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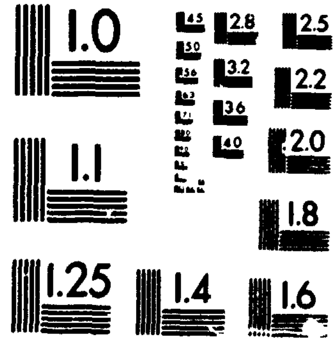

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NGO Partnership and Institutional Development: Case Studies from Mali and Niger

by

William Postma

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

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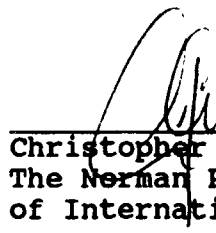

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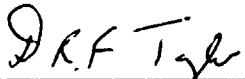

Professor D.R.F. Taylor, Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs are seen as an increasingly appropriate and effective tool by which to promote institutional development. This study draws on case study material from Mali and Niger to illustrate some of the means by which NGO partnerships promote institutional development as well as the potential and constraints that are encountered in the process. Fostering institutional development in the context of partnership needs to be understood in relation to historically-evolved state/society relations, regional economic and environmental constraints and the actual limitations of NGO interventions. For NGO partnerships to more effectively promote institutional development, greater commitment and specific resources will need to be invested in strengthening internal mechanisms of accountability, communication and learning, building inter-institutional linkages and improving the design of collaborative and funding programs that currently work against the cultivation of mutually-supportive partnerships and the development of viable national NGOs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people helped to make the writing of this thesis possible. To acknowledge them in a few short paragraphs hardly does justice to their helpfulness and support. Throughout the NGO and aid communities of Mali and Niger as well as within the development and academic community in Canada, there were many people -- many more so than I had first expected -- who took an interest in the topic and were open to lending advice, source material or, simply but always indispensably, encouragement to continue on.

I am particularly grateful to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for the financial assistance which enabled this research to be conducted. John Soloninka, Regional Director of the Lutheran World Relief's West Africa office, knowing about my wife and I and our respective research only from a single, short letter, opened up his door to us upon our arrival in Niamey in May, 1991 and kept it open to us until we left in December. His hospitality, the office support that he gave as well as his connections to the development community in Niger made the research process so much more easier and enjoyable. I am grateful as well to the staff of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), in particular Peter Vander Meulen and Gary Nederveld, for the logistical support that they made available and their ever-readiness to assist during my stay in Mali and Niger.

Profs. D.R.F. Taylor and Richard Maclure, my thesis supervisor and adviser, were very helpful in guiding and giving shape and substance to the topic and the argument presented. I thank them for the interest that they showed in the topic from the very beginning. I am also indebted to Profs. Fiona Mackenzie and Doug Anglin for their formative support in understanding some of the many complexities and nuances of the African continent. Their concerns for the people of Africa, the constraints that they face and the strengths and resiliency that they show, continues to be an inspiration. Marie Dulude of USC-Canada, Gilles Chouinard of CIDA's NGO Division and Réjean Piché of Solidarité Canada-Sahel also provided helpful advice and opened up more than a few doors in Mali and Niger.

In Mali, I learned much from Alexis Diouf, Boureima Touré, Claude Gilles and Joan Brown. Their enthusiasm for having me examine more closely the partnership projects in Missira and in the Manghadie and their willingness to make available project documents and arrange meetings with field staff greatly facilitated the research in those two communities. Their concerns and efforts to make NGO partnerships a more viable and beneficial way to promote institutional development and meet community needs were exemplary and inspirational. Among the many in the NGO/aid community in Mali who set aside several blocs of time, usually at my convenience, to discuss partnership, institutional

development or, quite simply, the needs of Malian communities were Massaman Sinaba, Abdoulaye Touré, Issa Sidibé, Salif Ouattara, Lynne Caron, Bakary Haidara, Luc Gagnon, Nancy Devine, Benjamin Fomba, Idrissa Maiga, Mohammed ag Louta, Paul Sanogo, Pierre Bélanger, David Olsen and Robin Poulton. I am grateful as well to the communities of Missira, Siratinti, Gagna and Yentela (villages in the Mangha plain) and to Lassane Diarra, president of the ton inter-villageois of the Manghadie, for the time that they gave to me to discuss the effects that the partnerships have on their villages and the meeting of their needs.

