

IDENTIFICATION DATA

A. Reporting A.I.D. Unit: Mission or AID/W Office <u>NIGER</u> (E57)		B. Was Evaluation Scheduled In Current FY Annual Evaluation Plan? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slipped <input type="checkbox"/> Ad hoc <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Plan Submission Date: FY <u>93</u> Q <u>2</u>		C. Evaluation Timing Interim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final <input type="checkbox"/> Ex Post <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
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D. Activity or Activities Evaluated (List the following information for project(s) or program(s) evaluated; if not applicable, list title and date of the evaluation report.)

Project No	Project /Program Title	First PROAG or Equivalent (FY)	Most Recent PACD (Mo/Yr)	Planned LOP Cost (000)	Amount Obligated to Date (000)
683-0260	Rural Organizations Development	8/89	9/94	9,000	5,865

ACTIONS

E. Action Decisions Approved By Mission or AID/W Office Director	Name of Officer Responsible for Action	Date Action to be Completed
<p>Action(s) Required</p> <p>This project is funded as a cooperative agreement with CLUSA as the principal lead agency. It is the Mission's expectation that CLUSA will continue in this role to ensure some movement toward the institution of the evaluation recommendations.</p> <p>This Mission will maintain regular, ongoing dialogue with the Project to assess progress toward the implementation of these recommendations.</p> <p>This Mission is particularly interested in monitoring progress toward the implementation of the following recommendations:</p> <p>1) Project Sustainability by Developing a NGO Entity:</p> <p>USAID will provide technical assistance to CLUSA to assist the project in the formation, registration and start-up of the local Non-Governmental Organization proposed by CLUSA in its original project proposal and recommended in the Mid-Term Evaluation to assist the continued development of cooperative activities after PACD.</p>	John Mitchell	12/93

(Attach extra sheet if necessary)

APPROVALS

F. Date Of Mission Or AID/W Office Review Of Evaluation: (Month) 2 (Day) 4 (Year) 93

G. Approval: of Evaluation Summary And Action Decisions:

Name (Type)	Project/Program Officer	Representative of Borrower/Grantee	Evaluation Officer	Mission or AID/W Office Director
	John J. Mitchell	Boukari Saley	Richard Macken	George T. Eaton
Signature	<i>John J. Mitchell</i>	<i>Boukari Saley</i>	<i>Richard Macken</i>	<i>George T. Eaton</i>
Date	8 April 93	10 April 93	14 April 93	22 April 93

SECTION E (CONTINUED)

E. Action Decisions Approved by Mission or AID/W Office Director	Name of Officer Responsible for Action	Date Action to be Completed
2) Project Sustainability by Formulating Appropriate National Policies:		
USAID will assist the Government of Niger and CLUSA in preparing new cooperative legislation which allows for much broader interpretation of what constitutes a cooperative and is not involved in any way with the formation of "groupement mutualistes".	John Mitchell	9/94
3) Project Sustainability Resulting from a Determination of Guarantee Fund Ownership:		
The Mission will seek guidance from REDSO/WCA/ Legal Office concerning the ownership of the Guarantee Fund. If it is determined that the project is the rightful owner of the fund, the Mission will request that the GON reprogram the fund for use by ROD's newly formed NGO.		
4) Integration of Gender Issues by Hiring a Female Manager:		
USAID will encourage and assist CLUSA in the employment of at least one woman staff member who would be responsible for the greater incorporation of women into the cooperative movement.	John Mitchell	7/93

The project aims to expand the private sector role in rural areas in Niger through the development of viable cooperatives engaged in productive economic activities. The project attempts to reverse the perceptions of rural Nigeriens resulting from a historical precedent of excessive government control of and intervention in the cooperative movement. Principal project activities include increasing and diversifying economic activities of the rural population of Niger by developing cooperatives modeled after the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA); cooperative management training of rural inhabitants; loan servicing; and project sustainability through the evolution of a non-governmental organization (NGO). The mid-term evaluation was conducted by Chemonics International on the basis of a review of project documents, visits to 13 rural cooperatives and interviews with project and Mission staff, project participants and beneficiaries, and other project collaborators. The purpose was to assess project effectiveness relating to its management, training activities and use of its loan guarantee fund; its progress to date in sustaining project outputs; and its inclusion of women as participants and beneficiaries. The major findings and conclusions are:

