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THE CENTRAL TUNISIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:

LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

A.I.D. Evaluation Working Paper No. 49

by

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Agency for International Development.

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this paper is three-fold:

(1) to examine the Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) Project experience within the analytical framework provided by Developing Alternative, Inc. (DAI) under the Organization and Administration of Integrated Rural Development Project;

(2) to provide a historical perspective on the development and implementation of the CRTD Project from its initial conception during the second half of 1977 to the first subproject evaluation in mid-1981 from the standpoint of an active participant in the processes of project design and implementation*, and

(3) to draw lessons of experience which may be of use to designers and managers of rural development projects.

In line with the first of the above two objectives, the paper reviews the CTRD project experience from the standpoint of seven (out of nine) critical implementation problems identified by DAI in late 1980 (IRD Research Note No. 1 Integrated Rural Development: Nine Critical Implementaton Problems, Feb. 1981) and subsequently studied through a review of selected AID projects (IRD Research Note No. 2; Implementation Issues in Integrated Rural Development: A Review of 21 USAID Projects, May 4, 1981).

The seven problems selected were:

- (1) Participation and Decentralization;
- (2) Political, Economic and Environmental Constraints;
- (3) Differing Agendas;
- (4) Information Systems;
- (5) Effecting Integration;
- (6) Timing; and
- (7) Managing Technical Assistance.

*The author was chief of the USAID Rural Development Office from July 1977 to August 1981.

Of the two remaining critical problems identified by DAI, the first, (counterpart shortage) is certainly relevant to the CTRD project, but it requires for its solution GOT policy measures designed to attract and retain qualified civil servants in rural areas such as Central Tunisia. Consideration of such policy changes are beyond the scope of this paper. Staffing problems, however, are discussed in the sections dealing with effecting integration and managing technical assistance. Finally, in light of the fact that CTRD project implementation had not reached yet its midway point by mid-1981, it was considered premature to discuss the last critical problem identified by DAI (sustaining project benefits).

A final word of caution: The focus of this paper is the institutional framework of the CTRD Project as a whole and the institutional development experience gained under the Area Development subproject. While some of the other subprojects described in Appendix I have an institutional development dimension, (particularly the Dryland Farming Systems Research and Rural Extension and Outreach subproject), they were at too early a stage of implementation in mid-1981 for them to yield any useful lesson of experience. Therefore, it would be premature to draw conclusions regarding the entire CTRD Project and its different subprojects on the basis of this paper.

The first draft of this paper was written while its author was assigned to the Office of Multisectoral Development in the Bureau for Science and Technology of AID. The draft was circulated for comments in May 1982 and extensive changes were made in response to comments received from Abe Waldstein, ST/MD and Jim Dalton, Louis Berger International, Inc. (formerly with NE/TECH).

Included as an Appendix to this paper is a memorandum to the files which describes how the CTRD Project design was influenced by the experience gained under an earlier project, the Siliana Rural Development Project.

SUMMARY

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) has been touted by its advocates as an effective alternative to sectoral strategies of rural development. It has attempted to replace a piecemeal approach (which separately addresses problems of crop production, livestock, off-farm employment, potable water development, health etc.) by an integrated approach which takes advantage of complementarities among the various components of a multi-sectoral rural development program. It also has been argued that the IRD approach makes it possible to provide to the target population - rural households - a unified package of interrelated goods and services, rather than an overwhelming array of competing advisory and support services.

There is, however, no single optimum IRB model. As a matter of fact, complete integration of rural development interventions at the regional or local level is seldom, if ever, achieved as it requires a degree of political and/or administrative decentralization unacceptable to most developing (or developed) countries. The Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) is a case in point: although the Project Agreement envisaged that a new regional development authority (the ODTG) would be responsible, within a geographically limited project area, for the integrated management of all functions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, this concept was successfully fought by the various bureaus of the Ministry. Eventually a "second-best" strategy was negotiated whereby the ODTG was assigned exclusive responsibility for irrigated agriculture, overall management responsibility for extension services, funding (but not implementation) responsibility for potable water development in sparsely populated rural areas and coordination responsibility with respect to other rural development interventions.

One of the major lessons of the CTRD project experience is that IRD strategies should be carefully tailored to a country's political, administrative and institutional environment and take into account the current capacity and growth potential of existing organizations, as well as the time and resources required to develop new regionally-based organizations. What is required is a regionally-based (or locally-based) institutional development strategy which take into account not only provincial and local government institutions but also the regional and local activities of sectoral agencies.

The CTRD Project experience indicates that, at the project design stage, not enough attention was paid to the institutional development aspects of the project, as against its more technical aspects, such as regional planning, information systems, agricultural extension, etc. In effect, the assumption underlying the CTRD project design was that the Government of Tunisia (GOT) needed technical assistance only with respect to new, innovative, approaches in such specialized fields as regional development planning and rural extension.

That assumption, shared by the GOT, might have remained unchallenged if technical assistance had been extended only to well-established Tunisian organizations (such as the National

Livestock and Pasture Authority). In the case of the newly created ODTC, however, it became apparent, by the time of the mid-term evaluation of the Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject, that a higher priority should have been given to the institutional development of the ODTC (particularly team building within the organization and establishment of linkages with other organizations involved in the development of the region) as well as to staff training in project design and management. This would have enabled the ODTC to meet its primary responsibilities for irrigation and rural potable water development and to gradually build up the capacity to assume innovative functions such as regional planning, management of an Experimental Fund and testing of new approaches to extension.

The CTRD Project experience thus suggests (1) the use of a more unified approach to technical assistance which integrates management and technical skills training within a long-term institutional development perspective (2) formal AID acceptance of an extended time-frame (e.g. ten years) for rural development projects (rather than grudging approval of ad hoc one year extensions of terminal dates) and (3) phasing of rural development projects into discrete, separately funded increments, with final design and funding of each successive phase contingent on satisfactory near-completion of the previous phase. Such phasing would reflect "up-front" recognition that rural institutional development is a slow and frustrating process and would provide the flexibility needed to adjust, or revise, the initial project strategy and timetable on the basis of the experience gained during the previous phase and in light of unforeseen events affecting project implementation. Hopefully, it also would insure that no activity is funded until evidence is provided that the institutional capacity to undertake it has been developed.

A major objective of this study has been to reexamine CTRD project design in light of project implementation experience. One of the principal lessons learned through that reexamination is that implementation difficulties were often the result of differences between USAID and the host country government, or within the host country government, which were left unresolved at the time the project agreement was negotiated i.e. they were either the subject of project compromises or their resolution was deferred through the use of very general language in the agreement. Some would argue that a project agreement should not be signed unless all such differences are clearly resolved. Since many of these differences involve institutional arrangements, however, a more realistic approach might be to reduce the number of differences to be resolved at any one time through the time-phased approach to project funding suggested above. This would obviate the need to agree on a detailed institutional development "blueprint" for the entire life of a rural development project. It should be noted, however, that the resulting flexibility in the timetable for funding and starting individual subprojects would not relieve AID missions of the requirement to provide detailed specifications prior to financing specific interventions.

PROJECT DATA SHEET

Project Title: Central Tunisia Rural Development (664-0312)

Purpose: To assist the GOT in the integrated rural development of 8 districts in three governorates of the underdeveloped region of Central Tunisia.

Date of Initial Project Agreement: 5/18/79

Completion Date: 9/30/86

Obligations (Loans & Grants):

<u>Subproject Number and Title:</u>	<u>Amount (\$Million)</u>	<u>Date Pro Ag Amended</u>
312.1 Area Development	3.2	5/18/79
312.2 Dryland Farming Systems Research	3.15	5/18/79
312.3 Small Holder Irrigation Dev.	4.8	5/18/79
312.4 Potable Water	.75	9/21/79
312.5 Potable Water-Siliana	.5	8/19/79
312.7 Rural Potable Water	2.2	7/10/80
312.8 Rangeland Management	2.6	6/5/81
312.9 Rural Extension & Outreach	2.8	8/30/80
312.14 Kasserine Water Improvement	1.0	8/31/79
Total Obligations	21.0	
Host Country Contribution (estimate)	30	

Project Implementation: Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has overall project implementation responsibility (except for Subproject No. 312.5 and 312.14) which it delegates to subordinate agencies as appropriate.

Subproject Implementation:

<u>Subproject Number and Implementing Agencies:</u>	<u>Contractors</u>
312.1 ODTC	<u>Technical Assistance (1979-81)*</u> University of Wisconsin* Cornell University** <u>Mid-term Evaluation (Summer 1981)</u> NASPA*** and El Amouri Institute
312.2 MOA/El Kef Agricultural Institute	Oregon State University
312.3 ODTC	Oregon State University
312.8 Livestock & Pasture Authority	Oregon State University
312.9 MOA/ODTC	Oregon State University
312.14 National Water Development and Distribution Company (SONEDE)	
312.7 CTDA/MOA Water Drilling Agency (RSH)	
312.5 Ministry of Public Health	CARE/Medico (OPG)
312.14 Ministry of Public Health	Care/Medico (OPG)

* Amendment to centrally-funded cooperative agreement

** Host country contract

*** National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

TUNISIA

Mediterranean Sea

ALGERIA

CTRD Project Area

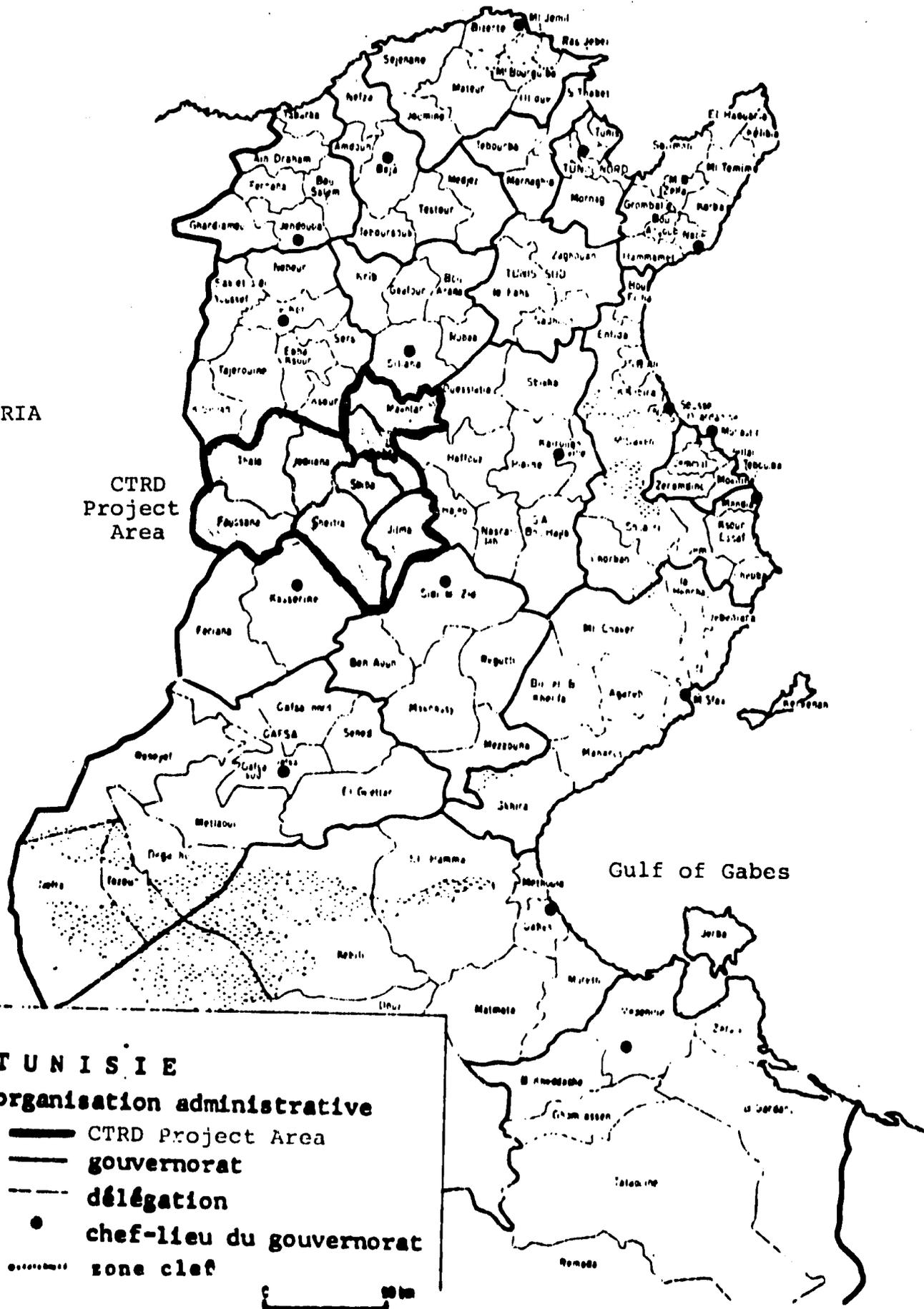
Gulf of Gabes

TUNISIE

organisation administrative

-  CTRD Project Area
-  gouvernorat
-  délégation
-  chef-lieu du gouvernorat
-  zone clef

0 50 km



I. INTRODUCTION

Is the Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) Project an integrated rural development project? The answer depends on whether or not one draws a sharp dividing line between projects using an "integration" strategy and those using a "coordination" strategy.

In the Executive Summary of its state-of-the-art paper entitled Integrated Rural Development: Making it Work?, DAI makes a clear distinction between integration and coordination:

These two terms -- "integration" and "coordination" -- are used with uninhibited exuberance in many IRD projects, sometimes to hide a lack of understanding of the practical issues involved. The principal difference between an integrated as opposed to a functional organization is indicated by the level where authority over the full range of organizational activities converges. In a functional organization it occurs near the top. In an integrated organization, on the other hand, convergence occurs closer to the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. For example, in an integrated area development project, engineers, agriculturalists and medical personnel may all be accountable to a single project manager in a subdistrict area. Thus integration denotes structure and implies comprehensiveness (a multi-sectoral focus) and control (direct lines of authority).

Coordination, on the other hand, describes the type of managerial behavior required to produce the results visualized in the project design. The word itself provides a clue to the behavior it describes: "co" suggests joint or shared activities and "coordination" implies the ranking of these activities. This ranking refers to the timing, type, quality and magnitude of resources applied and goods or services produced. It also includes the distribution of implementation responsibility. The joint effort refers to sharing resources and information to guarantee the needed mix of goods and services.

To apply multi-sectoral resources to rural development objectives, then, either integration or coordination strategies can be used.

In the case of the CTRD project, AID's intent was to combine an "integration" strategy with respect to program planning and evaluation and a "coordination" strategy with respect to program implementation. To that effect, a

preliminary Central Tunisia development strategy was developed jointly by the GOT and USAID prior to CTRD project design and provisions for developing an institutional capacity for program planning and evaluation at the regional level became the central element of the "core" (Central Tunisia Area Development) subproject.

As the Project Identification Documents (PIDs) for the first four CTRD subprojects were being prepared in July 1978, the GOT announced the creation of a new regional development authority to promote the development of Central Tunisia. Since this step was taken with practically no consultation with USAID, it is difficult to say what the GOT had in mind at that time, but testimony given by the then Minister of Agriculture to the National Assembly on the pending enabling legislation indicates that an "integration" strategy with respect to program implementation was under consideration.* When the new regional development authority was physically established in the Central Tunisia town of Kasserine during the early part of 1979, however, the GOT Ministry of Agriculture (the parent agency) was no longer supporting the "integration" option and, in the course of the year increasingly advocated a coordination role for the Central Tunisia Development Authority (ODTC)**

The final design of the CTRD project in the latter part of 1978 involved the preparation of an overall CTRD Project Paper (PP) as well as the preparation of separate Subproject Papers. After considerable debate, a decision was made by AID/Washington in the Spring of 1979 to approve the Central Tunisia assistance effort as a single project with separately funded subprojects. The intent was to encourage unified project management by both USAID and the GOT while retaining separate fund control and accountability for each subproject (no transfer of funds between subprojects was allowed).

It was AID's intent from the beginning that funds allocated through the CTRD project be managed by the ODTC but not that project-funded activities be necessarily implemented by the ODTC. The ODTC, however, took a rather narrow view of what "management" meant and attempted to implement, or at least tightly control, all project-funded activities but the attempt did not meet with success due to the resistance of the

*See Section VI and Appendix III, pp. 15-17 and Attachment.

**Office de Developement de la Tunisia Centrale

various bureaus and field services of the Ministry of Agriculture which usually won the Minister of Agriculture over to their side of the bureaucratic infighting. As it turned out, the ODTC retained responsibility for management and implementation of the Area Development, Smallholder Irrigation and Rural Extension and Outreach subprojects (the latter in collaboration with the Ministry's agricultural extension services); it retained overall project management responsibility for the Dryland Farming Systems Research and Rural Potable Water subprojects but their implementation was in fact contracted out to other agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture. Finally, two subprojects (the development of a potable water system for three semi-urban agglomerations and Rangeland Development and Management) were managed and implemented by autonomous authorities under the Ministry of Agriculture with the ODTC retaining a vague "coordination" role but no control over funds. The ODTC also was responsible for coordinating several AID-supported Central Tunisia development activities which were funded outside the CTRD Project loan and Grant Agreement, as for instance, the Rural Community Health project or the potable water projects implemented by the private voluntary agency CARE. In the case of activities financed entirely by the GOT, budgetary resources were, in some instance, allocated to the ODTC (e.g. for construction of storage facilities and improvement of rural roads) and, in other instances, to other agencies (e.g. for potable water development and reforestation). It was both GOT and AID policy to encourage the ODTC to contract with private or public organizations for the implementation of as much as possible of its program activities (including activities financed jointly by the GOT and AID under the Area Development Experimental Fund) and to emphasize its role as promoter, advocate, planner, and manager/coordinator of Central Tunisia development.

Whatever the original intent of the GOT and AID might have been, it is clear that integrated management of central Tunisia development activities has been achieved only in those instances in which the ODTC has retained control over investment budget funds and, even then, the ODTC's management role includes a large element of coordination.

It should be said at this point that most, if not all, IRD projects implemented on a regional scale (as against community-based IRD projects) include a large element of coordination. Whatever the authority granted to provincial governors or to directors of regional development agencies, they still have to contend with the political, bureaucratic and technocratic power of line ministries. This may be one of the reasons why DAI, in its IRD Research Note No. 2

(Implementation Issues in Integrated Rural Development: A Review of 21 USAID Projects, May 4, 1982) developed a fairly broad working definition of IRD for the purpose of determining what projects to include in its sample. The criteria used by DAI in determining whether a project was "integrated rural development" for that purpose were as follows:

-- The project involved more than one component (e.g., agriculture, road construction, health, etc.) and required some degree of coordination (either explicitly called for in the design of the project or implied through, for example, giving the responsibility for implementation to a single entity);

-- It was geographically bounded, i.e., concentrated resources in a specific area or group of areas within the country; and

-- It was focused on meeting the needs of people in predominantly rural areas.

The CTRD Project clearly meets all of these criteria:

-- The project is geographically bounded: it is focused on a nine delegation* area of approximately 2,600 square miles which includes portions of three governorates (Siliana, Kasserine, and Sede Bouzid).