In Niger, I am grateful for the research permission granted by the Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines of the Université de Niamey as well as the access I was given to its resource centre. Boukarey Saley, Abdoul Karim, Abouzedi Reza, Barry Rands, Pierre Barry, Guillaume Ayadi, Idrissa Daouda, Bill and Liz Edgar, Olaf Kula, Louise Martin, Boukary Younoussi, Geneviève Spaak, Zouma Salifou, Oumarou Gaoh and Abdoulkadri Boubacar were among the many people in Niger who helped out in ways that often went far beyond discussing the topic at hand. And although a newcomer to their villages, the members of the cooperatives in Tamaske and Roukouzoum opened up their books, their stores and warehouses and discussed with enthusiasm the concerns and difficulties they face in running their cooperatives. Zenou Touré and the women of the Foyer Féminin of Keita came out to welcome my arrival -- twice --

and showed me their orchards, gardens, tree plots and farms. Louise Beaudry arranged for me to visit the Centre avec des Elles in St. Gabriel in April, 1992 and discuss with the women members their perceptions of the partnership with the women of Keita.

There are many others, particularly in the national NGO communities of Mali and Niger but also among the non-nationals, who shared thoughts with me not only about the research but also about development and north-south issues in general and how they hoped the 'second NGO decade' would evolve in their countries. I am truly grateful for the knowledge that they shared with me. I can only hope that this research will make a small but helpful contribution to an understanding of partnership, its potentials and its limitations.

Throughout the seven months conducting research in Mali and Niger, my wife, Rebecca, was also carrying out studies of her own. Together, we learned and we grew. And although ever so briefly and always so remotely, we could experience, with a mixture of wonder and admiration and more than a little trepidation, some of the concerns and struggles of some of the people of Mali and Niger. I thank her for the fact that, while carrying out her own research, she could still support and encourage me. Most of all, I thank her for the confidence that she put in me to see this thesis through to the end.

development of southern organizations which would continue to operate after a partnership has been phased out. Community members could potentially find continued support and monitoring assistance from the southern NGO, perhaps in a further collaboration between the latter and a different northern NGO or funder or perhaps as a result of the southern NGO being perceived as sufficiently credible among the local population and able to draw on or invest its own resources.

Institutional development is seen as integral to both the absorbing of aid and the executing of development assistance. It is possible, however, that institutional development will draw resources away from the immediate meeting of local needs. Indeed, in Mali and Niger, where needs and organizational constraints are both great, institutional development may require significant resources and a longer time line -- which could result in opportunity costs to the local community. Nonetheless, it is believed that institutional development is necessary in addressing and meeting longer-term needs, that it can promote permanence in support for and advocacy of the poor and that it is essential in the shaping of a better-balanced and more productive state-society relationship.

A growing number of analysts concur. Rondinelli (1990:496) notes that civic institutions at the national and community level can become strong counter-vailing forces, able to save people from the irrationalities and adversities of unfettered markets and unfettered governments. Blaikie (1985:155) makes a case for

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Chapter One - Introduction

Alarmist discourse has worked its way centre stage in the debate on the African crisis, both in locating and understanding the causes of the crisis and in formulating and implementing strategies for recovery. Comments from many journals reflect varying and increasing degrees of 'Afropessimism.' Former Nigerian head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, warned recently of the continent becoming "the Third World's Third World" (Joseph, 1990:28). Senegalese President Abdou Diouf, speaking at the Fourth Francophone Summit in Paris in November, 1991, sounded an alarm over the shipwreck of Africa "sinking further into a deep crisis" (ARB-P, 1991:10328). Indeed, when one reflects upon the many obstacles with which Africa is faced, from large public debts to an increasingly fragile environmental base to declining per capita food production, whatever developmental efforts that are undertaken can appear small and insignificant relative to the continent's needs. Indeed, such efforts, even when they are carried out, often are circumscribed by an overlay of discouragement or even resignation.

This study looks at the contribution that international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make in one region of Africa -- the Western Sahel[1] -- in seeking to ameliorate the discourse of despair that has taken hold. It examines how

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[1]In this study, the Sahel refers to the Western Sahel, that is, the countries of Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mali and Niger.

northern and southern NGOs, when forming a partnership and undertaking to work together on a specific development program, seek to promote local-level development.[2] Indeed, the NGO/aid environments of Mali and Niger -- where primary research for this study was conducted -- as well as the four case studies that were chosen offer comparatively interesting insights into an analysis of the possibilites and limitations of NGO partnerships.

