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SAHEL MASTER'S TRAINING PROGRAM: TRIP REPORT

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This report covers my trip to Chad, Niger, Upper Volta, Senegal and Mauritania during the period of April 17--May 17, 1978. A scheduled visit to Bamako did not materialize because of a ground crew strike in Chad which necessitated the rescheduling of flights within workable time constraints. The report first makes some general observations regarding our recruiting efforts and some special problems in the Sahel, in general, and follows with a brief discussion of each of the country visits.

### A. General Observations

Overall the Sahelian countries can be broken into two groups: Senegal and Mali which have a relatively favorable rural manpower endowment, and the remaining six countries. This last group of countries is characterized by the general unavailability of manpower relative to project needs. New projects which require more highly-trained personnel absorb virtually all available candidates for training -- indeed, lack of available manpower is the key constraint on those countries' absorptive capacity. As a result, there is no shortage of training opportunities at the B.Sc. and the M.Sc. levels. This means that the attractiveness of the M.S.U. program is directly related to the awareness of the need for agricultural economics as opposed to other training on one hand, and the kinds of development projects which USAID favors, on the other.

Most countries financing projects with an agricultural economics training component train candidates in their own country. Candidates to be trained under USAID financed projects are usually programmed

for their studies by the implementing contractor. When these are American universities, as they often are, candidates study at the contracting university. Thus most candidates for project related agricultural economics training are not available for studies at M.S.U. When problems of equivalency between diplomas and the continued emphasis on non-agricultural fields of study in most Sahelian countries are added to this, even unassigned, fresh university graduates are difficult to attract unless their grades are below levels required for graduate study in France.

The situation in both Senegal and Mali is more favorable though the same forces operate to restrict the available pool of candidates. A student's first preference is almost always to study in France and good students in agriculture related fields have little difficulty finding sources of finance for their studies. The major problem is getting oneself released from service. Directors are most reluctant to release their good people because of the likelihood that they will be qualified for more responsible positions in other departments when they return. Thus the decision to allow someone to go for training is often tantamount to permanently losing them. If a candidate is not good in the first place this is not a problem unless he returns as his former director's boss -- not an uncommon situation for training at the M.Sc. level. But for good and motivated people there is a clear tendency to remain stuck in service until a superior decides that he deserves a chance to move on to bigger and better things. Such changes do arise, especially in the context of training for responsible positions in new projects. But much of this, we have seen, will be done at contracting universities

rather than at M.S.U. Thus we can expect continuing problems in finding suitable candidates for our program.

The problem of equivalency between French and American diplomas is slowly being worked out, generally quite fairly. The only major exceptions are universities in West Africa where there is a clear tendency to downgrade American education by focusing on major subject matter and ignoring collateral or broadening-oriented course material. This problem can probably be overcome with the agricultural colleges in the Sahel since the content of their respective areas of study does not seem to differ that much from M.S.U.'s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. However this will require entering into formal scientific and educational agreements between M.S.U. and the respective Sahelian universities. We are now investigating how this can be done since Sahelian universities, the University of Niamey in particular, seem very interested in establishing this kind of relationship. Once such a relationship is established we can expect to get many candidates now going to France for agriculture economics studies.

As we intensify our recruiting efforts in the less developed of the Sahelian countries, in Chad, Mauritania and Niger in particular, we are increasingly being confronted with the fact that the only available candidates are those who do not have the equivalent of the American bachelors degree. Some of these candidates will have had their BAC before going on to 2-4 year agricultural schools while others will have had

less secondary school. USAID has shown increasing flexibility and willingness to finance a year or two of preparatory studies to enable such students to enroll in master's level programs so financing is no longer a problem. But at the university level this poses some thorny questions regarding equivalence and entrance requirements which we will have to solve if we are to succeed in getting students from these countries.

Students trained at the School of Rural Cadres (ENCR) in Bambey, Senegal provide a good case in point. The ENCR has evolved from a four-year post BEPC (a four-year secondary school diploma on top of six years of primary school) high school finishing/agricultural training school to a post BAC, two-year agricultural school. Recently a third year of agricultural studies was added and the first class under this system will be graduated in 1977. Formerly, students with a BEPC were admitted into the school by competitive exams. However students having completed seconde, premiere or terminale, the last three years of the French secondary school leading to the BAC, were admitted directly without exam.

