selling of the animals present major problems. The purchase problems center primarily around locating a sufficient number of acceptable animals and finding some qualified persons which can do this and, at the same time, be trusted with the money. These problems have caused the GON to create animal buying committees. The unworkability of these committees is usually enough to wreck the entire operation. The marketing of the animals presents many of the same problems but in reverse sequence. If the farmers are to profit, they must get a good price for their animals. This is difficult because buyers also are interested more in making a profit than in the improved quality of a fattened animal. Buyer would rather purchase decrepit, skinny animals which offer more potential in terms of maximizing their profit margin. Thus the marketing of fattened animals has become a real problem and one that recently found a temporary solution when the State owned cattle buying agency, SONERAN, was required to buy fattened animals in order to present farmers from selling at a loss. SONERAN claims that it lost money on this deal.

No further on-farm fattening programs should be supported until a better evaluation of NDD I's experience is performed. A major obstacle in doing evaluations is that exact animal weights, before and after being fattened, must be known if a satisfactory economic analysis is to be done. The quantities of feed, labor times etc. wou also have to be measured. With this in mind the project installed three cattle chutes

with scales in the zone; however these are a long way from being adequate. In retrospect, this looks like another activity which a farmer could do by himself - if he really wanted to . Maybe the money to buy an animal should be loaned directly to the farmer and re-collected six months later. Once a farmer has fattened and sold an animal he should be able to continue on his own after that.

ANIMAL TRACTION

I believe this is the appropriate place in the report to briefly mention that most of those problems mentioned above for the on-farm fattening program can also be applied to purchase of animals needed to draw the farm implements and carts being introduced by the project as part of its technological innovation packages. These problems are, however, compounded a bit in this instance because the animals must also be trained to do the job desired of them. All this again means that natural limitations are put on the size of animal traction program which can currently be implemented.

Given the high cost of animal traction to the farmer and the difficulties of adequately caring for the animals and maintaining the equipment, animal traction should probably still be considered as an optional part of the technical package. This means it is not for every farmer and, consequently, those selected to receive animal traction equipment should be carefully screened. A better analysis of the merits of animal traction versus manual, traditional labor will be permitted following the compilation of the results which will obtained from the project's applied research program which is being carried out this year at its three CPR's. The information gained here should give us an exact idea of differences in labor times and crop production levels resulting from the use of different cultivation practices. This will be the first step in coming up with technical packages which are appropriate for the project zone. This will allow the project to replace the "imported" technical

packages promoted by the project up to now. One might correctly conclude from the previous sentence that the project has never really had a tried and tested technical package which it could introduce with confidence in all parts of its zone.

CHICKEN PROGRAMS

Again you're faced with the same weary load of problems mentioned under the animal programs discussed above, except, in the case of chicken programs, your dealing with a more fragile animal whose value in no way merits the cost of implementing one of the variations of this program. ~~Although~~ The idea of introducing new breeds of chickens into the village milieu so that, theoretically, a heartier, larger, improved, mixed blooded bird can be produced is laudable. However, as all too often the case, the constraints, costs and the meager results cast doubts on the worth of these kind of programs.

Chickens present special problems because of their health problems, special feeding and housing requirements. When pure- bred chickens are introduced into an area with the idea of cross-breeding them with the local chickens all the chickens in the area must be rounded up and vacinnated. Even when these precautions are taken, the mortality rate of the imported chicken is intolerably high. Contributing to this mortality is the lack of an adequate feed ration, and housing. The farmer just does not have available the ingredients needed to prepare a feed ration which will insure proper animal growth and, in the case of layers, an adequate supply of eggs. The proper control and care of the chickens requires that they be penned up. This is another expense for the farmer and it means that special hygenic measures must be taken if the chicken house is not to become a breeding ground for disease. Given that farmers are used to letting their chickens run free and to scratch for their own food, these kind of innovations inevitably lead to insurmountable adaptation problems.

As for as I am concerned the vehicles, personnel, feed, medicines, etc. to do the required, close follow-up of each handful of chickens is more resources than this program is worth. Chicken demonstrations should be continued at the CPR's and, if a village group really wants to get into a feasible, commercial chicken operation, maybe assistance should be afforded. Other than this, village chicken operations should be left to those who have the time, money and special inclination these "fowl" programs require.

FISH PROGRAMS

One can't deny that more kilos of protein per hectare can be obtained by fish culture than any field crop activity. With this in mind, I guess one should not hesitate to stock the abundant ponds (mares) which exist throughout the project zone. However, the fact of the matter is that there are a lot of mares already stocked with fish and practically nobody is fishing them. It appears that most Nigeriens are disinclined to do fishing and many have little taste for eating fish. Of course, the usual overwhelming administrative, transportation, conservation, etc. problems are encountered.

No further fishing programs should be considered until guaranteed ways of overcoming past failures with such programs are defined. Of interest here might be a review of the abandoned CARE fish project just across the river from Niamey. Personally, I believe fishing is usually best left to the fishermen and I wouldn't ever get into such a project in the zone unless I was moved to action by the impressive demands and arguments of the villagers concerned. I don't think anyone will over have to worry about the latter ever happening. Not once during my five years in Niger did any village authority ever come to our office to request assistance or has one ever forcefully asked for any kind of valid assistance during our many visits to

project zone villages. I believe that this lack of "self-help" initiative and general community spirit is one of the major obstacles to village level development in Niger. The attitude seems to be: "Let the government do it". This contrasts greatly with my previous experience in Togo.

GARDENING PROGRAMS

Initially I was astounded to discover that there are a lot of small permanent bodies of water scattered across Niger. I was later further astounded to note that, although it would be an easy task to do gardening near these water sources,none was being done. I've wrestled a lot with the "why's" of this one and it seems to boil down to the fact that Nigerens have a strong distaste for gardening work. True there are gardens all along the river, but a careful check will show that most of the people doing the actual gardening work are Gourmantchés, most of whom are Upper Voltan Gourmantchés. The President of Niger was quick to criticize this bougeois attitude of most Nigeriens in ~~our~~ HIS recent visit to the new Tera lake when he stated that he didn't see even one tomato or lettuce plant because the people in the area think their noble ancestry makes them too good for such work. This reflects hard core attitudes which are not easy to overcome during the short run, they may have hit it on the head in a recent "Le Sahel" headline which proclaimed the need for the birth of a new kind of Nigerien.

If some Nigeriens really want to do gardening and they need some assistance to obtain necessary fencing (one major obstacle to many development schemes in Niger) tools, etc; they should be able to do this through the credit channels of their local cooperative and, therefore, it is not necessary to create a special project everytime someone gets the idea that a garden should be grown somewhere. This same rule also applies to many other activities.

More details on the failings and problems facing gardening projects can be found in John Mullenax's and my own recent papers on CARE's Balleyara project and on the GON's Guessi and Ssrgane mare gardening project proposals. These should be required reading for anyone considering giving support to a gardening project in Niger.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

The linchpin of the entire project is the supplying to farmers the inputs required to obtain the increased yields needed to attain Niger's goal of food self-sufficiency. The alarming fact is that all these inputs are imported from foreign sources. This dependence on foreign sources exposes Niger to all kind of real and potential disruptions in its agricultural development program. This dependence must always be kept in mind and carefully analyzed in terms of risks, costs, logistics, future projections etc. as we design and implement our agricultural projects. The weakest link in the feasibility of many of our agricultural projects is probably this one of dependence on external sources.

The key input is fertilizer; consequently it requires special attention. At present almost all of the fertilizer used in Niger is smuggled in from Nigeria. How Niger can permit that its entire agricultural development program depend upon fertilizer obtained in this way, is very puzzling indeed. Certainly, at the moment, this is the cheapest and easiest way for Niger to obtain fertilizer. Nigeria is closeby and the government of Nigeria already heavily subsidizes its fertilizer which allows traders to sell to Niger at attractive prices and still make excessive profits. (See my memo of October 1980 on this same subject for more detail). Given that it will be years before Niger has any capacity to produce fertilizer of its own, (if ever), I believe it should now make formal arrangements with Nigeria to obtain the fertilizer it needs. It should not be difficult for Nigeria to allow 6,000 tons (Nigers approximate 1980 use level) out of the almost one million tons it produces and imports annually.

