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A PROPOSED MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY
FOR THE SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

by

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SUMMARY

This report presents recommendations for developing monitoring and evaluation capacities to meet the needs of the Sahel Development Program (SDP). An analysis of the SDP indicates that it is heterogeneous and loosely structured; and that no single technique can be applied to monitor and evaluate all of its activities. Instead, a range of techniques will be needed, and they must be carefully adapted to the specific needs of Sahelian decisionmakers. Over the life of the program, the Sahelian countries themselves must assume increasing responsibility for its direction and support.

The Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) unit recently established at the CILSS Secretariat will have a crucial role to play as the SDP evolves. At the regional level, the PME unit can guide and synthesize monitoring activities which focus on the following key indicators:

- (1) Indicators of change in the physical environment, drawing on the outputs of a regional ecological monitoring project which is due to get underway in early 1981, and which will probably be based at AGRHYMET;
- (2) Indicators of change in macro-economic conditions, with initial assistance from the Club du Sahel Secretariat, and a gradual shift of responsibility to the CILSS PME unit itself; and
- (3) Indicators of change in the quality of life of Sahelian populations, based on forthcoming work by the Overseas Development Council, and an eventual transfer of monitoring functions to the Sahel Institute.

An evaluation system for the SDP, as distinguished from monitoring, must include a capacity for attribution of impact to planned interventions, and a capacity to diagnose the need for modifications in the process of intervention at the project and sector levels. These requirements can best be addressed at the country level, with the PME unit of the CILSS serving in an advisory and liaison role with national planning ministries. Two initiatives are recommended for the immediate future:

- (1) Pilot exercises in several countries, with comparative impact evaluations of mature or completed First Generation projects, in order to identify the determinants of impact for policy guidance; and
- (2) Workshops for project managers and technicians from several different Sahelian countries, working in a common sector on methods and uses of mid-project evaluation aimed at identifying needed changes in project inputs, approach or objectives.

These recommendations are presented for consideration by CILSS and Club members at meetings scheduled to take place during the second half of 1980.

INTRODUCTION

The Sahel Development Program represents an unprecedented and very ambitious effort to apply a regional development strategy in one of the poorest areas of the world. Through the twin organizations of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel,¹ the SDP provides a framework for cooperation among the eight countries in the region² and more than 20 bilateral and multilateral donors. In the view of its sponsors, the achievements of the SDP in its early years strengthen the case for undertaking regional development programs in other parts of the world.

The time-frame for the SDP (conservatively estimated at 20-25 years) is substantially longer than in most major planning exercises, and the level of investment (\$1.0 - \$1.5 billion per year for an area with about 32 million people) is much larger. The gap between the present status of the Sahelian economies and the objectives of the SDP is extremely wide, and estimates of the external resources required to transform those economies can only be regarded as provisional. While significant progress has been made in mobilizing support to launch the SDP, there is

¹ The CILSS, or Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, was founded in 1973 and is based in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta. The Club du Sahel, an informal grouping of donor organizations and Sahelian governments, was established in 1976. The Club maintains a small secretariat in Paris at the headquarters of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

² The eight Sahelian countries are Chad, Niger, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Cape Verde.

no guarantee that this support can be sustained over the projected life of the program, and at the present juncture, no certainty that the stated goals will be achieved.

These considerations indicate a need for thorough and systematic evaluation of the SDP as it evolves over time. Thus far, however, evaluation needs and approaches have received comparatively little attention. The purpose of this report is to define the role of evaluation within the SDP, and to suggest ways of initiating an evaluation process.

The report addresses four basic questions:

- What rationale exists for undertaking thorough evaluation of the SDP in its present form?
- What approach is best suited to the evaluation needs of the program?
- What types of evaluation are needed to deal with issues of process and impact? and
- What steps should be taken to develop Sahelian capacities to manage evaluations and utilize the results?

This report presents an opening statement on evaluation, rather than a detailed prescription for a comprehensive system. The discussion of evaluation issues is aimed at decisionmakers within the CILSS and the Club who are charged with directing and sustaining a diverse, highly complex regional program. In this context, the report describes a range of distinct but complementary activities needed to meet the evaluation needs of the SDP.

THE NATURE OF THE SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Regional Perspective

The outlines of a regional development program for the Sahel emerged in the aftermath of the severe drought that afflicted the region between 1970 and 1974. Sahelian governments and international donors concluded that to reduce the region's vulnerability to recurrent drought and move the constituent national economies towards self-sustaining economic growth, a collaborative effort would be needed to address a range of common problems. Low productivity in dryland agriculture, deterioration of soil and forest resources, and scarcity of trained manpower in all sectors affect all eight countries, although these by no means exhaust the list of such problems. In combination, they pose formidable constraints to economic development in the region.