This study examines the significance of NGO partnerships in fostering local-level development in Mali and Niger. Collaborative efforts in non-governmental development assistance are seen as essential in allowing for a larger pool of resources and complementary knowledge to enhance the realizing of efficiency and effectiveness in the meeting of objectives. Ideologically and in light of much paternalism in both the defining and delivery of development assistance in the past, it is also more appropriate for a northern NGO to work in close partnership with a southern organization staffed by individuals who already have significant and place-specific technical skills. As Hyden notes, northern NGOs can potentially play a catalytic role in strengthening these skills and accelerating the growth of social capital resident in its partner agency by providing credit, management services and institutional development support (Hyden, 1991a:79)

Indeed, NGO partnership can allow for the institutional

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[2]For reasons that will be made apparent in the course of this study, not all southern non-state development organizations are NGOs in the legal sense of the term.

development of southern organizations which would continue to operate after a partnership has been phased out. Community members could potentially find continued support and monitoring assistance from the southern NGO, perhaps in a further collaboration between the latter and a different northern NGO or funder or perhaps as a result of the southern NGO being perceived as sufficiently credible among the local population and able to draw on or invest its own resources.

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A growing number of analysts concur. Rondinelli (1990:496) notes that civic institutions at the national and community level can become strong counter-vailing forces, able to save people from the irrationalities and adversities of unfettered markets and unfettered governments. Blaikie (1985:155) makes a case for

cohesive, participatory decision-taking peasant groups to control soil erosion and monitor and improve land and resource management. Otto (1991) from his study of NGOs in the Sahel notes that local institutional development can contribute to natural resource management and effective and appropriate user-based governance. And finally, as Brinkerhoff and Garcia-Zamor add, "strong institutions enhance people's abilities to solve problems and undertake development action and reduce over time their dependence on externally provided aid" (1986:3).

Institutional development[3] is understood in this study as being

> the dymanic process by which an organization learns and becomes increasingly capable of delivering goods and services and influencing, adapting to and drawing resources from a continually changing environment. (see Long *et al.*, 1991:124)[4]

Although in the course of an NGO partnership, institutional development needs to be perceived as a 'two-way street,' and a

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[3]This study recognizes the discussion in the literature on organizational relative to institutional development. Esman (1991:133) makes some of the clearest distinctions. Organizations are technical instruments or means to an end. They do not become institutions "until they are perceived within their own ranks and relevant publics as embodying norms of behaviour and serving values that are widely respected in society." Uphoff (in Blase, 1986:324) adds that an institution is more than an organization in that "it attracts support and legitimacy from its environment so that it can better perform its functions and services. This is the essential dynamic of Institution Building."

[4]The definition given by Long *et al* is the basis of the one given here. That one reads: institutional development "is a dynamic process of becoming a 'learning' organization capable of influencing, and adapting to, a continually changing environment."

process by which both partners become more effective and efficient in their use of human and financial resources, the focus of this study is limited for the most part to its occurence in Mali and Niger. This limits the analysis of the northern NGO to its national office. Ideally and in a truly transparent relationship, the southern partner should be aware and supportive of its northern partner's initiatives in fund-raising, education, objective-setting and internal policy and given opportunity to contribute to its design. Here, however, the focus is on learning, adapting and influencing in the context of a changing environment (social, economic, political and physical). As a result, the case studies accord significant consideration to three specific but related aspects of institutional development: institutional strengthening, learning, and the development of civil society.

The study is framed in an awareness both of the constraints and vulnerabilities of the Sahel and of the potential and limitations of NGOs to operate and assist effectively and efficiently. The foundation or canvas, so to speak, on which this study seeks to analyze national NGO emergence and NGO partnership is that of state/society relations. An awareness of the evolvement of state/society configuration in both Mali and Niger and how it has shaped ideology and political culture is deemed critical in demarcating the environment, the constraints and the opportunities that are faced by NGOs collaborating together. Such an awareness is also crucial in discerning the significance that

NGO partnership has for promoting local and sustainable institutional development.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study is as follows:

> To what extent -- if at all -- do international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitate local-level rural development as desired and pursued by those NGOs and/or local community associations with whom they work in partnership?

The research question needed to be modified somewhat to allow for case study analyses to be conducted in Niger. Here, the particular and historic configuration of national NGO formation and state hegemony have served to severely limit the emergence of North-South NGO partnerships.[5] Nonetheless, research was conducted in Niger so as to show clearly the contrasting opportunities and constraints of the present NGO environment in Mali and in Niger as well as the possibilities for future NGO partnerships in the two countries. Moreover, the two case studies chosen in Niger -- although not North-South partnerships between legally-recognized and non-profit making NGOs -- offer important empirical insights for the rationale, design and implementation of NGO partnerships.

