

NIGER

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REPORT OF A FACT-FINDING TRIP TO
NIGER, MALI, SENEGAL AND UPPER VOLTA

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PURPOSE: to assess the degree of integration of
women into development projects in these countries,
with specific reference to the Niger Cereals
Project and the Bakel Village Livestock Project.

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During July of 1976, two members of the faculty of the University of Arizona visited four Sahelian countries (Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta) to study the impact of development on women there. My trip was funded by the AID/SFWA office, and CID, and Dr. Dinnerstein's trip was funded by the Institute of Arid Lands at the University of Arizona. We spent approximately one week in each country, talking with government officials, UN staff, officials of CLISS, and many African women. In spite of the limited time and the immensity of the subject, I was able to learn a great deal that should be useful to teams as they begin their work in the area.

I brought back from each of the four countries extensive notes on the involvement of women in farming and livestock activities. I also have a list of a number of women, both African and expatriate, who would be willing to talk with CID team members about the specifics of the agricultural involvement of women in their countries. The notes and the roster are available on request.

Since the information I gathered is so complex and varied, this report will summarize only the information relevant to the Bakel Livestock and Niger Cereals projects.

ON EXPECTATIONS AND THE REALITY

My expectations are probably best summarized by the following quote from the report of the Economic Commission for African Women:

Women do between 60 and 80% of all agricultural work, between 60 and 80% of small trading and selling in markets, 70% of all work relating to community projects, and almost all domestic tasks, including fetching water and fuel. African women have traditionally played an active part in the subsistence economy, but their access to the activities and benefits of the modern sector has been much more limited than that of the men The enormous volume of work accomplished by women is at a very low level of technology . . . development projects, agricultural services, training in modern farming techniques, and the acquisition of farming machinery and land have been aimed mainly at men. (Document E/Conf/66/BP/11)

There seems to be considerable truth to the statement above in terms of the delivery of training and other resources to women in the Sahel. The amount of their involvement in agricultural work seems to vary considerably with the region of the country, the ethnic group and the kind of agriculture being practiced. The estimate of the amount of farm work done by women seems also to vary with the sex of the informant. With a few outstanding exceptions, both African and expatriate men consistently underestimated the amount of farm work being done by women.

THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE IN NIGER

I will expand on these generalizations by taking Niger as an example. The Djerma (25% of the Nigerian population) are sedentary farmers who live primarily in the Niger Valley and provide the major proportion of government officials. The Hausa (54%) are sedentary farmers and traders who also live along the Niger and as far north and east as farming is possible. The two remaining groups are the Tuareg (12%) and the Pueli (8%). Both are nomadic herdsman; the Tuareg are also long-distance traders across the desert, and the Pueli are sometimes settled in the cities in commerce, or sedentarized as farmers.

Both the Djerma and Hausa grow millet, but the pattern of involvement of women is very different in the two groups. According to Dioulde Laya, Director of IRSH, the Djerma women participate in the planting by putting the seeds in the ground after their husbands have poked a hole with a stick. In some instances they also treat the seeds with fungicide before planting. They do not seem to hoe, either before the planting or afterwards. They help in the harvest and do the daily threshing and milling of the grain in large mortars and pestles.

Older women may have kitchen gardens where they grow vegetables to make the sauce for the millet that is their daily diet. In addition, the women collect leaves, nuts, and fruits that provide variety in the diet, as well as adding necessary vitamins, minerals, fats and protein.

It is easy to underestimate the value of these food-producing activities. For example, the kerite nut, which is collected and processed by the women, not only provides the major sources of fats and oils in Nigerian diets but also is traded as a cash crop. Known as shea butter in English, this oil is a major source of income in some areas of West Africa. Interestingly enough, when the amounts traded are small and the resulting profits are low, the shea butter is traded by the women; when the volume becomes larger, the trading shifts to the men, as do the profits.