In terms of standard economic criteria, the Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world: in the most recent year for which data were available, GDP per capita did not exceed US \$350 in any of the countries except Cape Verde. In broader socioeconomic terms, using the Physical Quality of Life Index, the average score for the region, 19, is far below the range for North Africa and South Asia (31-55), let alone the scores for Europe and North America, which exceed 90. The component indicators of the PQLI, literacy, infant mortality and life

expectancy at age one, are consistently lower in the Sahel than in almost any other part of the developing world.

Because the constraints to development in the Sahel are very severe, most estimates state that at least 20 years will be required to bring about significant improvement in social and economic conditions. In the near and medium term, at least, the process of development will depend very heavily on external financing. The total volume of donor assistance required over this period has been projected at \$20-30 billion in current dollars. On a per capita basis, current foreign assistance to the Sahel amounts to \$38, reflecting a quantum jump over pre-drought levels; its continuation hinges on the joint efforts of the CILSS and Club to attract and mobilize resources from the donor community.

While it has a regional orientation, the SDP is not a centrally managed program, since neither the CILSS nor the Club du Sahel sets policy or allocates resources among different sectors or projects. The roles of both the CILSS and the Club involve collaboration and consultation; neither has a bureaucracy of any magnitude, and neither functions as an implementing agency per se. The absence of structure and hierarchy reflects a conscious decision on the part of the participating governments and donor agencies. The twin institutions provide a forum for dialogue and coordination, and their affiliated working groups have contributed substantively to the planning and design process in their respective sectors.

SDP Objectives and Strategy

The two overarching goals to which the CILSS and Club members subscribe are (1) the achievement of food self-sufficiency and (2) eventual self-sustaining economic development. These goals have not been tied to precise indicators, and they are subject to differing interpretations, particularly in the case of the food self-sufficiency issue. Being broadly stated, they do not significantly restrict ongoing bilateral programs in the region. One consequence of this is that potentially critical tradeoffs are not illuminated: for example, the impact on export crop production of programs creating increased incentives for foodgrain production. To cite a recent instance, evidence from Niger indicates that impressive increases in the production of millet and cowpeas between 1972 and 1978 were partially offset by a drastic decline in peanut production. While a severe blight was responsible for part of the falloff in peanut production, farmers' response to changing price incentives appears to account for a major share of the shift.

In terms of the strategy formulated by the working groups and adopted by the CILSS and Club, six sectors are designated as high priority areas for SDP activity: rainfed agriculture, irrigated agriculture, livestock, resource conservation, transport and communication, and human resources. In reality, everything remains a priority in this framework, since virtually no

activity touching on rural development has been omitted. The first two sectors, rainfed and irrigated agriculture, are acknowledged as requiring the greatest attention and investment.

The CILSS and Club have endorsed broad goals for development in the Sahel which are indicative rather than definitive. As such, they reflect the number and nature of the unknowns affecting the SDP as a new regional program. At the country level, where sectoral programs and relationships with donors have a longer history, objectives in each sector tend to be more clearly defined. To date, it is doubtful whether the CILSS/Club regional goals have influenced the priorities and targets adopted by individual Sahelian governments. If anything, the regional goals reflect the aggregation of national objectives. This has major implications for evaluation: the measurement of results against objectives is likely to be more precise at the country level than at the regional level.

The Start-Up Phase of SDP

In the years since the Club du Sahel was formed and commitment was gained to a long-term development program for the Sahel, the attention of both donors and recipients has focused on the mobilization of resources. The SDP program, as originally proposed by the CILSS member states in 1973, was a diverse and unstructured shopping list. With the establishment of the Club du Sahel and working groups for each of the major

sectors in 1976-77, a more detailed program was formulated and the list was trimmed to a "First Generation" of 620 projects which were formally endorsed by the CILSS and the Club. Even so, the portfolio was designed to attract funding from a diverse set of donor institutions with differing approaches, interests and procedural requirements. Given that the intent was to secure a maximum of external investment, the First Generation was not a planning exercise to allocate a finite amount of resources among competing sectors and projects. The opposite tended to be true: viable projects proved to be scarce, in many countries and sectors, relative to the quantity of funds that could be mobilized.

In terms of the commitments made by bilateral and multilateral donors, the effort to attract investment for the SDP's initial phase has been successful. The Club Secretariat has devoted considerable effort to recording and monitoring resource flows to the Sahel, which are designated as Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since the First Generation projects are extremely heterogeneous, and since disbursement procedures vary widely, this is a difficult task, but it provides an essential tool for coordinating the efforts of different donors under the SDP.

Numerous First Generation projects remain unfinanced, and the Club and CILSS remain formally committed to obtaining funds for them. But attention is gradually shifting towards a more

intensive programming exercise during 1980 and 1981; it is hoped that a tighter and more coherent Second Generation of projects will supersede the First in attracting further investment.

