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REDSO/WCA

PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

FOR

SAHEL POPULATION INITIATIVES PROJECT

(625-0969)

Date of Report: September 1993 PACD: December 31, 1990

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PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

SAHEL POPULATION INITIATIVES PROJECT - MAURITANIA COMPONENT
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Sahel Population Initiatives Project (SPI) was a \$4.677 million regionally-funded project designed to provide funds for a variety of population sector activities in eight Sahelian countries. The project assisted the Sahel countries both individually and collectively to develop, implement, and evaluate population programs compatible with their respective cultures, resources and development objectives.

The project, which began on March 31, 1986, financed long- and short-term training in family planning policy analysis and formulation, and supported information and education programs. The goal of the program was to improve the overall well-being of individuals living in the Sahel region by helping them keep population growth in balance with resources and rates of economic growth. The Sahelian countries involved in the project were Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

Despite the many similarities among these countries, their differing levels of receptivity to family planning and the existing health infrastructure had to be taken into consideration during the planning of project activities. Prior to the Sahel Population Initiatives project, the eight Sahelian nations had demonstrated little interest in adopting policies or implementing activities to reduce fertility and slow their rates of natural population growth. Population issues in general, particularly family planning or any hint of "population control," had been regarded as highly-sensitive and beyond the purview of governments or foreign donor agencies.

USAID's previous experience with family planning in the Sahel was limited. USAID had funded the Africa Bureau Regional Family Health International project (698-0662) and the Near East Regional Population project (298-0048). The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) was the only other donor active in the Sahel addressing population issues.

In the Mauritania component, USAID assisted the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's (GIRM) Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Department of Maternal Child Health, to administer activities which included training and observation tours in family health and child spacing, support for a rural maternal child health center, and support for the Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott.

The objectives of the project were: to promote policy dialogue on population issues; train cooperating country health personnel in family planning; improve management of population and family planning; increase the availability of family planning services, and to collect more accurate demographic and health data on the Mauritanian population.

The following activities were conducted to realize these objectives: a recently completed fertility survey was analyzed in three technical reports; results of research conducted by the Center for Demographic and Social Studies (CEDS) were published; a national seminar on population and development was held; a population sector assessment was completed; laws relating to the population and family were studied; an inventory of demographic data resources was compiled; employees of the GIRM were sent to short-term training programs and observation tours; construction work on the Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott was completed; the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS)¹, generated demographic data; and an information program was created within the GIRM's Ministry of Health.

The primary beneficiaries of the project were the couples who received family planning services resulting from project activities, and secondary beneficiaries were government workers who received training in the fields of family health, planning, and demography. Additionally, Mauritanian development planners obtained more accurate data on which to base future endeavors.

An evaluation of the Sahel Population Initiatives project was conducted in January 1988, and it recommended that, to facilitate implementation, OAR/Nouakchott alter project management. (This topic is discussed further on page 8.)

Funding for the project was issued through two Limited Scope Grant Agreements, for a total of \$181,000. The project's original completion date was extended one time until December 31, 1990. This extension was granted for work being conducted at the Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott.

Following the June 1993 close-out of operations in Mauritania, project files were delivered to the REDSO/Abidjan office. This project assistance completion report was compiled from these documents, which consisted of the project paper, project implementation reports (PIRs), project evaluation, project implementation letters (PILs) and correspondence.

II. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PARTIES

GIRM

The GIRM's Ministry of Health and Social Affairs provided administrative support to the project.

¹ An AID-funded regional project that provided advance warning of populations or areas at risk of famine.

USAID

USAID provided \$181,000 through two Limited Scope Grant Agreements. Only \$122,661 of the total project funds were expended during the life of the project.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

The OAR/Nouakchott Office of Health, Population and Nutrition was responsible for project management and fund disbursement. The OAR/Nouakchott Health Officer was designated as the project manager. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs represented the GIRM. Regional-level supervision was provided by REDSO/WCA in Abidjan.

Project activities in Mauritania were implemented through annual workplans developed by OAR/Nouakchott. These were implemented through Limited Scope Grant Agreements or individually negotiated contracts.

Commodities

Waivers were processed for the procurement and ocean transport of \$40,000 of medical equipment for the Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott. Goods were procured through UNICEF's Copenhagen warehouse in lieu of procuring the equipment from several sources, in order to reduce shipping costs and delivery delays.

Another PIO/C earmarked funds to purchase \$45,000 of miscellaneous medical instruments and office furniture.

USAID Financial Inputs

A summary of project financial reports as of June 30, 1993 indicated that of the total project funds, \$122,661 were obligated and disbursed. Unused project funds were deobligated.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the project according to the Sahel Development Strategy Statement for fiscal year 1986 was to provide badly-needed population programs. In Mauritania, the following activities were successfully implemented to this end.