-- The entire Central Tunisia region, and the project area in particular, are characterized by poor and eroded soils, low and erratic rainfall, a dispersed settlement pattern, poor agricultural practices, overgrazing of pastures, a high illiteracy rate, inadequate access of the dispersed rural population to potable water, health and social services, lack of industry and, generally, a much lower standard of living than the relatively prosperous northern and coastal regions which make Tunisia a "middle-income" country. Because of the limited resource base and the recent transition from pastoralism to sedentary settlement in much of the project area, there are no large villages other than delegation seats and most of the population is rural. At the time of the 1975 census, 89% of the project area's population was rural and 79% consisted of isolated rural households. While the proportion of isolated rural households has probably decreased since, as the project area's population has increased from 185,000 in 1975 to an estimated 266,000 in 1981 and as irrigated areas have expanded, the basic settlement pattern has not changed.

*The delegation (district) is the smallest geographical unit of local government with a full-time administrator and a staff of representatives of various technical ministries.

-- Not only is the CTRD project aimed at increasing the productivity, income and general welfare of the predominantly rural population of the project area, but it also addresses specifically the problem of meeting the basic needs of the dispersed rural households. Thus it provides for the design and testing of delivery systems for public goods and services which are accessible to dispersed rural households and it encourages and assists the Government of Tunisia to undertake activities specifically designed to increase the productivity and income of small dryland farmers and herders.

-- The project does involve more than one component and requires some degree of coordination, the responsibility for which has been assigned to a regional development authority (the ODTC). The CTRD project components are described in Appendix I.

II. PARTICIPATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

Administrative decentralization was already official policy in Tunisia by the time that the CTRD project was first discussed by GOT and USAID officials in late 1977. The GOT's objective was to make government authorities and services more accessible to the people and more responsive to their "felt needs." The measures taken included the creation of new governorates and delegations (districts), the allocation of "Rural Development Program" funds to governorates and the assignment of rural development staff to administer these funds on behalf of the governors. The A.I.D.-supported Siliana Rural Development project which was initiated in 1976 and terminated in 1979 was aimed at strengthening the Siliana Governorates' capacity to plan and implement rural development projects.

Unfortunately, recently created governorates, such as the Siliana governorate, lacked the staff necessary to plan rural development activities and to supervise their implementation by the field services of technical ministries (which also were understaffed throughout most of central Tunisia). Creating the ODTC was a typical technocratic response to the situation and, to some extent, represented a step backward in terms of decentralization: While it did establish field offices in most of the project area's delegations, decision making power was centralized in the Kasserine home office and was exercised only by the ODTC director.

At the time the ODTC was created, the concept of local participation was practically unheard of in Tunisia. Any suggestion that the members of a community would cooperate for the purpose of improving their livelihood or living conditions was countered by arguments to the effect that the rural population lacked community spirit and was suspicious of the term "cooperation" in light of its experience with production cooperatives in the late 60's (At that time, then-Minister of Economy Ben Salah attempted to forcibly collectivize Tunisian agriculture under the guise of establishing cooperatives).

In spite of the skeptical attitude of most Tunisian officials (except for a few in the Ministry of Social Affairs), a modest attempt at introducing local participation approaches in central Tunisia was launched in 1978 by the Save the Children Federation (SCF) under an A.I.D. grant.

Given the fact that the SCF project was barely getting underway and in light of the technocratic, top-down mode of operation of the Ministry of Agriculture, no attempt was made to introduce participatory features in the first set of CTRD interventions designed in 1978. The wisdom of this course of action was later confirmed when the ODTC began operations and

it became apparent that the centralization of decision-making in the hands of the ODTG director precluded even ODTG staff participation in the decision-making process.

By the end of 1980, SCF had successfully demonstrated that it was possible for appropriately trained and motivated agents to elicit participation and self-help from rural communities in parts of central Tunisia. Under a one-year extension of its grant to SCF, A.I.D. encouraged it to enlist the collaboration of government authorities and the ODTG in the planning and implementation of Community-Based Integrated Rural Development (CBIRD) activities.

While several CBIRD projects were jointly funded by SCF and the Governorate of Siliana during the one year extension period, SCF was not successful in persuading the ODTG to provide financing from the Area Development Experimental Fund (See Appendix, B(1) pp 3). The staff of the ODTG field office located in Makthar delegation (Siliana Governorate), however, did collaborate with SCF staff on one or two projects and the ODTG planning staff visited ongoing projects. The ODTG director was impressed by the reports he received from his staff and particularly by the enthusiastic reaction of the Governor of Siliana upon visiting a project site (Magrouna) where the community had joined forces to develop and irrigate land which had laid idle since 1969 (when the Ben Salah "cooperative" drive was terminated). The Governor had been particularly impressed by the fact that the local population had taken that initiative with no official GOT assistance and very little material support from SCF.

A.I.D. support of the SCF program was extended in August 1981 for another three years but at a low level of funding which required Tunisian financing of all CBIRD project expenditures. Substantial financial commitments were, in fact, received from the Siliana Governorate as well as from the Kasserine Governorate which requested that SCF activities be expanded to include areas under its jurisdiction. While USAID continued to encourage ODTG to finance CBIRD projects from the Experimental Fund, no pressure was placed on SCF to secure a funding commitment from ODTG. SCF was expected, however, to collaborate with the Ministry of Social Affairs in designing a few projects for Experimental Fund financing. A.I.D. hoped that selected field personnel of governorates, technical ministries and ODTG would learn from exposure to the SCF community-based approach to project design and implementation and would develop a more participatory style of operation. It was realized, however, that change was being introduced at the periphery, i.e., at the point where government agents interfaced with beneficiaries, without any attempt to change the basic organizational structure and

operational style of the agencies involved. It was not anticipated, therefore, that collaboration with SCF on a few small-scale CBIRD projects would result in a major "bureaucratic reorientation" of these agencies from a top-down, technocratic approach to a bottom-up, participatory approach (with the possible exception of the Ministry of Social Affairs field services which already had been exposed in the past to community development approaches and which were forced by budgetary constraints to undertake modest projects on a scale more amenable to a participatory style of implementation).

The recent tide of political liberalization in Tunisia (its most dramatic aspect being the evolution from a one-party to a multi-party system) has been accompanied by official pronouncements concerning local participation as well as administrative decentralization. GOT officials who made these pronouncements, however, were not specific about the content of participation and it could be safely assumed that there would be a substantial time-lag between the first mention of the abstract concept of local participation and its actual implementation by government agencies. The first step in that process should be to break the "dependency" relationship between government staff and beneficiaries whereby the latter perceive themselves as powerless to act and perceive the government as a source of handouts, perceptions which are shared by the technocrats who administer government programs. The SCF experiment in Central Tunisia has challenged this stereotype and has attempted to replace it with an operational model of community self-help. This approach, however, cannot become institutionalized unless the regional and local authorities develop decentralized organizational structures which can match community self-help with an appropriate outreach capacity. In the case of the ODTC, this would require a conscious effort to build up the delegation-level field offices capacity to assist local communities identify their felt needs and to respond quickly to their requests for assistance. This implies, of course, progressive decentralization of decision-making within the ODTC.

III. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

A. Political Constraints

Until the mid-1970's, the GOT's public investment program had been aimed primarily at increasing production and income (The exception being the educational sector which had been allocated considerable public investment over the years). As a result, there had been a tendency to concentrate public investment in the more productive northern and coastal regions of Tunisia and to neglect the resource-poor central and southern regions.

By the time the CTRD project was designed and approved, however, the GOT had become aware of serious dissatisfaction and incipient political unrest in some of the interior regions, including central Tunisia. It became conscious of the fact that the local populations were fed up with studies and promises and were becoming increasingly vocal in their demands for action. The GOT, therefore, perceived U.S. support and advocacy of a "basic human needs" approach focused on the "rural poor" as an opportunity to make good its past promises and to improve its standing with the Central Tunisia citizenry. This was reflected in the haste with which the GOT created a new regional authority, (the ODTC), to promote and direct the development of Central Tunisia, a few short months following signature of the CTRD project loan and grant agreement.

As a matter of fact, the high priority given to Central Tunisia in official speeches and other pronouncements turned out to be somewhat of a liability for the project. In its desire to maximize the short-term political gains from the Central Tunisia program, the GOT (at the time headed by former Prime Minister Hedi Nour) advertised the ODTC and the new programs it would undertake as the instant solution to the region's economic and social problems. When the ODTC failed to deliver on a timely basis what had been promised, resentment and criticism of the office replaced the earlier sense of rising anticipation. This no doubt affected both the morale of the ODTC staff and the attitude of other GOT agencies toward the new institution.

B. Economic and Environmental Constraints

It had been recognized from the outset that lack of natural resources, geographic dispersion of the rural population and cultural isolation of the urban centers would make it difficult to increase income and employment, to attract private capital and skilled manpower and, generally speaking, to produce dramatic results over the life of the CTRD project. As a matter of fact, the long-standing aversion of both GOT and A.I.D. agricultural technicians to devoting

time and resources to improving agriculture in the area, the GOT's delays in following up with action the numerous studies undertaken since the 1950's, the IBRD's rejection of a proposed Central Tunisia project in 1974 and AID/W's initial reluctance to approve the CTRD project, all bear witness to a general lack of confidence in Central Tunisia's development potential over the years and up to the time of project approval.

Recognition of these constraints led the GOT to favor allocation of financial and human resources to those geographical areas within Central Tunisia which offered the greatest potential for rapid increases in production i.e., those areas with a potential for irrigation. In its desire for political impact, the GOT also favored highly visible and rather costly potable water and infrastructure projects. These GOT preferences tended to run counter to A.I.D.'s emphasis on meeting the basic human needs of the poorest segments of the population, particularly dispersed rural households in remote areas, through small-scale, low cost interventions.

While the GOT was conscious of the need to attract administrative and technical cadres to the "interior", it moved rather slowly in taking the necessary measures. In late 1980, USAID was informally told that substantial financial incentives would be provided to cadres willing to move to "hardship areas", including semi-urban centers in Central Tunisia, in order to compensate for the lack of cultural and social amenities and the generally harsher living conditions relative to Tunis and coastal cities. By the end of 1981, however, there were still no signs that those financial incentives were being put into effect.

C. Institutional Constraints

The slow pace of administrative reform in Tunisia is indicative of another type of constraint, i.e. bureaucratic resistance to change, which seriously limits the scope of management innovations within the time-frame of an A.I.D.-funded project. Ingrained patterns of administrative behavior, whether formally codified or not, constitute serious institutional constraints on the design and implementation of rural development projects in Tunisia. For instance:

(1) Although "decentralization" was a stated GOT policy objective, actual progress in carrying out that policy was very slow due to the centrifugal tendency inherited by the Tunisian administration from pre-independence French and Ottoman administrations. Even when regional authorities -- such as ODTG -- were created and staffed to administer programs in specific geographic areas, decision-making

authority remained largely vested in the Tunis-based central administration. For instance, A.I.D. and the GOT had agreed that the ODTTC would be responsible for managing small-scale pilot projects funded by the Area Development Experimental Fund. In order to encourage innovative behavior by the ODTTC, A.I.D. decided not to require mission approval of pilot projects prior to implementation but, instead, to require that pilot projects be evaluated at the end of each year for conformance to agreed-upon selection criteria. The GOT Ministry of Plan, however, insisted on reviewing and approving each pilot project as part of its investment budget approval process and the ODTTC itself did not appear to relish the delegation of authority wished upon it by A.I.D.

(2) The complexity of integrated rural development project implementation called for organizational innovation. The Tunisian practice of codifying administration behavior and organizational structure into administrative law (also a French heritage) made such innovation difficult. For instance, the basic organizational structure of the ODTTC, as specified in a Ministerial decree, was a standard model applicable to all offices. Organization charts may differ but they must go through a lengthy approval process and be published in the Official Journal before they can take effect.

This administrative formalism may partly explain the fact that USAID was unable to obtain an ODTTC organization chart as late as three years after the enabling legislation had been passed by the national assembly. The ODTTC director argued that he did not wish to get "locked" into a permanent organizational structure (including permanent appointments to division chief positions) until he had had the opportunity to assess the merits of alternative organizational structures and to evaluate the capability of his staff. The resulting uncertainty, however, contributed to low morale and lack of motivation among ODTTC staff members who complained that they had not been assigned clear-cut responsibility and authority.

Tunisian administrative formalism also contributed to the difficulties encountered by the University of Wisconsin in providing technical assistance to the ODTTC in the field of regional planning. While much of the "Sketch Plan" approach advocated by the University of Wisconsin focused on the planning process itself, rather than on planning techniques, the Wisconsin team did not pay adequate attention to the existing elaborate formal process of national planning which was itself closely tied to the annual budgeting process. By not even attempting to demonstrate how the proposed regional "Sketch Plan" process could be integrated within the national level formal planning process, the Wisconsin team missed an opportunity to confer legitimacy on a new approach to regional planning.

IV. DIFFERING AGENDAS

A. Project Design and Approval

As DAI points out in its IRD Research Note No. 1 (pp 66-67), host country governments are primarily interested in the resource transfer component of projects whereas A.I.D., at the project design stage, is primarily interested in "packaging" projects for its own review and approval process. When rural development projects are located in resource-poor areas of a country, these divergences in viewpoints are aggravated by differences between host country and A.I.D. strategies in dealing with economic and environmental constraints.

In the case of the CTRD project, the GOT and A.I.D. agreed on the need to reallocate resources from the more developed northern tier of the country to the poorer interior. From the GOT's standpoint, it was politically advantageous to increase public investment in Central Tunisia. In the case of the AID Mission, it was a matter of survival to concentrate its assistance in the poorest areas in Tunisia, as otherwise it would be difficult to justify continued assistance to Tunisia, a middle-income country.

From the beginning of the CTRD project discussions, it was clearly evident that the GOT, and particularly the Ministry of Plan, wanted A.I.D. to finance the Central Tunisia Project which had been submitted to IBRD for financing in 1974. That project, which included large expenditures for relatively high-cost irrigation and potable water facilities, as well as for roads, electrification and other rural infrastructure was turned down by the IBRD because of an unsatisfactory internal rate of return (below 10%). A.I.D. on the other hand, while agreeing to the choice of Central Tunisia as the geographical focus of U.S. assistance, wanted a completely new project design which would emphasize innovative approaches for meeting the basic human needs of the rural poor which constituted the vast majority of the Central Tunisia population.

Even before project design began, disagreement between A.I.D. and the GOT Ministry of Plan on the issue of A.I.D. funding of infrastructure almost led to a complete breakdown in the negotiations. This was averted by a last minute face-saving compromise whereby it was agreed that PL 480 Title I local currency proceeds would be allocated to the financing of infrastructure which A.I.D. would not finance with dollar funds (particularly rural roads).

The final package of A.I.D. dollar-funded interventions included very few of the original components of the project proposed to the World Bank for financing (irrigation infrastructure and a potable water system for three delegation seats were retained in the A.I.D.-funded project). On the other hand, it included a number of innovative and/or experimental components which were suggested by A.I.D. such as the development of a regional planning and evaluation capability; the establishment of an Experimental Fund designed to finance innovative pilot activities which could be replicated on a regional scale; a dryland farming systems research effort, and new approaches to the provision of potable water to dispersed rural populations.

While these initiatives were generally well received and supported by GOT officials during the initial stage of project design, they resulted in a larger technical assistance package (relative to capital assistance) than would have been the case if the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture had had their way. During the final negotiations leading to the signature of the project loan and grant agreement, Ministry of Plan negotiators fought to increase capital assistance at the expense of technical assistance (as if U.S. technical assistance was the price that had to be paid in order to obtain A.I.D. capital assistance) and generally succeeded in keeping technical assistance to the minimum acceptable to A.I.D. This emphasis on "hardware" (equipment, construction, etc.) as opposed to "software" (technical assistance, new ways of delivering goods and services, etc.) was carried over from the project negotiation process to project implementation. Thus the ODTIC assigned a higher priority to investment projects (irrigation and other rural infrastructure) than to regional planning, evaluation, information system development, Experimental Fund activities and the formulation of strategies for the provision of potable water and outreach services to the rural poor.

B. Project Implementation

Other differences in the agenda of the various participants became obvious in the course of CTRD project implementation. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture showed practically no interest in ODTIC activities which did not fall within its jurisdiction, such as health education (in support of potable water interventions) or regional planning. On several occasions, it went so far as to suggest that monies earmarked for the Experimental Fund be reprogrammed for potable water interventions. Under these conditions, it was difficult for A.I.D. to persuade the ODTIC management to play a broad inter-sectoral coordination role.

There also was the inevitable clash of interest between the ODTC and existing field services of the Ministry of Agriculture when the new office moved in on their "turf". For instance, the Rural Engineering Service resisted Ministry approval of a rural potable water strategy developed by the ODTC (with University of Wisconsin assistance) in collaboration with USAID.

Finally, major divergences developed between the two universities responsible for technical assistance to the ODTC under the Area Development sub-project with respect to the establishment of a Central Tunisia information system. On the one hand, the University of Wisconsin wanted to limit the collection of data to what it needed for regional planning. On the other hand, Cornell University wanted to develop a minicomputer-based information system which would meet project impact evaluation needs. The failure of the two university teams to collaborate could not but contribute to the lack of progress achieved in the development of an ODTC-based information system. A more important factor impeding information system implementation, however, was the difference between the GOT and A.I.D. viewpoints concerning evaluation activities. On the one hand, USAID was under pressure from AID/Washington to develop a comprehensive CTRD project evaluation plan, as required for every A.I.D.-funded project. From A.I.D.'s standpoint, it was obviously advantageous that as much as possible of the information needed for project evaluation be collected and analyzed by the ODTC. The ODTC, on the other hand, was not particularly happy about the prospect of being evaluated, while the agencies responsible for monitoring CTRD program performance (the ministries of Plan and Agriculture) did not allocate the necessary resources to a task which was assigned a much lower priority than plan and budget formulation.

V. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Central Tunisia Rural Development project design provided for the establishment of a regionally-based information system in Central Tunisia. What this system would consist of, however, was not clearly defined at the outset and efforts by USAID to reach agreement with the GOT on the subject during the two years following signature of the Project Agreement met with little success. As a result, little progress had been made in the establishment of an information system by the time the Area Development sub-project evaluation began in June 1981.

Without any doubt, the primary reason for this lack of progress was the fact that proposals for a CTRD information system were largely shaped in terms of the information needs of AID's evaluation system, rather than in terms of the GOT's needs.

The Area Development sub-project of the CTRD project called for the establishment of a planning and evaluation unit in the ODTC to carry out the ODTC's mandate with respect to the planning and evaluation of the Central Tunisia development effort. This mandate, however, was conferred on the ODTC only by the US/GOT project agreement and not by the legislation creating the ODTC which made no specific reference to planning and/or evaluation. This was not surprising since there was no nation-wide GOT evaluation system and since the existing national planning system operated along sectoral rather than regional lines.

The regional planning component of the Area Development sub-project, however, had the support of the Ministry of Plan which was considering the introduction of a regional dimension in its 1982-86 five year plan formulation process. The evaluation component, on the other hand, had been added at the suggestion of AID/Washington and had no significant constituency within the Tunisian bureaucracy, even though everyone paid lip service to the need for program evaluation. In light of that fact, consideration had been given to assigning the CTRD program evaluation responsibility to a separate autonomous agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Center for Agricultural Center (CNEA) under a separate contract at least partially funded by AID. The ODTC director, however, objected to the concept of an outside evaluator and insisted that the evaluation function be assigned to the ODTC.