While the designation of "generations" in the SDP is convenient for purposes of information exchange and coordination, the process of project preparation and design operates continuously. Membership in the CILSS and the Club has not significantly altered ongoing bilateral relationships, and individual project agreements are reached, and funds disbursed, on the timetables of particular donors and recipient governments.

In this highly flexible programming context, there is as yet little evidence of consensus on the role or importance of evaluation. Throughout the first phase of the SDP, AID has attempted to stimulate a dialogue within the CILSS and Club membership on evaluation needs arising from the program and possible approaches to meeting those needs. The response thus far has been tentative, and in some cases skeptical, but such a dialogue is both necessary and beneficial.

Rationale for Evaluation

The rationale for evaluation of the SDP hinges on two sets of factors:

- Political realities, specifically the likelihood that external investment in the program will

diminish if no tangible results are documented;
and

- The complex character of the SDP itself, with all of its attendant uncertainties.

The first point is a highly sensitive subject, and has been largely overshadowed by the genuine humanitarian concern that motivated many of the major donors to the Sahel during the drought and its immediate aftermath. With the shift towards a long-term developmental perspective, however, the commitment of funds to specific projects and programs represents a deliberate investment choice. For most of the participating Club donors, the options include placing development assistance outside the Sahel if there is no hard evidence that positive results are being achieved through the SDP.

Regarding the second point, the following reasons may be cited to justify a rigorous and thorough evaluation effort:

- The gap between the present situation in the Sahel and the twin CILSS/Club goals of food self-sufficiency and self-sustaining economic development is extremely wide;
- There are numerous unknowns in the development process, and therefore a considerable risk of failure both at the project level and in sectoral programs and, by implication, in the overall performance of the SDP; and
- Successful implementation of the SDP hinges on the ways in which the limited resources of the principal actors in the development process are allocated: donors, Sahelian governments, project managers and farmers and herders all face such critical choices.

These considerations suggest that neither sustained external investment in the SDP, nor its eventual success in achieving the stated objectives, can be taken for granted. ODA levels alone provide no guarantee of development impact in the region. The Sahelian countries themselves must acquire the capacity to direct, analyze and modify the SDP as it evolves. Considerable experimentation will be needed before a proven and consistently beneficial program emerges. In this regard, the diversity of the SDP in its current form offers considerable latitude for comparison at the project, sectoral and national levels. Such comparison must be rigorous and analytical, rather than impressionistic, requiring that failures as well as successes be documented, and that implementation experience be carefully examined to extract lessons that will improve the design of future activities.

The remainder of this report, building on this rationale, discusses a framework for evaluation of the SDP, encompassing the dimension of process (analyzing changes in the program over time), and the dimension of development impact (including both intended and unintended results, and thus not limited to the stated objectives of component projects, sectoral strategies, or the overall CILSS/Club program).

APPROACHES TO EVALUATION OF THE SDP

Simple but Inadequate Approaches

A simple and relatively low-cost approach to developing generalized assessments of SDP activities draws on existing evaluation documents prepared by or for participating SDP donors. Most such evaluations are conducted at the project level. In theory, the results of these evaluations could be compared and synthesized, with a view towards generalizing about trends at the sectoral, national and regional levels. Evidence of variable impact at the project level could be examined in terms of possible explanatory factors, and the results could then be fed into the design of subsequent projects in the sector, and into the decisionmaking process at the program level.

Consultants to the Club Secretariat recently experimented with this approach by collecting documents from First Generation SDP projects where evaluations have actually been carried out. They identified three serious problems with this approach:

- Many projects in the SDP portfolio have apparently never been formally evaluated (in some instances evaluations were scheduled but did not take place);
- It became apparent that definitions of "evaluation" vary widely (often the term refers merely to an audit of expenditures), and that methodologies are even more diverse; and

- Very rarely, in the documents examined, was there any attempt to measure impact on the beneficiary population (e.g., net changes in farm income attributable to a project), as distinct from project outputs, (such as the number of farmers accepting credit).

These findings, while not surprising in view of the low priority thus far given to evaluation by Club members, demonstrates the inadequacy of this ex post approach to evaluation. Yet the exercise may have been useful in showing how little information exists, and how few of the critical questions arising from the SDP can be answered by relying on "routine" evaluation efforts by the participating donors and recipients. The forthcoming report on this exercise deserves a wide distribution and careful reading by CILSS and Club members.

A second possible approach, also relatively inexpensive and simple to execute, is to rely on the monitoring of specific indicators which are expected to show change over time. There are three domains in which the monitoring of change would help to document impact, or the lack of impact, from SDP activities:

- Change in the physical environment, including such components as rainfall patterns, soil fertility and the status of rangeland areas;
- Change in macro-economic indicators, including components such as GDP per capita and trends in the output of foodgrains and other agricultural products; and
- Change in the quality of life of Sahelian populations, specifically the rural poor, who are the intended beneficiaries of most SDP activities.