****The existing national law has restricted the flexibility of developing productive cooperatives. One example of this is the formation of cooperatives based on geographical proximity and the requirement that all male villagers within the designated area must become members. This has resulted in membership oversubscription and mistrust among members who otherwise would not have had any reason to cooperate with each other.**

****Most cooperatives under the project's umbrella are engaged in economic activities which have limited potential for growth; which tend to compete with private businesses; and which generate small profit margins.**

****Whereas the efficacy of training given to cooperative trainers and members could not be adequately assessed, information surveyed suggests that training provided to project collaborators, like the Association Française des Volontaires de Progrès (the French counterpart of U.S. Peace Corps), has been very successful.**

****Training collaborators has been very successful.**

****The credit program is effectively permitting access to loans for coop members through the use of a guarantee fund.**

COSTS

I. Evaluation Costs						
1. Evaluation Team		Contract Number OR	Contract Cost OR	Source of Funds		
Name	Affiliation	TDY Person Days	TDY Cost (U.S. \$)			
Quan Cao	Chemonics International Consulting Division	PDC-1406-I-00-0033-00-DO No. 23	48,863	AID/Niger PD&S		
Steven Silcox	"	"				
2. Mission/Office Professional Staff		3. Borrower/Grantee Professional				
Person-Days (Estimate) <u>50</u>		Staff Person-Days (Estimate) <u>100</u>				

3

The evaluators noted the following "lessons":

****Coops which have local traders as active members appear to be operating more productively than those that do not.**

****Conducting both training and credit activities by the same persons limits the effectiveness of both activities.**

****The cultural and societal constraints inhibiting women from participating in project activities were underestimated. Current project strategy to integrate Nigerian women into existing cooperatives has proven to be invalid.**

SUMMARY

J. Summary of Evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations (Try not to exceed the three (3) pages provided)

Address the following items:

- Purpose of evaluation and methodology used
- Purpose of activity(ies) evaluated
- Findings and conclusions (relate to questions)
- Principal recommendations
- Lessons learned

Mission or Office:

NIGER

Date This Summary Prepared:

5 APRIL 1993

Title And Date Of Full Evaluation Report

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE NIGER RURAL ORGANIZATIONS PROJECT, MARCH 1993

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess progress toward project objectives, to identify areas requiring attention, and to make recommendations on project implementation during its remaining life.

Project Description

The ROD Project Purpose is to expand the private sector role in rural areas through the development of viable cooperatives engaged in productive economic activities.

Findings and Conclusions

1. The existing cooperative law limits the flexibility of coop organization. The historical cooperative structure was designed to facilitate a government program for agriculture inputs and marketing of agricultural produce. A new law is currently under consideration. Subdivisions of coops appear to be a more appropriate group size to work with. ROD staff have been focusing on this level of group organization.
2. ROD Project management decision-making responsibility is not clear. The Project Coordinator is responsible for the supervision of the entire project staff of 72 employees including 50 field-based staff. The process for evaluating employee performance is weak.
3. The project has proved somewhat successful in assuring active member participation. However the training being performed in the field often has limited relevance to economic activity development. The lack of a good monitoring system on the effectiveness of the ROD Project training hindered the evaluation team from being able to adequately assess the efficacy of ROD training given to cooperative members. The training provided to other Partenaires has been very successful.
4. The Credit program is effectively permitting access to credit to coop farmers through the use of the guarantee fund. However, monitoring and collection of loans still has some problem areas and it is doubtful that existing banks will provide loans to coops in the absence of the guarantee fund or administrative support from ROD staff. The performance of both training and credit activities by the same persons limits the effectiveness of both.
5. Most cooperatives served by ROD staff seem to be engaging in economic activities with limited potential for growth. It is difficult to ascertain concrete economic benefits to coop members from coop economic activities. Coops visited which have local traders as members and involved with coop management appear to be operating on a more effective financial basis.

