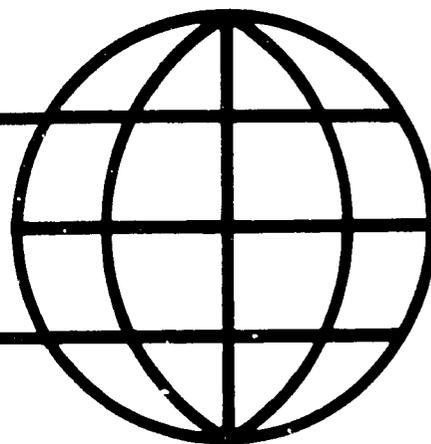


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**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
AND NATURAL RESOURCE SYSTEMS ANALYSIS**



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**Report of an Assessment of Research
Needs for USAID Project 660-0102
In Bandundu, Zaire
On Behalf of SARSA
August-September 1985**

R. E. Downs

1

SARSA was asked to review the materials available in Kinshasa relevant to AID project No. 660-0102 on Agricultural Production and Marketing in the region of Bandundu with particular reference to rural-urban linkages and to make recommendations as to further research that might be appropriate. Cyril Daddieh and I spent four weeks reading a total of sixty documents of all kinds and were able to spend one day in the field, visiting two villages in the collectivité of Luniungu. Unfortunately a Small Farmer Household Survey carried out in 1984 was not available till the eve of our departure. We have submitted separate reports.

In order to understand the nature and significance of rural-urban linkages in the area of Bandundu envisaged by project 660-0102 it is necessary to see them, to the extent possible, in the total context within which they operate. I will, therefore, first summarize what appear to be the most salient facts in that context before making suggestions as to the kinds of interventions and research which seem most essential.

Physical Environment

There is a uniformly hot and humid climate (average annual temperature of 25 c., annual rainfall between 1500 and 1600 mm.), with a three-month dry season from June to September and a short one from January to February. Most of the region consists of plateau savanna cut by numerous rivers and streams running south to north into the Kasai River, which create steep valleys where forest and relatively fertile soils are found. Elevations decrease gradually from about 700 m. in the south to about 300 m. along the Kasai River. The soils consist either of Kalahari or Karroo sands and are basically low in fertility, though more clay is found in some of the more northerly regions and the forest cover provides

more vegetal matter. At one time the whole was apparently forested, but by the early 1960's forest covered only 37.5% of the surface of the Kwilu sub-region (#49:78), and it was disappearing at a good rate. No figure could be found for the present forest cover, but Holtzman reports (#6:5) that "...cultivated land as a proportion of total land area in Idiofa Zone increased from 1.4% in 1970 to 13.1% in 1981 and 20.9% in 1982," which suggests the rapidity of its destruction. The region is furthermore not blessed (or cursed) with any known mineral resources.

Population

The population of the project area, including the collectivities of Kemba and Batere north of the Kasai, amounted to some 850,000 in 1982. With a total area of 32,000 km², it has an average density of 26.6/km², though densities vary from 11.9 to 70.6. This makes it, along with some regions of Kivu, one of the most densely populated areas of Zaire. There are three towns within the area: Bulungu, with a population of 45,000, and Idiofa and Dibaya-Lubwe, with about 22,000 each. Just outside the area there are the major regional centers of Kikwit, with some 156,000, Bandundu, the regional capital, with 104,000, and Bagata with some 9000. It should be added that these towns have a substantial agricultural base.

The people are divided into some fourteen different ethnic groups speaking separate languages, which, however, fall into two language families of northern and southern origins. Two lingua franca, Kikongo and Lingala, are also spoken. All of the peoples below the Kasai River are organized into matrilineal clans and lineages which once tended to occupy separate villages until many were consolidated together by the Belgians in the 1920's to combat sleeping sickness and for

administrative convenience. Present villages range in size from 20 to well over 1000.

The population is young, 53% female, and growing at possibly 3% a year. There is a significant rural exodus, however, chiefly of young men, which is only partially compensated for by reverse migration.