We now have three good nominees who have diplomas from the ENCR -- two Mauritians and one Chadian. Of the two Mauritians coming from this school, one had completed premiere and one seconde before going there. In terms of years of schooling they have 15 and 16 years respectively, with a diploma from the ENCR. The Chadian candidate had completed his BAC before entering and also has 15 years of schooling plus the diploma. The challenge will be to get the university to give credit for at least two years toward a bachelor's degree to students who have a

diploma from this school. If it does, we can probably train all three of these candidates to the M.Sc. level in three years. If not, we could be talking about 4 years -- a length of time neither their superiors nor USAID would find agreeable and which quite probably, does not seem fair to the students themselves. Since large numbers of Mauritians and Chadians have passed through this school, we could considerably expand our potential pool of candidates by accepting this diploma as the equivalent of a junior college degree. The school does, by the way, have an excellent reputation in the Sahel for training well-qualified cadre.

Similar kinds of situations arise with graduates from schools in Zaire, Camerouns, Mali and other African countries when technical studies are favored over more traditional secondary school material. It is virtually impossible, without a major investment of time, to review all those curricula to determine whether they have the equivalent of an American high school diploma or whether this technical course material is of university level. The easiest is to follow years of successful study and assume that what was covered was more relevant to their needs and therefore quite an acceptable substitute for American diplomas or American university credit. I know that admissions departments have a somewhat different point of view but we must formally tackle this issue if we are to respond to the needs of the Sahelian countries.

In terms of candidates identified on this trip we have one from Chad, Mr. Zacharia Ousman, and probably two from Mauritania, as yet unidentified, who will probably enroll for undergraduate studies toward a Master's degree beginning in the fall of 1978. Mr. Rigoulot and

Mr. Dian Diallo from Senegal are waiting for their formal admission and call forward by M.S.U. I was not able to visit Mali because of the changes in plane schedules but presumably both candidates still in Mali, Mrs. Mariam Toure and Mr. Bafotigui Sako are waiting for their formal admission and call forward. Mr. Dramane Coulibaly of Mali is already in language training in the States. Thus we have at least five who will be enrolling directly in the master's program in 1978 and another three who will be enrolling in bachelor's programs with the expectation of enrolling in the master's program in 1980. In addition, I am expecting at least two nominees from the June graduating class of the Economics Faculty at the University of Chad. One of them would begin language training in the U.S. in the fall. So we will probably have a full complement of six new Sahelian master's students on campus by the beginning of winter term.

#### B. Country Reports

1. Chad:--The manpower situation in Chad has improved greatly since the last time I was there, in 1976. Large numbers of students with post BAC, three-year diplomas are now becoming available. These include students from the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences and the Institut of Animal Husbandry Techniques at the University of Chad. The economics students are impeded in their direct access to French schools by the fact that the third year of their studies in Chad is not recognized in France. If we can get them admitted to graduate programs on the basis of their 13 years secondary school and three years college then we should be able to bring them up to graduate level in agricultural economics with at most an

additional six-months of preparation, i.e., in two and one half years including 6 months language training. However should M.S.U. not accept them directly into graduate school instead requiring them to complete an American bachelor's degree first, then our program would be distinctly unattractive to Chadian students since they would fare no better than in France and would have a diploma unknown in Chad besides.

Apart from students directly from the University, the Ministry of Agriculture has fairly immediate needs for agricultural economics training in its livestock and its crops departments. The latter includes the Ministry's research and analysis unit. These services all mentioned the lack of candidates who could meet our qualifications but showed a clear interest. Nonetheless, most of the candidates they could put forward will either be weak four-year graduates or stronger two- and three-year graduates. Clearly we will have to convince the Graduate Admissions Office to be more flexible - perhaps allowing us to admit such students as unmatri-culated graduate students until they make up necessary background material with the training they need in a reasonable period of time. Unless we are prepared to be flexible along those lines, I do not think we will have much chance of attracting in-service Chadians directly into the program.

