USAID/SENEGAL PVO/NGO SUPPORT PROJECT

1990 – 1999

I. Background

The Senegal PVO/NGO Support Project (685-0284) was a 9-year $21 million project authorized on June 21, 1990. The Project Agreement between USAID and the Government of Senegal was signed on June 22, 1990, with a focus on creating active local community participation in and ownership of their own development. The project was implemented through a contract with the PVO New Transcentury Foundation (NTF) acting as the Umbrella Support Unit (USU), in collaboration with various U.S. PVOs and local NGOs and NGO associations.

The umbrella support unit organized and provided a full range of training, technical assistance, grants processing, monitoring and evaluation, financial management and organization support activities carried out under the project. The National Project Committee provided policy guidance to the USU and approved sub-projects for certain levels of funding. USAID/Senegal was involved in project monitoring and evaluation, grants selection and approval, and in coordinating activities with the Government of Senegal (GOS) and other projects.

II. Project Goal and Purposes

The goal of the Senegal PVO/NGO Support project was to improve the standard of living for the poor and vulnerable in Senegal, as measured by increases in income from local productive activities, increases in access to inputs, goods and markets, and improved access to primary health care, literacy training or credit and savings.

The project's purposes in the following order of priority were as follows:

a) to support viable and sustainable development activities initiated by the beneficiaries and oriented towards the project's key intervention areas, while producing a real and positive impact on the lives of the population;

b) to strengthen community groups and associations management and technical capacity and capability to design, plan and implement viable and sustainable projects with the support of NGOs;

c) to strengthen the technical, organizational, and institutional capacity of NGOs, NGO Associations, and Development Associations in order to enable them to support local Level community groups in their sustainable development initiatives.

III. Project Description

The Project's emphasis was twofold. First, the project financed self-sustaining, local-level activities in priority development areas through grants awarded to PVOs/NGOs. Secondly, the project provided systematic and collaborative institutional support to the wide range of NGOs, NGO associations and NGO consortia in Senegal.

IV. Project Elements

The project had two major elements linked both conceptually and operationally: (1) institutional support to NGOs, PVOs and NGO associations and (2) grants to U.S. PVOs, NGOs working in Senegal or U.S. PVOs and local NGOs working collaboratively for discrete community-based sustainable activities.

A. Institutional Strengthening

The large number of NGOs in Senegal, including U.S. PVOs, range along a wide continuum of institutional capacities and maturity. Some of the larger NGOs could develop adequate sub-project proposals without any outside assistance whereas the majority of smaller, institutionally weak, and younger NGOs would need substantial institutional strengthening assistance at different levels before they could meet the criteria for sub-project selection. At the same time, experience in Senegal has shown that institutional support may not always be positive: (1) it may undermine leadership (funds misused by NGO staff); (2) it may encourage leadership to respond to donors instead of members or beneficiaries; or (3) it may lead NGO or NGO federations to become solely a lobbying group, more interested in fund raising than in providing services or acting as an advocacy group.

In order to minimize these and other potential problems, the project was guided by the following basic principles:

(1) The Contractor shall be sensitive to the interactions and process-oriented requirements of institutional support.
(2) The USU will utilize and encourage a participative process at every level in determining needs, support programs and specific interventions.
(3) The project will focus on training as the most important means of providing institutional support.
(4) A deliberate, participative, and systematic approach will be used in the design and execution of institutional support activities.
(5) Absorptive capacity will be considered to ensure that NGOs are not overwhelmed with resources that cannot be sustained once USAID assistance ends.

(6) Any institutional support activities must be consonant and coordinated with other donor NGO institutional support programs to avoid duplication of efforts and to learn from experiences.
(7) The USU will systematically assist local NGOs to diversity their financing sources. This may include increasing capacity of NGOs to attract other donor funds, developing programs for fund raising and income generation and charging for services.

Institutional support was provided at various levels. Training modules for generic, cross-cutting themes were developed in close coordination with NGO representatives and based on a training needs assessment of a wide range of NGOs. This training was provided for interested NGOs, and the modules were evaluated and refined as the project continues. At the same time, direct, specific support (purchase of vehicles or photocopiers for example) were provided by the USU to selected NGOs based on a specific needs assessment of the NGO's strengths and weaknesses. The USU carried out this assessment of any NGO which submitted a sub-project proposal to determine the NGO's capacity to carry out the Grant activities and the level of institutional support required both prior to or after approval of the Grant.

A study on NGO institutional needs carried out as part of the PP design identified the following priority areas for training: project management, financial management, project design, group dynamics, rapid rural appraisal techniques, appropriate technology, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, marketing, credit management and training of trainers in literacy.

B. Community-Based Activity Grants

The Contractor financed a wide range of Grants for community-level activities designed and implemented by the communities themselves with the assistance of U.S. PVOs, NGOs currently working in Senegal, and U.S. PVOs and local NGOs working collaboratively. Those activities not only provided direct benefits to the community through their outputs, but also enhanced the capacity of local organizations and community groups to plan, manage and carry out other development activities.

V. Expected Achievements

The achievement of the project's purpose was measured by the degree to which community-based activities were sustained at the end of the project and the ability of local NGOs and NGO associations to plan, design and carry out expanded development activities using diversified funding sources.

Specifically, the end-of-project (EOP) status indicators were as follows:

a. increased income for the beneficiaries
b. 50% of supported and assisted local NGOs design, plan and implement extended development activities

c. 75% of supported and assisted local NGOs are receiving training and TA to improve their capacities in financial management planning, project design, monitoring, evaluation and implementation.
d. 50% of assisted communities plan and implement new activities by the end of the project.
e. 50% of project supported community revenue-generating activities become self-sustaining by the end of the project

In addition, the project was expected to produce local solutions to local problems with local resources, broader community-level and local NGO participation in the development process, and increased income and employment opportunities.

VI. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At the end of the project, satisfactory results were achieved towards meeting the end-of project objectives.

Forty (40) sub-projects were approved covering all regions in the country (see attached document of USU grantees). The sub-projects were implemented by American PVOs, Senegalese NGOs, as well as a US PVO and a Senegalese NGO working in partnership. The subproject interventions were in agriculture, natural resources management, health**,** literacy, training, water supply, income generating activities, cattle farming, and credit.

Under the Training and Institutional Strengthening component of the project, as of September 1995, (project ended in 1999) 252 (versus the target of 75) NGOs were trained in areas such as Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Institutional Diagnosis, Financial Certification, Project Design, Project Management and Monitoring. The training reached approximately 362 participants. The NGOs also received technical assistance for improved planning, financial management, project design, monitoring, evaluation and project implementation.

It was also originally planned that between 70 and 150 community level groups would be reached, but as of September 1995, the project was already working with 728 village groups.

VII. EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT AND TRAINING

- Improved formulation of project files
- Compliance with operational planning of project activities
- Definition of responsibilities and availability of NGO staff
- Better control of financial standards and procedures
- Increased transparency in how funds and equipment are used
- Fewer rejections of financial reports
- Capacity building in budgeting and budget monitoring

- Establishment of financial empowerment plans

The approach used by the NGO Support Project has brought noticeable changes and now constitutes an important lever for durability, i.e. organizations' increased capacity to identify and plan for the needs of their locality. These organizations have reached an agreement on priority development needs. They are informed about existing funding sources and approach these sources directly. Their requests generally generated interest among supporting organizations.

[Note: there is not mention of funding levels, so no way to judge the cost effectiveness of this project.] W. Navin 12-14-2013