At its simplest, this approach would require careful tracing of resource flows at the front end (i.e., project and program inputs by donors and Sahelian governments), and measurement of indicators at specified intervals, focusing on those areas in which the SDP is expected to have measurable impact. This would supply answers, in a very direct fashion, to the bottom line question: "Is the overall SDP effort achieving its desired results?" However simplistic, this is a legitimate question, and it needs to be answered at agreed (and reasonable) intervals over the life of the program.

Exclusive reliance on this type of monitoring would raise more questions that it would answer, however, and it would not constitute true evaluation. Whereas it facilitates summary judgments regarding impact, it cannot account for impact because it treats the development process as a "black box" and has little explanatory power. It sheds no light on the complex "why" and "how" questions that are so important in a bold, high-risk program such as the SDP. Diagnosis is needed, not just monitoring -- diagnosis based on collection and analysis of a wide range of data. Monitoring of selected indicators is a useful way to initiate the evaluation process, but that process must focus on the dynamics of implementation at the project and program levels in order to answer the critical "why" and "how" questions.

The Need For A Comprehensive Framework

A comprehensive framework is needed to accommodate the range of evaluation tasks arising from the SDP. The demand for the bottom line -- captured in impact measures -- is reasonable and legitimate, but equal emphasis must be placed on opening up the "black box" and examining the development process. Questions naturally arise, however, regarding the incentives needed to ensure that: (1) evaluation receives higher priority within the program, and (2) evaluation results are utilized by decisionmakers.

In the initial phase, which stressed the commitment of donor support for the program, incentives of both kinds were weak or non-existent. Over the medium and long term, however, the incentives are likely to be strengthened to the degree that SDP decisionmakers recognize two major elements of risk in the program:

- Donor interest and patience is likely to run out if there is no systematic capacity to show tangible results from the investments being made under the SDP; and
- In the absence of a capacity to diagnose problems and make mid-course corrections in both development strategy and project design, many activities will run aground during implementation and yield little or no impact.

The degree to which these threats are perceived at present varies considerably within the CILSS and Club membership. In the short run, it might appear adequate merely to demonstrate

that donor resources are not being wasted or misused; but this will not ensure continued support over the long run. It is in the self-interest of the Sahelian states to expend resources on evaluation in order to document concrete positive results, where those occur. Even where results prove to be disappointing or negative, frank assessment of the causes in a continuing dialogue with donors is the most likely way to gain continued support.

TYPES OF EVALUATION REQUIRED

Because of the program's scale and complexity, SDP evaluation must deal with issues of both impact and process. This requires two distinct but complementary types of evaluation: one focusing on the results (both intended and unintended) achieved by SDP interventions, and the other on the methods and strategies employed to obtain those results. This section describes the ways in which each type of evaluation can be utilized within the framework of the SDP.

Impact Evaluation

In any situation where a development project is implemented, the measurement of change -- whether in the physical environment or in the social and economic status of the target population -- presents methodological difficulties. The

attribution of change to project interventions, which is the essence of determining impact, can be even more troublesome. Thus, it is not surprising that many "evaluations" are limited to an assessment of whether project outputs were achieved, such as the delivery of services to a target population.

This does not mean that impact evaluation is impossible, however. When focused on a single project which was designed with clearly formulated objectives, the process of inquiry can be adapted to the amount of time and resources available. Ideally, impact evaluation would be scheduled several years after the termination of project activities, so that lasting effects could be analytically distinguished from the short-run effects of resource transfers introduced by the project. Yet there are very few cases in which this technique has been applied. A second-best solution is to attempt a projection of long-term impact at or near the end point of the project.

Impact evaluation can also be very useful at the program or sector level, in comparisons between projects which generate variable results. Standardization is crucial to this kind of analysis. Since no two projects are alike, in terms of their inputs, their outputs, or the populations they are designed to benefit, it is tempting to argue that no "fair" comparison can be made. Yet decisionmakers at higher levels are routinely faced with choices, and are expected to allocate resources on a pragmatic basis: projects that succeed will

(or should) be chosen over those that fail. Since comparisons are inevitable, standardized evaluation at least ensures that critical assumptions and methodology are made explicit; once challenged, they can be improved upon.

The logical starting point in this evaluation exercise is with the dependent variable, which can be referred to as "development impact." A relatively simple model for comparative impact evaluation was used in a study of PVO rural development projects.¹ The model distinguished three dimensions of development impact: direct benefits, benefit continuation and benefit growth. The first category deals with the immediate results of project initiatives; the second encompasses self-sustaining benefit flows after project resources are withdrawn; and the third considers the likelihood that project outputs may lead to a diversification of development benefits outside the original scope of the project.