Two USAID projects will be sending Chadians for master's degree training in agricultural economics in 1979. The Crop Production, Research, Seed Multiplication and Grain Marketing Project envisions sending two Chadians for an M.Sc. in agricultural marketing. The Agricultural Institutional Development project envisions sending two Chadians for an M.Sc. in agricultural economics and an additional one in 1980 for an M.Sc. in agricultural statistics. Since both these projects will probably be administered under University contracts we may have some difficulty getting them to study at M.S.U.

In addition to the above needs for graduating training, the USAID mission in Chad is preparing the dossier of a candidate for a combined B.Sc.-M.Sc. program in agricultural economics at M.S.U., Mr. Zacharia Ousman. This candidate has a two-year, post secondary diploma from the Ecole des Cadres at Bamako in Senegal. From the student's transcript, I think it may be possible to get M.S.U. to give him credit for 1 1/2 - 2 years of undergraduate work toward a 3 - 3 1/2 years combined B.Sc. - M.Sc. program, excluding language training. This will be an interesting test case since it may be the only way we will get in-service candidates from Chad for the M.Sc. program.

2. Niger:--Niger seems to have the tightest manpower planning of all the countries of the Sahel. Students are assigned to specific ministries as soon as they pass their BAC, the secondary school diploma. The high-level manpower available to a given Ministry is therefore known several years in advance of its actual availability. Manpower planning is taken very seriously in Niger and ministries are constantly reconsidering priorities and reallocating available manpower to meet those priorities.

Within the Ministry of Rural Development individual departments program their needs over the next five years on a rolling basis according to the projects they anticipate. These needs considerably exceed available supply. Annual meetings are held in which the various departments collectively reconcile their conflicting priorities and agree on the allocation between departments for the coming year. Thus the first step in getting candidates for agricultural economics is to create an

awareness throughout the Ministry of the need for it and then find a project in which this kind of training has a high priority.

The Nigeriens have a very healthy attitude toward project training -- they do what they can with what they have. Where a project calls for master's level training and suitable candidates are not available, the Ministry provides lower level people for bachelor's training. While this may be frustrating for degree specific programs such as our Sahel Master's Training Program, it does make good sense in the Nigerien context.

At the present time there are two projects already underway which require agricultural economics training and possibly 2-3 others now in preparation. The Niger Range and Livestock Project envisions training two agricultural economists to the M.Sc. level, probably beginning in 1978. This is not a university contract so M.S.U. should have an opportunity to provide some of the training. The Niger-cereals project also expects to provide some training in the phase II portion of the project but this will not likely begin before 1980.

A Rural Sector Human Resources project will train one agricultural economist but it looks as though a candidate is already in training. The Applied Research in Rural Economy project will probably go ahead and could provide a candidate as early as September 1978 - though 1979 seems to be a more realistic expectation. Finally, the Niger Agricultural Sector Assessment project calls for agricultural economics training but discussions on the project are still in a preliminary phase. From all these projects, both those now being implemented and those being planned, we should be able to get at least one Nigerien candidate for the 1979 program and another for 1980.

Graduates from the University of Niamey's School of Agronomy constitute a second pool of potential candidates for our program. Although Nigerien students enrolled at the school are assigned to the Ministry of Rural Development, the school itself determines who will go on for graduate study. However, the individual students pick their own specializations. At the present time, there is little incentive for graduates to come to the U.S. With only one additional year in France they receive the same civil service classification as they would with an M.Sc. in agricultural economics. They can then return and have a year's seniority over someone coming from a two-year program in the U.S.