Communications

The area is connected to Kinshasa by river, but barge traffic is irregular, slow, and highly insecure. By road it is linked to Kinshasa by the paved road between it and Kikwit, and it is also connected by dirt road to Tshikapa to the southeast. Internally there are many dirt roads which vary considerably in condition, depending primarily on whether or not they are maintained by private contractors. Many are impracticable in the rainy season thanks to the ravages of heavy trucks and broken bridges.

Commercial transport is primarily in the hands of city-based merchants. There is bus service, however, both private and state, between Kikwit and Kinshasa.

There are serious problems for villagers in attempting to sell their produce because of the remoteness of some of their villages, the irregularity of purchases by traders, low prices, and lack of storage.

Government officials at the collectivity level are furthermore severely handicapped by a total lack of vehicles available to them.

Telecommunication services are non-existent.

Socio-political System

The political system is a combination of a national administrative structure, with regions, sub-regions, zones, "collectivités," "groupements," and "localités" superimposed on a traditional clan-based structure, which extends upward as far as the "chef de groupement." Within the "localité" or village there is normally a "conseil de notables," consisting of all the "chefs de clan," one of which will be recognized by the "Chef de Collectivité" as representing the village. He will be assisted by a kapita, a position created by the Belgians, who is also appointed. The "chefs de clan" will have control over clan land and whatever other property, such as cattle, their clans may own.

The "collectivité" collects taxes and is responsible for carrying out orders and regulations emanating from above, providing for various services, promoting development, keeping records, and maintaining order. The extent to which they can and do carry out these responsibilities varies considerably.

As mentioned above, people are divided into matrilineal descent groups of various sizes: clans, lineages, and localized sub-lineages among the Bapende, for example. At least at the lineage level these groups are exogamous, but the degree of corporateness and control that they exercise over their members varies considerably among the different ethnic groups and according to local circumstances. Marriage, once under lineage or clan control, now seems to be more a function of individual interests and passions, and marital residence varies according to circumstances. In one Basongo village, for example, it was said that a man could stay with his father after he married until his father died, at which time he would have to move to his mother's brother's village, where as a clan member he would have a right to its land. However, particular circumstances

could dictate such a move much earlier. Women follow their husbands wherever they choose to reside.

There also seems to be a shift toward increasing recognition of the interests of the father as opposed to those of the mother's brother, as is reflected in the case of marriage payments. Whereas it was said that traditionally a bride's mother's brother and father would share the payment equally, now the former would get 300 zaires, whereas the latter would get as much as 7000. Curiously enough, however, the mother's brother is responsible for the whole payment in case of divorce.

In 1963 Nicolai mentions a once characteristic, but by then less significant, distinction between slaves and free men. One would like to know how important this might be now and in what circumstances. The same applies to the apparently once frequent presence of age classes.

Production System

With the exception of palm nuts, coffee, and irrigated rice, the latter two of which are relatively rare in most areas, the normal system of cultivation is slash and burn, with ever declining fallow periods. At the turn of the century twenty years fallow was supposedly the norm, by the early 1960's it was around ten years, and now it is three to five years. Yields have declined accordingly. One man said that even a forest field left for eight years produced little. The reasons for this would appear to be not only increasing population pressure, but also perhaps the consolidation of scattered small villages into larger ones by the Belgians (which has had similar consequences in the Peoples Republic of the Congo), and most particularly the continued burning that takes place during

fallow periods, either for the hunt or from carelessness. According to Nicolai people in Kwilu make no attempt when burning the forest to protect areas with valuable trees or former village sites from the fire so that they could form nuclei for forest regeneration.

There is a traditional sexual division of labor whereby the men do the hunting and clearing of the forest and the women do all the cultivating. This is beginning to break down with the decline in forest lands available and pressure to grow more crops for sale. Both men and women may now cultivate food crops together, whereas men tend to do all the work on such purely cash crops as coffee.

Traditionally any couple could choose to cultivate any land belonging to the husband's clan, with men deciding on forest lands and their wives choosing the savanna fields. In one poor village, however, it was said that forest land was so poor and so scarce that any one in the village (which had seven clans) could cultivate wherever they could find a suitable plot. Only in urban areas is there evidence that land may be sharecropped or rented.