Well aware of the fact that the ODTC would not be particularly enthusiastic about evaluating its own performance or even gathering data which would facilitate such evaluation, USAID/Tunis sought the establishment of a joint GOT/AID CTRD Evaluation Committee (composed of representatives of the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture, ODTC and USAID) which would make CTRD program evaluation a "collaborative" endeavor. To that end, assistance was obtained from AID/Washington in developing a conceptual framework for the formulation of a joint GOT/AID CTRD program evaluation plan. Several versions of this conceptual framework were produced, each detailing the various levels at which evaluation could be conducted (regional impact evaluation, appraisal of project inputs and outputs, monitoring project implementation). While alternative evaluation strategies were discussed at one GOT/USAID meeting, decisions concerning the evaluation plan could not be made due to the absence of key senior officials from the Ministries of Plan and Agriculture.

In the absence of an agreed-upon joint GOT/AID evaluation plan for the Central Tunisia program, the only impetus for the development of an ODTC-based information system came from the two universities responsible for providing technical assistance to the ODTC Planning and Evaluation Unit.

The University of Wisconsin, which had overall responsibility for planning and evaluation assistance, had been opposed from the outset to the collection of baseline data on the ground that this would result in the accumulation of an excessive volume of data, much of it useless to planners. Under pressure from USAID, however, the Wisconsin team did produce a proposal for collecting data on selected economic and social development indicators. The proposal was reviewed and commented on by USAID/Tunis but was ignored by the ODTC management and was never reviewed by the Joint CTRD Evaluation Committee.

Cornell University, which was responsible for the "macro-social accounting" component of evaluation assistance to the ODTC, had advocated from the outset the collection of baseline data for later use in evaluating the regional impact of the Central Tunisia development effort. Its main motivation for participating in the CTRD project (under a broad cooperative agreement with AID/Washington) had been to test an "informant survey" methodology aimed at producing base-line data on key development indicators at a low cost (relative to the more sophisticated sample survey approach) and monitoring changes in those indicators. While the proposed methodology was criticised from the standpoint of reliability of results by AID statisticians, the "informant

survey* of secteur* leaders conducted by the Cornell team in 1979 ended up being the major source of base-line data for the project area, since the ODTTC refused to consider undertaking, or contracting for, a sample survey of households in Central Tunisia. (It did not even act on a USAID/Cornell recommendation to request the National Statistical Institute to modify the design of an already planned national household survey so as to obtain a more representative sample at the delegation level for Central Tunisia).

Through sheer perseverance, the Cornell team succeeded in mobilizing the ODTTC staff to conduct the "informant survey" and in getting the data computerized for use by the Planning and Evaluation Unit. (It was also responsible for the procurement and installation of two AID-funded Apple minicomputers.) While the team ended up doing much of the data interpretation work (under pressure from the ODTTC management to complete the final, comprehensive survey report) it did elicit a fair amount of participation from the ODTTC planning and evaluation staff.

In spite of the demonstrated usefulness of some of the data collected (for instance, for the selection of potable water intervention sites), the ODTTC showed little or no interest in undertaking additional surveys (such as a survey of irrigated areas). The Cornell team, however, did elicit positive responses from ODTTC project managers when it offered to assist in the establishment of a minicomputer-based project monitoring system (beginning with irrigation interventions.) In addition, staff members of other agencies operating in Central Tunisia demonstrated considerable interest in learning to use the minicomputers.

Some have argued that a minicomputer-based information system was too sophisticated for the ODTTC. This may be more true from the standpoint of equipment maintenance and repair than from the standpoint of utilization. A more relevant question in the light of the ODTTC/Wisconsin/Cornell experience is whether it was realistic on the part of AID to expect the ODTTC to move ahead with the development of a program evaluation system. The alternative would have been for AID to finance a contract between the Ministry of Agriculture and an organization such as the CNEA for the collection and evaluation of data (preferably in collaboration with the ODTTC). In that case the organization selected would have had a clear financial

* the secteur is the lowest unit of territorial administration in Tunisia.

incentive (as well as a contractual obligation) to get the job done. In retrospect, it was clear that the same concern which motivated the ODTc to oppose this alternative would deter it from undertaking any serious effort to establish an effective program evaluation capability.

A decision-information system should be designed to meet the needs of decision makers and implementors. Thus, the primary function of the ODTc Planning and Evaluation Unit should have been to meet the needs of the ODTc director and program managers. It is questionable, however, whether the regional planning and evaluation outputs called for by the CTRD Area Development sub-project were the kind of information inputs required by the ODTc management as a basis for making programmatic and budgetary decisions. In retrospect, it appears that the regional planning emphasis was somewhat premature, that the program evaluation component was based on unrealistic expectations and that a focus on project design and monitoring would have been more responsive to the immediate management problems faced by the ODTc.

The ODTc appeared to suffer from several of the information system problems identified by DAI in its IRD Research Note No. 1 (pp. 14-18): perception of an information system as a threat to management, particularly when it emphasizes the type of evaluation which grades the overall success of a project; management inability to anticipate information needed for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects; top management predilection for "crisis management". The main lesson to be drawn, however, is that technical assistance aimed at increasing the supply of information is useless unless there is a demand for the information on the part of top decision-makers. In other words, information systems must be demand-driven.

VI. EFFECTING INTEGRATION

A. Organization Placement

The CTRD project experience clearly supports the DAI contention that it is extremely difficult to move from an integrated rural development (IRD) concept to the actual coordination of planning and implementation activities. It confirms the observation that organizational placement (i.e. the placement of an IRD project within the existing government structure) is usually determined by political and institutional factors. It also illustrates the difficulty of (a) convincing decision-makers to consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative organizational placement strategies in the light of past experience and, consequently, (b) influencing the organizational placement decision-making process.

From an A.I.D. standpoint, it was logical to consider the organizational placement of the CTRD project in the light of the experience previously gained from the A.I.D.-supported Siliana Rural Development project. On the other hand, the GOT Ministry of Agriculture looked upon the proposed CTRD project as the updated version (with significant modifications required for A.I.D. approval) of the project presented to, and rejected by, the IBRD in 1974. A considerably scaled-down version of that project (consisting primarily of irrigation improvement and complementary rural infrastructure) had been launched in 1976 by the GOT without any support from multi-lateral or bilateral donors. In the eyes of the Ministry of Agriculture, A.I.D. financing would have made it possible to expand the scope of the project, accelerate its implementation and transfer its management from the OMVVM* (an existing regional authority primarily responsible for the Medjerda Valley irrigation system near Tunis) to a new regional authority located in central Tunisia. (Plans for the establishment of such a regional authority were included in the 1974 proposal to the IBRD).

While the general concept of a central Tunisia development authority was incorporated in the CTRD Concept Paper submitted by the Mission to AID/W in late October 1977, subsequent discussions with a number of GOT officials in different ministries in early 1978 revealed the existence of significant differences of opinion on that subject. In fact, four different organizational placement strategies surfaced in the course of these discussions:

(1) Working through line ministries (Agriculture, Health, Social Affairs, etc.) with the responsibility for inter-agency coordination resting with an executive committee chaired by representatives of the Ministry of Plan and USAID.

*Office de Mise en Valeur de la Vallée de la Medjerda

(2) Working through one governorate with the responsibility for program planning and coordination assigned to a strengthened rural development staff under the supervision of the secretary-general of the governorate.

(3) Establishing a regional development authority (office) responsible for CTRD project management, or

(4) Establishing an autonomous but temporary program planning and coordination unit which would be disbanded once the project was completed.

Surprisingly enough, there was considerable opposition to option (3) from officials in several ministries, including some Ministry of Agriculture officials (although it was supported by the ministry's top officials). Offices were criticised as (a) being costly, top-heavy and technically-oriented; (b) constituting a duplication of efforts with existing field services; (c) competing with them for scarce managerial and technical talent; (d) stifling local initiative; (e) creating a sense of dependency among the people served by the office and (f) generating friction between the office staff on the one hand, and governorate and line agency staff on the other.

The official in charge of government decentralization in the Office of the Prime Minister favored option (2) but recognized the difficulty of adequately strengthening the rural development staff in each of the resource-poor, often recently created, governorates of central Tunisia. He was reminded that the Siliana Rural Development Project Agreement had called for the creation of a special project management unit in the governorate administration. Not only was the unit never created but the governorate's rural development unit remained under-staffed throughout the life of the project. As a result, the burden of project management was shifted to the USAID resident representative in the project area*.

While everyone recognized the desirability of strengthening the governorate's capacity to administer rural development programs, it was generally felt that provincial governors were too busy with political and administrative matters to take on major responsibility for managing development programs. It was also considered politically ill-advised to build up a program planning and coordination capacity in one central Tunisia governorate unless such a build-up could be duplicated in neighboring governorates (an unlikely prospect in the near future).

*See Appendix III, pp. 10-11.

Option (1) did not receive much support except in the Ministry of Plan which endorsed it as an interim measure until such time as the level and complexity of the CTRD program justified the creation of an autonomous program management entity.

Option (4) appeared to be the preferred organizational placement strategy but there were disagreements among GOT officials as to what the role of the unit should be. For instance, the Ministry of Interior favored a small, interdisciplinary planning and coordinating staff which would collaborate closely with governorates and other local government officials in the formulation of a development strategy for the area and which would be disbanded as soon as the governorates were able to assume its functions. The Ministry of Plan favored the assignment of program coordination functions to an autonomous regional entity while retaining in its own hands development planning responsibility.

It is difficult to evaluate the effect of these informal discussions with senior civil servants on the actual organizational placement decision-making process. While the creation of a regional authority (office) had been agreed upon by an inter-ministerial committee before these discussions took place, it had not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers (i.e. the full cabinet), the Economic and Social Council and the National Assembly. It also appeared that a final decision as to the type of regional authority to be created (an agricultural development authority versus an IRD regional authority) had not yet been made. In March 1978, USAID suggested that a joint US/GOT committee be established to formally discuss the institutional framework of the CTRD project but this suggestion was rejected by the Ministry of Plan on the grounds that organizational placement was an internal GOT matter not subject to negotiation with a foreign donor. A few months later, draft enabling legislation was hurriedly circulated through the agencies concerned and approved by the Council of Ministers. The enabling legislation was passed by the National Assembly in August 1978.

In retrospect, it appears that the expectation of A.I.D. support of the central Tunisia program acted as a catalyst with regard to the actual creation of a regional authority. In other words, the GOT decision to expand the program, contingent on A.I.D. assistance, justified the added investment and recurrent costs of establishing and operating a separate regional authority. The timing of the GOT action, however, reflected a strong sense of political urgency, as the publicity surrounding the creation of the new office well indicates. This political urgency, in turn, acted to limit internal GOT discussion of the draft enabling legislation in

the context of the project negotiations being conducted with A.I.D. A clear indication of this haste was provided by the fact that the definition of the project area contained in the draft legislation sent to the National Assembly was "lifted" from the 1974 GOT proposal to the IBRD and thus did not conform to the boundaries agreed upon by the GOT and A.I.D. The Ministry of Agriculture's responses to questioning by members of the National Assembly concerning possible duplication of functions and overlap with existing agencies also suggests that little attention to these issues had been paid during the drafting of the enabling legislation.

B. Organizational Linkages

The legislation establishing the ODTC was very broad in its definition of the new regional authority's mission. It gave the ODTC a general mandate to promote the integrated rural development of the area under its jurisdiction and specified only a few of the functions that it might perform, such as agricultural land development, contracting for rural infrastructure development and promotion of small industry. Thus, a number of decisions remained to be taken concerning the ODTC relationship to other developmental agencies operating in the region.

In his testimony before the National Assembly prior to the vote on the enabling legislation, the Minister of Agriculture indicated that the ODTC would absorb all the agricultural development functions currently performed by the Ministry of Agriculture field services located in the project area. While this reply apparently allayed the concerns of some legislators with respect to overlap and duplication of functions, it set the stage for an early confrontation between the ODTC and the field services of the Ministry's line agencies. While the situation might have been defused by the nomination of a Senior Ministry of Agriculture official to head the ODTC, the appointment of a senior Ministry of Plan official (its chef de cabinet) to that position made such a confrontation inevitable.

When the ODTC began operations in early 1979, it took over the functions, facilities and staff of the OMVVM in the area. A later decree formally assigned responsibility to the ODTC not only for the so-called "public irrigated perimeters" (consisting of privately owned land irrigated by government-owned and administered irrigation systems) but also for assisting farmers who irrigate their land from private wells. However, there was no transfer of agricultural development responsibilities from Ministry of Agriculture field services to the ODTC which was thus faced with a choice between two alternative strategies:

(1) Assume a promotional, financing, coordinating role but rely on other existing organizations for implementation of activities outside of irrigated agriculture or

(2) Attempt to implement all the activities funded through the CTRD project even if it meant duplicating functions already performed by other agencies.

The ODTTC chose the second strategy. While the rationale for this decision was never clearly spelled out by the ODTTC Director, the following factors were cited at one time or other: (a) The ODTTC felt compelled to deliver on the political promises made by high GOT officials at the time of its creation; (b) It felt pressured by governorate and local authorities to show immediate results; (c) It felt hostility on the part of existing line agencies in the project area. In any event, its first priority was to undertake visible infrastructure projects, such as rural road improvements and crop storage facilities.

While the ODTTC director spent considerable time with the governors concerned by the CTRD project, the ODTTC staff was not encouraged to seek contact with, and advice from, technical field services of line agencies. As a result, not only were there no attempts to set up formal organizational mechanisms for coordination and information-sharing (such as inter-agency committees or cooperative agreements) but informal contacts and communications between ODTTC and other field-level organizational units were limited to purely personal relationships (such as contacts between relatives or between people originally from the same geographical location, e.g. Sfax or Gafsa).

The CTRD project design provided two models for establishing organizational linkages between the ODTTC and other agencies. One model, provided by the Area Development sub-project, called for the ODTTC's Planning and Evaluation Unit to perform a monitoring and evaluation function with respect to all Central Tunisia development programs and to set up a regionally-based information system which would serve all government agencies operating in the area. The ODTTC, however, never made any headway in that direction for reasons discussed earlier in this paper. Another model of organizational linkage was provided by the Dryland Farming Systems sub-project which called for a contractual agreement between the ODTTC and a regional training and Research Institution to conduct applied research on small landholdings in Central Tunisia. While that agreement was negotiated and signed, it was not adopted by the ODTTC as a general model of collaboration with regional technical services in the implementation of other CTRD project-funded activities.

As time went by, however, the Ministry of Agriculture became increasingly critical of ODTG attempts to duplicate functions already being performed by existing regional field services. One might attribute this shift to a number of factors: (a) the ODTG's slow start and failure to build up an effective project implementation capacity; (b) successful lobbying by Minister of Agriculture staff and (c) the appointment of a new Minister of Agriculture and the concurrent transfer of the powerful Ministry of Agriculture Chef de Cabinet (a former Ministry of Plan official who had been instrumental in the creation of the ODTG) to a senior position in the Ministry of Plan. In any event, the outcome was a logical sequence to the Ministry's failure to follow through with the announced ODTG takeover of agricultural development functions in the project area.

Thus, the ODTG was told by the Ministry of Agriculture that it should contract out the well-drilling component of the Rural Potable Water Sub-project (including the operation of A.I.D.-funded drilling equipment) to the Ministry's own well-drilling organization and that it should rely on the Ministry's rural engineering services for technical advice on all potable water interventions. Furthermore, Ministry officials hinted that extension services aimed at dryland farmers would remain the responsibility of the appropriate Ministry of Agriculture field services under the supervision of the governorate-level Regional Commissioner for Agricultural Development (CRDA's), contrary to what had been agreed upon under the Rural Extension and Outreach sub-project. Finally, in the case of the Rangeland Improvement sub-project, implementation responsibility was assigned to the Livestock and Pastures Authority (OEP), a national-level office, with the ODTG responsible for "coordination". The ODTG was reminded by the Ministry of Agriculture, however, that it was the CRDA's responsibility to coordinate agricultural field services within each governorate: the ODTG's responsibility was to coordinate between governorates or between sectors.

C. Institutionalization

The CTRD project experience indicates that failure to establish a new pattern of organizational linkages in Central Tunisia following the creation of the ODTG adversely affected prospects for institutionalization of the ODTG's regional role. Part of the problem may be attributed to the fact that, even after the creation of the ODTG, the GOT remained unable or unwilling to make a clear-cut choice between three alternative organizational models:

(1) A regional planning, coordinating, monitoring agency While such a role was consistent with the broad legislative mandate given to the ODTC, it did not coincide with the functional responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, which supervised the ODTC's activities.

(2) A regional agricultural development authority responsible for all agricultural sector activities in the project area -- While this concept was initially endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture, it probably ran into opposition from the governors and governorate-level Regional Commissioners for Agricultural Development who would have lost their supervisory authority over agricultural development activities in those parts of their governorates located within the project area. Such a regional agricultural development authority, however, was later considered for one of the Central Tunisia governorates (Sidi-Bouzyd) where it would operate under the supervision of the governor.

(3) A regional irrigation authority -- such authorities have been established in several governorates to take over the management of public irrigated perimeters previously administered by the Tunis-based OMVVM.

By mid-1981, the ODTC combined some elements of the three types of organization at a relatively low level of effectiveness. However, even while some Tunis-based officials argued that the ODTC should be given more time to improve its performance and institutionalize itself, its very existence was being threatened from two different directions. On the one hand, Central Tunisia governors were pushing for the creation of governorate-level agricultural development or irrigation authorities. On the other hand, the National Assembly approved in late July 1981 legislation creating a national General Commissariat for Regional Development, under the supervision of the Ministry of Plan and Finance and with a field office in each region. Among other tasks, these field offices would eventually be responsible for regional planning and for coordinating and monitoring IRD projects, functions which the ODTC was expected to perform under the terms of the CTRD project agreement of May 1979.

It is open to question, however, whether a more adaptable and innovative ODTC management might have more successfully addressed some of the weaknesses of the initial placement strategy. The July 1981 report prepared by a joint Tunisian-American team of consultants, as part of the mid-term evaluation of the Central Tunisia Area Development sub-project, severely criticized the ODTC management for its failure to pursue a policy of systematic coordination with regional technical services and for not making use of their technical expertise

when its own staff lacked such expertise. It also blamed poor management practices (such as failure to delegate responsibility and to specify tasks) for the loss of competent staff and the demoralization of the existing staff which consequently lacked the authority and motivation to establish effective working relationships with technical staff personnel in other agencies. The report did recognize, however, that the GOT's failure to clearly define the role and functions of the ODTC did contribute to the paradoxical situation whereby its creation only added an additional structural component to the regional organizational patchwork without bringing about the improvement in coordination which was the initial justification for setting up a new office.

The GOT never formally accepted the findings of the evaluation consultants but senior officials informally recognized the validity of those criticisms, even while arguing that it was unreasonable to expect the ODTC to accomplish much after only one and a half year of existence (January 1980 - June 1981). While not responding to charges that it had failed to clearly define the role and functions of the ODTC, the Ministry of Agriculture directed its various departments to close ranks behind the ODTC and give it their full cooperation. It also gave the ODTC a vote of confidence by finally making the long-delayed decision to assign to it responsibility for extension services to dryland farmers as well as to farmers in irrigated areas.

