

PD BAYZT

SAVE THE CHILDREN FEDERATION (SCF)
PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT
(635-0217)

Official File Copy

The purpose of the project was to initiate and establish a program of community-based integrated rural development in The Gambia.

SCF became involved in the Gambia in 1978 through the interest of the Roots Foundation. A preliminary feasibility study funded by the Foundation was conducted by the Africa region section of SCF in 1978. In September 1981, SCF began actual program activities under an Operational Program Grant (OPG) in the amount of \$300,000 from USAID. This was for a two year program.

The SCF/Gambia field office was established in March 1982, and operations were set up to meet the stated objective of the OPG.

The program objective was to strengthen and increase the capability of Community Development Assistants (CDAs) of the Department of Community Development (DCD) to better perform their function and duties in the following areas:

- (A) improving CDA curriculum in areas of job conceptualization, implementation and management skills as a model for country-wide institutionalization; and
- (B) providing opportunity for villagers to play a greater role in their own development activities and better meet their basic economic and social needs.

In the first stage of the OPG, it was proposed that SCF work with approximately 10 of the 16 CDAs in the North Bank Division (NBD) who were posted to the Jokadu and Niuni districts. Eighty projects were to have been designed and implemented in forty villages, with CDAs assigned to four villages. The CDAs were to be trained as trainers. They were also responsible for administering three technical training activities to village participants. (They were to receive on-the-job training to enable them to design and implement twenty projects in their four villages.).

In September 1982, the first training workshop for the CDAs was held followed by a number of training workshops throughout 1983. Much emphasis was placed on teaching CDAs to enable them to implement projects in their communities and fulfill the OPG objective. The report on these workshops was that progress was slower than anticipated in teaching concepts such as organizing village development committees (VDCs), assessing the communities needs, and planning projects and project budgets. It was found that although CDAs had received extensive training at the Gambian Rural Development Institute (RDI) in development theory, they lacked the organizational tools to apply these skills in the field. The SCF training program re-emphasized the application of theory in the village context. In these workshops, CDAs were taught to proceed through each stage of the project development process thoroughly with their VDCs.

In June 1983, the Gambia's SCF program was evaluated by a team comprised of a staff member from the SCF Upper Volta field office, a representative from SCF's headquarters, and a representative from the DCD/Banjul. The evaluation was conducted at the end of the first year of the OPG. After interviewing several DCD North Bank Division staff and SCF staff and visiting several NBD project sites, the following observations about SCF's village-based activities were made:

- Although formal training workshops were helpful, it was found that CDAs needed more assistance in learning to apply these skills in their villages. Emphasis was placed on training at a national more than at a field-based level.
- It was difficult for CDAs to plan, implement and evaluate community projects carefully with the full participation of the VDCs and still meet the objectives of establishing 20 projects in their villages before the termination of the OPG. These projects could only be produced at the cost of skipping vital stages in the process.
- Because SCF worked with only a portion of the CDAs in the NBD, it was difficult to coordinate their activities with the middle management community development officer (CDO) of the DCD who is the primary supervisor and coordinator of the CDAs at divisional level.
- Although the DCD recommended that the VDCs be formed, it was found that these groups had not been formally recognized and empowered within the Government structure, therefore, their decision-making power had been limited.

Other observations were made on a national level:

- There was a need to define more clearly the relationship between SCF and the DCD. At this point, there was no formal agreement between SCF and the DCD.
- The RDI expressed interest in collecting information about the lessons learned from establishing and working with the VDCs in the NBD and disseminating this information through the RDI and appropriate government agencies.
- The RDI staff at Mansakonko also expressed a need for supporting the CDA in terms of training and improved communication.

As a result of the evaluation and through the efforts of the evaluation team, it was determined that modifications must be made in the original OPG. An OPG amendment was approved by USAID/Banjul in January 1984. The project objective was reassessed and rewritten as follows:

To strengthen and increase the capability of the CDAs of the DCD in order that activities of the DCD are better designed, implemented and managed.

2

The two major goals being: A) field staff of the DCD posted to the NBD will have the necessary skills and resources to assist villagers in participatory development activities; and B) lessons learned in the field will be incorporated in the DCD field operations nationwide.

The following activities were to be accomplished during the last year of the OPG, i.e. December 1983 through December 1984:

- (1) a training system for DCD staff to be established and functional;
- (2) a management system for project activities and impact areas to be created and operational;
- (3) an information system to be established at village, divisional and directorate levels; and
- (4) village-identified self-help projects.