Decisions are also complicated by a law requiring certain minimum areas of cultivation. The law is enforced by extension agents, who assign land to some of the villagers. This arouses resentment among the villagers, because if nothing else, in the words of one clan chief, it threatens their reserves of forest land.

The dominant crop is bitter manioc, which, however, is usually intercropped with others such as peanuts, corn, squash, voandzu, rice, tomatoes and yams. Millet and sorghum, which used to be more widespread among some groups, have almost disappeared. Manioc tends to be both the prime subsistence food and cash crop.

There would seem to be a considerable number of cattle in the region. Some are held by Catholic development institutions and some by absentee owners, but

many are also held within the villages, where they tend to be lineage or clan property. In the villages they are not milked (any more than sheep or goats), but are rather raised for sale as meat. One well-to-do village claimed to eat beef themselves, but it is not to be expected that this is widespread, as most villagers would not be able to afford it. Animals are not stabled, graze at will, and no advantage is taken of their manure. Crop losses to freely grazing animals are said to be significant.

Marketing

Most crops marketed would appear to go to Kinshasa (Bandundu supplies 80% of the manioc for Kinshasa) and most of them apparently go in the hands of Kinshasa based merchants or their agents, who have the financial resources to meet the very high transportation costs. Villagers tend to sell either to traders who come to their villages or at periodic markets where the traders come to buy. Women take the produce to markets, whereas men make longer trips to secondary towns or even Kinshasa to sell. The great problems with marketing from the point of view of the villagers are the infrequency and irregularity with which buyers appear, the low prices offered (though these have risen for some crops since the freeing of prices in 1982), and the lack of adequate facilities to store crops for later sale. One consequence would appear to be that people are tempted to sell most of their crop whenever any one shows up, since they don't know when they will have another chance. Some cooperatives have supposedly been set up to deal with some of these problems, but their number, constitution, and effectiveness have not been well studied.

Health and Nutrition

Generally it would appear that these are low, but there are considerable differences from one region to another. In Luniungu, for example, one village seemed to be flourishing. The people looked fit, claimed to eat well, including their cattle, and said they had no problems with crop diseases or the fertility of their fields. In another village not far away, on the other hand, the people seemed emaciated and dispirited, their fields had been producing less and less for the last five years and they could only stay alive by selling pottery to buy food. When possible measures that could be taken were discussed they complained that the elders had no authority over the youth. Apparently this village did not represent an isolated instance, as half the "collectivité" was said to be suffering famine conditions.

Malnutrition, which is said to be widespread, particularly among children, probably has a number of causes aside from soil infertility: manioc itself as a staple, whether or not it provides enough calories, the economic pressure to sell food crops for cash to supply other needs, the shortage of game, which used to supply animal protein, and a lack of knowledge about balanced diets.

Malnutrition in children, particularly, leads to high disease and mortality rates, where they are exposed to unsanitary conditions and vectors of parasitic diseases such as malaria, sleeping sickness, and schistosomiasis. While basic forms of health services are available, they are housed in inadequate facilities, supplies are lacking, the level of expertise is low, and there is a problem of transportation.

Education

Although primary and secondary education is available in the region, facilities are poor, supplies few, teachers are lacking, and school fees are a burden on most of the population. While both boys and girls attend primary school, numbers drop off considerably at the secondary level and the ratio of boys to girls in rural areas rises to something like ten to one. It is said that girls are poorer students, but there is also the fact that earning money by farming has a more immediate attraction for girls, who are the traditional farmers. Education for boys is seen as a means of escape from the rural sphere and is therefore seen as worth the time and money. One complaint expressed about the school curriculum, however, was that it offered no technical or vocational training, but rather stressed academic knowledge of little use to them. One report said that there was a prejudice in the villages against agriculture and that boys tended to avoid agricultural training schools in favor of other kinds. Girls tend to be excluded from advanced agricultural training because they don't get beyond primary school. This would suggest the need for instituting agricultural training in school as early as the primary level.