It is difficult to ascertain how much the managerial problems of the ODTC affected its ability to establish linkages with other agencies operating in Central Tunisia. It could be argued that the morale problem which adversely affected the recruitment and retention of ODTC staff was itself, at least partially, a result of the uncertainty concerning the role of the new regional development authority. On the other hand, there is little doubt that the departure of OMVVM senior staff absorbed by the ODTC was motivated, at least partially, by dissatisfaction with ODTC management and had adverse effects on the ODTC's ability to establish linkages with the Ministry of Agriculture's field services which, in the past, had collaborated with the OMVVM regional offices in Central Tunisia.

In the final analysis, however, one can point to a direct link between the particular qualifications (or "profile") of the person selected to head the ODTC and the Government's initial choice of organizational placement strategy for Central Tunisia. After all, the choice of the Ministry of Plan Chef de Cabinet to head the ODTC was not a fortuitous one. The Chef de Cabinet position in the Ministry is a political one, as against the career civil service position of head of a "directorate".

Thus, when a minister is replaced, so is his Chef de Cabinet while the heads of directorates remain unchanged. By picking a political appointee instead of a career civil servant (such as the Ministry of Agriculture's candidate) to head the ODTC, Prime Minister Nouira obviously intended that the director of the newly created regional development authority have political stature in the eyes of the Central Tunisia governors with whom he would have to deal.

In retrospect, the assignment of a high Ministry of Plan official to head the ODTC also suggests that, at the time the ODTC was created, the government envisaged that it would be responsible for the management of a multi-sectoral development program for Central Tunisia, with the funds to finance this program flowing directly from the Ministry of Plan to the ODTC (which would be acting as a regional extension of the Ministry of Plan).

On the other hand, if it had been the original intent of the government to create an agricultural development authority responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of public irrigated perimeters and supporting infrastructure, for agricultural extension support and for coordination of other Ministry of Agriculture functions (potable water development, farming systems research, etc.) - which the ODTC eventually evolved into - it would have made more sense to appoint as ODTC Director the OMVVM official who had been responsible for the management of the GOT Central Tunisia Project through 1981 and who had participated in the design of the CTRD Project. That person was an experienced agricultural program manager and was, in fact, the Ministry of Agriculture's candidate for the ODTC directorship. (He subsequently was appointed director of the agricultural development authority responsible for irrigated agriculture in Kairouan governorate.)

D. AID Project Management

It seems unfair to describe in detail the difficulties encountered by the GOT in establishing an "integrated" or coordinated program management structure for the Central Tunisia Rural Development effort without calling attention to the fact that AID itself experienced similar difficulties in coordinating its CTRD project monitoring and management activities.

From the early stages of project design, AID/Washington officials were divided as to whether AID-funded interventions in Central Tunisia should be managed as a single project or as separate projects. This issue was not really resolved by the AID/Washington decision to treat the Central Tunisia portfolio of activities as a single project with separately funded sub-projects. In fact, AID/W backstopping of CTRD project

activities remained divided between two separate offices within the Near East Bureau, one of which was responsible for technical assistance activities (NE/TECH) and the other for capital development activities (NE/PD). In addition, the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration in the Development Support Bureau was responsible for project management of the centrally funded portion of technical assistance activities carried out by the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University under cooperative agreements.

In the absence of a unified CTRD Project Management structure, a CTRD Project Coordination Committee was established to coordinate the monitoring and backstopping activities of these different AID/W offices. That committee, however, was convened rather infrequently and only to deal with issues involving the Central Tunisia Area Development sub-project. Thus, as a matter of practice, each sub-project was managed as a separate project with little, if any, inter-sectoral coordination between project officers.

At the Mission level, the Chief of the Rural Development Office was responsible for CTRD Project Management from the Concept Paper stage through the early stages of project implementation. As the CTRD Project Officer, he, in effect, served as the permanent leader and coordinator of a team the membership of which changed according to the stage of project development (At the project design stage, it included several AID/Washington rural development specialists; at the project negotiation stage, the Regional Legal Advisor played a major role in drafting the Project Loan and Grant Agreement and, following signature of the Agreement, the Capital Development Officer was a principal contributor to the drafting of Project Implementation Letters.).

By late Summer 1979, however, the Rural Development Office was faced with a sharp increase in workload as the first generation of CTRD sub-projects moved into implementation while a second generation of sub-projects entered the design stage. This situation was aggravated by the departure of the number two American professional on the RD office staff who had been stationed in Makthar, Siliana but had become increasingly involved in CTRD Project design as the Siliana RD Project was phased out. While the RD office would eventually benefit from his replacement by an Assistant General Officer stationed in Tunis, the latter did not arrive until several months later.

Faced with this situation, the (newly arrived) Mission Director made the decision to decentralize CTRD Project Management to the sub-project level by establishing separate project committees for all sub-projects, with each committee chaired by a (Sub)project Officer. Under this arrangement, the

RD Office retained responsibility for the Area Development sub-project and for potable water development activities aimed at dispersed rural populations while other sub-projects were assigned to the Food and Agriculture Office, the Health and Population Office and the Capital Development Officer (the latter responsible for the SONEDE Water System and Smallholder Irrigation sub-projects).

While this decentralized project management system had the advantage of enlisting greater non-RD staff participation in CTRD project design and implementation, it tended to weaken overall CTRD Project coordination. The Chief of the RD Office continued to serve as the principal point of contact with the ODTC Director, as vice-chairman of the Mission-level CTRD Project Management Committee (chaired by the Mission Director) and as Mission coordinator for all CTRD Project activities. However, he no longer had the authority previously vested in him as the CTRD Project Officer; the role of the CTRD Project Management Committee itself was considerably weakened by the proliferation of (Sub)project committees and, in many instances, decisions were made by (Sub)project officers without reference to the other committee members. On the rare instances when the CTRD Project Management Committee met, its decisions were often contested by members who had failed to attend and some issues remained unresolved for long periods of time.

On the whole, it cannot be said that a satisfactory organizational model for AID management of a multi-sectoral rural development project had been achieved, whether in Washington or in the field, by the time the Mission Director and the Chief of the RD Office left Tunisia in the Summer of 1981.

VII. TIMING

DAI identified three timing issues which interfered with the effective implementation of IRD projects. (a) excessive time between project identification and startup; (b) inaccurate estimates and (c) inappropriate phasing of project-related activities. Although these three issues often are inter-related, we will try to address each one separately.

A. Excessive Time from Project Identification to Startup:

A total of 18 months elapsed between submission of the CTRD Concept Paper (November 1977) to signature of the CTRD Project Loan and Grant Agreement (May 1979) and another month between that event and startup of the first project activities, or a total of 19 months. If submission of the CTRD Project Identification Papers (PIDs) is taken as a starting point, the total time elapsed from project identification to startup is 13 months, which is relatively short for an IRD project. However, the first activity undertaken under the project was a reconnaissance survey by a University of Wisconsin technical assistance team which was financed under the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development Project. The first physical accomplishment (improvement of springs under the Smallholder Irrigation Subproject) did not in fact take place until the first quarter of 1980.

In retrospect, it is possible to identify the major factors responsible for these delays:

- 1) Lengthy arguments between the GOT, the Mission and AID/Washington resulted in a 8-9 month lapse of time between AID/Washington approval of the CTRD Concept Paper in November 1977 and Mission submission of the PIDs in July 1979. It was first necessary to convince the AID agricultural community that there existed a potential for agricultural development in Central Tunisia. This was achieved with an agricultural assessment carried out by a University of Missouri team early in 1978. The Mission was then faced with the task of reconciling the GOT's insistence on AID financing infrastructure projects with AID/Washington's uncompromising stand on this issue. As mentioned earlier a confrontation was side-stepped through a face-saving compromise whereby it was agreed that local currency proceeds from PL 480 Title I sales, but no dollar funds, would be allocated to infrastructure other than irrigation and potable water facilities (the door was left open to rural electrification under certain conditions which did not materialize).

2) While PID approval was secured by October 1978, preparation of the Project Paper and Subproject Papers (for three initial subprojects) was hindered by a change in the composition of the GOT negotiating team. During the formulation of a preliminary Central Tunisia development strategy and the preparation of the initial CTRD PIDs, the GOT negotiating team had been headed by the Director of Public Irrigated Perimeters at the OMVVM whose office was responsible for the implementation of the Central Tunisia Project initiated by the GOT in 1976. By October 1978, however, he dropped out of the negotiating process when it became known that the Ministry of Plan Chef de Cabinet had been named to head the newly created ODTC. The new ODTC director, however, did not take up his functions until early 1979 and, consequently, the Project and Subproject Papers were initially prepared without adequate participation on the GOT side and had to be modified and expanded in the first few months of 1979. Uncertainties concerning the ODTC's role, functions and future performance also contributed to lengthening the negotiating process as AID attempted to compensate for them by requiring that the Project Agreement include a relatively large number of conditions precedent to disbursement.

3) In order to overcome the considerable opposition to the CTRD project in some quarters in AID/Washington, a large volume of documentation, including studies, was generated in support of the project.

4) Finally, delays in project startup subsequent to project approval were due in part to GOT slowness in meeting the numerous conditions precedents imposed by AID and only reluctantly accepted by the GOT.

B. Inaccurate Time Estimates

It is evident that A.I.D. underestimated the time it would take for ODTC to become operational and, particularly, to recover from the disruption caused by the replacement, as GOT project manager, of a Ministry of Agriculture insider (the Director of Public Irrigated Perimeters at the OMVVM) by an outsider (the Chef de Cabinet at the Ministry of Plan). In retrospect, this factor appears to have contributed, to a larger extent than was perceived at the time, to the inability of both the Ministry of Agriculture and the ODTC (its subordinate agency) to rapidly mobilize GOT resources for an increased level of effort in Central Tunisia.

The CTRD project design, however, contained an inbuilt bias toward under-estimating the time needed for the ODTC to become operational inasmuch as (1) it provided that all subprojects other than the initial three would be designed in collaboration with the ODTC and (2), since CTRD project

approval was granted by AID/Washington in the context of a broader policy decision to terminate U.S. Development Assistance to Tunisia by the end of FY 1981, it required that all CTRD project funds be obligated before that date. This implied that all the subprojects would be designed and approved during the first three years of CTRD project implementation and, consequently, that the ODTIC would be able not only to collaborate effectively in project development (with the assistance of the University of Wisconsin) but also to assume management responsibility for these subprojects early on during the CTRD project implementation period.

C. Inappropriate Phasing of Project Activities

Time phasing of project activities is relatively simple when the activities are of a primarily technical character and when performance standards are available for scheduling purposes. This is the case with most construction projects even though there are factors such as weather conditions which cannot be accurately forecast (in addition to the human error factor which increases in direct proportion to the complexity of the tasks involved.)

In the case of rural development programs, the phasing of component activities is complicated by the institutional development dimension of the program. It is not simply a matter of determining an optimum (or at least reasonably efficient) sequence of inputs and outputs but it also involves the introduction and institutionalization of new ways of combining inputs in order to obtain new configurations of outputs. The CTRD project, for instance, called for the designing and testing of new ways of providing potable water and rural extension services as well as for the development of an institutional capacity to plan, innovate and evaluate.

Under these circumstances, it does not make sense to prepare detailed project implementation "blueprints" as in the case of capital projects where technical considerations are foremost. On the contrary, such "blueprints", when they are prepared, foster an illusionary sense of certainty when in fact uncertainty prevails. The usefulness of such "blueprints" is often diminished by the fact that they are prepared by missions without adequate consultation with the host country government.

Even if host country officials collaborate in the preparation of a project implementation plan, they often do not share the A.I.D. commitment to the "blueprint" approach. Firm plans and cost estimates are legally required as a basis for obligation of U.S. Government funds and, consequently, they are required in support of A.I.D. project agreements which obligate project funds. From the standpoint of many

recipient countries, however, a project agreement commits the government to making funds available but there is no requirement that such a commitment be backed up by detailed plans and cost estimates. In the case of Tunisia, funds are not obligated (in the U.S. sense of the word) until such time as annual expenditure budgets are approved. It is therefore difficult, even under normal circumstance, to obtain from GOT officials the kind of detailed project planning data which are required on the U.S. side.

In the case of the CTRD project, the difficulty was compounded by the fact that the ODTG was a new agency and that its newly appointed Director had not participated in the project design process and was not an agricultural program administrator. Therefore, at the time the Project Loan and Grant Agreement was negotiated, the new Director was unable and/or unwilling to make decisions about key project implementation issues or to ask for specific revisions of the project design. Therefore, the ODTG found it difficult to meet GOT budget submission deadlines, let alone A.I.D. requirements for project documentation.

In the face of uncertainty concerning the timely development of a host country IRD project management capability, it would be advantageous to replace the "blueprint" approach to project implementation planning by a more flexible approach which may be described as "project implementation planning in stages". Under that approach, a project agreement would be signed on the basis of a long-term overall project strategy. For obligation purposes, however, the project would be divided into discrete "phases" of two to three years duration, with funds for Phase I obligated at the time of signature of the agreement, on the basis of a detailed implementation plan for that first phase. Before the end of Phase I implementation, progress to date would be evaluated and detailed plans and cost estimates for Phase II would be developed and approved, thus providing a basis for obligating a second tranche of funds.

It should be noted that incremental funding of A.I.D. projects is a common practice and dividing a project into discrete phases is not unusual. Incremental funding, however, is usually dictated by factors other than a desire to retain flexibility in implementation planning (e.g. a lack of current year funds and/or a desire to keep a low pipeline). On the other hand, when a project is broken down into "phases", each "phase" is usually treated as a separate project requiring separate approval and authorization.

The proposed approach would call for incremental funding of separate "phases" within the framework of a single project agreement, with obligation of funds coinciding with

mission/host country government agreement on a detailed implementation plan for each specific project "phase". It would offer the following benefits:

(a) eliminate the necessity of making unrealistic time estimates for project implementation.

(b) allow detailed implementation plans for later "phases" to be developed during implementation of the first phase, thereby reducing the period of time between project design and startup.

(c) make it possible to delay implementation of the next "phase" if the evaluation of a previous "phase" indicates that the host country's institutional capability for project management is not developing as planned.

(d) spread over time the documentation burden imposed by A.I.D. on the host country government's project planning capability, and

(e) preclude the obligation of A.I.D. funds on the basis of implementation plans which have not been fully worked out collaboratively with the host country government.

VIII. MANAGING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The basic structure of technical assistance to the GOT within the framework of the CTRD project was established at the time the overall project and the three initial subprojects were designed. It included:

1) Technical assistance to the ODTC in the field of regional planning and evaluation to be provided by the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University under cooperative agreements between AID/Washington and the Universities (with the bulk of the services funded by the Mission through amendments to the applicable cooperative agreements).

2) Technical assistance to the ODTC and a regional training and research institution in the field of dryland farming systems research and to the ODTC in the field of irrigation water management, to be provided by a land grant institution under a host country contract with the GOT. (The contract concluded between Oregon State University and the Ministry of Agriculture was later expanded to include technical assistance in the fields of rural extension and rangeland improvement under two subsequent subprojects).

Since technical assistance in the field of agriculture did not get underway before 1981, this paper is concerned only with technical assistance in the field of regional planning and evaluation which was initiated in 1979. In the next section, we will see how the institutional development objectives of the CTRD project were affected by the way that technical assistance was structured. In a subsequent section, the actual management of that technical assistance will be examined.

A. Impact of Project Design on the Achievement of Institutional Development Objectives

With the benefits of hindsight, one can readily see that the CTRD Project design inadvertently set the stage for conflict between long-term institutional development objectives and shorter term area development objectives. On the one hand, the Central Tunisia Area Development Sub-project was aimed at developing an institutional capacity for regional planning, project design, evaluation and experimentation at the regional level. On the other hand, the CTRD Project called for the ODTC to manage and/or coordinate various area development interventions (irrigation, potable water, etc.) funded by AID and/or the GOT in Central Tunisia. The ODTC's

Planning and Evaluation Unit was, in fact, created to accomplish the specific functions called for by the Area Development subproject. The ODTTC itself, however, was established by the GOT to activate the implementation of Central Tunisia area development programs. This was understandable in light of the GOT's desire to maximize the short-term political impact of its development program on Central Tunisia's population. Thus, while the ODTTC and its overseer, the Ministry of Agriculture, might have disagreed as to the exact role to be performed by the ODTTC (i.e. coordination versus direct implementation), they both agreed that getting area development programs moving was the top priority.

AID's attitude was more ambiguous. Whereas at the project design stage the emphasis had been on the more innovative aspects of the ODTTC's role, (partly in response to AID/Washington's concerns), once the project was approved, the Mission came under increasing pressure to move ahead with the design and implementation of CTRD area development interventions. Thus, when it became apparent that the ODTTC, as program manager, was becoming a bottleneck which impeded the timely obligation and expenditure of AID funds, Mission management made it clear that it was prepared to bypass the ODTTC altogether (as it did in the case of the Rangeland Development and Management subproject).

As the prime contractor responsible for assisting the ODTTC to develop a regional planning and project design capability, the University of Wisconsin found itself under pressure to show results very early in the game. Conscious of the fact that new CTRD subprojects had to be designed and ready for implementation within three U.S. fiscal years (1979-81), the University of Wisconsin moved ahead with plans to field a "reconnaissance" team in January of 1979. The recently created ODTTC, however, was not ready to host such an effort and, consequently, the team's visit was postponed until the following summer. Another postponement was barely averted through the USAID-funded provision of logistical support by the National Center for Agricultural Studies (CNEA) which also provided interpreting services and background data. The "reconnaissance" backfired, however, when the team's report (which was critical of the GOT's past efforts in the area) was distributed by the University of Wisconsin to GOT ministries as well as to the ODTTC. The ODTTC director, angered by the fact that he was not given the opportunity to review the draft report and decide on the final report's distribution, ruled out further visits by large teams and insisted that further regional planning efforts be carried out by fewer experts spending longer periods of time in the field.

When it became evident that the University of Wisconsin's regional planning assistance would not bear fruit in time to provide a conceptual framework for the design of new CTRD subprojects, pressure was applied on the University to move ahead with project design assistance to the ODTC. In response to these pressures, the University of Wisconsin fielded two project development teams in the first half of 1980. The first team of two consultants, fielded in February-March 1980, was to assist the ODTC to establish criteria and procedures for selecting rural potable water intervention sites and modes. However, because of the short period of time spent in Central Tunisia (9 working days) as well as language problems, the team's report was really a unilateral product rather than a collaborative effort with the ODTC.

A second team, which included five University of Wisconsin members and two outside consultants, was fielded in March 1980 to prepare a background document for a Rural Extension and Outreach Subproject Paper. In that particular instance, the team's report did reflect a substantial degree of collaboration with the ODTC agricultural staff. In both instances, however, the participation of the ODTC's Planning and Evaluation Unit was minimal. While one could assign part of the blame for that situation to the somewhat antagonistic attitude of ODTC "technicians" towards the "economic planners" in the Planning and Evaluation Unit, the principal reason for the planners' lack of participation was their lack of training and experience in project design.