6. The number of women participating in coop activities is very limited and it appears that either the socio-cultural biases against such participation was underestimated or that insufficient attention has been given toward achieving the objective of increasing women's participation.
7. Some efforts have been made towards the formation of an indigenous institution to carry on the functions of the ROD project at the end of the project. However, unless substantial progress is made soon, this objective will not be achieved by the end of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More effort must be put into identifying alternative economic activities for coops/Groupes Mutualistes (GMs) which offer them greater comparative advantage to make profits. A further reduction in the number of coops/GMs assisted should be made to focus on those coops/GMs with greater potential for development of alternative economic activities. More linkages with other non-coop private sector enterprises should be made.
2. The key unit for measurement of delivery of services and for economic activity promotion should be the GMs or specialized groups.
3. A restructuring of the management of the ROD project staff should be considered which would delegate supervision and decision-making and reduce the number of field staff. A system should be put in place to assist in the process of letting ineffective employees go. Incentives should be designed to encourage field staff to transfer coop management skills to coop leaders faster and increase member participation, including women.
4. A system of monitoring effectiveness of training that looks at the effects of the training rather than simply measuring outputs should be designed and implemented.
5. The training and credit functions of ROD should be separated, both programmatically and physically, and a radical revision of the program, such as that recently proposed by the credit consultant, be implemented on a pilot scale to test the validity of a number of its suppositions. A more effective and accurate loan monitoring system should be implemented.
6. The ROD project should hire a Nigerienne with experience in community organization to work on the central staff as a Trainer to push for a more active women's promotion program and to assist the women field staff in improving their approach and techniques. Greater efforts should be made to coordinate with other NGOs which have programs which address women in development issues.
7. ROD/CLUSA should move immediately towards a decision on the appropriate indigenous institutional structure for project activities at the close of the USAID funding.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. The coops are based on geographic proximity and seem to be much too large to engender the type of trust between members needed to assure repayment of loans. Groupes Mutualistes (GMs), which are subdivisions of coops, and specialized groups, such as associations of entrepreneurs engaged in the same trade, appear to be a more appropriate group size to work with. ROD staff have been, in fact, focusing on this level of group organization in the past year.
2. The lack of a good monitoring system on the effectiveness of the ROD Project training hindered the evaluation team from being able to adequately assess the efficacy of ROD staff in transferring coop management skills to coop leaders and members and in training villagers in functional literacy.
3. The performance of both training and credit activities by the same persons limits the effectiveness of both. Experience in other countries has generally found that the staff and management of these activities should be separated.
4. The coops visited which have local traders as members and involved with coop management appear to be operating on a more effective financial basis.

This suggests that indigenous commercial expertise is a valuable asset to be used in developing productive cooperatives.
5. Farmer's perceptions of cooperatives suffer from a history of government domination. Changes in these perceptions have evolved very slowly. These perceptions negatively impact upon the attainment of project objectives.
6. Nigerien women continue to be marginal participants in cooperative and economic development activities, as well as in project implementation activities. Project strategy to integrate Nigerien women into existing cooperatives has proven to be invalid when applied to Niger's cultural and societal systems.
7. The development of viable rural economic activities is limited ostensibly by the economic situation currently existing in Niger.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments submitted with this Evaluation Summary, always attach copy of full evaluation report, even if one was submitted previously. Attachments should be referred to the evaluation report.

Final Report, English and French Versions, entitled, MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE NIGER RURAL ORGANIZATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTED, prepared by Chemonics, International.

COMMENTS

Comments by Mission, AID/W Office and Borrower/Grantee On Full Report

This Mission views the interim evaluation report to be of high quality and its usefulness apropos to the current status of the Project. Moreover, the Mission fully accepts the evaluation recommendations.

The evaluation team successfully met the demands of the scope of work and satisfactorily provided answers to the questions posed. Findings confirmed Mission's perceptions of the stringent obstacles to appropriately strategizing the integration of Nigerien women into the development process, and of the need for continual advisement to and collaboration with the Government of Niger in formulating supportive policy.

The evaluation team developed and implemented an assessment plan which allowed them to spend sufficient time interviewing project participants and beneficiaries, staff, colleagues and collaborators; and reviewing project records. Their attempt to allow the Project and the Mission to discuss and offer alternative opinions of the draft report was an excellent occasion to flush out other aspects of the Project which were least noticed.

The evaluation team demonstrated no apparent biases. On the contrary they offered a balanced perspective by having one team member who reflected a perspective gained from several years experience working specifically with cooperatives and training projects in Niger; and the other team member who offered an international perspective from his experience working with cooperatives in numerous countries, including the U.S. They both complemented each other by being able to make comparisons from the specific to the general.

The Mission is satisfied that the findings and lessons learned concur with conclusion reached by Mission, CLUSA, and Project staffs.