A secondary set of research questions sought to shed light

[5]North-South NGO partnerships did exist in Niger at the time of the study but they were either in an embryonic form or were partnerships of the type where the international NGO partner is not based in Niger but in another Sahelian, European or North American location.

the motivations and expectations of northern and southern NGOs which sought to enter into a strategic partnership. Members of international NGOs seeking to partner with a national NGO were asked why they sought to do so, what criteria they had established for selecting partners, what they had to offer and how they expected to learn and benefit from the partnership. Those who were not expecting to form a partnership with a national NGO or participate in additional partnerships were also asked for their reasons and perspectives. Representatives of national NGOs seeking such a collaboration were asked what contributions or resources they could offer, what they expected to gain and learn from it and what, if any, criteria they had in entering into a given partnership. The responses given in Mali and Niger to this secondary set of questions helped to construct an understanding not only of the perceptions of NGO actors on partnership but of the potential for NGO partnership development in these two countries to occur.

Research Methods[6]

Three techniques were used to collect data for this study. The first was simply a reading of written material on the subject. This included secondary source material available in North American libraries as well as more specific, primary

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[6]By research methods, the reference is to techniques that are used for gathering evidence; this is somewhat different from what is understood by 'methodology,' that is, "a theory and analysis of how research should proceed" (Harding, 1987:2).

material relevant to the case studies and the particular NGO cultures of Mali and Niger. The second technique for gathering evidence was that of formal and informal interviews of NGO representatives, community members, government officials or other development workers, researchers and consultants. Although questions had been prepared in advance, the interviews often turned into discussions or became action-research in method -- that is, formulating questions and concerns in light of previous responses and discussion. The third technique involved observation, that is, the day to day, purposive or non-purposive absorbing of impressions -- of partner relations, relationships between the NGO representatives and community members in the project area, and of openness to discuss project and partnership developments.

Seven months (May to November, 1991) were spent in Mali and Niger. Part of the seven months were spent learning of the concerns and perspectives of the Northern and Southern NGO community members and of the historically-developed constraints and opportunities specific to the Malian and Nigerien NGO environments. A larger part of the field research was dedicated to case study analysis. Two case studies from Mali and two from Niger were 'chosen' to provide the necessary empirical data for the study. The choice of the case studies, however, was for the most part a process of elimination: in order to construct an analysis of an NGO partnership, there needed to be sufficient data generated over several years; there needed to be a

willingness on the part of the NGO representatives to discuss the project and partnership at length and make available relevant documentation; and there needed to be a certain amount of openness in allowing a researcher to visit the project site and discuss with community members their thoughts about the partnership.

The material used for the case studies is based on project documents[7], interviews with administrative staff of the participating NGOs and field personnel/extension officers and discussions with local state officials as to their perceptions of the partnership and projects. Several days were spent in each of the villages discussing the partnership, primarily with administrators of the local community organization/village association/cooperative. All of these occasions provided ample opportunity for understanding some of the more visible dynamics and difficulties that occur in partnership.

A number of methodological concerns and weaknesses can be mentioned. First among these were the difficulties encountered in simply trying to understand the NGO environments of Mali and Niger as independently as possible from the many interpretations that are held by different actors within these environments. Not only is NGO activity and partnership in both countries a

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[7]Most of the project documents, it should be noted, are documents emananting from the northern NGOs. This is due to the relatively freer access granted to their files, a better storage and retrieval system and a larger availability of reports and field narratives. Documents made available by the national NGOs were mostly annual reports written for government officials, partner organizations and funding agencies.

veritable laboratory of experimentation, there also has developed a large amount of interpretive estimating as to which partnerships were effective and which national NGOs would develop greater legitimacy and capability. Acknowledging that research itself is interpretive, the reality in this respect may have become further distanced as a result of having to overlay the research on top of interpretations of others who may have been informed, at least in part, by the interpretations, scepticisms and biases of still others.

A second weakness became increasingly apparent as the field research progressed. The realization grew that the scope of the data-gathering was too wide, encompassing an analysis of four case studies in two countries as well as an understanding of the NGO environments and the different perspectives held by different actors. It became obvious that there were 'thin spots' in the research. One was the neglect to make purposive and more lengthy contact with rural Malians and Nigeriens outside of the project area and who had not benefited from the presence of the partnership even though the strengthening of inter-community development strategies may have been part of the initial project design. A second thin spot was the absence of a structured or consistent approach to gauging community member support of the project and appreciation of the partnering agencies. An effort as such would have presented a more revealing picture of how sustainable and enabling the partnership process really was for them and of what tangible or distributive benefits resulted.