There is little doubt that if USAID had waited for the ODTC to develop a project design capability before initiating the design of the Rural Potable Water and Rural Extension and Outreach subprojects, not only would the FY 1980 obligation target not have been met but subproject funds would probably not have been obligated in time to meet the end-of-FY 1981 obligation deadline. This can be gauged from USAID experience in trying to bring about ODTC implementation of the Area Development Subproject's Experimental Fund component. A team of five University of Wisconsin experts (including the resident advisor-designate) was fielded in April 1980 to assist the ODTC Planning and Evaluation Unit in the development of criteria for the use of the Fund. It was not until the Summer of 1981, however, that a set of criteria satisfactory to both the GOT and AID was finally developed and agreed upon. By the end of 1981, the ODTC had solicited from the private and public sectors proposals for Experimental Fund projects and was considering twenty responses. As a result of these delays in implementation a second tranche of \$1.3 million, which had been scheduled for obligation in FY 1981 (in addition to an initial tranche of \$1.5 million obligated in FY 1979), was reallocated by the GOT and USAID to Rural Community Health Project activities in Central Tunisia.

B. Cooperative Agreement Management Issues

The way technical assistance is managed is obviously influenced by the mode of contracting for technical services and the characteristics of the contractor selected. In its IRD Research Note No. 1, DAI identifies four basic contracting strategies (individual, academic, bodyshop and management team). Within the academic strategy, however, one can identify at least three basic subsidiary strategies: (1) Title XII (involving collaboration in project design between a land grant university, the mission and the host country; (2) host country contracting whereby AID-finances a contract between the host country government and a U.S. academic institution (as in the case of agricultural technical assistance in Central Tunisia) and (3) direct AID contracting with U.S. academic institutions, a variant of which is the cooperative agreement mode utilized for the provision of regional planning and evaluation assistance to the ODTC. It is with this third sub-strategy that we are concerned here, and particularly with technical assistance provided to the ODTC under the cooperative agreement between AID and the University of Wisconsin.

The typical cooperative agreement between AID and a university provides that:

(a) the university, as a resource center in the particular subject matter covered by the cooperative agreement (i.e., regional planning and area development in the case of the University of Wisconsin), will develop and test new methodological approaches responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries and

(b) the university will carry out four types of activities, namely (1) applied research and consulting in selected countries, (2) special studies and state of the art papers (3) development of a professional resource network and (4) information dissemination.

Technical services beyond the levels and types specified in the cooperative agreement may be provided by the university to missions under mission-funded amendments to the cooperative agreement. For instance in the case of Tunisia, a mission-funded amendment to the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development Cooperative Agreement provided for additional consulting services, in-country training, the assignment of one or two resident advisors, as well as for equipment and supplies.

The selection of the cooperative agreement mechanism by USAID/Tunisia was influenced by three factors:

(1) Because of the three year funding constraint on the CTRD project, it was essential to contract rapidly for the services of an institution which could assist the ODTC in the design (in collaboration with AID) of subsequent CTRD subprojects. (2) the concepts underlying the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development (RPAD) Project were intellectually attractive and appear to be compatible with Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject objectives and (3) it was felt that a higher caliber institution could be attracted by the possibility of working in several countries rather than in Tunisia alone.

During the two and a half years of experience with the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University Cooperative Agreements, no major management problem arose which could be blamed solely on the use of that contracting mode. However, two areas of friction are worth discussing:

1) Project Management sharing between AID/W and the Mission. In the case of both the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University cooperative agreements, management of centrally-funded activities was the responsibility of the Office of Rural Development and Development Administration in the Bureau for Development Support (DS/RAD)*, whereas the Mission was responsible for CTRD Project-funded activities. Since it was difficult to distinguish between AID/W-funded and Mission-funded activities, such a division of management responsibilities was a potential source of conflict (and a dispute actually did arise concerning responsibility for the University of Wisconsin's difficulties in providing technical assistance to the ODTC). However, compromises between the positions of the AID/W and mission project management were worked out satisfactorily once personality clashes or "turf" disputes between AID/W and mission management were gotten out of the way. In any event, with AID travel funds in short supply, it made sense for AID/W to rely on the mission to monitor field activities and for the mission to rely on AID/W to monitor university management of technical assistance and other on-campus activities. It was regrettable, however, that a shortage of travel funds prevented participation by the AID/W project officer in Area Development Subproject review and evaluation activities conducted by USAID in collaboration with the GOT.

2) Contractor Accountability. With the exception of cooperative agreements, it has been AID policy that technical assistance to host country governments be provided through

*Currently designated as the Office of Multisectoral Development, Bureau for Science and Technology (S&T/MD)

host country contracts, i.e. contracts between the host country government and the supplier of technical services. The purpose of this policy has been to convey to the host country government the notion that the contractor is responsible to it and not to AID. In the case of cooperative agreement, the university is clearly working for AID, even though its responsibilities to the host country government (and those of the government to the university) may be defined in a separate "memorandum of understanding" signed by the two parties. It seems that the host country contract relationship works best when the task to be accomplished is of a confidential character and/or the end product is to be used only by the host country government. (The ODTC's contribution to the GOT 1982-87 Five Year Plan and the training of ODTC planning staff fall in that category). On the other hand, the cooperative agreement approach seems to work best when the task to be accomplished requires close collaboration between AID, the host country government and the supplier of technical services, and when the end product will be used by AID as well as the host country government. (This was the case with the design of CTRD subprojects, the formulation of a potable water development strategy for Central Tunisia and the development of mutually agreed criteria for the use of the Experimental Fund.)

Thus, the Central Tunisia experience suggests that the nature of the technical services required should be the basis for deciding whether or not to use an amendment to a centrally-funded cooperative agreement as the vehicle for providing mission-funded technical assistance to a host country government. The anticipated savings in time and effort needed to prepare and issue a request for technical proposals and to select a contractor should be a secondary consideration. If a decision is made to go ahead with the cooperative agreement mode, an understanding should be reached at the outset on the nature of the collaborative relationship between the host country government, the AID Mission and AID/Washington including the following: (1) a clear understanding between the responsible AID/Washington project office, the applicable AID/W regional bureau and the AID Mission concerning project management and backstop; (2) agreement between the AID/W project office and the mission as to how the privileged relationship between the cooperative university and the host country government institution should be preserved. (In the case of Central Tunisia, DS/RAD reluctantly agreed that its staff members would not participate in the provision of regional planning assistance to the ODTC as TA team members); (3) host country government awareness of the applied research/state of the art/knowledge

dissemination objectives of AID/Washington and the cooperating university and its agreement to the publication of information gathered in the course of project implementation.

C. Conflict between Technical Assistance Needs and Applied Research Objectives

A more serious problem than the frictions mentioned above can arise, however, if, in the course of project implementation, divergences develop between the technical assistance needs of the host country agency and the applied research objectives of the cooperating university. If the latter agrees to adjust the technical assistance package at the expense of applied research objectives, this might cause tension between AID/Washington (which is funding the applied research), on the one hand, and the cooperating university and AID Mission on the other. If, however, the cooperating university is unwilling to modify the technical assistance package (within the limits of its technical expertise) to meet the need of the TA recipient, the relationship between the cooperating university and the host country agency may be seriously damaged.

In the case of Central Tunisia, both the Mission-funded Area Development subproject and the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development Project (RTAP) called for an inter-disciplinary regional planning approach. The Area Development subproject, however, emphasized the institutional development objective of building up a planning capacity within the ODTC whereas the RTAP emphasized the development and testing of regional planning concepts and methodologies applicable to rural areas of developing countries.

Even the formal on-site training program called for by the Area Development subproject was viewed by the University of Wisconsin as a means of testing new training concepts and approaches. Therefore, when the training program ran into difficulty, the University was reluctant to replace it by a more flexible on-the-job training program. Shortly after the formal training program was terminated at the request of the ODTC, the University issued a state-of-the-art paper which suggested that the training concept tested in Tunisia could "serve as a model for use by other organizations involved in planning and development" (Concept Paper No. 2: A Normative Training Program for Regional Planning, July 1982, page 29). While the paper asserted that "evaluation is at the heart of the training process" (page 30), it made no reference to the Central Tunisia experience.

Similarly when the University of Wisconsin and the ODTTC failed to reach agreement on the kind of plan to be prepared for Central Tunisia and the kind of technical assistance to be provided to the ODTTC by the University, the latter went ahead with the preparation of its own planning document in Madison, Wisconsin (later issued as Country Report No. 6, September 1981, An Illustrative Strategic Plan for Central Tunisia). A separate regional economic plan was prepared in Kasserine, Central Tunisia, by the ODTTC with the assistance of the University of Wisconsin Resident Advisor and short-term Tunisian consultants funded under the Cooperative Agreement. Obviously, the ODTTC planning staff did not learn much from the planning work done in Madison, Wisconsin.

It can be argued, of course, that all academic institutions are tempted to use technical assistance projects as vehicles to advance their faculty's research interests, and this clearly constitutes one of the arguments against the "academic strategy" in general. It should be conceded, however, that the temptation to place academic interests ahead of project objectives is greatest when the institution has a contractual obligation to pursue specific applied research objectives.

D. Long-term versus Short-term Assistance.

The CTRD project experience exemplifies the difficulty (cited by DAI in its IRD Research Note No. 1) of finding a suitable resident advisor who combines the required language and technical skills with a willingness to spend several years in an isolated rural area. In the case of the Central Tunisia Area Development subproject, the University of Wisconsin was unable to find an American candidate with the requisite regional planning skills and French (or Arabic) language capability. After one year of technical assistance without a resident advisor, the University finally assigned a non-American development economist who had neither training nor experience in regional planning as a discipline. The delay in assignment and the choice of resident advisor had the following consequences for technical assistance to the ODTTC:

a. The delay in assigning a resident advisor adversely affected the ODTTC's ability to effectively utilize short-term advisory and training services. In the case of in-country training, the needs of the ODTTC planning and project management staff were not adequately taken into account in the design of the training program and there was a lack of continuity between training sessions. In the case of

short-term advisory services, inadequate preparations were made for the visit of short-term consultants both in terms of gathering the information needed by them and in preparing the ODTc staff to provide the necessary support and to benefit from the consultants' expertise.

b. The assignment of a resident advisor who did not share the academic background and/or professional outlook of the University of Wisconsin/RPAD Project management staff resulted in a growing "communication gap" which eventually led to the resignation of the Resident Advisor and the suspension (and later termination) of University of Wisconsin assistance to the ODTc. It appears that, partly because of his lack of identification with the University of Wisconsin, the Resident Advisor was unable to mediate disagreements between the ODTc and the University concerning the conduct of technical assistance activities and increasingly supported the ODTc's viewpoint against that of the University, thereby losing the trust and support of the Madison-based project management team.

In its IRD Research Note No. 1, DAI suggests that the problem posed by the small size of the existing TA talent pool could be alleviated by substituting short-term TA for long-term, i.e. technical expertise would be supplied by "high-powered short-term" consultants who do not need to be as attuned to the host country's culture whereas long-term advisory services would be provided by managers/generalists who like living in rural areas and are good at working with people of different cultures.

When an IRD project's principal objective is to build up a broadly-based institutional capacity for managing development and when technical expertise in a variety of fields (potable water development, agriculture, health, etc.) is needed, it makes sense to rely on short-term consultants for technical expertise and on the resident advisor(s) for project management skills and a good understanding of institutional development processes. When, however, a particular expertise (e.g. regional planning) is a central element of the technical assistance, it is important that the principal resident advisor shares this expertise. Otherwise, it is difficult for the TA team to share what DAI refers to as a "common approach" to project implementation.

One should not underestimate, of course, the difficulty of finding a French-speaking regional planner willing to live and work in the difficult environment of Central Tunisia. The ideal solution would have been the assignment of a (French-speaking) faculty member of the University's Department of Regional Planning. If this proved not to be feasible, the

second best solution would have been the selection of a French-speaking regional planner from the U.S. academic and/or professional community. Possibly the third best solution would have been the assignment of a generalist from the University of Wisconsin's faculty outside of the Department of Regional Planning. For this solution to work out, however, it would have been essential for the university department supplying the resident advisor to have a good working relationship with the Department of Regional Planning and, particularly, with those staff members responsible for management of the RPAD Project on campus. (S&T/RAD's past experience with cooperative agreements suggests that one should not assume that such inter-departmental cooperation exists or will result from the fact that agreements are concluded with the University rather than with a particular department.)

With regard to the possibility of conflict between short-term and long-term advisors, the Central Tunisia experience indicates that it is greatest when the University-based project management attempts to impose an approach (such as the "sketch plan" concept) which is not shared by the resident advisor and the cooperating host country institution. The failure to agree on a common approach to the formulation of a regional plan resulted in the University's de facto suspension of short-term technical assistance and, as mentioned earlier, the preparation of two separate planning documents, one in Madison, Wisconsin and one in Kasserine, Central Tunisia, respectively. On the other hand, the possibility of conflict is least when the short-term consultants provide specialized technical expertise not otherwise available to the resident advisor and cooperating host country institution (as in the cases of potable water development and agricultural extension assistance to the ODTC).

The Central Tunisia experience also supports DAI's contention that the importance usually attached to leaving a finished product (i.e. a report) limits the effective utilization of short-term assistance. The potable water development team fielded by the University of Wisconsin in early 1980 was a case in point. Because of time constraints, the team spent the last half of its consultancy writing a draft report and left without giving the ODTC staff the opportunity to review the report and carry out a dialogue with the two consultants with respect to their findings and recommendations. The effectiveness of the consultancy would have been far greater if the team had spent an additional week in-country to review and discuss their report with the ODTC staff and, of course, if there had been a resident advisor to help overcome the language barrier and to follow up on the

consultants' recommendations. (The AID Mission, however, with TDY assistance from AID/Washington, did use the consultants' report as the basis for initiating a dialogue with ODTIC staff on the formulation of a potable water development strategy for Central Tunisia.)

IX. CONCLUSION

A. Organizational Placement

The major lesson to be drawn from the CTRD Project experience is that the establishment of an effective rural development program management and/or coordination structure at the regional level is primarily an institutional development problem and, as such, requires a flexible time-frame and a holistic, systemic approach to the design and management of technical assistance.

What the CTRD Project experience did not do is test the feasibility and effectiveness of the integrated model of rural development. As a matter of fact, even if the announced takeover of all agricultural development activities in the CTRD Project area by the ODTC had taken place, it still would not have integrated under ODTC management development activities outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The CTRD Project experience, however, did highlight the potential for conflict between a newly created autonomous regional development agency and existing administrative and technical agencies. Had an ODTC takeover of agricultural development activities in the project area actually taken place, it would have removed those delegations within the project area from under the authority of the Regional Commissioners for Agricultural Development (CRDAs), who are the Minister of Agriculture's representatives at the governorate level. It also would have reduced the governor's influence over agricultural development activities in their governorate to the extent that the ODTC was a regional development authority responsible for activities in several governorates.

On the basis of the experience to date, it seems fairly obvious that the ODTC, in its current form, is not an appropriate model for regional program management and/or coordination. From the standpoint of agricultural sector program management and coordination, a governorate-level agricultural development authority, with a board of directors chaired by the governor, would seem to be a more appropriate model than the ODTC: (1) It would consolidate all agricultural development activities under one director who would replace the CRDA as the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture at the governorate level; (2) it would decentralize decision-making to the governorate level inasmuch as the new authority would enjoy financial autonomy (while remaining under the technical

supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture); and (3) it would strengthen the influence of the governors without involving them in the day-to-day management of agricultural development programs. (It would not, of course, obviate the need to decentralize decision-making to the district level).

From the standpoint of intersectoral program coordination, it would seem, at first glance, that the regional field offices of the newly established General Commissariat for Regional Development would be in a better position than the ODTC to perform this function, inasmuch as the Commissariat is under the supervision of the Ministry of Plan. The fact that the ODTC reports to the Ministry of Agriculture understandably has reinforced the natural reluctance of other technical ministries to accept its intersectoral coordination role. Furthermore, the lack of interest shown by the Ministry of Agriculture for ODTC involvement in activities outside the Ministry's jurisdiction (even when, as in the case of rural health education, they complement activities - such as potable water development - which are under the Ministry's jurisdiction) has discouraged the ODTC from pursuing such a coordinating role in a vigorous manner.

The CTRD Project experience clearly indicates, however, that formal program planning and coordination do not necessarily translate into influence in shaping programs unless it is coupled with control or, at least, leverage over the allocation of budgetary resources. For instance, the ODTC played practically no role in the design of the CTRD Rangeland Development and Management Subproject, in spite of the need for coordination with the Rural Extension and Outreach subproject. While the Livestock and Pastures Authority (OEP), in any case, would have resisted ODTC involvement for essentially bureaucratic turf reasons, the fact that subproject funds flowed directly to the OEP (rather than through the ODTC) made it easy for OEP to bypass the ODTC entirely.

Thus, whether the new General Commissariat for Regional Planning (and its field offices) will play a meaningful program planning and coordination role above and beyond the preparation of regional economic plans may very well depend on its ability to participate in, and influence, the budgetary allocation process currently managed by the Ministry of Plan and Finance. If the new agency's regional field offices are able to affect the allocation of budgetary resources between, and within, regions through their planning and evaluation activities, there is a good chance that they might succeed in establishing the necessary linkages with other agencies operating within their region.

B. Absorptive Capacity

At the time the CTRD Project was being designed, the ongoing dialogue between AID/Washington and the Mission left the Mission under the impression that the prospect for AID/Washington approval would be enhanced if infrastructure financing was minimized and the introduction of "innovative" approaches to rural development was maximized (particularly innovative approaches to the delivery of public services to the rural poor). At the same time, the Mission had no firm information on which to base an appraisal of the GOT's capacity to absorb such "innovative" technical assistance, since the implementing GOT agency did not yet exist, except on paper.

Having built-in "innovative" approaches into the CTRD project design, AID's response to the uncertainty concerning the "absorptive capacity" of the ODTC was to load the project agreement with conditions precedent (some of which were imposed by AID/Washington) which had the unintended effect of slowing down implementation. One of these conditions precedent, concerning the staffing of the ODTC Planning and Evaluation Unit, may have had the negative effect of forcing the ODTC to recruit a given number of planners without adequate consideration of their suitability for the job (including receptivity to new concepts and approaches).

While the lack of cultural and material amenities in Central Tunisia certainly was a limiting factor in the recruitment of new staff, the low morale and disaffectation of the existing staff, as mentioned earlier (see Section VIC), was attributable to the prevailing uncertainty concerning the role and status of the ODTC, as well as to dissatisfaction with the management style of the ODTC Director.

When the time came to conduct the mid-term evaluation of the Central Tunisia Area Development subproject, the ODTC management and staff morale problems were foremost among concerns of the USAID, Ministry of Plan and Ministry of Agriculture representatives on the Joint CTRD Project Evaluation Committee. Therefore, management expertise was the main criterion used in the selection of members of a team of U.S. and Tunisian consultants hired to prepare a report for consideration by the Committee.*

*The team included two U.S. development administration and planning specialists recruited under a Cooperative Agreement between AID and the National Association of School of Public Affairs and Administration, and staff members of the Tunisian El Amouri Institute of Applied Psychology which specialized in human relations and organizational development.

In its report, the team of consultants addressed not only technical issues, such as the quality of the training and planning assistance provided to the ODTC, but also the broader institutional and managerial context of subproject implementation. While finding no fault with the project design, it was highly critical of ODTC management (as mentioned earlier in Section VIC).