There are those who ask why use fertilizer at all. These people contend that we should be showing the farmers how to produce and use compost and manure on their fields. The fact of the matter is that Niger cannot obtain the increased crop production it needs to feed its people by just relying upon the use of manure and other waste products. It takes at least 10 tons of manure per hectare to even begin to approach the results which can be gained by 100 kilos or less of super triple phosphate. There is just not enough manure around and the logistics problems are enormous. To obtain the amount of manure needed Niger would have to greatly increase its animal population. This would mean opening up more fields, just to feed the additional animals, and more destruction to the natural environment. Certainly, the project should promote the use of manure as much as possible, but it is clear that total reliance on organic farming would mean that much of the world would go hungry.

Others contend that nothing at all should be done because everything depends upon rainfall anyway. You cannot argue with the fact that the amounts and timing of the rains are the most important factors when it comes to agricultural production in Niger. The number of days it rains, the date it rains, the amount of each rain etc. all play a critical role in determining how much surface the

SUBSIDIES ON AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Early in 1979 I was one of the first to begin pointing out to the GON and the mission the costly problems caused by an agricultural input subsidy program which is not implemented within a rational policy framework and carefully reviewed and, if this review so indicates, periodically adjusted. The problem in Niger is not that it has a subsidy program but that it has been poorly administrated. There is a role for subsidies and this a point AID/W and others must understand and not just come out with staunch blanket statements against subsidies without any reflection at all on this very complex issue. The inflexible way AID/W held up the approval of the NDD II PP because of its simple minded, one sided view of this issue was, in terms of the damage caused to the project, truly regrettable.

I do not want to belabor the subsidy issue here. There is a special file of mine circulating somewhere in the mission for those who are really interested in this issue. This file combined with all that has transpired recently on this issue between AID/W and the mission and the efforts the mission and other donors are making to analyze this issue, provides ample information on this subject. I only bring it up here because it is an important issue to keep in mind and because I pioneered in the effort to expose the present and potential problems which are and could be caused by a subsidy program which has not be been carefully thought out and which does not evolve over time. I will only add that before any final decision is made on what the subsidy level should be that the political implication of that decision should also be considered. Some governments have risen and fallen on this question and even in the U.S. the subsidy issue (e.g. dairy products support prices) holds lot of political impact; particularly when there are prospects of critical food shortages (as is presently the case in Niger).

AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

It is difficult to talk about inputs without talking about credit because as far as the project is concerned inputs is credit and vice versa. The project provides the inputs which are then transferred to the farmer on a credit basis through the established UNCC-CNCA agricultural credit system. The farmer then repays in cash with interest in accordance with the terms of this loan contract. All farmer repayments are supposed to go back into the project's credit fund so they can be used again to purchase additional inputs and so forth. Of course, the farmer only pays back his loan at the subsidized price. This means that the monetary input into the project's credit fund does not match its output and, consequently, it will be depleted unless the subsidized portion of the cost of the inputs is paid for by additional funds from other sources. During Phase II it is planned that the GON will supply these funds. The GON signed the grant agreement which included language which made it clear that the GON would be required to prevent any decapitalization of the Project's credit fund. I believe that it will be extremely difficult for the GON to fulfill its obligations in this respect. It will have to reduce significantly its subsidy levels if it even is to come close to satisfying this requirement. This is something which bears close monitoring and requires continuing discussion between AID and the GON. To this end, project management is currently preparing a draft credit fund Agreement for review by all the parties concerned.

At present my major worry is not so much whether or not the GON will have sufficient funds to support its subsidy program, but is whether or not the farmer credit system as presently constituted is workable at all. The entire credit - input distribution system is riveted with many probably intractable problems. The issues are of a too complex and too diverse nature to treat in this report. Project management did try to come to grips with many of these issues in its recent report on its Phase I experience with the UNCC-CNCA credit and inputs system. This report should be required reading for anyone who plans to become involved with aspect of this system. It was my intention that this report be translated into French so that it could be shared with the Project Director - and that after his review of this paper that we could give a large distribution to it. For some reason this has not been done. I hope this reminder here will suffice to assure that this will be done. This will be particularly important for the mission's Agricultural Production Support Project.

COOPERATIVES

I have always contended that the use of the word, "cooperative", to describe the village organizations Niger wishes to establish in every village, is incorrect. It is a misnomer in that the villages will not be able for the foreseeable future to even begin supporting cooperatives as defined in the European sense. Also I am wary of the use of this word because "cooperatives" in general have not worked in Africa unless they are directly linked to a viable export, cash crop. Hopefully, under the new directions which the "Société de Développement" is supposed to provide these village organizations will be called "cellule villageoise de développement" (or something like that) which may have as one of its functions the supply of credit and inputs.

I believe Niger and the donors are expecting entirely too much of these village level organizations. There is a danger in pinning too many development hopes on a structure that, at best, will be difficult to make work and which will always be weak unless an enormous amount of quality resources can be supplied consistently over a long period of time. Given that the prospect for this is not good at all, it looks like we will eternally be refering to the project "cooperatives" as nascent village organizations.

GRINDING MILLS

During Phase I the project installed 10 village grinding mills. This activity was primarily aimed at reducing the exhausting amount of energy women must expend to pound cereal grains (primarily millet) into a flour which can then be made into edible food. It was thought that if the women could grind their millet at a motorized village mill they could save much time and energy - and, consequently, they would be able to devote themselves profitably to other activities. Of course, this was an ideal which, as usually is the case in a country like Niger, seldom works when exposed to the harsh realities of actual implementa-

The installation of a grinding mill in almost any project zone village represents a quantum jump in technological progress. In should not be surprising then that when such a jump is made in isolation without similar advancement in associated support requirements that such an activity is destined for failure. The only thing which has prevented the project's grinding mills from becoming silent monuments to the good intentions of the WID people have been the constant interventions of the project. The project has one man (a Yoruba from Nigeria) who does nothing but go around and maintain, repair, install, re-install, deliver parts and fuel, get grinding blades sharpened and train local villagers in the operation of these mills. An experienced development practioner will readily see that there is a lot of room for things to go wrong here. The long and short of it is that anything which is mechanical which is placed in a village, whether it be a mill, a hand water pump - or what have you, sooner or later breaks down (usually sooner given the abuse they suffer at the hands of people who have never before been in touch with any kind of mechanical operations). The only way to salvage such a situation is to create a permanent agency which does nothing but provide the kind of services our Yoruba man does. If you don't have such a service, please don't trouble yourself with the installation of mechanical devices at the village level. Since this pre-condition cannot probably ever be met, I guess I am virtually saying that the 30 additional grinding mills planned for Phase II should not be installed. Certainly, not another mill should be installed until all the Phase I mills have been evaluated. One option could be setting up the mill under private auspices.

If such an evaluation is ever undertaken, it should particularly focus on the economic feasibility of a mill in terms of the village's capacity to administrate the mill, repay the cost of the mill and to eventually purchase a replacement mill.

Given the small amounts of grain currently being ground I seriously doubt that a grinding mill operation can stand up under an economic cost-benefit analysis. Of course, you could raise the price people pay for this service, but this would only further discourage the poor women who are already undecided about which is more important: the 5-10 CFA it costs to grind their millet or the time it takes them to pound the millet themselves. Another option they often resort to is to hire even poorer women who will for a small sum or gift of food pound the millet for them. Establishing a grinding mill in a community could mean that the poorer women will lose a possible source of income. In reality the grinding mill affects only a minority of women in the village because many women have older children or relatives around just to do the task of pounding millet. How are these people going to earn their keep if a large part of their work is taken over by the grinding mill? They still have to have these people to do a preliminary pounding of the millet to remove the outer grain shell, so why not let them go ahead and pound their dehulled millet into flour? (Some people who use the mills are disappointed that they don't do this dehulling operation also. A mill could be set up with a "decortiquer" to do this, but, of course this would increase costs.)

For further information on these WID programs and women's status in general in Niger, I refer the reader to my first draft of the WID paper I prepared for the mission's FY 83 CDSS.

STUDIES AND REPORTS

The Phase I PP indicated that the project was supposed to carry out some dozen or so studies at a budgeted cost of five hundred thousand dollars. The results of all these studies were to have provided all the information needed to design Phase II.

This looked good on paper but in reality project management found th many of these studies were unecessary in that sufficient informatio for pratical project implementation and policy formulation was alrea available from existing sources. Fortunately, Project management wa able to convince AID that many of these studies were not necessary. The unfortunate thing is that in retrospect it appears that many of the studies which were executed were not needed either. In any event, only an insignificant amount of the information collected and analyzed during Phase I was used to prepare Phase II. It was found that it was best to base Phase II on the project's pratical experienc which provided the kind of irrefutable evidence needed to convince sc people to change their minds. Dollar for dollar give me experience o studies any time.