Among the Hausa there seem to be two patterns of farm production. One closely approximates the Djerma pattern described above. The other depends much more on female labor. In much of Hausa country, the women have not only their own vegetable gardens, they have their own millet fields as well. In addition to working their own fields, at each stage of cultivation they assist in their husbands' fields, weeding and cultivating as well as planting and harvesting. These are the women who demanded of the FED financed 3M project in Zinder that they, too, be provided with the training in improved farming techniques being given to the men. Through Animation Feminine, these requests were communicated to the department officials who in turn arranged that agricultural training be provided for these women. They were trained in the use of fungicides to treat seeds before planting and in the correct number and spacing of treated seeds during planting.

In addition, the Hausa women are responsible for the day-to-day care of livestock -- cows as well as goats. In the winter, the Hamatan wind brings disease. The women asked for and received training in early disease diagnosis. The training was delivered by the women of the Animation Feminine rather than the male agent because "we separate the men and women so the women can talk and question."

DELIVERY OF AGRICULTURAL TRAINING TO WOMEN.

This question of the training of women by women is directly relevant to the Niger Cereals project. When I asked men in both the Nigerian and American government offices about the provision of agricultural training to women, at least for the tasks they were directly involved in, I received a consistent answer: "The agents will teach the men, and the men will teach their wives." They were operating on the "trickle down" theory of agricultural education. The women, however, do not seem to feel this approach is adequate.

Animation Feminine, the division of the Ministry of Planning that reaches out to the village women, says that these women are demanding training in agriculture and the care of animals. The Federation of Nigerian Women has issued a policy paper asking for agricultural training of women.

As a response to these requests, Animation has provided such training since 1973. Of the 415 animatrices in the country, they have given short training courses to 270, and they have plans to train the remainder as quickly as possible. The training is not confined to certain groups or certain parts of the country; they are trying to reach five to ten villages in each aroundismont.

There are very real constraints to the kind and depth of training Animation is able to provide. There are 75 female agents stationed by aroundismont, who are responsible for training and supervising the 400 village animatrices. The length and depth of the training of the agents has steadily increased since the Animation Program began in the 1960's, but they still do not receive any formal training in agriculture or animal husbandry. It is my impression that their male counterparts do not receive agricultural training either, but there are male extension agents from the Ministry of Rural Economy who work with the male farmers. There is no such role in MER for women. In fact, there are almost no Nigerian women trained at the professional level in either agriculture or animal husbandry. Animation has to depend on male agricultural agents or technical experts to train female agents. For straightforward tasks like the treatment and planting of millet it often works well. In other areas which are more traditionally women's concerns (small animals, vegetable growing) the female agents find it harder to get the expertise they need. The problem is compounded by the social tradition that women do not question nor dispute a male authority figure. This reduces class discussion and interaction considerably.

Thus, the women in Animation Feminine are in the position of trying to provide training requested by village women in agriculture and animal husbandry without sufficient resources of training for themselves. Asked what Animation would like to do to correct this situation, Nariama Wani, Agent Technique d'animation, replied: "We would like to have our agents trained in animal husbandry and agriculture, but there is no room in the agriculture schools." I asked about scholarships abroad. Belgium has a program, but it is hard for women to leave their families and go.

I asked if it would be helpful to have American women agriculturalists to assist them in training their agents, or as Peace Corps workers out in the field. "American collaboration would be welcome at every level, top to bottom," she answered, then added: "If we had the resources we could do the training of our own animatrices at the departmental level. It would take a couple of years, but it could be done." I asked if it would be possible within the government structure for Animation to delivery training to women within the Niger Cereals project. She said, "Yes, but UNCC would have to request Animation to be involved."

THE NIGER CEREALS PROJECT

If women are not included in the training given by the Cereals project, then half of the population of the country will be effectively excluded from the technical knowledge that is necessary to improve Nigerian agricultural production. Since this is not only unfair but also shortsighted, it seems worthwhile to consider possible strategies for the delivery of training to village women. I am not proposing a major change in the social structure, simply an intensification of what is already occurring. The government officials I spoke to did not seem opposed to the idea of agricultural training for women. They seemed unaware of the need for it. In several instances when I asked about the possibility of such training, repeating what the women had told us, they were interested and seemed supportive of the idea.