For each of these dimensions, indicators were developed which would be applicable regardless of project size or type. A scaling system was then developed, so that the indicators could be aggregated to provide an overall measurement of development impact. Differences in the level of impact were then analyzed in terms of two groups of independent variables:

¹ A. H. Barclay, et al., and others, The Development Impact of Private Voluntary Organizations: Kenya and Niger, Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., February 1979.

(1) the development strategy and type of intervention used in each project, and (2) certain characteristics of the environment in which the project was implemented.

Comparative impact evaluations carry certain obvious risks of oversimplification. One cannot hope to capture all of a project's dynamics through this medium. Substitute (proxy) indicators may often be required, due to limitations of time and money in the data collection process. Often the desired data are of a kind (e.g., changes in household income) that cannot be obtained through direct, on-the-spot inquiry. There is an equal likelihood of oversimplification in the causal hypotheses that are formulated and tested: for example, "Intervention A gets better results than Intervention B in a Type X rural environment."

By the same token, however, comparative evaluations make explicit a judgmental process that is inevitable when decision-makers allocate scarce resources among different options. They provide a mechanism for fulfilling an accountability function ("Are project and program results adequate when measured against the investments that were made") and a knowledge function ("What lessons can be learned from the variable results attained by different projects?")

Process Evaluation

This type of evaluation, which is sometimes referred to as "formative," is applied during (rather than after) implementation, in order to identify possible changes in the project structure, inputs and/or approach. In contrast to a comparison of impact among different projects, the main purpose of a process evaluation is to determine how to improve an activity that is under implementation. The evaluation may call for minor adjustments or for a complete redesign of the activity. If timed correctly, process evaluation facilitates collaborative decisionmaking by project personnel, beneficiary groups, policymakers and other actors on key issues affecting the project.

Process evaluation is an essential instrument for project and program assessment in the SDP. Its logic is based on the premise that for complex development activities, major uncertainties will exist at the time when implementation begins. The SDP has been launched in the face of many such uncertainties, and many of its components will need to be carefully refined -- if not thoroughly redesigned -- as the program evolves. Rather than waiting for the results of comparative impact evaluations to be tallied up (which will take several years at a minimum), it makes far more sense to include process evaluation as an element in project design. There are two principal ways in which this can be done, and some projects use a combination of the two:

- Reliance on a team of outside evaluators who visit the project at or near the mid-point in the implementation cycle, and conduct a joint evaluation with project staff; and
- Inclusion of an internal project system for monitoring and evaluation, whose function is to track implementation performance and signal needed mid-course corrections.

The first option has traditionally been included in the design of medium- to large-scale rural development projects. Problems frequently arise, though, in mobilizing a team with the requisite skills at the appropriate time. Furthermore, the interaction of outside evaluators with project staff is often characterized by anxiety and distrust. A predictable result is that the evaluator's conclusions and recommendations meet stiff resistance from their supposed "collaborators" on the staff.

An interesting attempt has been made to lay the groundwork for collaborative process evaluation in the agriculture and livestock projects financed by the Entente Fund in West Africa.¹ A seminar was held in October 1979 for project managers (or their designates) from all 16 EF-financed projects. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce the basic tools of project evaluation, with the expectation that participants would use those tools in their own projects, in conjunction with evaluation teams fielded by the Entente Fund.

¹ The Entente Fund, based in Abidjan, serves as a financing agency for projects and investments in five countries: Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Niger and Upper Volta. A large share of the Fund's support is provided by AID.

The case for including an internal project system as part of the original design has been strengthened in recent years, although numerous operational problems have been encountered in making such systems work. In principle, an internal evaluation capacity is integral to the design of "experimental" projects, although many of those so labelled have not been designed with sufficient rigor to yield definitive results. Ideally, too, decisions about whether to move from Phase One to Phase Two of a "pilot" project, or to replicate it elsewhere, should have the benefit of a thorough formative evaluation suggesting which elements in the original design should be retained, modified or dropped. Here again, the state of the art is not impressive, although the issue is receiving greater attention from development practitioners than in the past.

The factors which must be considered in designing an internal project system for process evaluation include: the scale of project activities, the size of the target group, the availability of funds and the level and number of technical personnel involved in the project. Process evaluation mechanisms may consist primarily of face-to-face dialogue between beneficiaries and project staff, with a minimum of formal written data collection, in a small project based in a single village. In a large and heterogeneous project area, more highly structured systems utilizing detailed farm records from a sample of participating household would be appropriate.

