

MEMORANDUM

June 25, 1984

TO: S&T/POP/DIR, Steven W. Sinding

FROM: S&T/POP/PDD, Sarah C. Clark S<<

SUBJECT: Trip Report - Bamako, Mali May 9-16, 1984;
Abidjan, Ivory Coast May 17-19, 1984

SUMMARY:

The purpose of my trip to Mali was to follow-up on the mid term evaluation of the AID-financed Sahel Regional Demographic Data Collection and Analysis project (USED) at the Institute of the Sahel. That evaluation took place in October - November of 1982.

In brief, the progress of the project continues to be impressive. The evaluation findings were carefully considered and for the most part have been incorporated into the implementation of the project. The staff are talented and function well collectively; leadership and liaison with AID continue to be strong points. The training program is particularly impressive: under the project, 20 Sahelian students have been trained at the national statistical institute of Senegal and four are pursuing Ph.D. degrees in American universities. Problems continue in the long-term assistance contract with the Population Council and with the subproject called Population, Health and Development (PSD). These problems as well as the other recommendations will be discussed more fully below.

I also stopped in Abidjan where I reviewed the status of population activities for all the countries in the REDSO/WCA region.

Trip Report

In this report, I will discuss three aspects of the USED project:

1. its relationship to family planning;
2. the long-term technical assistance contract and;
3. the integrated health, population and development subproject.

1. Relationship to family planning

When this project was designed in the late 1970's, there was great reluctance on the part of the Africa Bureau and Sahelian counterparts to deal directly with the questions of rapid population growth and family planning. The project design therefore did not specifically include either awareness raising or family planning aspects, but proceeded under the assumption that increasing the level of demographic understanding and competence in the region would lead to increased awareness of rapid population growth and was worthwhile as an end in itself.

In the past few years, the project has successfully increased the availability of demographic data. In addition, the climate of the Sahelian governments and the Africa Bureau has become more favorable to open discussions of rapid population growth and fertility limitations. Therefore, I believe that it is time for the Institute to address the question of family planning directly.

The mid-term evaluation highlighted one suggestion in this regard made by the annual advisory group. The group's proposal was to convene a regional seminar in which the countries with active family planning programs would share their experiences. Unfortunately, because of inertia and lack of expertise in the subject matter, this seminar has not yet been scheduled. I believe however that this activity should take place and that expertise from the Population Council or FHI could be drawn upon to assist USED staff if needed. Such a seminar could go far in legitimizing family planning as a topic for policy consideration in the region. A second approach is to trace out the implications of emerging demographic trends on social and economic issues of the Sahelian countries. This is discussed further under Section 3 below.

2) Long-term technical assistance contract

Another of the problem areas identified in the evaluation was the long-term technical assistance contract. The Institute signed a sole source contract with the Population Council to provide a long-term advisor and technical support to the project. After an exhaustive search, Dr. Van de Walle a distinguished demographer at the University of Pennsylvania, accepted the post. However, in the course of the contract negotiations, his term of residence was shortened, the number of trips from the U.S. to Mali was increased, and his scope of work narrowed. Not all of the changes were incorporated in the actual contract document which led to a cost overrun. The contractual misunderstanding between the Institute of the Sahel and the Population Council was cleared up by extending the original contract through December 1984 and by reducing the requirements of the contract.

The evaluation team had recommended renewal of the t.a. contract with the Population Council, but since Dr. Van de Walle's return to Pennsylvania in September, 1983 negotiations on the placement of a new resident advisor have been pending. During the interim, however, Dr. Van de Walle has filled in the short-term consultancies.

The coordinator for the USED project, Dr. Papa Syr Diagne, would like to continue the relationship with the Population Council when the current contract expires. I will discuss next steps with Population Council staff upon my return, so that serious discussions about scope of work and a longer term institutional arrangement between the Institute and the Council can take place during Papa Syr's visit to the States in August.

3. Population, Health and Development

The third major problem area identified in the evaluation was the section of the project called (Population, Sante et Developpement) PSD or Integrated Population, Health and Development. This section of the project paper was included in order to respond to AID's programmatic interest in the effect of development on population. The project paper provided for three field studies to trace their effects of development projects on population variables, so called "natural experiments." At the time of the evaluation, only one project agreement had been signed in this area, in Senegal. The evaluation team recognized problems in

implementation and overall design and concluded that the current project had potential usefulness but needed substantial reorientation. The recommendation was that this item should be replaced with studies, examining the relationship between demographic factors and health, and overall development.

Since the evaluation there has been little further progress. The Senegal project has never really gotten underway. There was a reorganization within the Senegalese implementing institution (ISRA). There were difficulties in recruiting staff, and there was a lack of clarity on the objectives of the project. The annual meeting of the Sahel advisors in Praia (July 1983) recommended that an oversight committee be established to assist the project. Subsequently, a great deal of staff time has gone into resolving the problems and renegotiating the study. For example, the number of sites has been reduced, and a questionnaire has been developed. However, given continued delays and a putative increase in total costs, it is still my conclusion that the study should be dropped before additional money is expended. (Approximately \$29,000 of the \$163,200 obligated to the project has been spent). This money should be reprogrammed.

There are two options for carrying out the program. The preferred option would be to follow the recommendation of the evaluation team and carry out small (less than \$50,000 each) studies on the effects of rapid population growth on social factors. These could be based on the RAPID or other simple, presentational approaches. However, there is no one currently at the Institute who could carry out these studies.

The second approach is to carry out the original project idea to assess the impact of development projects on population variables in Upper Volta and Mali where AID is carrying out major development projects. While the Institute remains interested in this option, the experimental nature of the methodology and the complexity of the subject would seem to prohibit the chance of producing meaningful results. It would also require considerable outside expertise.

I concluded my stay in Mali by reviewing these issues with mission staff including the Director and the Sahel Development Program team.

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