One strategy that might be employed is for MER to invite Animation Feminine to train women for the Cereals project. Personnel, money, and training could be made available to Animation, permitting them to do the job efficiently. American technical assistance could be provided at their request.

A second possibility would be to have the male extension agents do the initial training of village women as well as the men, and have this training followed up by the village animatrice. The animatrice would still need some training in order to follow up effectively but not as much as in Strategy #1. The social acceptability of this would have to be considered. On the basis of my information it seems possible.

A third strategy that might be considered would be to deliver the training through MER, using a structure of female extension agents parallel to the structure of male agents. If MER does not have women with the necessary backgrounds, perhaps some could be transferred from Animation by the same process being used to transfer extension from UNCC. It is probably too late in time for this strategy to be useful. The structure of the program is already defined. However, the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution might be considered in another such project at the planning stage.

There are a number of combinations and permutations of the above possibilities, and numerous other strategies might also be feasible. Whatever solution is attempted, however, is going to demand that agricultural training be provided to some Nigerian women at a level of professionalism that permits them to train others. They want it; they need it; and they are asking for it. CID has the capacity to address this need. Culturally sensitive ways of doing so need to be explored.

A separate but related need is for the inclusion of women in the structure that controls and disseminates agricultural information. There are a substantial number of training slots within the Cereals project for people who will be responsible for agricultural training. Some of these

slots should go to women, so that they can be included in the planning as well as the execution of these programs. This would facilitate integration of information and delivery systems, thus improving the functioning of the total system.

THE BAKEL VILLAGE LIVESTOCK PROJECT

The Bakel project in northeastern Senegal reaches a population of sedentary Fulani who are both farmers and pastoralists. I do not have as much information on the division of labor between the sexes within this group, but I do know that the women are responsible for the small animals as well as for milking the cattle and processing the milk. Promotion Humaine, which is the Senegalese animation agency, will have two stations in the project area, each with both male and female agents. The Bakel project concentrates on livestock, and within this context Ana Digne, the Director of Promotion Feminine, suggested a small women's project that might be undertaken as part of the larger program. She proposed a small cheese-making cooperative for women in the area. Though this is milk-producing country, all butter and cheese sold in Bakel is imported from Dakar, 600 miles away. She felt it would be feasible to organize the women to produce and market their own cheese. Considerable study had been done on this possibility for an earlier project that worked with the people in the Senegal River Basin. It had been decided not to include it in the earlier project because it did not fit the other elements of the program, but it would seem to fit well here. After speaking to Mme. Digne, I mentioned the suggestion to Arthur Feil, the Deputy RDO for AID, Senegal. He was most enthusiastic about the suggestion, and suggested that it be followed up. I would second the recommendation.

Another point is worth mentioning with regard to Bakel. Mme. Marie Armer Sohail, who is a member of the National Assembly and the Administrative Secretary of the Movement National of the National Political Party (UPS) Women, told us that the movement was planning to launch a women's education program in the Bakel area. She said that the women's movement personnel in that area would be most happy to talk to people from the project to inform them of women's needs in these areas. Norman Schoonover, the CDO for Senegal, has used the National Party to help him generate a series of very interesting women's projects, so the suggestion seems worth exploring.

CONCLUSION

I have discussed the integration of Nigerian women in agricultural development at some length for two reasons. The first is that CID is directly involved in a program that impacts on women, and therefore we need knowledge for intelligent action. The second reason is that to a large extent, what is true in Niger about the situation of women in agriculture is also true in the other Sahelian countries. There are many local differences in the amount and kind of control that women have over the farm labor they perform, but the similarities are also striking. Some governments have been more successful than others in reaching the village level women with informational input, but basically the picture remains that described by the ECA: "African women have traditionally played an active role in the subsistence economy, but their access to the activities and benefits of the modern sector has been much more limited than that of men."

It seems that within these two projects DIC has the opportunity to make some change in this situation. Change is recommended by reason, by law, and by a concern for human equity.

CONTACTS MADE BY COUNTRY

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Several Dogon village women