Process evaluation mechanisms, when carefully designed, lay the groundwork for future comparative impact evaluations. Because it addresses certain questions in much greater depth, process evaluation tends to be more open-ended, and its procedures should be tailored carefully to fit the specific circumstances of the project. However, the issue of impact -- those changes in the social and economic situation that can be attributed to project interventions -- remains the ultimate concern of the evaluation process, whether examined through informal dialogue or through formal quantitative surveys. To the extent process evaluation reveals evidence of impact (or lack of it) and its causes, it contributed both to the substantive evolution of the specific project and to cross-project and sectoral comparisons.

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS AN EVALUATION SYSTEM

This section begins with a discussion of the potential uses of evaluation results within the Sahel Development Program. It argues that since most critical decisions are made at the country level, rather than the regional level, the linkage between specific projects and sectoral programs should be the focus of the SDP evaluation strategy. Suggestions are then presented for implementing this strategy and for developing evaluation capacities within the Sahelian countries.

Levels of Decisionmaking

As already emphasized, the SDP is a loosely structured effort that operates without a centralized management system. The broad regional goals for the SDP itself, as well as the sectoral strategies developed by the CILSS/Club working groups, reflect common themes in the national development strategies of the Sahelian states. The lack of precision in regional targets limits the possibility of carrying out rigorous evaluations. At the national level, however, commitment to sectoral strategies is stronger, and policymakers are more directly concerned with the rate of progress towards stated objectives. The individual projects in each sector command policymakers' attention, because project performance is the main determinant of success at the program level.

The CILSS and Club, as regional institutions, have been instrumental in attracting investment to the Sahel, in broadening the range of external support and in defining many of the common issues that confront the Sahelian countries. Most of the decisions reached at the regional level are non-binding, however. It is at the country level, in bilateral agreements, and at the sectoral and project levels, in budgeting decisions, that resources are formally allocated on the basis of actual or potential progress towards development objectives.

What does this indicate about evaluation priorities for the SDP? Given that evaluation capacities are poorly developed,

where should the principal effort be made to strengthen them?

Two main points can be stressed here:

- At the regional level, progress towards the broad CILSS/Club goals is likely to be slow, and attribution of change to SDP interventions will be problematic. However, monitoring of change can be carried out at relatively low cost by relying on institutional mechanisms that are already in place; and
- At the country level, the potential payoff from evaluation results is higher, but the development of evaluation capacities will be costly and slow. In the near future, the effort should be selective, and targeted on those sectors and individual projects where the investment of Sahelian resources is greatest.

The distinction between the elements of monitoring and evaluation suggests that a phased approach will be necessary. Some ideas on the steps to be taken at each level, and on their requirements in terms of time and cost, are presented below.

Developing Sahelian Commitment and Capacity

It does not make sense to try to "sell" evaluation as an incidental item requiring no significant commitment of resources. This report has argued for a major effort, although it would be premature to set a precise target for expenditure on SDP evaluation. What matters most now is gaining a formal commitment to the effort at the highest CILSS/Club levels; without this, the effort will not get off the ground.

The CILSS took an important first step in 1979 by establishing a Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in its Secretariat at Ouagadougou. The PME unit is charged with coordinating -- and gradually helping to standardize -- project design and evaluation procedures in the national planning ministries of the member states. Its staff and operating budget are small, and will remain so. Technical assistance has been programmed by AID to provide the unit with a planning and evaluation specialist who will advise the unit's director. This position is due to be filled in late 1980 or early 1981.

The PME unit, as a component of the CILSS, will not have the authority to impose procedures or reporting requirements on any of the member countries. Yet even without executive authority, the unit can serve two essential functions that are not currently being filled:

- In the domain of monitoring, the unit can serve as a point of synthesis and dissemination of data on key economic, social and environmental indicators that are systematically monitored by specialized institutions; and
- In the domain of evaluation, the unit can examine the range of potential evaluation techniques used to analyze both impact and process, and facilitate the adoption of appropriate techniques by decision-makers in the member countries.

Further details on the activities needed in each area are presented below, with suggestions regarding the role to be taken by the PME unit.

Regional Monitoring Activities

As suggested earlier, three sets of indicators reflecting conditions in the Sahel should be monitored at the regional level: these would show change in the physical environment, in macro-economic conditions, and in the quality of life of Sahelian populations. The cost of these monitoring efforts would be low, and the payoff -- in terms of attribution and diagnosis -- would also be modest, because they are not evaluation instruments in themselves. Their main advantage lies in the fact that they can be initiated fairly rapidly (in some instances they are already underway) and would not depend on the creation of new institutions.