It is my opinion that the mission should put a moratorium on doin any further studies until it is absolutely certain that a project can be designed or implemented or that a crucial policy cannot be formulate unless a specific study is executed. Any such study which satisfies these criteria should be carried out with a bare minimum of personnel and this personnel should be made to work under the narrowest terms o reference possible and obligated to produce before their departure a final product which will have an immediate, pratical results-oriente application. There has been too much time and effort spent in the pas on voluminous studies which end up doing nothing more than collecting dust in somebody's forgotten library of good intentions.

I fear that even if the above strictures are put on future studies that the impact of these studies will continue to be minimal because almost nobody will ever read them and, even if some people do read them, the impact will still be minimal because to be really fruitful it is necessary that such studies be the object of a critica dialogue between all the parties involved. Without such a dialogue between the users and producers of the study there can be no change in the situation the study was designed to scrutinize. Also, the

elimination of such a give - and - take dialogue means that little growth in the thoughts and philosophy of developers can be expected. Regarding this latter point I believe the mission has often lost many opportunities to improve its development efforts in Niger.

Too many times there have been too many project studies or reports which, because of neglect or other pressing business, neither the GON nor AID have commented on or, more importantly, openly and frankly discussed. This in many instances forced the project to work in a vacuum which condemned it to remain unaware of what either of the parties really thought about its efforts, conclusions, projections, etc. Normally, every project report, no matter how mundane or banal it may seem to be, should be reviewed and discussed by the parties concerned. This would improve the performance of all the parties. The project would then have the benefit of a "feedback" which would allow it to better do the on-going evaluation job it needs to do if appropriate implementation adjustments or to be made, and the other parties would benefit by being able to use the practical experience of the project to improve the accuracy and appropriateness of their own development planning. As far as I am concerned, if such a process of "development dialogue" does not exist, much of the benefit of the project is lost.

The unfortunate fact is that in the past nobody has read the project's reports (at least the project has no knowledge of anyone having read them) and this has condemned the project to be insufficiently understood. This has resulted at times in the project being poorly represented and in letting others repeat mistakes because they were unware of the project's experience with such or such. Recent examples of this are the zero reaction given by both by the GON and USAID to the project's final Phase I report and its $150,000 nutritional survey. (The former was only in French and it may be true that some AID employees might have read it if it had also been in English.)

Throughout my five years in Niger I have been completely befuddled by AID's demand that the GON's NDD project give it all its reports in English when AID fully realizes that the GON has no capacity for such translation work and that in the FGA it says all communications can be transmitted in French or English. Many times I have had key documents held up because they were not also in English - and I personnally had to translate them into English. This was done in spite of the fact that knowledge of the French language is a job prerequisite for all AID employees. The exasperating thing was that even after I had them put into English nobody read them. For instance, I have almost the total production of a hundred English copies of the Project's 1979 annual report in my office waiting to be thrown out. The upsetting thing is that much effort and money was spent to translate this report into English because AID said it wanted it in English. Ever since this fiasco the project's policy has been that if AID wants its reports in English it will have to translate them itself. The project will continue to require that all personnel working for it submit all communications in French. If the personnel can't do this, they shouldn be given the job. The mission should make its language requirements clear to the GON. Also, while it is at it, it should explain its internal clearance process. At present some USAID office heads don't want to sign off on project document until the GON project director does and the GON project director (having ~~having~~ been "burned" many times) doesn't want to sign until the document has cleared all the way through the mission.

Further examples of recent reports which have required a lot of time and effort, only to be met with uncomprehensible and uninterpretable silenc from the mission, are the project's reviews of CARE's Balleyara Project the GON's Sargane and Guessé Mare projects and of the mission 's FY83 CDSS. This is hard to understand because all three of these were done at the mission's behest. I was told informally that the mission didn't have time to review "personal accomplishments". Since when is bringing to bear the weight of the project's grass roots experience on key mission documents a personal accomplishment? The only interpretation of this which I can come up with is that some of the things mentioned in these reports did not suit the miss conception of things and were therefore considered best ingored because the mission had neither the fortitude nor the grounds for refuting some of the assertions made in these documents.

In summary, it appears that if the project is going to write reports it will essentially be to satisfy its own internal management needs. I'm sure that in a like sense that this present report will do more to satisfy my own sense of responsibility than it will serve to enlighten it's expected very limited readership. I am hoping, however that I am wrong in this and that my report will serve in some small way to stimulate discussion and to get the mission to taking a different look at itself and the role it plays in Niger.

VEHICLES

I've already mentioned several times in this report some of the vehicle problems faced on the project. Given that projects like this one find themselves in the unfortunate position of not being able to be implemented without vehicles, it is hard not to keep mentioning these problems.

If I were to go into detail of the importance of vehicles to the project and all the problems associated with procurement, shipment, operation, maintenance, use, disposal, etc., I could fill up more pages than used to write this longwinded report. The point I want to make here is that no matter what you do to minimize your vehicle problems you will always have vehicle problems which will require lots of time and effort, and which at times, will cause you untold grieve and heart-rending challenges. These problems will exist whether or not the vehicles are U.S. made or of a local source. Certainly, purchasing a vehicle from a local dealer will lessen the project manager's headaches, but remenber a local dealer purchase does little to change the way local drivers drive, care and use vehicles and that local dealers also run out of parts and are capable of providing poor service.

It was concluded that the best way for the project to minimize these problems in Phase II was for it to set up its own garage and spare parts inventory. This implies many costs and many administrative headaches. Who is to say that the

project can find qualified mechanics, the vehicle parts and garage equipment, the right person to manage its spare parts stock, etc? And even if the project is able to do the formidable job of setting up and efficiently operating its own garage, will this solve all the problems. I doubt it. A classic example supporting the case that an independent garage is not a complete panacea for all the ills affecting the operation of vehicles in Niger is our own mission garage at the GSO. This garage benefits from years of established procedures, professional expatriate managers, qualified, permanent mechanics, etc. and yet the dilapidated state of mission vehicles attests to the fact that, even under the best of circumstances, having your own garage does not mean you will not have serious vehicles problems. Now, tell me, if a U.S. controlled and operated garage, where all American know-how has been brought to bear, can't keep its vehicles running, how can a project, whose vehicles take 10 times the beating of those operated by the mission, be expected to keep its vehicles running? The wonder is that NDD has kept its U.S. made vehicles running better without a garage than the mission has kept its vehicles running with the best of garages. This "miracle" is primarily due to the laudable efforts of the GON project director. The fact that three years after delivery only 9 of 25 IH vehicles have been disposed of (three of these were cannibalized for spare parts from the day of their arrival and therefore never saw any use) attests to the Project Director's efforts to make do without a garage and practically no local service or any access to parts. Without a doubt, if anyone wants to know anything about keeping vehicles running in Niger, it should consult the project.

PESTICIDE USE

The Phase II grant agreement states that the project will respect U.S. pesticides laws 100%. This means that pesticides which do not have have the approval of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cannot be used in connection with any project entity. Theoratically, this restriction becomes effective on June 4, 1981 when the grant agreement was signed. This restriction poses short and long-term problems for the project.

An immediate problem is that the project already has a need to use pesticides but it may be 8 to 12 months before its initial order of EPA approved pesticides arrives. I assume that common sense and pratical necessity will permit the use of locally available pesticides during this interim period. Hopefully, when the EPA pesticides do arrive they will still be EPA approved pesticide at that time and throughout their shelf life.

Even after arrival of this initial order of EPA approved pesticides there will have to be at least a year or two of testing before they can be used with confidence on a widespread basis. I continue to be skeptical about the project's capacity to carry out such a demanding pesticide research program. It is intended that this program will be carried put by the project's as yet unhired applied research program coordinator. Even if this person has the appropriate background it is difficult for me to see how he or she can do both the pesticide and applied research programs jobs.

The project paper provides for the hiring of short term consultants to assist this coordinator, it is extremely difficult under the best of conditions to recruit people with the required specialized pesticide background who have adequate knowledge of the constantly evolving EPA regulations. Pat Matterson, the pesticide specialist who did the project's IEE has done a great job of identifying possible candidates, but, even if these candidates are available when the project needs them, I have doubts about whether or not short term consultancies will be sufficient. A qualified, full time person is really needed for this job if the project is to make an acceptable effort in this area.

