

-1-  
PD-AAA-036

USAID MEMORANDUM

b1 11/10

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 1979. 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 PIP).

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)<sup>1</sup>. 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 Sifiana and how this experience was incorporated into the CTRD program design.

---

<sup>1</sup>/ 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<sup>(1)</sup> 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 Hababisa 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 Dommen 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 Doman 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 Doman's role primarily as that of an expeditor. It is no wonder, therefore, that Doman 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 Doman-- 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 6 delegations and identifying a minimal 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. Domsen 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. Domsen, 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 COT/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 COT 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 technically 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<sup>of</sup> 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 GOF 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 <sup>a</sup> 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 Hababsa "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, HE/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 COT 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 CTD 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 Siliiana 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 Siliiana 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 Siliiana RD project had envisaged the introduction in the project area, on a pilot basis, of agricultural technology which had already been proved 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 Siliiana Regional Agricultural Development Commission (CRDA) and the Office of Cereals to conclude

a cooperative agreement (see page 43 of Donmen'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 1977. Of course as could be expected, the pressure to obligate the entire US contribution to the CTRD program (for expenditure through 1980) 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 could 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 USAID-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 ETR 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 1977 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 CIRB 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 OPGs was 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 (onda), 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 COT 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 COT 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 OFG 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 OFG covering the first phase of a community-based integrated development project was approved in August 1977 and a Country Director arrived in September 1977. While the course of action outlined in the OFG 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 IDR 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 some 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 <sup>such</sup> 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.

RD:PDemongest:nbs

## ATTACHMENT

Extracts from P. Denongeot's Memorandum to the  
Files of March 10 1970, subject: Central Tunisia  
Rural Development

During the discussions that led to the concept of a Central Tunisia Rural Development Program, GOT officials had assured us that management of such a program would rest with a Central Tunisia Rural Development Office established along the lines specified in the CNEA/FAO report on Central Tunisia. It was explained to us that the "Office" already existed legally (i.e. its statutes had been published in the "Official Gazette") and that it would be physically established as soon as agreement were reached on a Central Tunisia program.

Upon further investigations, it became clear that the "Office" was still in the conceptual stage and had a long way to go before it became a reality. While the creation of an "Office" for Central Tunisia had been agreed to by an inter-ministerial committee, approval by the Council of Ministers (the full cabinet), the Economic and Social Council and the National Assembly still had to be secured before the "Office" could be established. It also was revealed that the "Office" under consideration was an "Agricultural Development Office" (Office de Mise en Valeur) and not an integrated "Rural Development Office" as originally contemplated in the CNEA/FAO study.

Under these circumstances, it made more sense than ever to explore alternative institutional and/or administrative structures for managing the Central Tunisia Rural Development Program. All the more so since a decision to work through existing administrative structures might mean selection of different boundaries for the Central Tunisia Rural Development Program area. With this in mind, these issues were raised with GOT officials in several agencies concerned with Central Tunisia (Ministries of Agriculture, Plan, Interior, the Office of the Prime Minister and the National Center for Agricultural Studies).

With the exception of the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, all of the GOT officials contacted were somewhat critical of the traditional "Office" concept for the following reasons:

- (1) "offices" tend to be costly (due to high administrative overhead). It is cheaper, therefore, to work through existing administrative structures to the extent possible.
- (2) "offices" often are created to solve endemic problems (e.g. defective project implementation) which might be addressed just as well or better by strengthening existing administrative structures, thus avoiding needless duplication of efforts, functional overlapping and competition for scarce resources (particularly trained manpower).

(3) "offices" tend to become "top heavy" (and their top management too remote from the field), bureaucratic and technocratic. Too often they induce in the people they serve a sense of dependence on the state and thus stifle local initiative.

(4) Conflict over development priorities often generate friction between "office" directors and provincial governors.

Despite these criticisms of the traditional type of "office", most of the officials contacted (except for the official responsible for government decentralization in the Office of the Prime Minister) were not in favor of assigning to provincial governors and their staff the responsibility for planning and coordinating "integrated" area development programs, even if the program area were limited to a single governorate (e.g. Kasserine). They generally recognized that governors and their staff were barely able to keep up with routine administrative chores and, in the newer understaffed governorates of the interior such as Siliana and Sidi Bou Zid, even experienced difficulty in planning and implementing the small-scale projects financed from the GOT's "Rural Development Fund". Consequently, these officials argued, it would be too much to expect these governors and their staff to plan, and coordinate the implementation of, integrated development programs in their respective governorates (this only confirms what we already know from AID's experience in Siliana Governorate).