Environmental Indicators

During February and March 1980, a team based at the CILSS, with technical assistance from AID, prepared a regional project for ecological monitoring in the CILSS member countries. This project will be designed to draw on three sources of data: remote sensing, aerial reconnaissance and observations on the ground. The major unresolved question at this stage concerns the institutional arrangements for project implementation, which will be defined in the Project Paper, scheduled for completion in late 1980. AGRHYMET, the CILSS-affiliated meteorological station in Niamey, appears to be the most likely choice as a central institution to compile and synthesize ecological data from participating countries (Senegal, Mali, Niger and

Upper Volta have been identified as participants in the first phase of this regional project). The results of the regional analysis would then be transmitted directly to the CILSS PME unit for possible further statistical treatment, interpretation and reporting in the forums of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel.

Economic Indicators

Most development planners familiar with the Sahel have a healthy skepticism for the quality of economic data routinely assembled in the countries of the region. Aggregate statistics produced on sectoral performance must be treated with caution, and the same is true for indicators such as GDP per capita. There is a general consensus, at least among technical assistance personnel and other donor representatives, that stronger data collection and analysis capacities are needed at the national level in all countries. Proposals have been put forward in several countries for donor-funded programs to upgrade planning units and statistical services.

In the near term, however, conventional sources will provide an acceptable level of accuracy. This would probably not be true if the Sahel were undergoing a rapid economic transformation. The rate of progress towards the ambitious goals of the SDP is to be very slow, particularly during the 1980s. In these circumstances, it is reasonably safe to rely on data that are routinely compiled by country in IMF and World Bank reports,

provided that aggregate regional trends and variation within the region are reported and thoroughly analyzed.

Initially, this regional synthesis could be performed by consultants to the Club Secretariat, as was done with the "Socio-Economic Data Book" prepared in late 1978. At an early date, however, this should become a routine function of the CILSS PME unit, once reliable procedures are established to furnish the unit with documentation from the IMF, World Bank and other potential sources.

Quality of Life Indicators

Discussions are underway between AID and the Overseas Development Council regarding the possible adaptation of the PQLI to the monitoring needs of the SDP. Whatever indicators are used -- and it should be noted that any proxies used for the quality of life in developing countries have serious technical limitations -- there will be limited progress, at best, during the next one or two decades. Regarding the PQLI as originally formulated, two issues should be carefully addressed in any effort to improve its applicability in the Sahel:

- The correlation between literacy and socio-economic well-being appears to be significantly weaker in the Sahel than in some other areas of the developing world, which suggests that some other indicator might be more appropriate; and
- The relationship between the PQLI and standard economic indicators should be reanalyzed to explore and account for the relationship between population growth and development programs.

Initially, it is expected that the ODC will design a system for collecting and analyzing data, under contract with AID and in consultation with the Club Secretariat in Paris. Within the region itself, the Sahel Institute at Bamako should gradually assume responsibility for this monitoring activity, and for reporting the results to the CILSS PME unit. While the Institute does not presently possess the resources to manage PQLI data collection and analysis, it appears to be the logical institution for this activity over the long term. Close collaboration between ODC consultants and Institute staff will be essential during the forthcoming design process.

Using the Results

The information gathered through these regional monitoring efforts will prove useful in two ways:

- The results should be compiled at regular intervals (perhaps every five years) for review and discussion in high-level meetings of the CILSS and Club du Sahel; and
- Participating Club donors can also use the results in periodic progress reports to their constituencies, as a basis for an overall assessment of SDP impact.

It should be remphasized that there is little diagnostic value in this highly aggregated information, and that investment in impact and process evaluation at the country level, as described below, has a much greater potential to improve the quality of the SDP.

Evaluation Activities

Drawing on the recent Club-sponsored review of existing evaluation literature, a useful step would be to categorize the range of techniques available and in use: these should include techniques applied to evaluate both process and impact. Because of its direct link to Sahelian decisionmakers, the PME unit should carry out this analysis, with consultant's assistance if necessary. The central question should be: "From a Sahelian perspective, which evaluation techniques appear to be most useful in satisfying the needs of decisionmakers?"

Once tentative answers have been established, the next step is to disseminate them to the prospective users of evaluation results. Dissemination calls for initiatives aimed at two different audiences:

- Planners and policymakers at the program level who are concerned with comparing impact as a basis for resource allocations; and
- Technicians and managers engaged in implementation in various sectors, primarily at the project level.

Some preliminary thoughts on how the PME unit might address each audience are presented below.

Organizing Impact Evaluations

Given that targets and development strategies vary from one country to another in the region, it seems appropriate to deal with impact evaluation on a country-by-country basis, in

the near term. Initially, the CILSS PME unit should identify two or three countries where there is interest in strengthening planning capabilities, and where a sample of mature First Generation projects exists in two or more sectors. In each country, planning officers would then be brought together in a workshop or seminar forum, under the sponsorship of the PME unit. They would begin by defining the intended impact of the major projects underway or already complete; they would then develop indicators of impact on which data collection and field observations could be based; and they would specify the probable determinants of impact, to the degree these are known. Inclusion of projects in more than one sector is advisable, because both the choice of indicators and the statement of causal hypotheses are likely to vary among sectors.