Those concerned with the management of Phase II will have to familiarize themselves well with the covenants on pesticides in the grant agreement, the special environmental annex to the PP and the many materials in the Project's pesticide file. I believe this is another area where the project has bitten off more than it can chew. Hopefully, the NCR project, the CILSS IPM project and others will be able to lighten its burdens in this area.

MDR's CONCEPTION OF THE CPR's

The young farmer couples training centers (CPR's) are the centerpiece elements of the project around which almost all other activities of the project are to revolve. Needless to say their efficient funtioning is of the utmost importance to the project. Unless they are able to fulfill their roles as outlined in the project paper, the project can never hope to achieve its objectives. The problem here is that the Ministry of Rural Development (MDR) sees a much more modest, limited role for the CPR's than envisioned in the project paper.

The fundamental strategy for Phase II was that each canton size area would have a CPR which would not only provide long-term training to farmer couples but would provide solid material support and systematic follow-up to farmers previously trained at the center and be used to provide backstopping to the village cooperative's credit and inputs delivery function and to other types of village level training. Everyone agrees that its useless to train farmers unless they are closely followed up upon following their training. Such follow-up is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a capacity to deliver the commodities the farmer needs to apply the things he learned during training. What good is it to learn how to apply a new agricultural innovation package if you can't obtain the fertilizer and the other required ingredients needed for its pratical application? To provide these credit inputs services to farmers and their cooperatives theCPR's need more staff, more infrastructure and at least one 4-wheel drive vehicle. The Minis-

investment costs low; their thinking being that this better ensures the desired eventual passing of the management responsibility of the centers to the village cooperatives and that the modesty of the centers better duplicates what the farmer is accustomed to in his village and this better ensures that the things learned at the center by the farmer are applicable at home. As for follow-up services, the Ministry claims these are to be handled by the traditional GON services already in place. As previously mentioned it was found during Phase I that it is hopeless to expect that these services can ever to this job. Again it appears that the Ministry must reform its old structure if it is to have more success in the future than it has had in the part. What is wrong with the current GON service working out of the CPR's? If the CPR's don't become the structural framework upon which the GON pins its rural extension system, it should forget about them. A CPR with out an outreach capacity is like planting a crop and then abandoning it just when the harvest is ripe.

The project has clashed with MDR on this one several times. It has refused to allow the assignment of extra staff, the permanent placement of a vehicle at the centers and the building of needed storage space. In two cases the project did manage to convince them it could not assign CPR directors to isolated sites if no housing was available - and thus did receive permission to build some houses. However, MDR, in general remains against the building of staff houses at the CPR's. I believe that if the project is not able to make these additions to the centers that the CPR's can never have the outreach capacity they need to ensure the success of the project. Consequently, the project is doomed to failure unless these things can be worked out. This should be a priority matter for project management and the mission.

One thing which I believe makes MDR hestitant to implement any changes in its armchair rural extension system is that it does not know what it would do with all the cadre and field agents it has now and will have in even greater numbers in the not too distant future. IPDR/Kolo keeps turning out in greater numbers each year more cadre. Where will all these people go? Can Niger afford to pay this new cadre who, if past is prologue, will contribute almost nothing? If Niger's strategy is the development of the villagers own capacity to manage their own affairs (auto-encadrement), where will all the GON personnel go when the villagers take over? The GON has a lot of internal conflicts to solve if its going to get its money's worth from its development efforts.

In light of the above, another serious look needs to be taken at the future role, real and potential, of the CPR's before anymore are created. The plan under Phase II is that 3 or 4 more CPR's are to be opened in 1982 at an estimated cost of about 37,000,000 CFA per center. (MDR claims we have the highest per center cost of any of the projects and they use this as an argument to hold us back in our CPR plans). Given the late start of Phase II it will be very difficult to have these CPR's ready by the next agricultural season. A delay in their opening may be caused by the 10-12 months it will take to receive the required fencing materials from the U.S. Project management may want to attempt local procurement actions if it decides to go ahead as planned with the 1982 CPR opining. The failure to open these centers will set the project back a year or more.

CONSTRUCTION

All of the project's construction activities have been carried out under the auspices of MDR's Genie Rural (GR) service. Genie Rural is responsible for preparing all plans, estimates and everything else which is required for the IFB; for overseeing the construction work; making sure the construction firms are in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and for preparing all the necessary payment documents. This is a big job which implies more responsibility and

required output than any other job in the Ministry and, in view of GR's small staff, and its responsibility for almost all of Niger's rural construction and irrigation projects, it is an impossible job.

Genie Rural is impossibly swamped and as a result nothing can be processed through them without great effort and tact. The Phase II construction IFB was a simple, straight forward job which was made especially easy by the fact that most of the plans were the same ones used in Phase I. In spite of all this, it took GR from October 1980 to the end of June 1981 to complete the IFB and it would not have been done at all if I had not made almost daily visits to its offices and if the Project had not typed and duplicated all the documents. Many times I thought we were on the verge of completing this IFB only to see the project's work put aside when somebody higher up impressed upon GR that it had other priorities. There is no way to make rational plans with GR. The only way to get anthing out of item at all is to do a lot of its work yourself and to develop a close, friendly working relationship with its key personnel which allows you to do this work for and with them.

Its difficult for GR to get the staff it needs to do the job it should be doing. No Nigerien wants to go into this field because its difficult, the work is hard (and its hard to avoid work because the results GR has to produre are so tangible) and the pay is low. If anyone does have the qualifications GR needs, they will try hard to work in the private sector where conditions and pay are good. If the mission ever has the occasion, it should try to do more to assist GR. It was my impression that the major function of the mission's engineering officer would be to develope a close and frutiul working relationship with GR - and that this relationship would especially be used to accelerate all construction work on AID - financed projects and to ensure the quality of this work. I had hoped that by this time that this relationship with GR would have progressed to the point where for any construction job I could call on the mission engineering officer and he could supply me with what I wanted in a timely, efficient manner that had both GON and AID approval. Unfortunately, a

priorities have been assigned this officer which have prevented him from playing the role originally envisioned for his position.

During the preparation of Phase II it was said that I was again using U.S. imported pre-fab construction. I with to make it clear that I was not against this kind of contruction, but that I was agai the 1-2 years of delay its initial, untested use with the project wo cause. To support my case on this I draw the reader's attention to the first amendement of the grant agreement, where I have budgeted for the purchase if one pre-fab warehouse for construction on the ne project headquarters site. This will be an experiment which will require careful evaluation and the participation of GR, Travaux Publics in the selection of local firms. If all these participants become convinced by this experience that pre-fab construction is an improved, more economical way of doing building in Niger, from that point on AID should try to use pre-fab as much as possible; particularly on rural buildings that don't require electrical or plumbing installations. This could be an important turning point for Niger in the construction field and could end up saving the GON and AID millions of dollars.

After a year's delay the project was finally able to cancel the contract it had with a local firm which failed to complete work on 9 cooperative warehouses and two Eaux et Forêts buildings in the Kolo arrondissement d to engage new firms to complete the work. In order to pay the new firms the Project must recuperate the bank gr rantees given the old firm by the BDRN. The GR wrote the BDRN a cou months ago and it still has not responded. The project could have some payment difficulties if the BDRN does not pay by August. This counterpart funded construction payment problem will need some

special attention if it is to be resolved by this time

GON PROJECT CONTRIBUTION AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

In the original design of Phase II of the project an effort was made to maximize the GON's contribution. This was done in order to better insure that the GON would become acustomed to financing those key elements requiring local financing. In this way it was thought that the GON would then avoid a recurrent cost crunch when, if ever, external financing was withdrawn. This meant that at first it was programmed that the costs of the project would be split 50-50 between the GON and AID. Later the rapid decline in uranuim revenues required that the GON's participation be reduced and by the time the grant agreement was prepared the GON's cost and in-kind contribution represented about 30% of the total life of project cost. This is still a very high contribution for Sahelian country and, moreover, 25% of this 30% was scheduled to be a cash contribution.

Presently, in the grant agreement a GON cash contribution of 999,500,000 CFA is projected for the 5 years of the project. Of this amount 516,000,000 CFA is budgeted for local operational costs and 483,500,000 CFA for subsidy payments on the agricultural inputs distributed by the Project. In the PP an exchange rate of 200 CFA to $1.00 was used. Using this same exchange rate now would mean that the total GON contribution would be equivalent to $4,997,500; however, when today's exchange rate of 283 CFA to $1.00 is used this amount is reduced to $3,531,802. Although this increase in the value of the dollar decreases the dollar value of the GON contribution, it increases the CFA value of AID's contribution and in terms of local expenditures this means that the project will have much more than it originally planned to receive. On local construction alone this new high in the value of the dollar could mean a savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Perhaps this savings could be used to finance additional infrastructure for the CPR's.