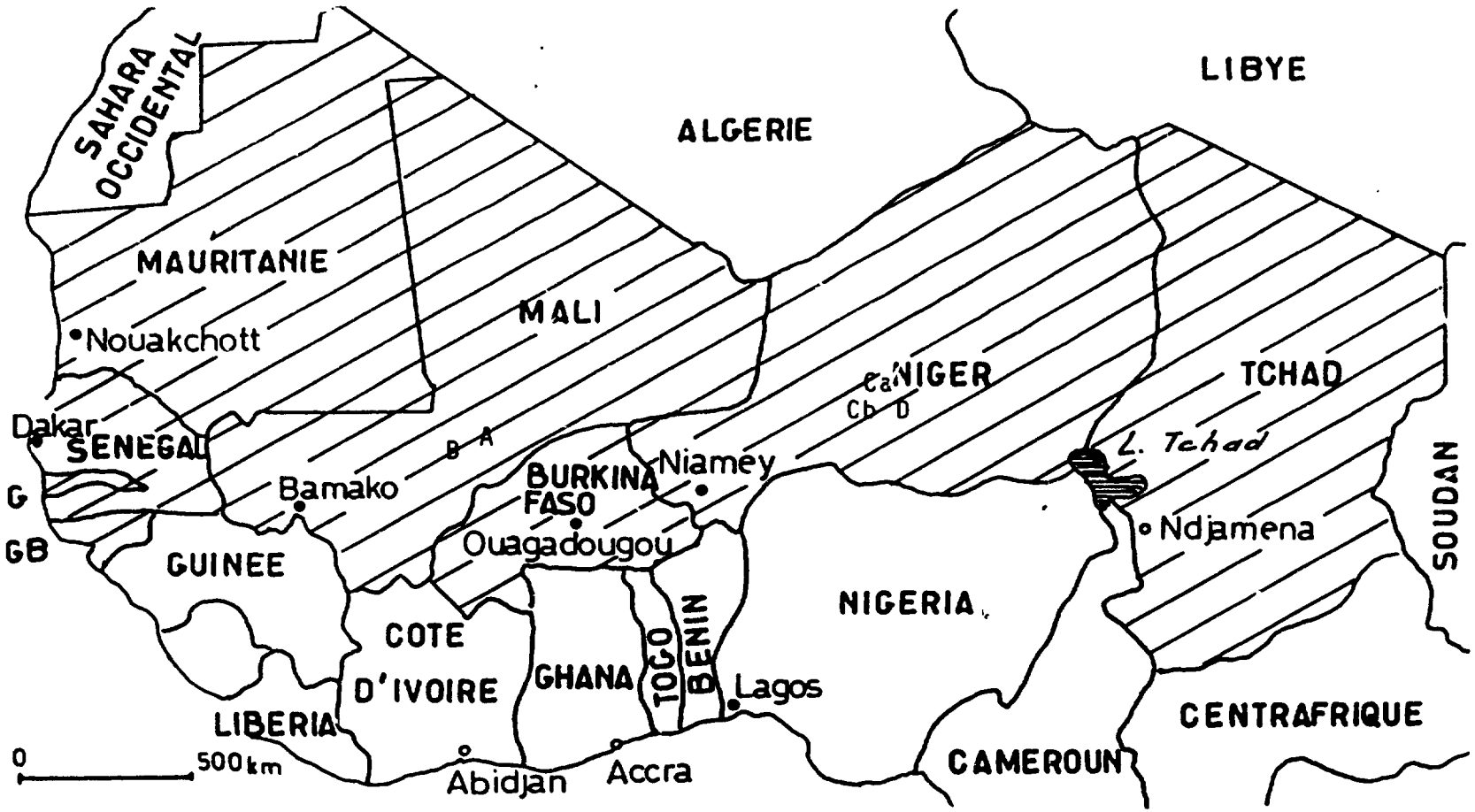
A third methodological weakness became evident during the field research and particularly as the data was being processed. It became clear to a large extent that what was being learned was a function of what I was being told either verbally or in the documents that were selectively made available for the research. Only one of the NGOs in the case studies granted open, unassisted access to their project files. As well, in the case-study project sites, working through a translator or one of the NGO field workers invariably modified responses. And finally, the opportunity for the NGO or community to 'dress up' for the occasion of a visit by an external observer also allowed for an element of distortion or artificiality. This was inevitable in that pre-planned visits especially in Niger, and particularly when conducting research, are a matter of courtesy and protocol. Nonetheless, this also contributed to further distance the real picture from the research.

Chapter Outline

This study includes nine chapters. The second, or following, chapter looks at the severe constraints and vulnerabilities that face not only the people of the Sahel but the northern and southern NGOs seeking to work there. NGOs, although they possess the potential to be significant promoters of institutional development and support local initiatives, are nonetheless circumscribed by their own often intrinsic limitations to be as effective and efficient as they and others perceive them to be.