The next stage would involve a pilot evaluation exercise on the sample of mature projects, with data collection carried out jointly by country planning officers, CILSS PME technicians, and outside consultants recruited by the PME unit. If the exercise is carefully prepared during the workshop sessions, considerable streamlining will be possible in the data collection process. Each field collection team would write up its findings in a standardized format, and the workshop participants would then reconvene to compare the data and analyze the results. The end product would be a report which compared the impact of discrete projects and stated the policy implications of the findings.

What would be needed to launch a pilot exercise of this kind in one country? Based on experience in the study of PVO projects in Kenya and Niger, these broad parameters can be laid out:

- The country sample of mature or completed SDP projects should be a minimum of eight (at least four projects in each of two sectors), but should probably not exceed 15;
- For each sector, one evaluation consultant and one CILSS technician (either from the PME unit itself or from one of the CILSS working groups) would be needed to work with personnel from the participating country;
- The full cycle would require 10-12 weeks when the exercise is conducted for the first time, with the likelihood of a reduction to about eight weeks in later replications;
- For an exercise covering ten projects in two sectors and taking approximately three months from start to finish, total costs would be about \$100,000;¹ and
- This exercise could be carried out in two Sahelian countries during the first year (say 1981), with follow-up work and extension to other countries in subsequent years.

It is difficult to forecast requirements for time, funds and personnel beyond the initial country exercise described here. A minimum of three such impact evaluation exercises will probably be needed in each country, possibly scheduled every

¹ The conclusion to the Kenya and Niger PVO study estimated that comparative impact evaluation of ten projects would cost about \$35,000. Most projects included in that study were much smaller than those in the SDP, with a smaller range of data requirements for evaluation. Also, the PVO estimate made no allowance for training inputs and collaboration with host country decisionmakers.

two or three years during the next decade, to develop evaluation procedures that are tailored to the decisionmaking system in each government.

Organizing Process Evaluations

The principal audience for process evaluations is assumed to be the managers and technical staff of development projects within the Sahelian countries. The CILSS PME unit could sponsor a series of initiatives specifically aimed at this group, beginning with workshops similar to the Entente Fund seminar described on page 20. These could be launched in late 1980 or early 1981, with a view to improving the content of ongoing SDP projects and enhancing their prospects for success.

Many of the issues arising in process evaluation are technical in nature and may be specific to the sector in which a project is operating. For example, managers and technicians in health projects will be concerned with tailoring health delivery systems to fit social and cultural systems in rural communities; and technicians working in dryland agricultural projects will be concerned with adaptation and extension of production packages. This suggests two things about the organization of process evaluation activities in the Sahel:

- Workshops for project managers and technicians should be organized in conformity with the six major sectors identified in the CILSS/Club program; and

- These workshops should include personnel from several different countries, to maximize the exchange of information and knowledge transfer from implementation experience.

The first recommendation would ensure a consistent focus in the workshop, since participants would be dealing with similar technical questions and would be working towards comparable objectives in their respective projects. The second would bring together experience from different countries, which has not been done before with mid-project evaluations. This would help to integrate the lessons gained from experience with different projects; at present such knowledge appears to be held only by a small number of consultants who have had the opportunity to work in several countries. For example, an agronomist who has evaluated dryland agriculture projects in Niger, Senegal and Mali may be aware of comparable findings and problems from the three countries; but it is most unlikely that the managers and technicians working in those projects have a comparative perspective.

Based on experience with the Entente Fund evaluation seminar, the total cost of a training workshop in process evaluation methods with 20 - 25 participants would be between \$40,000 and \$50,000. To yield maximum benefit, the workshop should be scheduled before planned mid-project evaluations for the projects represented. The CILSS PME unit could sponsor each workshop, drawing as necessary on specialists from the CILSS working groups and on outside evaluation consultants.

It would make sense if the workshop trainers also participated in the evaluations themselves, when those take place, building on the basis of collaboration established in the workshop. A second workshop for each sector grouping could be scheduled after the evaluations were carried out.

Conclusion

The ideas offered here are preliminary in nature, and have been framed concretely in terms of cost and timing, to indicate how the evaluation process might be initiated in the immediate future. None of these steps can be taken unilaterally, either by the CILSS Secretariat or by an individual donor agency. It is strongly recommended that an evaluation agenda be developed by the Club Secretariat in close consultation with the CILSS PME unit, for the major CILSS/Club meetings scheduled to take place later in 1980. Without a formal commitment at the highest level, the type of program suggested here cannot be undertaken, and a program of this kind is needed if the long-term needs of the SDP are to be served.