According to the grant agreement the GON is supposed to deposi 22,000,000 CFA for subsidy payments and 116,000,000 CFA for local operational costs into the project's account during the first year of the project. With the belt tightening going on with the GON I doubt very much if it will be able to do this. Even after applying the 35,000,000 CFA received in May 1981 against the 116,000,000 CFA it does not look like the GON will satisfy this grant agreement requirement. The project turned in its FY 1982 FNI budget request to MDR in May as scheduled. In the request the project asked for both year 1 and year 2 project funds as stipulated in the agreement however, when the MDR sent its budget proposal over to the Ministry of Plan early in June it contained all that we requested for subsid payments but only 37,500,000 CFA for operational costs. This means that the project will not receive from the GON the amounts projecte in the agreement. One way around this may be for MDR to arrange a line of credit at the CNCA as proposed by MDR during the grant agre ment negotiations. In any event, with a current deficit of several million CFA at the GON treasury and over 20,000,000 CFA at the BDRN the failure of the GON to contribute as planned may make it difficu to make up these deficits.

The financial management record of the project is often held up as an example for others to follow. (We did manage to do what very few projects do i.e. spend all the AID funds by the PACD.) Although its pleasing to be singled out in this way, it does perplex me that the very simple, straight forward way the project keep track of its funds can be singled out as a model. We're only doing what I throught was the standard, routine thing to do. Basically, our system is so simple that any grade school graduate could manage it after he gets the hang of it. The challenge is keeping the syst simple and at the same time satisfying the requirements of the GON and AID. The initial key is thoroughly explaining the system to those local employees charged with its daily maintenance and supervi sing them closely until they can do the job accurately and with conf dence. This does not require a lot of high powered training of loca [illegible] On the contrary, this kind of training usually over-

qualifies them and they then either lose interest or go on to better things. This is why I disagree with the recommendations of the recent Sahel Program audit which state that more training of local personnel needs to be done to prevent further misuse of AID funds. What is not so much more training but a more agressive, participatory attitude on the part of AID field personnel charged with financial oversight. This personnel should be going more into the offices of their host country counterparts and working closely with them on a systematic basis to make sure they are able and capable of managing AID funds. You just can't send then some poorly translated, complicated letter on how AID funding procedures and consider the matter taken are of. You have to get out of your office and go over to their offices, invited or not, time and time again. I lay a lot of the blame for the problems reported in the Sahel Program audits on controller office personnel who have not developed close and fruitful working relationships with the key host country personnel responsible for the management of AID funds.

Just recently the mission developed a long PIL on AID financial procedures that is supposed to be the first PIL sent by each now project to the GON. Unfortunately, the French version of this letter was so bad that much of it was incomprehensible to the NDD's GON project director. At present I and the GON project director are re-working this letter, attempting to boil it down to the simple essentials without changing its substance. However, there may be some problems in that some of the language used by AID may be mandatory - and it may be difficult to translate this into French wording which is adequate from the AID point of view and intelligible and appropriate from the GON point of view. This is just a question of words and not, as the controller's office had the audacity to suggest in writing, one of the Project Director possibly spending AID funds for unauthorized purposes. The biggest problem with this PIL is that there is probaby nobody in the mission who adequately understands its contents and who at the same time has adequate French to explain it to GON personnel responsible for the financial management of the project. Hopefully, the problems with this PIL will not hold up the approval of the project's upcoming request for an advance of AID funds for local expenditures.

"EXODE RURAL" AND THE TURNOVER OF GON CADRE

Not a day goes by that the high number of Nigeriens who migrate out of their home areas to the cities and neighboring countries is bemoaned in the local press. Why the GON believes this migration is so terrible is beyond me? I guess it is insulting to its dignity that the survival of its people oblige them to participate in seasonal migrations or to be absent for several years at a time. The GON and the donors must realize that it is almost impossible for rural people to live off farming alone and, consequently, it is rare to find someone who does not have to migrate or develop a secondary activity to earn the means they need to live at a level they consider acceptable. If somehow the GON stopped this migration, it would be a death blow to many families, would increase unemployment and beggary and reduce the amount of much needed foreign exchange following into the country.

Somthing which I consider much worse than "exode rural" and, more condemnable because it is somthing the GON could control, is the constant, rapid turnover in GON personnel. This turnover has combined with the project's weak implementation structure to sabotage over and over again the project's progress. It is rare that any department or arrondissement level GON personnel stay in place more than a year. The project no sooner gets one of these people to begin understanding the project when he or she is reassigned in complete disregard of the role he or she plays in the implementation of the project. In three years the Prefet has changed five times, all the sous-prefets 2 or 3 times, the UNCC departmental 3 times, Agricultural Service Departmental 4 times, Livestock service 6 or 7 times and with the exception of the literacy service, almost all the arrondissement chiefs have been changed 2 or three times. Apparently, the literacy service personnel are not changed very often because there is little else they can do.

This rapid turnover of GON personnel has to stop if the project is to get anywhere. The grant agreement asks that all GON personnel serving in the project zone serve at least three years in their positions. This is a GON rule and it should be made to enforce it, but being the jaded project manager I am, I expect the Phase II experien in this regard ~~to~~ will be much like Phase I's.

USAID ORGANIZATION

I made clear earlier in this paper and in annex D that I believ it is irrefutable that the most important thing the mission can do a this stage is to ensure the best possible implementation of its projects. This means it must have an organizational structure which pr vides to the greatest extend possible project management with the authority and resources it needs to be able to fully concentrate an project implementation. This implies that those offices charged wit project management must be given priority whenever a decision has to be made in the allocation of mission resources. (I'am probably repe ting myself here but the importance of the point warrants repetition. In this regard, I was pleased to see in the mission organization cha issued in May 1981 that the General Development Office (GDO) and the extremely important Agricultural Development Office (ADO) were giver the prominent positions on this chart that they deserve. Now I hope the mission will be able to give these offices the resources they nee to carry out the projects upon which the mission's fortune rises or falls. Every effort should be made to grant these resources and thi could mean if necessary, the drawing of resources away from other le priority offices - or, if need be, the freeing up of resources for project management by the closing of other mission offices. For instance, it is my belief that the functions currently performed by the PMSU and PDE offices should be given to the GDO and ADO offices. In this way the two offices would be better able to do the job of designing, implementing and supporting its projects. Often time these offices end up doing most of these thing anyway but have the added burden of involving other offices over which they have no control

This would greatly streamline project management, put the resources where they should be and allow the same output with less pain and for less money. It is my belief that the fewer chiefs and the more indians you can have in an operation like that the better.

I also believe the mission's organization chart can be further streamlined by making the assistant director (if there is to be one) also head of the program office. This would give more substance and structure to this job and keep it from becoming just a clearing house and special projects dump. It is obvious that changes like this could greatly simplify mission operations. We should always be thinking of ways of simplifying operations and facilating procedures and not just coming up with something because it reflects what exists In this sense we should come up with several alternative organization charts and ~~with~~ arguments for and against each one. In this same vein we should have several country development strategy variations to consider and not just come up with one which fits what we are actually doing.

In any event, with the creation of an ADO and GDO, the functions of other mission offices need to be reviewed. This is particularly true for the PMSU. As the one of those who first formulated and promoted the idea of a PMSU I feel that have a certain responsibility to evaluate its viability. When Herb Miller finished his paper in the fall of 1977 which officially layed out the functions and responsibilities of the PMSU it was thoroughly reviewed and discussed in the mission and everyone agreed that the PMSU was to provide services to the projects but that if a project didn't want to use any of these services it didn't have to. The problem now is that this guideline has been violated and projects are obligated to use the PMSU if they are to get much of their work cleared off on. This would not be so bad if the PMSU was stimulated and motivated in the same way

project managers are to see their projects succeed. The PMSU is marching to a different drummer and reports to a different boss and this assists the building of an adversary relationship with the projects instead of one where both parties are collaborating together to get the projects implemented in the most timely, efficient manner possible. Quite frankly, since the creation of the ADO and to a lesser extent the GDO, there is just no need for the additional layer of constraining bureaucracy which the PMSU represents.