Access to Credit and Supplies

These are both limited. Opportunities apparently do not exist for peasants or small local traders to obtain loans at normal lending institutions. It is said that some informal credit organizations exist, but just what they are and how they function is not known (although some data on them would seem to be available in the Small Farmer Household Survey).

It is a general complaint that supplies of all kinds are hard to come by,

particularly in the villages themselves, where it seems there are no shops. Instead people have to rely on what is brought from Kinshasa by traders in their trucks, on which occasions barter (to the disadvantage of the villager) is not infrequent. It should be noted finally that the region seems to be characterized by extreme poverty, an impression reinforced by the Small Farmer Household Survey.

After this very brief review of some of the basic facts of life in the project area, a word or two should be said about the nature of rural-urban linkage and their promotion. Some take the point of view that all stimulus for development in the countryside has come and must come from urban areas (Jane Jacobs, for example), and it has been argued that development projects in the past have mistakenly assumed that one could initiate development in one or two villages and then extend it from village to village, whereas villagers are only likely to accept innovations from urban areas because of the prestige attached to the latter (Deborah Prindle #54:4f). It would follow that one should bring about development not by direct intervention in the villages, but by supporting the economic growth of and facilities provided by secondary towns and cities, which would then pull the villages along with them through the economic stimulus they would provide.

However, while it is true that country people covet the material goods provided by urban areas, their facilities of all kinds, including education, and the distractions they offer, what they cannot get from them as things now stand, is the ability to increase significantly their agricultural production so that they can afford to buy what the urban areas have to offer. Without that ability the rural exodus will grow, the agricultural labor force will decline, and the number of urban unemployables will increase, and food production in the

countryside will not be able to feed the growing urban population.

While improved communications and marketing facilities will release some food currently reported to be unsold, not only can they not solve the problem of increased population pressure on the land and declining yields, but they could exacerbate it by encouraging people to increase their production in the only way presently available to them, which is by increasing the area they cultivate.

It is thus essential to build up the villages as efficient production units so that they and the towns can play mutually supportive roles in the development of the region. This will demand not only the development and application of improved soil conservation and production techniques and the introduction of improved plant varieties, but also the creation of conditions of life in the villages that will help to keep their labor forces and promote the necessary spirit and discipline to carry out the changes needed.

This is, of course, easier said than done. Unfortunately the existing agricultural extension service is incapable of doing the job, for not only are the agents inadequately trained and have responsibility for too many villages without the means of reaching them as often as necessary, but they are perceived primarily as agents of government interference and oppression rather than as respected agricultural experts. Indeed they share in the general fear and suspicion of the government in a region that has been the scene of strongly repressed rebellion in 1963 and 1978. The "collectivité" authorities, furthermore, lack the means to carry out general measures which might aid in the process, such as prohibiting brush fires.

The project paper, recognizing this problem, proposes to work through existing private organizations to the extent possible. However, even though these may

enjoy more respect than the government agencies, they will operate outside the villages and with respect only to agricultural or animal husbandry techniques and marketing. One proposal, for example, was for the people of a village to give over their cattle to the mission, which would hire an expatriate expert to manage the herd for them. Not unnaturally the offer was refused.

What should be done, in addition to the various interventions proposed to improve conditions generally in the project area, and for them to have any lasting effect, is to tackle a couple of villages intensively on a continuous basis to try to get them to deal with their agricultural, economic, and social problems themselves and as a whole. This really calls for a far-reaching agricultural and social revolution. The peoples of this region developed their cultivation practices and social norms at a time when the land was plentiful, forest cover extensive, and population thin. Their primary interest in land was for the game that lived on it and shifting cultivation for subsistence was an appropriate use of the environment. Now conditions have changed radically. The population is far denser, the game is largely gone, forest lands (all now secondary) are shrinking rapidly and declining in fertility, and people are called upon to produce not only for themselves, but to feed Kinshasa and to earn the cash necessary for survival in the modern world. Either a substantial part of the population must emigrate and allow the remainder to continue to exist on a subsistence basis, or ways must be found to make it possible for them to change to a system of permanent field agriculture with sustainable yields. Presumably this would require, among other things, new cultivation techniques incorporating vegetal matter and other nutrients into the soil, different crop rotations and planting schedules, the use of new plant varieties, reforestation, new

animal husbandry methods involving community control, and the use of manure. All this would inevitably have a major impact on the control of, access to, and inheritance of land and the lines of village authority in general. It would seem certain that only if the project can bring about a revolution of this kind at the village level will it succeed in bringing lasting improvements to the economy of the region.