Why not then attempt to strengthen the governorates capacity to administer development program? This would require, of course, beefing up the governorate's Secretary General's staff and particularly the rural development staff units which have been established in all governorates. While this was recognized as desirable (and in fact it is being done on a gradual basis) it was generally felt, however, that the governors were too busy with short-term political and administrative matters (as opposed to longer term developmental concerns) and lacked leverage (particularly financial leverage) in dealing with the line ministries and agencies operating in their governorates. There was general unanimity in rejecting the suggestion that AID should assist the GOT in conducting a "regional development planning" pilot experiment in one governorate. Recognizing that the lack of trained personnel would make it impossible for a very long time to decentralize development planning to the governorate level, officials in the Prime Minister's office and in the Ministry of Plan argued that such an experiment would not be replicable in the near future and, consequently, would be politically unwise, as it would seem to favor one governorate over its equally deserving neighbors. (It was learned, however, that FAO is discussing with the GOT Ministry of Agriculture, possible agricultural development planning assistance to the Jendouba CRDA).

Most of the officials contacted, however, endorsed the concept of a regional staff office which would be responsible for planning, coordinating and, ideally, "integrating" within an overall area development strategy the development activities carried out by the various ministries

and agencies within a program area which would include portions of several governorates. There also was a consensus that, in most cases, implementation responsibility should rest with the field services of line ministries and agencies. Doubts were expressed, however, as to the capability of CRDA's to implement complex agricultural development projects not only in irrigated perimeters (traditionally the domain of "offices de mise en valeur") but also in dryland areas.

There were differences of opinion as to whether a regional staff office would find it difficult to deal with several governors. Ministry of Agriculture officials were divided on this issue but Ministry of Plan (Regional Development) officials did not anticipate problems as long as the overall area development strategy was clearly defined from the outset. This qualification, of course, brings into question the extent to which the governorates should be invited to participate in the initial planning of an area development strategy. Ministry of Plan officials were in favor of greatly limiting the participation of the governorates in the formulation of an initial area development strategy. Ministry of Interior officials, on the other hand, argued that a regional planning office should be governed by a board of directors which would include representatives of all the "delegations" included in the program area (as well as the governors of the provinces in which those "delegations" were located). All agreed, however, that a certain amount of competition among the governors, would have a positive effect on their willingness to commit resources to AID funded programs within their governorate.

While there seemed to be agreement among GOT officials on the need for an administrative entity (other than the provincial governor and his staff) to coordinate the activities of the various line agencies, there were serious differences as to the nature and role of this administrative entity. On the one hand, the Ministry of Agriculture still thought in terms of a traditional "office" which would be responsible for implementing as well as planning agricultural development programs. On the other hand, the Ministry of Interior favored a small, interdisciplinary planning and coordinating office which would be disbanded as soon as the governorates were able to assume program planning and coordination functions. As for the Ministry of Plan, it seemed to favor the assignment of program coordination responsibility in the field to a Rural Development Office while retaining in its own hands area development planning responsibilities.

Indications were, however, that the GOT remained flexible as to the attributions of the still to be created Central Tunisia Development Office and, furthermore, was in no great hurry to establish an "Office". In both ministries of Plan and Agriculture, the view was expressed that the establishment of an "office" should be deferred until such time as the level and complexity of the programs undertaken in Central Tunisia would clearly justify it.

34

Therefore, in light of the level of resources which AID proposes to allocate to Central Tunisia over the next three years, it would seem premature to pressure the GOT to establish a "Central Tunisia Rural Development Office" as described in the "concept paper". At the same time we would certainly require from the start, a program planning and coordination mechanism within the GOT administrative structure. Officials in the Ministry of Plan Regional Development staff have suggested the creation of an executive committee chaired by the GOT Ministry of Plan and USAID and grouping representatives of other interested ministries and agencies. No committee, however, can provide continuity to the program development process. It was therefore agreed that the CNEA would perform the functions of a secretariat to the executive committee and provide a permanent point of contact for US consultants called in to assist in the planning of Central Tunisia development program. We also explored the possibility of the CNEA establishing a field office in Central Tunisia on its own or in collaboration with the "Central Tunisia" section of the OMVM. This would help strengthen the field operations capability of the CNEA and the field office eventually could constitute the nucleus of a Central Tunisia Rural Development Office (which need not be an "Office" in the Tunisian sense of the word).