Another failing of the PMSU is that it has no official relationship to the GON and its project directors. Also its existence has caused much work to flow to it which should of probably been done by local employees working within the different management units - and this has meant that the project's haven't hired and trained the local personnel it should have which in turn means Niger capacity to implement projects has not grown as it should. In addition, given that PMSU duplicates functions which would normally would be assigned to the controller's office or the GSO, it at times has prevented fruitful cross-fertilization of ideas between these offices and the projects. I guess the biggest argument against or for the PMSU is whether or not the project managers want it. It might be interesting to take a poll on this one.

In connection with mission organization and operations I would like to mention several other points which may seem small but are ones which have caused me considerable travail. The first one is that it must be recognized that some of the disharmony which exists in the mission could be dissipated if the AID office space were not split between the Embassy and the Rivoli Building. When I think of

the hours I've lost and the energy expended in running between these two buildings - I really get depressed. I think more consideration needs to be given to personnel working at the Rivoli building. Such consideration could include more frequent, friendly visits from the Embassy offices we're supposed to be collaborating with (some people have done there entire tours without ever having put their foot in the Rivoli). The provision of transport to Rivoli personnel when they are summoned to the Embassy and the ocassional holding of staff meetings at the Rivoli. It's unfortunate that AID staff has to be split up in this way but at least the road between the Rivoli and the Embassy can become a 2-way one.

Another item I wish to mention is AID's official hours of work. It is almost inconceivable to me that an organization which makes such a big deal out of wanting to collaborate closely with the host government would have a different set of work hours. It is my belief that, no matter how much we may not like Niger's official working hours, we should work these same hours. This would certainly add credibility to the seriousness of our commitment to the development of Niger. This may sound like a small thing to ask but when I officially requested to work GON hours in 1977, so I could carry through with my plans to work closely with my GON counterparts - my request was turned down. Later, after involving the highest levels of the mission, a compromise was reached whereby I would satisfy for the most part both the mission's and the GON's hours. This meant that I had an official work week of 45 hours. It was agreed that I should receive five hours of compensatory time for each 45 hours week I worked. After four years of working this long work week I still have yet to receive any comp. time. I ~~want~~ WILL NOT even mention here that I've also worked every U.S. holiday since I've been here because I believe if my counterparts come to work so should I. It's really scandalous that U.S. employees and mission local employees take both Nigerien and U.S. holidays. You don't want to work their hours but you sure like taking their holidays.

Another thing which has disturbed me is the lack of encouragement at this mission for employees who have reached the required french level and who want to learn a local language. I should know what I am talking about. I was the first mission employee to successfully get the mission to allow me to use office hours to take Hausa lessons (Sid Bliss was the first to unsuccessfully make the attempt), to be tested, to be certified by FSI and to receive a 2-step esoteric language pay raise. I just mention this because I believe it was wrong that I had to battle every inch of the way to get the mission to accept this, that others before and later were less successful, and that I had to pay for all the lessons and the materials myself. As far as I'm concerned the mission should make every effort to encourage its employees to learn a local language. Just a little local language can go a long ways in improving our rapport with our host country conacts. Hopefully, under the new Foreign Service Act local language training and incentives will be taken more seriously.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

This report is much longer than I expected it to be but, I assure the reader, I have only grazed the surface of many of the topics I have brought up and that there are others which I have not mentioned at all. Unfortunately, I did not have sufficient time to do justice to all the things I wanted to get off my chest and, in the end, my fatigue began to override my resolve to get it "all" down on paper

I realize that there is probably something to delight and disgust everybody in this report, but my intention was to do neither of these two but just to provide plenty of food for thought and som guidance based on my experience on a wide variety of topics which I consider of significance or general interest. I hope that in som small way that this taxing effort reaps some benefits in terms of better project implementation and Mission operations. At least I hope that when many of these topics I have touched upon are raised in the future, - and I am sure they will be, - that someone will remember this report and what I said and that what I said will be considered before a decision is made. If this is done only once, I might be able to consider that my eleven years in Africa on the front lines of development were not all for nothing.

Finally, I would like to say that I hope nobody interprets anything that is in this report as meaning that I found my time in Niger disagreeable. On the contrary, I consider the five years I spent in Niger as some of the most rewarding of my life. There is no doubt in my mind that if I had it to do over again that I would. Yes, there were many frustrations, but the rewards more than made up for these. I believe that the job I had was the best one in the Mission. No other job could have afforded so many exciting challenges and permitted such an eye-ball-to eye-ball encounter with such a stimulating, often times overwhelming, variety of

development activities. I really feel that I have gotten much more out of my job than I put in. The knowledge and experience I gained in Niger will serve me for a long time to come and will undoubtedly have a heavy influence on many of my future decisions.

In conclusion - Niger was good to me and, consequently, I have nothing to complain about. I had the honor and the pleasure of assisting AID and Niger with the implementation of one of its major projects and was amply cited for my efforts. During my two tours, I received a meritorious service award, a Superior Honor Award, a nomination for the Rivkin Award, and I was selected as a first alter nate candidate on the Agency's list for long term training. In addi tion to all of this, my GON associates have repeatedly praised my efforts. This is really too much to expect for doing a job I like to do and to which I am committed to doing. For all this I owe much to Jay Johnson, Mission Director, who provided me with generous support and encouragement throughout all my years of service in Niger, and to Wilbur Thomas, ADO, who, since his arrival in August 1980, has constantly surprised and pleased me with his understanding of what it means to implement a project like the Niamey Department Development Project.

ANNEX A

Niamey Department Development Project

Chronology of Important Project Events

Preliminary Decument Project Document prepared by the GON	Late 1973- early 1974
Final GON Project Document Presented at CILSS Meeting in Dakar and AID tentatively accepts to consider financing the project	March 1975
GON officially requests AID assistance	January 17, 1976
AID Consultants draft first PP	May-June 1976
First, 2 Volume PP is sent to AID/W	October 1976
AID/W reviews first PP and asks Mission to re-write it	November 1976
Revised PP re-submitted to AID/W	January 1977
AID/W project review committee agrees to approve PP if certain modifications are made	February 1977
Executive Committee for Project review recommends PP for approval	April 7, 1977
15 day Congressional Notification expires	May 16, 1977
Project is approved by Deputy Administrator	May 28, 1977
Project allotment is authorized	June 4, 1977
Project Grant Agreement is signed	August 29, 1977

Conditions Precedent are satisfied	November 26, 1977
GON Project Director arrives and project impmementation begins	January 2, 1978
Project Management Produces orientation document for Phase II	July 1979
Project Manager Prepares PID for Phase II	September 1979
Project Manager's third draft of PID approved by the Mission	December 1979
Decision made to send an abbreviated, cabled PID	January 1980
Abbreviated PID approval by Mission and cabled to AID/W	April 23, 1980
AID/W approves Phase II PID	June 23, 1980
First draft of Project Management's Phase II PP is reviewed in the Mission	June 15, 1980
Project Paper team provides contributions to Phase II PP	August-Setember 1980
Project Management assembles and edits new PP	November-December 1980
Official GON request for Phase II assistance	December 17, 1980
Project Management sends PP to AID/W	December 29, 1980
Executive Committee for Project Review recommends project for Approval	February 6, 1980
AID Administrator approves NDD Project	April 28, 1981
Phase II allotment received	June 3, 1981
Phase II Grant Agreement and first amendment signed	June 4, 1981
Phase II conditions Precedent satisfied	June 23, 1981

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ANNEX B

NIAMEY DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
LIST OF PRINCIPAL PROJECT DOCUMENTS

1 - Analyse Préliminaire de Coût - Profit des Normes Techniques Employés pour les Démonstrations Agricoles (Wentling) . 1977

2 - Analyse des Conditions de Stockage du Mil, du sorgho et du niébé ((Unoblao) 11/1978

3 - Enquête Socio-Economique sur la Zone du Projet (8/1978

4 - Planification et Evaluation des Activités d'Information et d'Organisation Rurale dans le cadre du Project (Charlick) 1978

5 - Brève Analyse de l'Impact de la Modernisation sur le Système Foncier Traditionnel des Zarmas (Goldmark) 1977

6 - Rapport sur l'enquête de la Formation des Agents encadreurs dans la Zone du Projet (Radja) 1979

7 - Brief Description of Animal Traction Activities in the Project Zone (Sargent) 1977.