The third chapter discusses the twentieth-century evolvement of state-society relations in Mali and Niger. These provide an essential backdrop in which to adequately perceive and understand civil society and institutional development today. Although the chapter's contents are divided into pre- and post-independence time periods, the break is rather artificial in that current state/society relations and state and non-state institutional development need to be seen with reference to the wider span and ongoing developments of the twentieth century. The fourth chapter looks at both the opportunities presented by current state-society realignment in Niger and Mali for national NGOs and NGOs seeking to work in partnership as well as the benefits that a well-designed and well-implemented partnership can have for institutional development.

The fifth through the eighth chapters look at specific case studies of partnership. (See Map 1.1 for location of the communities where the partnerships operated.) The first two chapters look at two different cases where northern NGOs are working with Malian NGOs. In the first instance, one Malian NGO is partnering with a British NGO in a small nomadic resettlement initiative near Mopti; in the second, three Malian NGOs are collaborating with one Canadian NGO in the Mangha plain of the inner Niger delta and very near to the historic city of Djenne; The seventh and eighth chapters look at two cases of partnership in Niger. Neither case represents a formal NGO partnership. Yet both have much to offer to NGOs working in partnership and



Map 1.1: The Sahel

(SUCO, 1990a:13)

A. Projet Missira
B. Projet Manghadie
C. Clusa - Cooperatives
   a. Tamaske
   b. Roukouzoum
D. Foyer Féminin de Keita

seeking to strengthen their own effectiveness and visibility. The first looks at the institutional support given by an American cooperative agency to a number of rural cooperatives in central Niger; the second examines a partnership of mutual learning and awareness-building between a women's group from Quebec and a women's association in Niger.

The ninth and final chapter offers a number of conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the case-study partnerships in facilitating and promoting local institutional development and community-level delivery and service. It goes on to mention several of the general concerns raised by northern and southern NGO representatives as well as by other aid representatives regarding the prospects for NGO partnership in Mali and Niger. The chapter concludes by widening the analysis beyond the practical lessons of the case studies and the dominant observations of the NGO/aid environments within Mali and Niger to include comments and perceptions from other observers as to the relevance, the complexities and the future of partnership, particularly insofar as it can promote institutional development.

Chapter Two

Regional Constraints and NGO Potential

Although a number of research questions were employed to guide the gathering or collection of data, there were also two starting points that served to orient the understanding or processing of that data. The significance of these 'points de départ' was confirmed throughout the period of field research. Ample consideration needs to be given to how they shape and circumscribe the opportunities for NGO partnerships to facilitate institutional development and help to realize local initiatives. The first is an awareness of the resource constraints and vulnerabilities of the Sahel itself; the second is an awareness of the potential but also the limitations of NGOs to contribute to the meeting of community and regional needs.

This chapter will discuss the relevance of these two points. First, it will discuss very broadly some of the contextual difficulties that are particular to the Sahel. Those that are mentioned are mostly of an economic and climatic nature but they are important to this study in that they frame the environment in which southern and northern non-governmental development agencies work. Although the study's focus is Mali and Niger, several of the more intransigent problems pertaining to the region in general will be drawn out, the implication being that regional studies and region-wide constraints bear heavily upon its member countries. Second, the chapter will look at the heightened interest in and importance of NGO activity in Africa and the

Sahel as well as the possible and, sometimes, inherent limitations of their effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to overall development needs and goals. Just as the region presents many potential and real difficulties to the meeting of development needs, so too do the character and limitations of NGOs create potential and often real obstacles to the realization of community-defined goals.

The Sahel

In the West African Sahel, it is a fact that NGOs are growing in visibility and importance but it is also apparent that the geographical context in which they operate is increasingly beset with woes on both a macro and micro scale. Whereas Sahelian governments are plagued with fiscal and current account crises which threaten their ability to survive and govern, much of the Sahelian population is faced with problems of finding enough food or cash, threatening their ability to survive and stay healthy. Indeed the two are linked. The state needs the revenue and production of the peasantry in order to survive but, in so doing, it diminishes the amount of resources upon which the peasant can draw in order for him or her to maintain basic subsistence.

Total external debt grew in the Sahel by 2000% from 1970 to 1987 (Cross, 1990:20). Commodity prices and depressed demand for groundnuts and uranium have contributed to decreased export purchasing power. Membership in the West African Monetary Union, in which most Francophone Sahelian states participate, guarantees

some degree of economic predictability and stability but diminishes the competitiveness of export products. In early, 1991, some policy analysts estimated that the CFA franc was overvalued by 40%, especially given the significant recent devaluation of the currencies of Nigeria and Ghana. In effect, for these two countries, production costs have decreased relative to the Sahelian countries using the CFA franc. Even though there continues to be effective import demand in the Sahel for consumer goods and technology, some of its more important exports, such as milk and meat, are becoming increasingly uncompetitive on a regional basis (Delgado, 1991:108).