Analysis of World Fertility Survey Data

Based on data from a world fertility survey collected in Mauritania in 1981, the CEDS sent two research staff members to work with personnel at the International Institute of Statistics at the Hague to analyze data on marriage and mobility, proximate determinants of fertility, and fertility among youth. The project also funded two short-term consultants from the U.S. and five Mauritians to assist in the design of new data collection systems and compilation of the data. The group produced three technical reports in June 1988.

Program of Publication

This project funded the publication of previously completed research conducted by the CEDES.

National Seminar on Population and Development in Mauritania

CEDES organized a week-long seminar in December 1987 designed to sensitize key personnel in various ministries and bureaus of the GIRM to current population and development issues. Sessions were held on topics including: data sources; and the demographics of Mauritania; population and rural development; women and development; population and health; drought, migration and urbanization; and population policy in Mauritania. The Sahel Population Initiatives project covered the seminar's major expenses.

Population Sector Assessment

In December 1987 a three-person team undertook an assessment of population policy and family planning services in Nouakchott at the request of OAR/Nouakchott. The team's report provided recommendations on general family planning programming and more specific project planning. They also presented options for post-project activities.

Law and Population in Mauritania

The project supported a study of existing laws relating to population and the family. The study was performed by a demographer and a legal expert. According to project documentation, the results of the study served as the foundation for the formulation of more appropriate legislation.

Inventory of Demographic Data Resources

The CEDS completed a detailed analysis of demographic data that had been collected by various Ministries and public and private agencies throughout Mauritania. It provided additional data and recommended methods for improving data reliability. Two experts from the Futures Group along with CEDS demographers developed a model for projecting the impact of population growth on development. This computer model, known as the RAPID model, was discussed at a seminar of GIRM statisticians and, in December 1988, was presented in detail to a national seminar of policymakers.

Short-Term Out of Country Training

Six individuals were offered short-term third-country training in the areas of family planning program management, clinical aspects of family planning, and family planning education and communication. The trainees included nurses, nurse-midwives and health administrators.

Two officers from the GIRM's Ministry of Health attended a course in "Communication and Family Planning" in Lome in May 1988. The program was sponsored by the Center for African Studies.

In November 1988, two women were sent to a Center for African Studies-sponsored course in the "Management of Family Planning Programs" in Lome. The GIRM's Deputy Director of Statistics and a CEDS demographer attended a meeting in November 1988 in Dakar of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.

Based on recommendations from CEDS for greater training in demographic research and training, two individuals were sent for training in demography and fertility survey in The Hague. The one-month program was conducted at the International Statistical Institute.

The Director of Statistics for the Ministry of Economy and Finance and a demographer with the CEDS attended a conference on the dissemination and use of census data. The conference was hosted by the Egyptian Central Agency for the Public Mobilization and Statistics and was organized by the United States Census Bureau.

One participant was sent to the United States to attend a family planning administration course.

Funds were earmarked for the Director of Operations in the GIRM's Ministry of Economy and Finance to attend a one-month course at the University of Chicago course on the use of micro-computers for social and demographic research. He was unable to attend the course due to an increase in his office workload. Funds for the program were de-earmarked.

Training and Observation Tours in Family Health and Child Spacing

An observation tour of family planning programs in Morocco and Tunisia was conducted in October 1987 for four Mauritanian government, education and religious leaders. The GIRM and OAR/Nouakchott approved the candidates, and the OAR/Nouakchott Health Officer accompanied the group.

Six health care professionals were given third-country clinical training. Two of these were offered management training.

One official was sent on an observation tour of the Sahel region and Mali to reinforce collaborative links between Mauritania's CEDS and national population-related programs in these regions.

Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott

The project also supported the Family Health Referral Center in Nouakchott for construction, and ob/gyn equipment and office supplies. The center itself provided family planning services, treated sexually transmitted diseases, and trained nurses and midwives.

Construction work on the center was interrupted in April 1989 by ethnic-oriented civil unrest. The original contractor departed the country and another contractor assumed the contract. Construction was monitored by the OAR/Nouakchott engineer, and daily supervision was conducted by staff of the GIRM's Directorate of Buildings, Ministry of Public Works. Consultations were held with the Ministry of Health.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

An evaluation was conducted in January 1988 at the mid-point in the implementation of the project. The majority of project activities had not yet commenced or were still incomplete; therefore, the report did not provide an in-depth appraisal of project accomplishments. It did, however, note the following lesson learned:

Communication barriers between the CEDS and OAR/Nouakchott caused a six- to 12-month delay in all planned activities. The evaluators attributed this to the fact that the Health Officer who initiated the project was transferred, and a replacement was not named until four months later. Project evaluators also recommended that a contractor be hired to monitor project activities to supplement the efforts of the Health Officer. This recommendation was not accepted. Instead, an OAR/Nouakchott official assumed the responsibility in the absence of the Health Officer and a new system of reporting, monitoring and fiscal guidelines was adopted. In the absence of a final evaluation, it is impossible to ascertain the affect of the new management system; however, the project did yield the significant outputs summarized on pages 4-7.