Unfortunately there is no simple formula for doing this. Whatever is to be achieved must be based on the circumstances prevailing in those villages, and we know far too little about village life in this part of Zaire. A considerable number of studies of various aspects of life in the region have been made or drawn upon in the preparation of this project, but for the most part they are of a quick and superficial kind. While they provide a kind of inventory of the region, they do not explain the dynamics of the processes taking place. Although there is some information on the nature of the towns and their links to each other, we have no analysis of the flows and distribution of crops, goods, and services between the villages and towns in the project area. There are not even any solid historical baseline data on traditional agricultural practices or the social norms of the peoples involved. No one has ever made an exhaustive study of the reasons, both practical and religious, for the traditional cultivation practices, and these must be understood before attempting to change them. Of all the peoples in the area only the Bapende have been described more than superficially in the literature (and this was some thirty years ago), and a profound knowledge of these societies and cultures cannot be acquired by simply administering questionnaires. The changing patterns in descent structure, the sexual division of labor, marriage patterns, the exercise of authority, control of

resources, expenditures, investments, etc. must be studied at first hand and over an extended period of time in order to understand their significance for village society's adaptation to changing economic and social conditions.

The position taken here is that a fundamental necessity for economic development in the region is an ability to expand production safely in an endangered environment, that further knowledge in both technical and societal areas is essential, and that research into both these areas must be an integral part of the development process, rather than simply a monitoring device to see periodically if the project is succeeding.

This might be achieved as follows. - A team consisting of a social anthropologist, an agronomist, an agro-forester, and an expert in animal husbandry would make a long-term study (minimum 2 years), of traditional and current norms and practices in all these areas in preferably two villages with contrasting conditions of welfare and ethnic background, such as those referred to above in the collectivite of Luniungu. At the same time, or rather as soon as the situation seemed to make it advisable, innovations in reforestation, cultivation, and animal husbandry techniques and new varieties of cultigens developed in collaboration with research organizations in Zaire and elsewhere would be introduced with the cooperation of the villagers. This would provide crucial tests as to the adaptability and acceptability of these varieties under village conditions. As experience was gained it would provide an effective demonstration for other villages in the area and a solid basis for interventions in other villages in the region.

Concurrently a more extensive kind of research should be carried out in the project area as a whole to identify and analyze the modalities of marketing and

credit, and to quantify and map the flows of agricultural produce and other goods. This kind of knowledge would be a necessary complement to the development efforts in the individual villages, the aim of which, of course, is to increase the production and sale of crops, and it should be developed in collaboration with the village team.

An important consideration in forming the team should be the sex of the investigators. As is commonly stressed, women are the prime cultivators, so it would seem highly desirable that the anthropologist be female. Since the forest is the preserve of the men, it follows that the agro-forester should be a man. The same goes for the animal husbandry expert, whereas the sex of the agronomist would be less crucial if a female anthropologist were present. Obviously it would be crucial that these four people work together as a team and not pull the villagers apart in four different directions.

As far as the position of social anthropologist is concerned, the appropriate level of training would be after the completion of formal study and examinations. The field research would then constitute the basis for the Ph.D. dissertation.

It is felt that an intensive involvement with two villages such as described above would be the best way to go about development in the region. However, if because of budgetary limitations and prior commitments it proves impossible to carry out in its entirety, at the very least the village study by an anthropologist and the one proposed for marketing, credit, and goods flows in the project area should be made so that one would at least have an adequate basis for understanding whatever successes or failures result from the other project interventions.

R. E. Downs
Durham, 23 September 1985

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