The CTRD Project design, however, must bear some responsibility for the ODTC's management problems inasmuch as it failed to take into account the management "overload" imposed on the ODTC staff which was called upon to perform the following functions:

a) Coordination of Central Tunisia development activities undertaken by governorates, ministries, autonomous agencies, etc. (a "political" as well as administrative function);

b) Management of CTRD Project activities funded through the ODTC but implemented through other agencies;

c) Management of irrigation systems inherited from the OMVVM and of new irrigation and supporting infrastructure construction undertaken by the ODTC (including contract management); and

d) Management of "innovative" activities such as regional (spatial) planning, development of a regional information and evaluation system, design and monitoring of experimental Fund activities, development of new approaches to potable water delivery to dispersed populations, rural extension and outreach, etc.

By focusing almost exclusively on these "innovative" activities, AID-funded technical assistance actually diverted scarce management resources from the other three management functions which were assigned a higher priority by the GOT and, in the final analysis, by AID. If, however, technical assistance had been focused on the overall needs of the ODTC, and, particularly, on the need for management assistance across the board, it might have enlarged the ODTC's capacity to absorb the more innovative elements of the T.A. package. Such a global approach to the ODTC's technical assistance needs also might have had the effect of making some of the individual components of the T.A. package (particularly the regional planning and information system components) more relevant to the tasks and problems faced by the ODTC.

C. Area Development versus Institutional Development

While, at the project design stage, AID tends to emphasize the introduction of innovative approaches through technical assistance, at the project implementation stage, the emphasis tends to shift to the expenditure of funds obligated for capital projects. This shift reflects the fact that, once project funds are obligated, AID Mission management is under constant pressure from AID/Washington to reduce the "pipeline" of obligated and unexpended funds. Since capital projects usually include "lumpy" expenditures for equipment, they provide the best opportunity for reducing the pipeline.

In the case of the CTRD project, however, there also was the additional concern, shared by both the GOT and the AID Mission, that the Central Tunisia development efforts have a visible impact on the region within a relatively short time. After all, creation of the ODTC had been largely politically inspired and, consequently, the failure to show quick results was bound to generate adverse political fallout.

This meant, in effect, that the long-range institutional development goals of building a Central Tunisia-based capacity for regional planning and evaluation and for the design and management of innovative projects tended to be displaced by the shorter-term imperatives of getting construction of irrigation and potable water systems underway.

How can such a conflict between shorter-term area development objectives and longer-term institutional development goals be resolved? The CTRD Project experience suggests that, at the project design stage, one of two alternative institutional development strategies be selected:

- 1) If the host country government is reasonably satisfied with the current project implementation performance of existing agencies in the target area but wishes to build up a regionally-based capacity for area development planning and evaluation, information system management and innovative project design, the appropriate strategy would be to continue funding area development interventions (such as potable water development, irrigation systems, rural health delivery systems, etc.) through existing agencies, while the new regional development agency is left free to concentrate on long-term institution-building. This "dual track" strategy would insure that delay in the institutional development of the new agency did not become a constraint on the implementation of area development activities (as it did in the case of the ODTC).

2) On the other hand, if the proposed area development program is a response to a critical need to improve the management and coordination of development activities and, consequently, a decision is made to channel funds through a new regional development agency responsible for overall program management and coordination, technical assistance to the new agency should focus on building-up its program management capacity over a relatively short period of time and should avoid the introduction of experimental activities and/or new concepts and methodologies which require a long "incubation" period.

These two institutional development strategies could be pursued sequentially over an appropriately long period of time. For instance, regional planning, evaluation and experimentation functions could be added after institutionalization of the program management and coordination functions has been achieved. Alternatively, program coordination functions could be added after institutionalization of regional planning and evaluation functions have been achieved.

Whatever strategy is selected initially, however, it is essential that a "global" approach to technical assistance be followed. Such an approach should emphasize the building-up of a team spirit within the new agency and of strong linkages between the new agency and existing agencies operating in the region. This means that members of technical assistance teams would be selected on the basis of their ability to initiate and sustain institution-building processes as well as for their technical expertise in fields such as regional planning, project design and monitoring, or information system management. Under that approach, host country officials not only would be preparing plans, designing and monitoring projects, etc., but would also actively participate in the development of program planning and management systems and in the design of new service delivery systems.

A technical assistance package combining on-the-job training in program planning and management "techniques" with a broad-based organizational development/process consultation approach would probably gain the acceptance of host country government officials even in countries (like Tunisia) where the advice of foreign experts is sought only on technical matters. (This reluctance to seek or accept foreign advice on broad management issues is exemplified by the official GOV rejection of the Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject evaluation

consultants report because it addressed broad management issues rather than confining itself to narrow "technical" issues such as training in regional planning techniques). By combining the transfer of technical skills with a broad systems approach to program management, within a participatory learning process, technical assistance could address management problems across the board before they became critical constraints on program implementation and without being perceived as a threat by program managers, inasmuch as the solution to these management problems would be generated through an internal process of interaction between agency staff members rather than being prescribed by foreign experts.

D. Applied Research and Institutional Development

The reservations expressed earlier about "innovative" technical assistance apply, a fortiori to technical assistance combined with applied research. It is very clear from the CTRD Project experience that a new organization with project management and implementation responsibility is not an appropriate vehicle for developing and testing new concepts and methodological approaches.

In the case of the program of applied research in dryland farming systems carried out by the Dryland Crops Institute at El Kef under a contractual agreement with the ODTC, no major problems were encountered since the research program had been jointly developed by the Mission and the GOT on the basis of the report of the University of Missouri agricultural sector assessment team and since the training function of the Institute did not interfere with the applied research effort.

The situation was different in the case of the applied research conducted by the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University under cooperative agreements with AID's Development Support Bureau. During the discussions between AID and the GOT concerning the technical assistance to be provided by these two universities to the ODTC, no clear distinction was made between the advisory services funded by the Mission under the Area Development subproject and the consulting services and applied research financed by AID/Washington under the centrally-funded Regional Planning and Area Development and Local Participation projects. However, as it became evident that the ODTC was having difficulty performing basic program management functions, the two universities (particularly the University of Wisconsin) found it increasingly difficult to adjust their technical assistance to meet the more pressing needs of the ODTC while concurrently pursuing applied research objectives.

This is not to deny that the applied research conducted in Central Tunisia produced some useful results. The University of Wisconsin did test its training model and did apply its "Sketch Plan" concept to the particular case of Central Tunisia. Cornell University did contribute to the "state of the art" with regard to the use of informant surveys to map out and monitor the social and institutional development impact of government interventions at the community level. Microcomputer-based information system concepts and approaches initially developed and tested in Central Tunisia by the Cornell University team are being successfully applied in other developing countries. The point at issue, however, is whether these benefits were worth the cost of diverting ODTG staff, as well as technical assistance resources, from the performance of program management functions which had been assigned a high priority by the GOT.

The CTRD project design team had been aware of the fact that a well-established organization with an innovative leadership and no operational responsibilities, such as the National Center for Agricultural Studies (CNEA), would be better able than the ODTG to collaborate with the University of Wisconsin and Cornell University and to benefit from that collaboration. It was believed essential, however, that the regional planning and evaluation functions be based in Central Tunisia and not in Tunis. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems clear that the ODTG, in fact, was overburdened with tasks which, in the short-run at least, were not directly supportive of what the GOT considered to be its main function, namely to "activate" the Central Tunisia development effort.

The following lessons may be drawn from the CTRD Project experience:

- 1) Better care should be taken from the outset that the technical assistance needs of the host country institution coincide with the applied research mandate of the cooperating university.

- 2) Not only the AID Mission but also the host country government should be aware of how experimental the applied research is. (In the early stage of applied research, the cooperating university may be groping for a new methodology whereas in the later stages it may be applying and refining a methodology which already has been successfully tested in several countries).

- 3) The fewer operational responsibilities a host country has, the greater the probability that it will effectively

collaborate with a U.S. university on an applied research program (For instance, it would seem a priori that the General Commissariat for Regional Development would be better able and willing to collaborate on applied research in regional planning than was the case with the ODTc) and

4) Applied research should be concerned not only with the testing of new techniques or methodologies but also with studying the process of institutionalization itself and with the design of indicators for measuring progress in achieving institutional development.

E. Strengthening Institutional Development Aspects of Area Development Project Design

While AID Project Paper preparation guidelines call for an administrative analysis, no analytical methodology has been formulated for addressing institutional development issues. Institution building concepts did gain some popularity in AID during the late 60's and the early 70's, but the general tendency was to apply them only to projects aimed primarily at the creation of new organizations. In the case of rural development and area development projects, the emphasis was on the development of productive capacity and supporting infrastructure and, later, on the delivery of goods and services to the rural poor, even when such projects (e.g. the CTRD Project) involved the establishment of new organizations. As a result, the institutional development aspects of the projects tended to be neglected.

In the specific case of the CTRD Project, the ODTc was seen as the agency responsible for implementing the Project but was not perceived by the GOT, and even by USAID, as the focus of a major institutional development effort. Technical assistance was put in place to develop an institutional capacity for regional planning and evaluation and, later, for rural extension but the overall institutional development needs of the ODTc were not addressed by the Project.

While, in retrospect, this appears to have been a serious shortcoming in project design, it should be kept in mind that, at the time the project was designed, the GOT considered the ODTc's organizational structure and management needs to be outside the scope of project negotiations, except for organizational issues directly related to project implementation (for instance, the ODTc's Planning and Evaluation Unit). Thus USAID was faced with the alternative either to delay project approval until the ODTc became

operational (this, however, was inconsistent with the planned FY 1981 obligation cut-off) or to go ahead with the project under cover of conditions precedent designed to insure that adequate implementation capacity would be in place before Project funds could be disbursed. This latter course of action was chosen, with the results which have been described in this paper.

The CTRD Project experience clearly suggests that the primary focus in designing an area development project should be the institutional development of a "management structure" capable of planning, designing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating area development interventions rather than the technical aspects of the various interventions. This is true whether a new autonomous agency is created to direct and/or coordinate area development intervention or whether this role is performed by existing regional, provincial or local authorities (as is the case of the Siliana RD Project). Whether the host country government should pursue (and AID support) "integrated" or "coordinated" strategies (as defined in the Introduction to this paper) is an issue which should be resolved in the context of the host country's political and administrative system. In some instances, it may be both feasible and desirable to set up a regional development authority responsible for directing all development interventions within a given area. In other instances, it may be preferable to rely on existing provincial authorities to "orchestrate" the activities of centrally managed line agencies (especially when it is the host country government's policy to decentralize decision-making to the provincial and local level). In all cases, however, a unified project strategy should be pursued and institutional development should be given priority over the multiplicity of technical issues.

In order that an area development project not be simply a cluster of separate subprojects loosely tied together under an "umbrella" project, it is essential that technical assistance be designed as an integrated package within the various "technical" components woven together with an institutional "matrix". Even if (as argued earlier), it is neither feasible nor desirable to prepare detailed "blueprints" for all planned interventions, it is crucial that the AID mission gain a detailed understanding of the functions to be performed by the program management and/or coordination authority (or authorities), the organizational structure which will perform those functions and the interface between "new" and "pre-existing" administrative structures. Unless AID and the host country government can come to grips with institutional

development issues during the project design stage, it is preferable to continue channeling technical assistance along sectoral or (subsectoral) lines through centrally managed technical ministries or agencies.

APPENDIX I

The Central Tunisia Rural Development
Project - Summary Description of the Subprojects

The CTRD Project comprises the following subprojects:

(1) The Central Tunisia Area Development Subproject, aimed at assisting the Government (a) in building up within the ODTTC a capacity to plan and evaluate a regional development program for Central Tunisia and (b) in financing and managing an experimental fund designed to finance innovative pilot activities with a high potential for replication throughout Central Tunisia and elsewhere.

(2) The Dryland Farming Systems Research Subproject, aimed at assisting the Government in developing dryland farming technology adapted to the needs of small farms in Central Tunisia and a continuing applied research program operating out of the government agricultural training and research facility in El Kef.

(3) The Small Holder Irrigation Subproject, aimed at assisting the government in providing irrigation water to small farms through financing (a) construction of government-operated irrigation systems fed by existing deep wells (b) improvement of natural springs (c) loans to small holders for the construction or improvement of surface wells and (d) technical assistance aimed at improving irrigation methods and on - farm water use.

(4) Four potable water development subprojects including, (a) Loan financing of a potable water system for three delegation seats in the Siliana and Kasserine governorates, with implementation responsibility vested in the national water company (SONEDE) (b) Two Operating Program Grants (OPG's) to the private voluntary agency CARE for improvement of surface wells, experimental drilling of small shallow wells, and water-related health education and (c) an ODTTC-managed subproject aimed at improving access of dispersed rural populations to potable water through a more rational water development policy and application of lower cost technologies such as drilling of relatively shallow wells (using drilling equipment financed by AID).

(5) A Rural Extension and Outreach Subproject aimed at establishing effective two-way communication between GOT service and information organizations operating in the CTRD Project area through the development of an integrated Agricultural Extension Service and a multi-sectoral Extension Service Support Unit within the ODTG (with complementary assistance provided to the Ministry of Agriculture central extension support unit).

(6) A Rangeland Development and Management Subproject aimed at: (a) introducing improved range management and stock raising practices on 12 pilot sites in Central Tunisia and (b) establishing a Range Management Unit in the National Livestock and Pasture Authority (OEP) which is expected to continue operations after completion of the AID-funded pilot activities.

The first three subprojects were part of the initial CTRD Project Loan and Grant Agreement signed in May 1979. The other subprojects, with the exception of the two CARE OPG's, were funded through amendments to the May 1979 Agreement. In addition, AID funds initially programmed under the CTRD Project for rural health outreach services were eventually obligated through an amendment to the existing Rural Community Health (RCH) Project. That amendment extended the geographical area covered by the RCH Project from two to three Central Tunisia governorates, including the entire CTRD Project area.

Under the CTRD Project Loan and Grant Agreement, the Government committed itself to financing not only a portion of AID-supported interventions (such as the Experimental Fund) but also other interventions primarily of an infrastructural or agricultural nature such as storage facilities, rural roads, irrigation systems, reforestation, etc. Out of a total GOT contribution of \$30 million (at the current rate of exchange), \$10 million consisted of local currency proceeds from the sale of PL 480 Title I commodities.

It should be noted that the CTRD project area includes the target area of an earlier project, the Siliana Rural Development Project. This project, located in the two southern delegations* of the Siliana Governorate comprised three components:

*Maktar and Rohia (Maktar delegation later was split into two delegations: Maktar and Keabra).

- 1) Loan financing of a rural penetration road (implemented through the GOT Ministry of Public Works)
- 2) Grant financing of specific rural development interventions carried out by GOT technical services under the overall supervision of the Governor of Siliana, and
- 3) Operational Program Grants to CARE for potable water improvement/rural hygiene activities and to Save the Children Federation (SCF) for community-based rural development activities.

Whereas all other Siliana RD Project activities were completed or nearing completion by the time the CTRD Project was initiated, the SCF component was barely getting underway. (In fact, some collaboration did take place between SCF and the Maktar field office of the ODTIC.)

Conceptually related to the Siliana RD Project but covering a wider geographical area, the Rural Community Health (RCH) Project initially funded the construction of rural health centers in the governorates of Siliana and Sidi-Bouzid as well as technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to improve outreach services to the rural population. The loan-financed construction component was well underway when the CTRD Project was initiated, but the grant-financed technical assistance component was not put in place until after the RCH Project was expanded to include the Kasserine Governorate (Signature of the TA contract was an AID pre-condition to expanding the Project).

The Siliana cluster of projects also included loan financing of potable water systems for a number of delegation seats in the Governorate of Siliana. The project was implemented by the national water (SONEDE) which also implemented a similar CTRD subproject.

APPENDIX II

The Office de Developpement de la Tunisie Centrale

Following is an unofficial translation of Tunisian law No 78-44 of August 1, 1978, providing for the establishment of the ODTC.

LAW NO. 78-44 OF 1st AUGUST 1978 PROVIDING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE DE DEVELOPPEMENT DE LA TUNISIE CENTRALE

In the Name of the People

We, Habib Bourguiba, President of the Tunisian Republic;

The National Assembly having adopted,

Promulgate the law whose substance follows:

Article 1. Is hereby established a public body of the industrial and commercial type endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy called the Office de Developpement de la Tunisie Centrale, placed under the over-all control of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Office has a commercial character in its relations with third persons and is governed by the dispositions of Commercial law to the extent that they are not derogated by the present law.

Article 2. The Office exercises the functions provided for in the present law in the governorates of Kasserine, Sidi Bou Zid, Gafsa and Siliana and this in a progressive manner.

The radius of action of the Office comprises, initially, the following delegations:

---Governorate of Kasserine: delegations of Tala, Foussana, Jedliane, Sbiba and part of Sbeitla;

---Governorate of Sidi Bou Zid: delegations of Jelma and Mknassi*;

---Governorate of Gafsa: delegation of Sned* and part of delegation of Gafsa-North*;

---Governorate of Siliana: delegations of Rouhia and Makthar.

*These delegations are not included in the CTRD Project area

The whole in conformity with the annex plan to the present law. The radius of action can be extended later on by decree to other governorates and delegations.

The head office of the Office is fixed at Kasserine. It may be transferred, nevertheless, to another locality by decision of the Administrative Council, approved by authority of the over-all control.

Article 3. The general mission of the Office is to promote integrated development in its area of action.

To this end and in relation with the services and organizations concerned with development it has responsibility for:

- 1) encouraging the exploitation of the land in function of its resources and best use;
- 2) proceeding to the exploitation of the asparto grass cover for the promotion of the asparto sector, as well as the rational organization of the asparto harvest and the establishment and exploitation of artificial plantings with a view to meeting the needs of the country for cellulose products;
- 3) proceeding to the regularization and adaptation of land tenure to the requirements of agricultural development;
- 4) organizing and leading an extension action, particularly with a view to suppressing illiteracy among adults, encouraging citizens to practice family planning methods, and facilitating the formation of professional groups in relation with specialized organizations and services;
- 5) helping agriculturists to obtain credit, supplies of inputs and services, and markets for their products;
- 6) supervising the execution of water and soil conservation works;
- 7) executing works of socio-economic infrastructure by means of sub-contracting with various organizations of an official, semi-official or private character;
- 8) promoting development of non-agricultural enterprises by providing technical assistance to the organization and management, and by facilitating their access to sources of capital;

9) and in a general way to execute all missions entrusted to it by the government and intended to further the development, the improvement and the organization of agricultural activities in its area of responsibility.

Article 4. The Office de Developpement de la Tunisie Centrale is administered by an Administrative Council comprising representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Plan, Finances, Industry, Mines and Energy, Public Health, Equipment, and Social Affairs, representatives of the regional authorities, of the Destourian Socialist Party, of national organizations, and of agriculturists concerned.

A decree will fix the administrative and financial organization of the Office de Developpement de la Tunisie Centrales, as well as its operating procedures.

Article 5. In the event of dissolution of the Office de Developpement de la Tunisie Centrale, its assets will return to the State which will execute the undertakings contracted by the Office.

The present law will be published in the Journal Official of the Tunisian Republic and will be executed as law of the State.