8 - Rapport des tournées FIL (JM et IA) ; 06/23/79

9 - Rapport des tournées NY (JM et IA) 07/28/79

10 - Observations sur la proposition de l'aménagement de Sargane 08/1979

11 - Monographies pour 82 villages dans la zone du projet 1979

12 - Une brève Présentation des Problèmes Relatifs à l'Approvisionnement des Intrants Agricoles (Wentling) 3/1979

13 - Analyse de la liste des villages (Wentling) 7/11/1979

14 - Trip Report (Moussa Saley/Mark Wentling) 7/2/79

15 - Rapport Trimestriel Janvier-Mai 4/1979

16 - Rapport Trimestriel Avril-Juillet 7/1979

17 - Rapport Trimestriel Juillet-Septembre 10/1979

18 - Liste des villages touchés par le projet campagne 1979 2/1979

19 - Rapport Annuel 1979 2/1979

20 - Analyse de Base d'une Exploitation Agricole Moyenne dans la zone du projet (Wentling) 12/19/78

21 - Orientation du projet pour 1980 et la Deuxième Phase 5/1979

22 - Rapports préparés pour le Séminaire sur la stratégie de la Vulgarisation Agricole (Trois Documents):
a) Rapport sur la stratégie agricole (Mullenax)
b) Le Volet Agriculture du Projet (Mullenax)
c) Domaines Potentiels de Collaboration entre l'INRAN et le Projet Productivité Niamey ((Wentling) 2/1980

23 - P.V. Réunion Examen résultats 1ère Evaluation et Document sur orientation du Projet 1980 et 2ème Phase 7/18/79

24 - Avant-Projet Phase II (Wentling)

25 - Proposition d'Accord de Réglements afférents au choix des villages pour l'installation et la Gestion des Moulins Coopératifs

26 - P.V. Réunion plan de campagne agricole cadre projet productivité Niamey 1/28/80

27 - Analyse sommaire de rentabilité des thèmes techniques (Mullenax) 6/79

28 - Propositions des Politiques des CPT's (Mullenax) 10/1979

29 -	P.V. Réunion de Planification Campagne Agricole 1978 dans le cadre PPN	3/13/79
30 -	Enquêtes de Statistiques Agricoles et Elevage	77/78/79
31 -	Etude des Centres de Marchés Ruraux (Godfrey)	3/15/80
32 -	Documents détaillants des thèmes techniques préconisés pour les parcelles de démonstrations (Mullenax)	4/1979
33 -	Fiches pour le Suivi des parcelles de démonstrations (Mullenax)	4/1979
34 -	Evaluation des démonstrations 1978 (Mullenax)	8/1978
35.	Synthèse des Rapports des Tournées effectuées en 1979	9/1979
36 -	Rapport de Tournée	3/1980
37 -	Analyse Economique du Projet Productivité Niamey (Wagner)	4/1980
38 -	Rapport de tournée	6/1980
39 -	Brève description des Moulins à Mil installés dans le cadre du PPN à Hamdallaye et Simiri (Wagner)	8/1980
40.-	Rapport des Activités	8/1980
41 -	3 Rapports de tournee	10/1978
42 -	Synthèse des Rapports sur les Rendements de Mil et de Niébé dans le cadre du Projet Productivité Niamey	11/1980
43 -	Photographies Aériennes et Carte d'Occupation des Sols	11/80
44 -	Points saillants du Programme des CPT pour la 2ème Phase	12/1980
45 -	Procès Verbal de la clôture des 3 CPR	12/1980

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46 - Etude Nutritionnelle (MDW International - Zerfas and Awantang) 1980

47 - Rapport sur les stagiaires de la Promotion 1980 des CPT dans le cadre du Projet Productivité Niamey

48 - Rapport Annuel 1980 et Bilan de la 1ère Phase 78-80 3/1/1981

49 - Evaluation of the Project's Phase I Expérience with the UNCC-CNCA Credit and Agricultural Inputs System (Wentling, Mullenax, Shaw) 4/1981

50 - Observation Préliminaires sur les Champs de Recherche Appliquée aux CPT (Mullenax) 7/1981

51 - Proposition d'Accord pour la Gestion de Fonds de Crédit du Projet 7/1981

The above list is not exhaustive. It does not include key AID documents such as the PID, PP, PGA, PES etc. or routine reports prepared by the AID Project Officer. Also not included are the financial reports prepared by the project and the controller's office. Of course, these is a wealth of information in the Project Management Unit's Office files (AID's and the GON's). Here can be found letters, cables, memos, minutes of meetings policy statements, etc which are of significant importance.

ANNEX C

NIAMEY DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT(NDD) PHASE I (683-0205)

Project Implementation Period: January 2, 1978 - December 31, 1980
PACD: July 30, 1981

	AID	PL480 Counterpart	GON (FNI)
Total Project Funding:	$4,698,000	323,950,000 CFA	40,511,240 CFA
Total Disbursements:	$4,315,481	323,950,000 CFA	40,511,240 CFA
Accumulated --------	275,138	-o-	-o-
Balance:	107,381	-o-	-o-

NDD PERFORMANCE DURING PHASE I

ject ponent	EOP Output Target As per PP	Actual Output Magnitude
ricult.	1. 3 arrond. office complexes built	1. 1 house, 3 offices & 3 warehouses completed
rvices gthened	2. 3 arrond. training centers built	2. 3 center created with total of 3 classrooms, 4 houses and 2 wells & 1 water system constrac ted.
	3. 42 ag. auxil. field agents trained	3. 40 aide-encadreurs trained and working
	4. 90 farm couples trained in improved practices	4. i. 84 young farmers trained at CFJA ii. 90 farm couples trained at CPT'S iii. 1,710 peasants given some training
	5. 1125 demonstrations carried out	5. 1,697 millet & 1,277 cowpeas demonstration fields

	6. Jardins scolaires formed in 3 arrond.	6. 46 Begun in 3 arrond. & school Garden books published
	7. Collection of agric. statistics	7. Baseline data collected in 148 villages
I. UNCC Co-Op. Services develop.	1. 3 arrond. office complexes built	1. 3 offices, 3 houses & 3 warehouses
	2. 42 coop. warehouse constructed	2. 20 completed & 3 scheduled for completion Sept81
	3. Coop. level monitors trained and functioning	3. None trained by Project because UNCC was already training them at IPDR/Kolo
	4. 10 grindings mills tested & evaluated	4. 10 installed and operators trained
	5. A tapioc/manioc flour mills tested and evaluated	5. None purchased and none installed. (Considered unviable & uneconomical)
	6. 252 coop. leaders trained & evaluated	6. 165 coop. leaders trained
	7. 2100 village leaders trained	7. 2099 GMV people trained, 313 market persons trained
	8. Coop. marketing & credit system developed	8. 43 coop. & 208 GMV's formed, 705 tons fertilizer & 21,500.000 CFA in inputs financed: 51,800.000 CFA, credit fund established. 25 scales also provided
	9. Training of blacksmiths	9. 28 blacksmiths trained.
I. Farmer Literacy Program	1. 3 arrond. offices built	1. 3 constructed
	2. 84 literacy instructors trained and functioning	2. 86 trained
	3. 3100 villagers receiving literacy training	3. 3531 enrolled, but only 144 successful on final exam at 79 literacy centers created by the project.
	4. (Not listed).	4. 180 CPT trainees took literacy course but only 29 passed final exam.