Technical and Managerial Performance:

1. Training system: A) In September 1982, 3 community-based integrated rural development methodology workshops were organized for CDAs; B) A special training coordinator was hired in December 1983; C) Two baseline data collection workshops and one child-centered strategy workshop were conducted; D) Nineteen CDAs and five home craft assistants (HCAs) were trained to carry out job responsibilities; and E) Training manuals for CDAs were printed in June 1984.
2. Management system:
 - A) DCD management staff, one community development officer (CDO) and one assistant CDO were trained. Following the conclusion of the OPG, SCF withdrew management and logistical support with the exception of a special project advisor to assist in project development. The DCD in the North Bank Division now runs independently from SCF/Banjul office with the exception of project monitoring, evaluation and minor technical support.
 - B) VDCs in the North Bank Division are responsible for managing funds and keeping records for projects. SCF held two VDC workshops in the NBD and has assisted VDCs in establishing community data bank and record keeping systems. Manuals for operations were printed for CDAs in June 1984.
3. Information system:
 - A) Extensive baseline data has been collected using child-centered indicators in 6 key villages in the NBD.
 - B) Organized VDC workshop and training of trainers workshop including participants from different Ministries and Divisions. Rural Development Institute staff assisted in conducting the majority of workshops and all surveys.

C) VDCs have begun to keep community data banks and archives have been established in 20 villages.

4. Village-identified self-help projects:

The following are examples of projects implemented in the NBD and monitored by sixteen CDAs: vegetable gardens, handicrafts, soap making, communal farming (rice, maize and millet), school construction, nutrition program, sanitation/latrine construction, water well construction and rehabilitation, construction of bridges and causeways, seed/cereal stores, farm implement packages, groundnut processing, grain mills, and fishing cooperatives.

In all, forty-two self-help projects have been successfully completed in 27 villages. Eleven self-help projects have been a partial success. Five self-help projects were unsuccessful and seven projects are in the process of being completed.

It has been beneficial to the SCF program to have incorporated all of the DCD North Bank Division field staff into their program structure. The SCF's training coordinator/projects officer works closely with the CDO and assistant CDO to assist in the design and management of SCF projects. The CDO is familiar with all of the development activities within the Division, and it is hoped that through SCF's assistance the CDO will improve his abilities to coordinate and manage all development activities within the Division. Progress seems to be slow in this area because of the sheer magnitude of activities and number of subordinates scattered throughout a large area. However, regular monthly meetings have been established for CDAs. In these meetings, the SCF training coordinator/project officer and CDO review project documents and financial management reports and discuss problems with the CDAs. Monthly site visits are also made by the training coordinator/project officer and CDO to monitor projects.

The end of project evaluation conducted in August 1985 by a USAID consultant and representatives from the Women's Bureau and SCF indicates that the CDA's in the NBD assisted a variety of non-government and government agencies within their villages. Village Development Committees (VDC) interviewed in Kerewan, Salikene and Lamin, felt as though they were involved in the initiation, planning and implementation of SCF-sponsored development projects. All of these VDCs stated that village-initiated projects were deemed the most successful. It was also interesting to note that the three least successful projects were initiated from the national level.

Resulting from several visits by technical consultants from SCF's home office, a program was designed and is now operational in a new impact area. The focus is on many aspects of village food production with special emphasis on the development of appropriate technologies related to food production and maternal nutrition. Because of SCF's ongoing activities throughout the NBD, projects proven to be effective within the high impact area can be replicated on a wider scale in other communities within the NBD. SCF has initiated these efforts through an AID Matching Grant which began in January 1985.

4

Lessons Learned

The end of project evaluation also indicates that CDAs and CDOs expressed a great deal of frustration over the lack of coordination between government and non-governmental agencies. They said that agencies work independently of one another by establishing their own representatives in the villages which hinders an integrated approach to village development. It is fair to say that even though rural extension agents coordinate activities informally at the village level the issue is not being dealt with adequately at the national level. There are few efforts being made to enact policy that would encourage agencies to coordinate.

Conclusion:

Although the SCF's work was confined to the NBD, a system should be devised to document lessons learned and thus information should be disseminated at the directorate level. This is particularly important in light of the fact that SCF, in cooperation with the DCD, is an agency that has made headway in assisting the government to achieve their rural development national goals. The CDAs could certainly benefit from lessons learned. There is a great deal of informal information sharing that has accrued between SCF and the DCD on a national level, i.e. frequent meetings with DCD/Banjul staff and joint training programs with RDI staff. However, it would be helpful to set up a system of formal documentation of lessons learned. Another possibility would be to encourage The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) to discuss these issues regularly and develop policy recommendations.

The skills of the DCD staff need to be continually upgraded and more efforts made to transfer these skills for local development activities by the development committees. Through improved coordination of development activities by the VDCs which are assisted by the CDAs, projects can become more sophisticated and better integrated to meet the needs of villagers.