Done at Tunis, the 1st of August 1978
For the President of the Tunisian Republic and
by delegation
Prime Minister
Hedi Nouira

APPENDIX III

Siliana Rural Development Project:
Lessons of Experience

The attached memorandum to the files provides background information as to how the experience gained under the Siliana Rural Development Project influenced the design of the CTRD Project. In particular, it calls attention to the fact that the lack of success in developing an institutional capacity to manage rural development at the governorate level led AID to support the GOT proposal to develop a program planning, management and evaluation capability at the regional (ODTC) level.

TO : The Files

FROM : Patrick D. Demongeot, General Development Officer

SUBJECT: Siliana Rural Development Project -
Lessons of Experience (A View from Tunis)

DATE : June 10, 1980

The origin of this rather lengthy memo was a statement made on pages 11-7 of the Siliana RD evaluation report prepared by Practical Concept Inc. (PCI) contract team in September of 1978. Referring to the Central Tunisia Rural Development (CTRD) project as "Phase II" of the Siliana RD project, the report stated that, according to everyone that the PCI team had talked to, Phase II had been "developed independent of Phase I" and that a quick reading of the CTRD document showed "no obvious use or reference to the Siliana project experience".

I was rather puzzled by the statement, since I had talked to the PCI team more than once about the lessons we had learned from the Siliana RD experience. Obviously, what the PCI had been looking for were specific references in the CTRD project documentation to the Siliana RD project and, particularly, to specific activities funded under the project. However, at the time that the CTRD project was being designed, most of the Siliana RD interventions were barely getting underway (the exception being the CARE/Medico water improvement project). This explains why there is little reference to these interventions in the CTRD project documentation (except in the Potable Water PID).

Nevertheless, much had already been learned from the Siliana RD experience at that time but most of these lessons were not technical in nature but rather managerial and institutional. For instance,

valuable insights were gained into the working of the Tunisian Administration at the governorate and local level, particularly with respect to the planning, budgeting and management of the GOT Rural Development Program (Programme de Développement Rural or PDR)¹. Some of the insights and the conclusions derived from them are discussed in Section 3 of the October 1977 CTRD Concept Paper. The major lesson learned was that little progress toward the development and implementation of Tunisian integrated rural development strategy could be achieved through studies and rural development interventions essentially managed and/or coordinated by USAID: Neither "pump-priming" nor "institution-building" could be successful in the absence of a concerted effort to develop and/or strengthen a GOT capability to plan, manage and evaluate RD activities at the regional and local level. In the following pages, I will attempt to describe in more detail what experience was gained in Southern Siliana and how this experience was incorporated into the CTRD program design.

^{1/} Under that program, the GOT Ministry of Plan allocates funds directly to governorates (rather than to technical ministries and agencies) which spend them on small projects and subsidies which benefit the rural poor.

I. The Siliana RD Project: Purpose versus achievements

The first lesson of the Siliana RD project is that no matter how well the preparatory research work is done for an RD project, the risk is high that unforeseen events will deflect project implementation from the intended course of action and, therefore, that project objectives will not be achieved. This is a lesson that we must keep in mind as CTRD project implementation gains momentum.

Siliana project implementation was preceded by a volume of research and analytical work which, to most observers, seems out of proportion to the actual level of effort provided. In addition to the PP, the Mission (or rather Dr. Hirsch who was then project officer) also prepared a 110 page description report⁽¹⁾ as well as a 42 page Sector Paper on Rural Development (May 1977). On the GOT side the Ministry of Plan commissioned the National Center for Agriculture Studies (CNEA) to prepare a six-volume preliminary report on a proposed Southern Siliana integrated rural development project.

According to the Project Paper, the overall purpose of the Siliana RD project was "to test and demonstrate ways in which changes in the rural economy of the project area can increase rural income, and how the quality of life for men and women can be improved by other means for target communities and households". It should be noted that the project purpose was very similar to the overall CTRD program goals. The Siliana RD project, however, was divided into two phases, of which only Phase I was implemented. The purpose of this first phase, (again to quote the PP) was "to study and test selected factors in the situation in order to determine critical elements of an agreed strategy for a long-range AID/GOT rural development program."

(1) Description and problems of an Area Proposed for an AID-assisted Rural Development Project in Tunisia - Rural Development, Siliana, April 1976.

While the PP stated that the results of Phase I would be applied to design the "mature phase" (Phase two) of the program for the project area, it provided little information about this second phase. It was not even made clear why Phase II should be limited to the Siliana RD project area since, according to the PP, there were "at least twelve delegations which share with Makthar and Rohia the same economic and human problems" and the project was being designed with a "view to permitting replication in the whole mountain and steppe interior of Tunisia."

In light of the similarity of overall project purpose and the potential for replication of activities tested in Southern Siliana, it appears logical to view the CTRD project as a geographically expanded Phase II of the Siliana RD project. This view is supported by the fact that the decision to terminate the Siliana RD project at the end of (an extended) Phase I and to go ahead with the development of the CTRD project were made simultaneously.

Most of the lessons learned from the Siliana RD experience, however, do not flow from the project activities actually undertaken but rather from the problems encountered in implementing the project. By focusing on individual activities (subprojects), the PCI evaluation failed to identify the more complex underlying critical factors which were in fact tested and subsequently taken into account in designing the CTRD project.

As contemplated in the PP, Phase I of the Siliana RD project was to proceed on two separate tracks: an "applied research" track and an "immediate investment" track. The "applied research" component was to

consist of a series of studies related to agricultural and other income-producing activities, social services development, community organization and rural household behavior, the results of which were to be applied to the design of Phase II. The "immediate investment" component, however, while not necessarily experimental on a technical level, was intended to test a number of important institutional relationships such as (1) the ability of various Tunisian government organizations to reach out into previously neglected rural areas (2) new ways of interaction between the formal administrative structures of government and rural community leaders and (3) the ability of the GOT and AID to collaborate in a localized RD program. The research effort was to test new modes of collaborative research between Tunisian and other scholars.

There is no doubt that the agricultural component of the Phase I "applied research" was dealt a severe blow by AID/Washington's inability to recruit a French and/or Arabic-speaking experienced steppe-zone agronomist willing to live in Makthar. Among other tasks, this mythical expert was to conduct a detailed agricultural survey of the project area which would result in recommendations for further specialized studies and experimentation. Not only was this initial survey never carried out but only one short-term agricultural study was conducted and that by a fruit tree expert.

The joint social science research committee called for in the PP was indeed established on paper but never managed to enlist the active participation of the Tunisian academic community. In any event, it was unrealistic to expect such a committee to design a research program which would determine (1) the appropriate level of government sponsored social

services infrastructure (2) alternate means of organizing and delivering these services and (3) other form of community-based activity. Even the socio-economic survey of the Hababsa secteur of Rohia delegation, which was designed by the more policy-oriented CNEA with the assistance of a US social scientist did not produce data for use in designing alternatives to existing programs. Neither did the study of small industry in the project zone carried out by Georgia Tech.

As for the "immediate investment" component of Phase I, it obviously also suffered from the failure to recruit the steppe-zone agronomist but this alone cannot explain the fact that it ended up resembling the GOT's Rural Development Program (PDR) for which it was intended to serve as a model. In fact Arthur Dommen's words to describe the PDR can equally apply to the Siliana RD project activities: "Far from being an integrated program, as the name would suggest, the latter consists of a bundle of disparate actions"...(page 7 of Dommen's Final Report).

An in-house project evaluation was carried out at the time of Hirsch's departure. In addition to a long evaluation report submitted by Dr. Hirsch in August 1977, the Mission submitted a Project Evaluation Summary (PES) in September 1, 1977. That document recommended that Phase I of the project be extended by one year as implementation was one year behind schedule. No recommendation was made for Phase II, but it was noted that the agricultural component of the project could not succeed unless the services of a competent steppe-zone agronomist became available.

If the PCI evaluation team had read the September 1977 PES more carefully, they might have found clues as to how the Siliana Project experience did affect CTRD project development which was to begin the following month with the preparation of a Concept Paper. The following PES conclusions in particular reflected Mission perception of the Siliana project experience to date and its implication for a possible Phase 2:

- (1) While the agricultural actions undertaken or planned under the Siliana project could bring some economic benefits to the population, they hardly shaped a comprehensive agricultural development program, nor were they "likely to provide insights into developmental issues facing the area."
- (2) However, the Siliana cluster of projects did provide USAID with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of how things really worked at the governorate and local level: the difficulties experienced by GOT agencies at all levels in coordinating their activities in the context of an "integrated" rural development project and the constraints imposed on project implementation by the "lack of RD planning and management staff at the Siliana Governorate level."
- (3) The GOT had no overall rural development strategy and there was little integration at the conceptual level between the actions carried out by the various agencies in pursuit of their own objectives.
- (4) All in all, RD planning and implementation as well as coordination between AID and the GOT was severely affected by the lack of a single agency responsible for rural development.

The experience gathered over the following year with Arthur Dammen in the field confirmed the validity of these conclusions which played an important role in shaping the CTRD project as it evolved from a primarily infrastructure project proposal unsuccessfully submitted to the IBRD to a complex RD program with regional planning, applied research and experimental components.

II. Major Lessons Drawn from the Siliana Experience and Applied to CTRD Project Management*

A. Project Management

The difficulties experienced in the course of the Siliana project's implementation reflected to a large extent USAID's failure to build into the project design adequate provision for the development of a GOT project management capability.

The problem appeared to have stemmed in part from basic differences between (and possibly among) AID and GOT officials with regard to the scale of the undertaking which was to be managed. Thus the interventions identified by the CNEA study of June 1976 for inclusion in the "immediate investment" component of the project totalled TD 8.2 million (nearly \$20 million at the 1976 rate of exchange). In a subsequent Project Identification Summary* entitled "Integrated Rural Development of Southern Siliana", the Ministry of Plan cited a project cost total (including studies) of TD 17.9 million (over \$40 million).**

Both the CNEA report and the Project Identification Summary called for the creation of a "cellule technique" which would be responsible for programming,

*/ Fiche d'Identification de Projet

**/ The increase over the CNEA total reflected primarily the addition of a dam and rural electrification.

monitoring and evaluating project implementation. As a matter of fact, the CNEA insisted that the success of the project depended on the immediate establishment and start-up of this project management unit.

It is hard to believe that AID ever considered such a large investment program for the two southern delegations of Siliana governorate (even if one assumes a 50% participation of the GOT) but there is no doubt that a down-scaling of the Siliana RD program did take place for reasons not obvious from the AID project documentation. It is clear, however, from the CNEA report that agricultural development was to be the cornerstone of the development strategy for the project area and that much of the agricultural development was to take place through irrigation of the Rohia plain. According to Roger Carlson, who was USAID/Tunis Program Officer at that time, irrigation of the Rohia plain was initially considered for a major AID investment effort but these plans were abandoned when it was discovered that drainage problems would make an irrigation project uneconomical. (An expensive Rohia plain drainage project is being financed by the GOT).

The failure to recruit a dryland agronomist led to further atrophy of the agricultural component of the Siliana RD program. As a result, the MC77 road project which was then considered as only one of several major components of the program now appears out of proportion to the remainder of the interventions. This has led the PCI team to make the somewhat misleading statement (on page 111-1 of their evaluation report) that "most project resources were diverted to roads and

potable water". The truth is that the agricultural component just faded away.

In his evaluation report of August 1977 (page 5) Abraham Hirsch criticized the "technocratic management-cell concept" underlying the CNEA proposal and stressed the importance of using the existing structures of the administration. He added that the Ministry of Plan never formally adopted the CNEA concept as its own and that, had it done so, the concept would have given USAID problems in terms of costs and as a management approach. It thus appears that, for different reasons, both Hirsch and the Ministry of Plan feared the creation of an Agricultural Development Authority (Office de Mise en Valeur) under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, should the "management cell" concept be adopted. Nevertheless, the first RD Project Agreement of June 30, 1976 (which obligated a paltry \$120,000 for research, immediate actions and vehicles) did call for the establishment of project coordination units at both the Tunis and Siliana Governorate level (in addition to the ill-fated social science research committee). Namely: (1) An Executive Committee would be entrusted with the general management of the project at the Tunis level while (2) a Management Section would be established within the Rural Development Unit of the Governorate to coordinate project activities at the Siliana province level. In fact neither of these coordination units was established. While the failure to formally establish the Tunis level committee was of little importance (as the officials which would have constituted its membership met informally whenever the need arose), the failure to establish a project management capability at the Siliana Governorate level had more serious consequences.

Admittedly, the idea of creating a special section to coordinate AID-financed activities was poorly conceived to start with. It would have seemed logical, instead, to strengthen the capacity of the Rural Development Unit as a whole to manage the Governorate's rural development program, of which the AID-funded activities were only a small fraction. In the absence of a Rural Development Unit at the Governorate level (its first member was appointed only in the Summer of 1978) the burden of coordination at the provincial level fell on the Secretary-General of the Governorate and on the Regional Commissioner for Agricultural Development (CRDA). Since these two officials were too busy to spend much time on the small AID-funded RD activities, it became more and more expedient to deal directly with delegation-level officials directly involved in the implementation of AID-funded activities, thus by-passing the governorate bottleneck. By the time Arthur Dommen arrived (a month after me), the same delays in project implementation which made it necessary to extend Phase I by one year also motivated Mission management to perceive Dommen's role primarily as that of an expeditor. It is no wonder, therefore, that Dommen chose to reside in Makthar rather than in Siliana, as Hirsch had (with the support of USAID's top management) recommended. This decision meant, in effect, that Arthur Dommen-- rather than the governorate-- became the focal point of Siliana RD project coordination in the field.

As CTRD project development got underway with GOT and AID/W acceptance of a concept paper late in 1977, a conscious effort was made to take into account the lessons learned from the Siliana experience from the standpoint of project management. For instance:

(1) Program Scale: In his evaluation report (page 22), Hirsch admitted that the Siliana RD program had not reached the "critical mass" needed to "meet the twin objectives of improving life of the rural poor in the project area and their productivity, and at the same time boosting Tunisian performance in developing poor areas". More to the point, the Siliana RD program had failed to reach the critical mass necessary to mobilize both AID and GOT technical and organizational resources. In the case of CTRD, by expanding the project area from 2 to 3 delegations and identifying a minimum development potential for this relatively poor and neglected area, USAID was able to obtain from AID/W more effective support in terms of recruitment of consultants needed for program development and, from the GOT, a higher level of participation in program planning and decision-making. In his Final Report (page 63), Mr. Dommen criticizes AID's decision "to contract with the University of Missouri to make an agricultural assessment of the CTRD area from the bottom up "when such information was already available from other sources. Dommen, however, missed the point that this assessment by a reputable U.S. university (assisted by the CNEA) was needed to convince the AID agricultural establishment that there existed an agricultural development potential in Central Tunisia (In one of his trip report, Carl Ferguson, USAID F&A Officer until July 1978, had recommended that Southern Siliana be converted to a national park!).

(2) GOT Project Management Structure

Early in the CTRD program development process, it was decided that the responsibility for project management should be firmly assumed by the GOT and not by USAID as had been the case with the Siliana RD program.

This was particularly important in light of the projected phase-out of AID assistance to Tunisia after FY 1981 and Assistant Administrator Wheeler's directive that AID be a "wholesaler" rather than a "retailer" of assistance. The CTRD project paper made it very clear (page 20) that CTRD would be a GOT/contractor implemented program and that program management responsibility would rest with the Central Tunisia Development Authority (CTDA). This concept is still valid even though delays in the establishment and staffing of the Authority so lengthened its gestation period as to cast doubt on its ability to assume full program management responsibility before the end of FY 1981.

B. Institution building versus Pump-Priming

In his August 1977 Evaluation Report (page 22) Bram Hirsch made the point that he did not want the Siliana RD project to become "a routine, old-style AID project, heavy on institution-building, participant training and US advisors, light on direct efforts to alleviate underdevelopment and help the rural poor." Instead, he advocated a strategy of working through existing government structures (rather than through a temporary structure created specifically to manage the project) with a relatively modest level of financing intended primarily as "pump-priming" to encourage reallocation of limited GOT resources (particularly management and technical staff) to hitherto neglected groups and areas (pages 3-17 and 3-18).

In the case of the Siliana RD project, this strategy was less than successful for a number of reasons: (1) existing government structures at the local level were weak in terms of outreach capacity and (2) the activities undertaken (particularly in agriculture) were technical and/or organizationally too complex for local government structures to

implement, thus requiring USAID to perform a management/coordination role at the project area level.

One alternative to working through the existing local government structures is to set up parallel structures for project implementation. This is in effect what US voluntary agencies such as Save the Children and CARE/Medico (to a lesser extent) have done in the Siliana project area. The gain in effectiveness however, is offset by a loss in terms of "pump-priming". While the voluntary agency programs may act to create or stimulate a demand for the goods and/or services they provide they have no effect on the supply side except to the extent that they work through host government structures (as Care/Medico does in the case of health education). In addition, duplicating existing government structures can be very expensive.

The other alternative is to combine "pump-priming" with "institution-building" so that the host government develops a capability to carry on the RD activities after the project has terminated. This can be achieved by (a) strengthening existing structures (b) supplementing them by a coordinating structure and/or (c) setting up new implementing structures. It is obvious that "pump-priming" is maximized and "institution-building" minimized if existing structures are strengthened and their planning and coordinating capacity built up.

In practice, the "institution-building" and project management issues were never considered separately. Since it was AID's intent that the Central Tunisia development effort be managed by the Tunisian Government, we were prepared to assist the GOT build up its capacity to effectively manage a program long after the last U.S. input had been provided.

The discussions held with GOT officials on that subject in early 1978 are summarized in a memorandum to the files dated March 10, 1978 (a copy of which is attached). At that time, four major options were under consideration:

- (1) Strengthening the governorate's capacity to plan and manage a regional development program - while this could be attempted in one governorate on a pilot basis, it was argued that such an experiment would be politically unwise as it could not be replicated nation-wide in the near future.
- (2) Creating a Tunis-level committee, chaired by the Ministry of Plan, to coordinate the interventions of the different line agencies - while such a committee (especially if supported by a permanent secretariat) would be useful during the program formulation process, it could hardly be expected to effectively coordinate program implementation in Central Tunisia (or to develop a GOT capacity to do so).
- (3) Creating a new agricultural development authority (Office de Mise en Valeur) which would be responsible for all public investment in both irrigated and dryland agriculture as well as supporting infrastructure. While favored by a few officials in the Ministry of Agriculture, this type of organization was generally criticized as being very costly, top-heavy, technocratic and biased toward irrigated agriculture. Furthermore, it could not play a multi-sectoral coordination role.
- (4) Creating a regional staff office responsible for planning, coordinating and evaluating the integrated development of the area- this solution appeared to be favored by most GOT officials although the Ministry of Plan was initially reluctant to delegate planning responsibility to a regional office. This alternative was also favored by USAID.

USAID unfortunately was unsuccessful in persuading the GOT to set up an inter-ministerial committee to study the institutional aspect of the Central Tunisia development effort. The decision to set up a Central Tunisia Development Authority (CTDA) was, in the final analysis, a political decision. Fortunately, the enabling legislation was very broad in its language as it assigned the Authority a general mandate to promote the integrated rural development in the area under its jurisdiction. Its more specific functions included agricultural land development (mise en valeur), contracting for public works (socio-economic infrastructure) and promotion of small industry. Thus the new Authority combined some of the characteristics of alternatives (3) and (4).