Village information radio programs developed	1. 42 radio club monitors trained and functioning	1. a. 16 radio clubs formed b. 9 radio club programs performed c. 15 animateurs trained d. 5384 listened to the programs (N.B.)(This program was cancelled after 1 year).
Livestock Service programs developed	1. Cottage poultry program tested, demonstrated & evaluated	1. a. 61 farm chiken coops installed in 17 villages b. Creation of 52 villages pilot chicken coops in 33 villages c. 700 pure bred roosters sold.
	2. Maradi Goat Program	2. 294 Goats distributed in 1979.
	3. On-Farm cattle feeding tested, demonstrated & evaluated	3. 295 steers fattened
	4. Project area animal health program function-	4. 54,500 doses of vaccin & 12,580 doses of de-paritizing medicines provided.
	5. (Not listed).	5. 3 vaccination corrals with scales constructed.
I. Village level,	1. 42 field agents trained	1. 20 Prospecteurs trained
Land-use and	2. Land-use & soil conservation plans developed in 425 villages	2. Prospecteurs given special training by consultant but work recurrent beyond capacity of these agents and their service

Conservation programs developed	3. Initial implementation of plans begun in 50 villages	3. 127.4 h in village woodlots planted, 6.5 kms of wind breaks planted and 50 ha of Gao Tree planted
	4. Tree nurseries established and 2 wells completed	4. 3 nurseries established & 2 well completed
	5. Experimental fish ponds constructed & evaluated	5. 2 mares stocked with fish
	6. (Not listed)	6. 3 arrond. offices & houses constructed
VII. Trial irrigation schemes	1. 6 minor irrigation schemes installed & evaluated	1. Several proposals considered, but activity transferred to PCV's
VIII. Studies Program	1. Baseline data Studies in nutrition etc.. completed	1. See Annex C
IX. Comprehensive area development program created	1. PP discusses no target levels	1. 3 volume Phase II PP completed
X. Program management unit established with COTEDEP	1. PP does not set target levels	1. Unit consisting of 13 people is well established & functioning efficiently

INTERIM PHASE

Interim Implementation Period: January 1, 1981 - June 30, 1981

Additional funding received from PL480 counterpart funds for this period: 52,000.000 CFA

PHASE II (683-0240

Projected Implementation Period: July 1 198[illegible] to June 30, 1986

PACD: December 31, 1986

	AID	GON (In-Cash)
Total Projected Funding	$13,582,000	999,500,000 CFA
Total Funds obligated on 6/4/81	$5,704,000	35,000,000 CFA
Total Sub-Obligations as of 7/10/81	$1,326,000	-o-
Total Disbursements as of 6/30/81	-o-	6,520,773 CFA
Accumulated accruals	-o-	5,439,317 CFA
Balance:	$5,704,000	23,039,910 CFA

ANNEX D

OFF THE CUFF IMPRESSIONS ON THE AID

(OR I'VE SEEN THE ENEMY AND IT'S

Of course, a lot of the bureaucracy and de. lie beyond the control of AID. Over the years by Congress and other regulatory agencies with of rules, regulations, guidelines, etc. that A. time making sure everything it does is in accor edicts than it does with development. This has become a multi-tiered, amorphous bureaucracy wh armchair specialists are all too prepared to tri of your project until it satisfies some esoteric ever popular theory which is in vogue or, in mar pays special tribute to one of their pet subject

Although a lot of the delays in the prepara of projects can be attributed to AID/W, the mis absolve itself of the responsibility for the is that the larger the mission becomes the more AID/W. This seems particularly true in terms o ances and reviews now required by the mission. ed to point where the end product is no better have resulted from fewer clearances and fewer p In many instances the larger group and, consequ turns out an inferior end-product or one that c superflous materials which are required to sati rests of the different committee members. This

process which allows everyone to participate would not be so bad if it did not result in the inordinate waste of time and effort of those involved and in inexcusably high levels of stress and frustration. Of course, the real argument against the "more people involved the better" approach is that it ultimately results in long, unexpected delays which the mission is unable to compensate for in its planning cycle. This inability to allow enough lead time for the design of projects usually means that the mission runs up against a final deadline which cannot further be postponed and, therefore, after all the discussing, reviewing, consensus taking, etc. is done someone has to work hard and fast to complete the job. Usually, this "someone" is the same person who could have completed about the same product several months earlier if he or she had been told to do so.

The experience in the design of NDD II aptly supports the foregoing brief exposé on the mindnumbing cumbersomeness and often comic bureaucracy of AID. How in the world was it possible for the first draft of the NDD II PP to be completed in June of 1980 and not submitted to AID/W until late December of the same year? How could a second follow-on phase effort have gone so far astray? There were poor decisions made here that should be analyzed if the mission is not to repeat this horrid experience. These decisions were costly in terms of the needless waste of funds, time and effort and, worst of all, they delayed the start of NDD's Phase II by at least six months. The damages caused by this delay were especially

serious when it is considered that this initial 6 months delay in the start of the project could mean an eventual 1 to 2 year set back in project implementation. It is very regrettable that the responsibility for this delay and its sorrowful consequences can all be attributed to AID.

Its experiences like this one which make me wonder if AID will ever be capable of being really serious about development. It is apparent to me that many of the people who are devoting their lives to a carreer with AID have little real commitment to development in general and, more specifically, to the development of the countries they live and work in. If this lack of commitment is really true, then it s probably one that will continue to exist as long as AID employees worry more about themselves than those they have purportdly come to help. I'm not suggesting that all AID employees be bleeding martyrs; however it would be re-assuring if some of them showed as much interest and élan toward development of the country they're serving in as they do for their tennis matches, poker games and rec center socks hops.

With regards to PP preparations (or anything else for that matter), my recommendation to the mission is that in the future it keep to a bare minimum the number of participants and to make sure that all the participants be truly able to contribute in a competent, timely manner. Also, before adding any individual or office on the list of participants make sure that this will increase the efficiency of the execution of

the assigned action. Above all don't bring in any non-AID people unless it is absolutely necessary. Every AID personnel resource should be exhausted before bringing in any contractors. It is shameful to me the way AID uses contractors instead of its own people. If AID can't run its own show and run it right it should get out of the development business.

In connection with the above it also follows that we should not create any new posts or offices unless it is crystal clear that this will increase the efficiency of mission operation and lead to improved output. Of course, my own particular biases make me believe that overall the output of the mission should be judged primarily on the quality of the implementation of its projects. It goes without saying that if it was not for our projects there would be little reason for any of us to be here. Thus it forcefully follows that project implementation should be the focus of our attention. This is particularly true as the mission's major projects move into their second phases and the mission's project package is not expected to change much over the next several years. The clear, irrefutable logic of all this is that all major mission decisions in terms of the assignment of resources, policies, procedures, etc. should be always made with the following question in the front of our minds: How will this action improve project implementation? If it doesn't improve project implementation, it probably shouldn't be done. I believe that the entire mission organizational chart should be reviewed in this light. I also believe that more efficiency could be gained by granting each office in charge of project impementation those resources needed for both the design and the implementation of projects. This should be done even if it means reducing resources to other less essential offices -, or at the extreme, the demise of these offices. Overall, all project implementors should be able to design and vice-versa - and, in general, all AID employees should be able to manage the implementation of projects and they should be prepared to be pulled off there regular jobs to do so -- if need be.

I realize that maybe what I want is an ideal that never can be attained but this should not stop us from at least trying to assure that the project design and implementation offices have easy and ready access to the resources they need to do their jobs. Important among these resource are qualified secretaries (especially bi-lingual ones) translators, drivers and vehicles. This may seem like easy items to grant but, for the want of one of these, many a project in this mission and its manager have suffered unduly. Good bi-lingual secretaries and translators are worth their weight in gold and the mission should move heaven and earth to keep such employees once they are engaged. It makes no sense for millions of dollars worth of projects to be obstructed because of a lack of these things. Keep in mind that it is patently unfair to ask a manager to correctly implement a project according to schedule if he or she has not been given the means to do so.

I also believe that project implementation could be improved if we gave more authority to our project officers. These are our front line people and they can't keep running back to a mission committee on every little matter. If you can't trust your project manager to a competent, responsible job, he should not be a project manager and you should get rid of him or her. In this regard, a project manager should have all the authorities accorded to the AID representative in the grant agreement except those concerning the modification of the scope and financial plan of the project. This authority should include the signing of all PIL's that do not change project content. The project manager should definitely be able to respond to letters from his or her GON counterpart. This does not means foregoing those clearances the manager deems necessary, but it does mean giving him or her the same authority and perogatives enjoyed by his or her GON counterpart. (The other donors seem to be able to grant this authority to its project liaison people)

In summary, the project manager should be allowed to be a hero or to hang him or herself. This means he or she must be unfettered by unnecessary bureaucracy. The project manager's superiors should concern themselves more with judging the performance of their managers than with coming up with more ways to control them. They should weed out the poor performers and encourage the good ones. Of course, one problem here is that many supervisors have trouble rating a project manager's performance because they've never managed a project themselves.

I must admit that many of the views expressed above are due to a certain nostalgia for the smaller mission I once knew. However, nostalgia or no nostalgia, it still bothers me that the mission is basically doing the same job it did four or five years ago, but with twice the people. In fact, it may even be possible that during those heavy work load years which immediatly followed the drought when the mission rushed to establish itself and its new projects while at the same time overseeing its emergency relief program, - that the mission had more to do then it has to do now. It's also interesting to note that, although AID is sixth or seventh on the list of donors in Niger, it probably has the largest staff and operations budget of any of the donors.