For the Sahel, the shipment of subsidized meat and milk by the European Community[1] and of meat by Latin America has cut deeply into the market share of its producers. In Côte-d'Ivoire, for example, the Sahelian market share has fallen from the historical mean of 85% to less than 40% (ibid). One of the reasons for this lies in the Sahel itself where heightened pressures on land by farmers and pastoralists alike have resulted in a rupture of the socio-ecological balance and, relatedly, greater difficulties in increasing production. Fragile soils are not given the regenerative fallow time they need.

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[1]M.B. Barry (1992: 21-23) notes that beef imports from the EC increased from 8000 tons in 1984 to 30,000 tons in 1988. Heavily subsidized shipments allow for an import price of 165 CFA/kg at Abidjan whereas meat funnelled in through north and central Côte-d'Ivoire is sold at 830/kg. Regional producers' share of the beef market has decreased from 66% in 1975 to 29% in 1988. These figures are significant for Mali and Niger where livestock sales to the coastal countries have historically been very important to their economies.

Biotechnological research that has brought increased yields to other developing countries has not been similarly successful in the Sahel, partly because of lack of smallholder purchasing power, the survival risk that new seeds entail for the farmer, the particularity of pest regimes, rural infrastructural deficiencies and the lack of location-specific research and extension. Increased competition between and among herders and farmers for a diminishing resource base usually entails high costs for both: the herder not being able to access enough forage and fodder throughout the year and the farmer not being able to produce enough food for consumption, let alone commercial or export purposes.

Food imports have been supplying a rising share of food supplies for the population of the Western Sahel. Net food imports have been increasing at over 10% per annum. In the 1985/87 period, it was estimated that food aid amounted to 33% of food imports and 10% of food consumption. On an aggregate level, food self-sufficiency in the Sahel, measured in calories/capita/day, has declined from 115% in the 1960/65 period to 82% in the 1985/87 period (IUCN, 1989:70-73). Indeed, a process of agricultural involution has set in, in which decreasing returns per hectare of land are coupled with an increasing amount of labour employed per unit of land.

Climatic variability remains high in the Sahel as well. The Sahel has suffered from two decades of chronically low rainfall. From the early 1960s to 1987, average rainfall has decreased as a

percent of departure from the long-term mean, quite unlike the scenario for the rest of Africa (Nicholson, 1989:49,55). Since the late 1960s, there has been a 20-40% decline in average annual rainfall with the rainy season averaging 22-27 days shorter than long term averages (Arnould, 1990:339). Moreover, whereas there is a 10% chance that rainfall may vary more than 20% in a given year in the West African coastal countries, the likelihood increases to 50% for the Sahelian countries (Delahanty, 1988:49). The variability of rainfall within one season creates possibilities for excessive dry stretches, dessicating millet and maize stalks in mid-season, or very wet periods, where the soil becomes soaked and weeding difficult to undertake. In western Niger, the 1991 rainy season saw both scenarios: in spite of higher-than-average rainfall, the millet yield was much lower than previous seasons; in south-west Niger, farmers in the first month of the wet season were praying for the rains to stop, so as they could tend to their fields and rebuild their homes.

The uncertainty of climate and rainfall has a number of implications for the people of the Sahel. It can serve to compromise existing cropping and grazing strategies and contribute to increased land clearing and resource depletion. This in turn brings about aeolian and alluvial soil erosion and a reduced capacity of the environment to regenerate (Arnould:340). Second, the insecurity brought about by climatic patterns in the Sahel can encourage distress migration to the cities, to the coast, to the uranium mines of north Niger and, significantly,

away from the rural areas where the periods of planting, weeding and harvesting remain crucial times during which household labour is high in demand. Third, a reduced vegetative cover, triggered in part by rainfall shortages, contributes to the 'albedo effect.' Land, stripped of vegetation, reflects heat and can inhibit cloud formation. Less rain and less soil moisture lead to a greater loss of vegetative cover and an increase in desertification (Cross and Barker, 1991:vii-viii). And fourth, the interaction between climate, environment and people has also played a part in exacerbating tenure conflict over resources.[2]

> In much of Sahelian Africa, tenure rights are no longer clear cut... [Generally] traditional systems of temporally and spatially overlapping land tenure rights and land use have broken down as the number and variety of available econiches contracts, populations expand, urban elites assert control over rural resources and the environment is desertified and degraded. (Arnould:340).