During the legislative process, members of the National Assembly raised questions concerning the possible duplication of functions between the new Authority and existing agencies. The Ministry of Agriculture's answer at the time was that the Authority would take over most agricultural functions currently performed by other agencies or sub-divisions of the Ministry but would be limited to a coordinating role with respect to other sectors. Unfortunately, for reasons of political consumption, the new Authority was publicized as the answer to all the problems of Central Tunisia, therefore giving rise to exaggerated expectations, on the part of the population of the Kasserine governorate.

At the outset, the "mise en valeur" character of the CTDA was emphasized by the fact that it took over the Central Tunisia staff and facilities of the Medjerda Valley Development Authority (a traditional "Office de Mise en Valeur" which had been responsible, since 1976, for the implementation of a modest Central Tunisia development project).

Since then, however, the trend has been to emphasize the planning and coordination functions of the CTDA. AID can claim some credit for this trend as it did persuade the GOT to accept two features which were completely absent from its original project proposal: (1) the assignment of a regional planning and evaluation role to the CTDA, supported by U.S. technical assistance and (2) the assignment to the Dryland Crop Institute at El Kef of an applied research responsibility for Central Tunisia, thus creating a precedent for CTDA reliance on other institutions for agricultural (as well as non-agricultural) development functions. There appears to be a growing recognition in GOT circles that (a) the building-up of the CTDA's institutional capacity should not detract from implementation of CTRD activities through existing administrative structures and (b) eventually CTDA itself should play a "pump-priming" role with respect to other GOT institutions in the area.

C. Integrated Rural Development

One measure of the success of a rural development program is the level of integration achieved between program components both within and across sectors. It is not sufficient that, at the project design stage, key problems and issues be identified across sectoral lines. It also is necessary that specific interventions be planned, designed and implemented so as to maximize their complementarity over time. The GOT programs proposed for Southern Siliiana and Central Tunisia were both presented as integrated rural development projects. In both cases, however, they consisted of exhaustive lists^{of} specific interventions in every sector without much regard to cost/benefit or cost/effectiveness considerations, to sequential priorities and/or to institutional

and policy issues. As a result these proposals had a very high infrastructure content and little in the way of actions that would increase productivity and employment.

In both instances, the courses of action proposed by USAID involved a phased approach to rural development, with a first phase addressing priority needs (such as potable water) as well as research and experimentation required for the identification of the key elements of an integrated rural development strategy. In the case of the Siliana RD project, AID was to finance "a series of studies related to agricultural and social development with a view to determine how the Government of Tunisia and the communities in the project area might improve integrated rural development planning and implementation" (page 1-1 of PP). On the basis of the results of this first phase, a determination would be made by the GOT and AID whether or not "to launch a fully integrated RD program in the project area" (page 2-11 of PP).

As mentioned earlier, the research and experimentation, component of the Siliana RD project (Phase I) was only partially implemented due to AID's failure to recruit a steppe-zone agronomist, the lack of interest on the part of the Tunisia social science community in participating on a non-remunerative basis in the work of ^a joint Tunisian/US Social Science Research Committee and, finally, the diversion of USAID management's attention to the implementation of specific AID-funded RD activities in the project area. The only socio-economic research activity actually carried out was the survey of the Hababaa "secteur" carried out by the CNEA under an AID-financed contract with the Ministry of Plan. Of course,

in addition to data collected by the CNEA, much information on social/cultural factors was accumulated in the course of project development and implementation, some of it recorded (e.g. in Hirsch's and Dommen's final reports), but as the PCI Evaluation points out (page 11-6) "the lessons for project management are not made explicit or collected in one document".

The failure to fully achieve the research objectives of Phase I of the Siliana RD project as well as the decision to expand the RD project area to eight delegations made it necessary to incorporate in the Central Tunisia RD program a substantial research, analysis and experimentation component. At the same time, it was essential that the problems which had hindered the implementation of the Siliana RD project be avoided through improvements in project design, especially with regard to the institutional arrangements required to carry out research, analysis and experimentation. This was fully recognized not only by USAID project management staff but also by the AID/Washington officers who assisted in CTRD project design (J. Dalton and J. Blackton, NE/TECH), both of whom had participated in Siliana RD project development.

The Siliana RD project experience has shown the need to institutionalize not only the socio-economic data collection process but also the analytical process which brings this information to bear on the solution of specific problems. In other words, it was necessary to institutionalize a planning process which could translate inter-disciplinary studies into an integrated multi-sectoral development program. The chosen solution was to gain GOT support for the assignment of a regional development planning function to, and the development of a planning and evaluation

capability within, the Central Tunisia Development Authority. Technical assistance to CTDA in the field of regional planning through a contract with a US university was built-in as a major component of the Area Development subproject of the CTRD project.

Another major component of the Area Development subproject, the Experimental Fund, was designed to serve as a vehicle for the kind of experimentation which can only be carried out on a small-scale and, therefore, would impose a heavy "retailing" burden on the Mission if each pilot activity had to go through the project review and approval process. The Siliana RD project experience also had taught us that it was risky to rely on USAID for the design of such experiments (In the absence of a steppe-zone agronomist, very little experimentation was built into the activities funded under the Siliana RD grant). It was therefore agreed that both the criteria for approving experimental projects and the projects themselves would be designed by the CTDA, assisted by the US university contracted to provide advisory and training services in the field of regional planning and evaluation.

The Siliana RD project had envisaged the introduction in the project area, on a pilot basis, of agricultural technology which had already been proven in Northern Tunisia (see page 2-14 of PP). While this was done to a limited extent with regard to pastures and tree crops, practically nothing had been done with regard to cereals and forage crops grown in rotation with cereals: medicago trials were started but were never completed due to the failure of the Siliana Regional Agricultural Development Commissioner (CRDA) and the Office of Cereals to conclude

a cooperative agreement (see page 43 of Dommen's final report). The CTRD project design has provided for such experimentation through support (contractual advisory assistance, equipment and on-farm experimental costs) for the applied research program to be carried out by the Cereal Crop Institute at El Kef under a contractual agreement with the CTDA.

Although the Siliana RD project was intended to be "collaborative and integrative", AID-funded activities ended up being conducted in isolation from GOT-funded activities carried out in the project area. While the project did "test the ability of the Tunisian Government and AID to collaborate in a localized program" as called for in the PP (page 1-3), this collaboration took place in the framework of an AID project rather than a Tunisian project.

In the case of the Central Tunisia development effort, an attempt was made from the outset to operate in a collaborative mode. Thus, a joint CTRD strategy and a joint "First Tranche" (1979-81) expenditure program (only one fourth of which was AID dollar-funded) were formulated in July 1978. Of course, as could be expected, the pressure to obligate the entire US contribution to the CTRD program (for expenditure through 1986) over three fiscal years has tended to focus AID's concern (and to some extent the attention of the University providing regional planning assistance to CTDA) on the US-funded portion of the Central Tunisia development effort. This probably would still be the case (albeit to a lesser extent) even if the obligating pressure were reduced, inasmuch as the US-funded interventions are more innovative and/or experimental in character and, therefore, require greater management

attention than GOT-funded activities. It should be kept in mind, however, that the development of a regional planning capability within CTDA will take time and probably will be completed only after all the US inputs have been obligated. It is only at that time that the regional planning concept can be tested as a means of integrating all development activities within the CTRD project area, whether funded from the Tunisian investment budget (either through the CTDA or line agencies), from the Tunisian Rural Development Program (PDR) or from bilateral or multilateral assistance.

D. Potable Water Strategy

Commenting on the University of Missouri agricultural assessment of Central Tunisia (page 63 of his final report), Arthur Dommen remarked that

"technical assistance is most effectively used when expertise can be directed to help solve specific problems, and a little greater examination of the Makthar experience would have revealed many of those on which to focus".

Unfortunately, at the time the Agricultural Assessment was made (February 1978), the Siliana RD project had produced very little data on specific problems for anyone to focus on. Dommen was well qualified to gather and record information about the problems of the rural people of the Makthar area, but much of his time was spent monitoring work in progress on various construction jobs (catchment basins, sheep-dipping vats), a task which required long hours of driving on barely passable dirt tracks. While that work could have been done by a PCV or a well-trained Tunisian employee and certainly did not call for someone with a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics, we initially felt that criss-crossing the project area on his land-rover would enable Dommen to learn much about the land and its people and to get acquainted with local officials

at the secteur level. (The secteur is the smallest unit of Tunisian territorial administration.) After a year, however, both Blackton (then on TDY in Tunis) and I felt that it was time to bring Dommen back to Tunis for a month or so that the insights gained in the field cou'd be applied to the design of the first four CTRD subprojects. While that time could have been spent on data collection and follow-up, as Dommen suggests in his Final Report (page 58), his participation in CTRD project design nonetheless did provide a vital link between the Siliana RD project and the CTRD program.

I believe that this was particularly true with respect to the potable water component of CTRD since by that time, we had gained considerable experience with the respective approaches of SONEDE (the National Water Company) which was in the process of designing an AID loan-financed program of water systems for large villages in Siliana Governorate, Genie Rural (The Agricultural Engineering Service of the Ministry of Agriculture) which was responsible for constructing water catchment basins (as well as sheep dipping vats), financed from Siliana RD project funds, and CARE/Medico, which had just completed a well reconstruction/sanitary education OPG-funded project in Southern Siliana. From this experience, we had drawn the conclusion that greater consideration of cost per beneficiary should enter into the selection of potable water interventions and that efforts should be made to lower costs whenever feasible. Therefore, the CTRD Potable Water FID identified as a top priority the formulation by the CTDA of a potable water strategy for meeting the needs of the greatest number of people at the least cost.

Not only was the range of potable water technologies considered in the CTRD Potable Water PID (see page 29) drawn from actual experience in the Siliana RD project area but the use of cost per beneficiary criteria for selecting among alternative technologies, was itself demonstrated for the first time in the course of Siliana RD project implementation. (See Section IV.1(d) of Dommen's final report, pp. 34-36, for a description of the Hababsa Water Supply experiment in persuading GOT officials to consider the relative costs, as well as benefits, of alternative technologies).

Whereas, in the Siliana RD project, Dommen had been responsible for monitoring AID-funded potable water interventions, the CTRD potable water PID provided that the CTDA would be responsible for planning, allocating among implementing agencies, monitoring and evaluating all CTRD potable water interventions. (see pages 33 and 37 of PID). Unfortunately, attempts to insure that all interventions within the project area were properly integrated within the area development strategy at the design state and adequately coordinated with one another at the implementation stage did result in considerable delays in the design and approval of Care/Medico OPGs for Siliana and Kasserine. This provoked Dommen into remarking on page 30 of his final report that "thousands of people in the project area were without water to drink because of poor planning". (A slight exaggeration since the Care/Medico projects are aimed at improving and sanitizing existing wells). It should be recognized, however, that these delays were the result of real differences between USAID, Care/Medico and the GOT about technical and institutional issues which still have not been

completely resolved. It should also be noted that the new OPG proposals for Siliana and Kasserine were submitted by Care/Medico only in response to Director Davis' directive to Volags that future efforts be concentrated in Central Tunisia. While Dommen does mention this directive he does not mention the fact that at the February 1978 USAID meeting with Volags during which the new policy was announced, the Care/Medico Country Director had presented several new OPG proposals but none in the CTRD project area. Furthermore, since the initial OPG proposals submitted by Care/Medico in response to the new directive were simply carbon copies of OPGs submitted for other governorates (the only change being the names of the governorates), there was never any question that they could be approved in that form and, in fact, the formal Ministry of Foreign Affairs request for the Siliana and Kasserine OPG not issued until October 1978 and still requested changes in the project content (namely the inclusion of new wells in addition to the rehabilitation of old wells). Although both OPGs were funded by AID in FY 1979, the agreement between Care/Medico and the Governorate of Kasserine was not signed until March 1980 and work has not yet begun in either Siliana or Kasserine governorates.

E. Local Participation

The Siliana RD Project Paper identified a number of socio-political objectives among which was increased local participation. It recognized that the population of the project area perceived development as "something to be provided by the government" and asserted that the project would "help in changing this posture of dependency to a posture of self-development, albeit with the government's assistance" (page 3-10).

The PP, however, did not explain how this would be achieved. The "Applied Social Science Research" planned (but for the most part not carried out) under the project did include topics such as the role of the "secteur" chief (omda), decision-making in the small and extended household, community and dispersion and communication patterns (pp.2-27 through 2-29) which might have provided useful information on the extent of and potential for, local participation. On the other hand, there was no local participation in the choice of activities to be supported under the "Immediate Actions" component of the Project since that choice "was made from recommendations contained in the CNEA study" (page 2-31). As for the mechanism selected for carrying out these activities it was "program support provided on a matching basis, with funds from the GOT Rural Development budget" for the purpose of enabling Tunisian operational agencies "to conduct within the specific zones a level of activities greater than would be possible with their own budgetary resources" (page 2-30).

As a matter of fact, implementation of Siliana RD project activities was not different than implementation of GOT Rural Development Program (PDR)-funded activities except that, in some instances, they were more inovative and/or complex and therefore required greater coordination and follow-up. No attempt, however, was made at "pump-priming" the local participation element of the PDR, probably because it was found to be practically non-existent. The only exception to the above may be the sheep-dipping campaign which, by its very nature, did involve some broad-based popular participation.

While the Siliana RD Project Paper did mention that USAID foresaw a role for American Volag in community organization (page 2-32), it did not indicate how this would relate to other elements of the Siliana RD program. The Save the Children Federation (SCF) was invited to submit an OPG proposal but in spite of SCF/GOT discussions in the Fall of 1976 and lengthy SCF/AID/W negotiations thereafter, none of the successive proposals submitted by SCF to AID embodied a realistic community development strategy for Tunisia. (See pp. 13-15 of Hirsch's Evaluation Report). At the Mission Director's request (and against Hirsch's recommendation), an OPG covering the first phase of a community-based integrated development project was approved in August 1978 and a Country Director arrived in September 1978. While the course of action outlined in the OPG documentation was completely impractical in the Tunisian context, a more realistic approach involving community self-help projects was negotiated with the GOT by the SCF country director with the support and assistance of USAID.

The SCF program was barely getting underway in the summer of 1978 when the CTRD program development process was in full swing. Thus, due to lack of experience with community development in the project area, no attempt was made to build a local participation element into the CTRD Project Paper. From the Siliana RD project experience, however, we had learnt that the detailed budgetary control exercised by the Ministry of Plan on the PDR budget and the resulting slowness in delivering goods and services to the beneficiaries would make it difficult for the governorates to undertake self-help projects of the type planned by SCF. In fact, remembering how the expectations generated by the

Siliana RD program had turned to disillusionment because of all the delays in implementation, we had no illusions as to what would happen to any self-help motivations under such conditions.

Some thought was given to the possible use of the AID/GOT funded Experimental Fund as a vehicle for small-scale experiments in local participation but we were somewhat discouraged by the Ministry of Plan's refusal to grant CTDA the authority to approve Experimental Fund-financed pilot projects without its prior review (although it did agree to keep such reviews very short). By the Fall of 1978, we felt that the "Second Phase" SCF OPG would provide the best opportunity for introducing a broader local participation element in the CTRD program. To that effect, USAID and AID/W agreed that it might be opportune to extend the current "Phase I" OPG through FY 80 so as to allow SCF more time to test and demonstrate its approach as well as to plan, in collaboration with CTDA, a new "Phase II" program which would be proposed for AID funding in FY 1981 (or possibly late FY 1980).

We felt that this delay in starting Phase II was particularly important in view of the need to "institutionalize" SCF's community development approach. At that time, we thought that the best way to achieve this institutionalization was to promote a collaborative venture between SCF/Tunisia and the CTDA. In fact, while in Washington during December 1978, I had discussed the feasibility of SCF (as well as Care/Medico) playing a technical assistance role (as advisor to CTDA) rather than an implementation role. (I had understood at the time that a new type of "collaborative agreement" between AID and Volags was being considered by AID/W as an alternative to the OPG).

The CTDA's mandate does call for it to carry out "animation rurale" activities which might turn out to be the best vehicle for local participation, if and when the CTDA should decide to recruit and train the staff it would need to undertake such a program. The establishment of a "Community Development Fund," however, would raise the same type of issues as the creation of the CTDA Experimental Fund (i.e. would the CTDA be given the necessary authority to approve individual self-help projects?) While financially autonomous, the CTDA still requires Ministry of Plan approval on all projects no matter how small. The issue is one of decentralization of decision-making: without it, the system will not have the flexibility needed for a community development program. Of course, to the extent that funds provided through OPGs do not flow through the GOT system (and therefore are not subject to its constraints), OPGs are handy vehicles for AID to get around ^{such} obstacles rather than induce the GOT to remove them. While this may be convenient when one is primarily concerned with getting a job done (as in the case of the Care/Medico well improvement projects) institutionalization requires that we work through the system and change it, if necessary. It is evident, that local participation of any sort will require such changes i.e. decentralization not only of budgetary approval procedures but also of project planning and evaluation. It is in the latter area that SCF may be able to contribute the most through a collaborative relationship with CTDA.

III. Conclusion

At the time the CTRD program was being developed, none of the specific interventions funded from Siliana RD program funds were completed or far enough advanced to draw lessons from them, except for the Care/Medico wells projects. This is why I have not discussed them specifically in this paper. In any event, it became obvious fairly early on that there was a need for (1) better coordination between the Tunisian agencies involved (such as the CRDA, the Livestock and Pastures Agency (OEP), the Cereals Agency, the Forestry Service and, since last year, the CTDA and (2) a more effective extension effort across the board (including pasture improvements, apiculture and fruit trees). Little has been learned from a purely technical standpoint either because it is still too early (as in the case of rangeland improvements) or because not enough technical expertise was brought to bear on the interventions for them to be effective (as in the case of sheep-dipping and medicago trials). It should be added that the PCI findings and recommendations concerning those same interventions suffered from the same lack of technical expertise.

Thus, in the final analysis the lessons learned from the Siliana RD experience were more of an administrative and organizational nature. We did learn quite a bit about the functioning of the Tunisian territorial administration and technical agencies at the regional and local level. Hopefully, we also have learned from the mistakes made: lack of institution-building, segregation of AID input management from the overall management of the GOT Rural Development Program (PDR) at the regional and local level, lack of planning and evaluation, piece-meal approach

to programming and budgeting, lack of integration between social science research and planned interventions etc. The most damaging criticism however is that neither the RD grant project administered directly by USAID nor the community development project funded through SCF appear to have had any significant impact on the way in which the GOT plans, implements and evaluates its Rural Development Program (PDR) activities at the governorate level and below.

In the case of the CTRD program, the pressure to obligate AID funds and to "deliver" to the GOT on our commitment is bound to impinge, at least in the short-run (i.e. through FY 1981) on the concept of an integrated RD program financed jointly by the GOT, AID and other donors. The Area Development subproject and particularly its regional planning component, however, is expected to play an integrative role which should counter-balance the natural tendency of AID program management to focus on the AID-supported components of the Central Tunisia development effort. Thus, while we should be concerned that the Area Development component of the CTRD program not become a bottleneck for AID-financed assistance to Central Tunisia, we should not lose sight of the fact that the failure to develop a CTDA planning and evaluation capability probably would mean the failure of the CTRD program as an integrated regional development effort.

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