At the same time, the University itself has been unwilling to send candidates to M.S.U. because we have not established a "convention" between our two schools. Accordingly, I opened the question of establishing such a convention. Among other things a convention establishes the civil service ranking of students returning from study abroad. It thus opens up the possibility that a student returning from the States could be given the same classification and step grade as students returning from France would have after one year of service. Such a convention will probably require a prior scientific and cultural protocol agreement between the U.S. and Nigerien governments. But this will be required for the INRAN project as well and there is no reason why M.S.U. should not be the primary mover behind such an agreement. I have promised to draw up a first draft and to check with the State Department on how to proceed. The Nigerien acting director with whom I spoke seemed very pleased with this approach. It may be possible to

work out a similar arrangement with the University of Ouagadougou and the new Agricultural College in Senegal, though discussions with either one would be premature at this time. Once we know more about what all this involves we can approach them with a more formulated proposal.

3. Upper Volta:--My trip to Upper Volta fell in the middle of the first popular elections in almost ten years. Needless to say, most high-level people were very wrapped up in political activities and the few of those who were available were unwilling to make any decisions until after the new government was installed.

For the 1978 academic year we have no candidates and no prospects. Nineteen-seventy-nine looks more promising. Two candidates who would, no doubt, be admitted if they applied are intending to apply for the 1979 or the 1980 program: Mr. Traore J. Dekrin, Director of the FDR and Mr. Traore Salifou, Director of the ORD of Koudougou. Contacts at the National Administration School (ENA), the Institut of Economics and Law (IUSEJ) and the Polytechnique Institut (ISPO) at the University of Ouagadougou show promise for 1979 but the question of equivalence with French diplomas will be a problem for candidates hoping to return to the University as teachers. Contacts with the technical services within the Ministry of Rural Development were not encouraging and I would be surprised if we obtained candidates from there before 1980 without some special assistance from returning Voltaic graduates.

The question of equivalence of French versus American diplomas has not yet been finally resolved in Upper Volta. At the present

time the civil service has classified a student with an M.Sc. in agricultural economics from Laval University at an A<sub>1</sub>, second step level. Students with the same background returning from the same number of years abroad with a doctorat du troisieme cycle from a French university are classified A<sub>1</sub>, third step, resulting in a salary about 10 percent higher for the student with his doctorat du troisieme cycle.

The University is still more unfavorable. There, the American bachelor's degree is considered equivalent to the DUES, the first cycle diploma (2 years of university work after the secondary school diploma (BAC)). The American M.Sc. is considered equivalent to the French Maitrise, a two year, second cycle diploma on top of the DUES. Thus 5 1/2 years of American education is equivalent to four years in the Voltaic system. In Upper Volta, as throughout the Sahel, the universities discriminate much more severely against American diplomas than does the civil service. This discourages the use of American universities for training university level teaching staff.

In spite of this, we can reasonably expect to get some nominees in 1979 from both ISPO and IUSEJ at the University. The first class at ISPO is just finishing its fifth year this year and the first class at IUSEJ is now in its third year. Next year's graduating class at both places will give us a pool of about 40 graduates. Based on conversations with the directors of each school we should get one or two nominees from this pool. Unfortunately these nominees would be essentially unattached to the the civil service or the University and present a greater risk of not returning to Upper Volta after their studies.

Apart from the two specific prospective candidates mentioned earlier, the technical services within the Ministries of Rural Development and Plan were not encouraging. Almost all of them cited their involvement in and the constraints imposed by the current political campaign. The same was true of the Director of the National School of Administration. All stressed the high priority given to planning, evaluation and management training but, at the same time, stressed still more strongly the lack of available candidates for such training at the master's level. I expect that the major source of candidates from the technical services within Upper Volta will come from personal contact with the potential candidates themselves and their own efforts to get themselves released. At the same time we can expect a high rate of no shows among accepted applicants as the political machinery catches up with them shortly before their scheduled departure.

At this time only one current or planned USAID project will require M.Sc. agricultural economics training. The Agricultural Human Resources and Development project calls for training two agriculture economists to reinforce the teaching staff at ISPO, Upper Volta's agricultural college. This project will most likely be contracted to SECID which prepared the project paper under a collaborative agreement with USAID. The training will no doubt take place at one of the more than 20 colleges and universities that belong to SECID so these candidates will probably not be available for training at M.S.U.

4. Senegal:--My trip to Senegal fell at an inappropriate time. The Director of Studies and Plan in Agricultural Science, Mr. Robert Sagne, had been appointed Director of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Promotion Humaine. He had been a key contact in the Ministry of Rural Development, nominating three of the four Senegalese now in the program. His replacement had not yet been named but he is not likely to be as dynamic in finding candidates for us as was Mr. Sagne.

A second contact, Mr. Bernard Sambou, in charge of training in the Ministry of Plan, also has been removed from his post. He put forward the name of Amadou Niane, the other Senegalese now at M.S.U. and had promised another for 1978 which did not materialize. His replacement has also not yet been named so it was not possible to line up candidates for next year's program.

Other contacts in Senegal turned up nothing, though these were not very extensive because of the limited time I spent there. SODEVA and ISRA both noted the lack of people to replace anyone sent for training. Mr. Baro Gueye the official USAID contact with the Government of Senegal for AMDP financed training, had not yet had time to contact the various government departments likely to need agricultural economists. None of this is cause for concern, however, Already four of the first nine students in the program are Senegalese and once our key contact positions are filled we should easily be able to get one good candidate per year until the end of the project. Also with Dakar being the first stop for all direct flights to Africa, it will be easy to follow up these and other contacts on subsequent trips to Africa for other business.

5. Mauritania:--In spite of my delay in arriving in Nouakchott and the brevity of my stay there, it was the most successful part of the entire trip. Five candidates presented themselves formally, with the approval of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Rural Development. He asked me to interview them all and give him my recommendations. He will then meet with the directors of the three departments within the Ministry to decide who to release for studies.

Of the five candidates, two had the equivalent of B.Sc. degrees, two had something less, and one had a junior college equivalent degree. The Secretary General prefers that the lower people get upgraded before sending those already having a bachelor's equivalent on for further studies. On a first impression basis, one of the bachelor's equivalent degree holders and two of the less than bachelor's equivalent degree holders would qualify for our program either directly or after completing an American bachelor's. All three finished in the top 20 percent of their classes -- one from an agricultural school in Florence, Italy and the other two from the School of Rural Cadre at Bambey (ENCR), Senegal. One applicant is clearly not qualified and the other, a university degree holder who studied in the Soviet Union, appears to have mediocre grades from a rather unknown school -- though I must check this further with the Russian Embassy in Washington. The selected candidates would begin language studies at M.S.U. in the fall of 1978.

In addition to candidates nominated this year, the director of SONADAR, the Ministry of Rural Development parastatal organization in charge of implementing rural development projects and programs, has promised to submit candidates for next year's program and I am sure

he will. He wanted to submit candidates this year but was concerned about creating conflict with the Ministry of Rural Development over available funds. I told him I would speak to the Director of USAID about reserving one slot for SONADER for next year and subsequent years. He was hopeful that something of this sort could be arranged to avoid potential conflict. He has 15 Mauritanian university degree holders and a like number of expatriates working in his organization so, clearly, project analysis and planning has a high priority. Though he cannot spare any agricultural people he could spare an economist or a rural sociologist for the two years required for the M.Sc. program. He will no doubt be a key contact in Mauritania in the future and a good source of nominees for the program.

The exact number of candidates coming from Mauritania this year is not yet certain. Available funds are sufficient to fully fund one three-year program or three one-year programs. Though some Sahelian AID missions fund only the first year of studies from current year obligations, the mission in Mauritania was not certain of the prudence of this practice. We have agreed to investigate whether future funding is guaranteed for candidates once they are enrolled and if so, then to finance two candidates for 1978 and two additional ones -- one from the Ministry and one from SONADER -- for 1979. I am optimistic that this will be the case though the two for 1978 will probably both be ENCR graduates and will enroll in undergraduate school.

In conclusion, I was struck with the openness and cooperation of Mauritanian officials at all levels and with their interest in

practical and relevant training. The Mauritians are clearly taking the time to build a base for development and are carrying out the necessary manpower, sector and policy studies before launching any large-scale interventions. They are trying to do the best with what they have and we can best help them by upgrading some of their better students from the ENCR to the M.Sc. level in agricultural economics.