Tenure insecurity and competition for even marginally fertile land by farmers and herders seeking to survive and having only limited material and human resources creates conditions for "resource mining without reinvestment (ibid.).

Diallo refers to a "structural food shortage" in the region (1989:45). In a changing environmental and demographic context, most Sahelian countries, Diallo notes, can only supply from 150 to 170 kgs of millet and 15 grams of animal protein per person. Relative to the optimum, this represents a shortfall of about 100

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[2]Tenure conflict can result as well from varying interpretations of different legal codes emanating from the state, the Koran, and local custom. Efforts in Niger are underway to codify in (state) law rights to land.

kg of millet per day and 6 grams of animal protein per day. It also underscores the food dependent position in which the Sahel finds itself relative to neighbouring and industrialized countries.

For Jean Copans, this is part of the external reliance of the region and is tantamount in the long run to "destructive dependence" (1975:26). It is especially so given that industrialization in the Sahel in the 1980s has been going through an acute crisis, with production declining, factories being shut down or operating far below capacity and foreign capital pulling out (Giri, 1990:7). French private investment in sub-Saharan Africa, which in the early 1980s amounted to about US$350 million per year, had, by the late 1980s, fallen by 20 to 25% according to official sources. A 1990 survey by the French Employer's Council found that the rate of disinvestment from the franc zone is on the rise: in the 1990-92 period, 32% of French investors expected to scale down their African operations while another 48% did not plan any new investment (Bentsi-Enchill, 1990:19). Indeed, conditions conducive to industrialization are not high in the Sahel. There is practically no current domestic market for industrial products and labour productivity in the region is low. Factors of production, such as electricity and water, can only be supplied at a high cost (Giri:8-9). Transport costs for bulky items in the Sahel, even on paved roads, are also high relative to costs in the coastal countries (Delgado, 1991:106).

There remains a gap between what the Sahel can supply and the amount of demand that may exist for its products. The region could supply more milk and meat to local and regional markets but constraints of financially accessible technology, limited domestic purchasing power, a weak transport infrastructure, low labour productivity, and high production factor costs work against such a realization. An overvalued regional currency and international subsidies for meat and dairy products also contribute to effectively maintaining or even widening this gap. Exports of millet, sorghum and maize from the Sahel to coastal countries are hampered by increased use of hybrid maize (especially in Nigeria and Ghana), the growing debt and production crises that these coastal countries face, and shifts in consumption patterns, particularly in the urban areas to rice and wheat. For the Sahel, investment costs in expanding irrigation of rice and wheat are on average four times as high as in Asia, due to less favourable water resources and the high cost of imported, non-locally available materials (Cross, 1990:25).

Yet another gap exists, that between the Sahel and the international community in general. As global trade and production revolve more and more around medium and high technology and around service- and knowledge-intensive economic activity, the Sahelian economy remains mired in low and, perhaps, only marginally-increasing labour productivity. Even informal production and services and informal cross-border trade circuits, although dynamic and much more a semblance of regional economic

activity than the patterns planted by colonialism, are hampered by low labour productivity and remain dependent on formal sector growth and foreign capital inflows.

Official development assistance (ODA) to the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought-Prevention (CILSS) has increased significantly. (CILSS comprises Niger, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde.) Aid commitments in 1988 were US$2963 million, more than double those of the average committed in the years 1980-1982. This amounts to $59 per inhabitant of the CILSS countries, twice that of the $29 per inhabitant for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole (Club du Sahel, 1990a). However, annual debt repayments consume on average 35% of aid receipts. And whereas aid packages constituted 6% of the Gross National Product (GNP) for Sub-Saharan Africa in the mid-1980s, the figure was 25% in the case of the CILSS countries (Cross, 1990:20). These figures show not only the significance of ODA for the Sahel but also the dependency of the region on ODA receipts.

Foreign aid fills some of the gaps that were mentioned above: it finances the excess in public and private consumption over domestic production; put differently, it purchases the consumer and capital goods that the Sahel does not produce (OECD, 1988). Yet it is symptomatic of the difficulties with which the region is beset. There is great dependence on both foreign capital flows and on external demand for exportable goods, such as livestock products and commodities such as cotton and

groundnuts. Sahelians remain in a very vulnerable position, facing numerous constraints and numerous difficulties in being able to successfully and independently chart and control their own future. Perhaps it is best to listen to the words of a Nigerien farmer and a Nigerien (former) pastoralist, Sahelians for whom these constraints and vulnerabilities are a lived experience:

> Our land is turning to desert and trees are being destroyed to clear the land for agriculture. Look at that hill over there. In the old days it was not visible because the bushes were so thick. Today you can see it even when you are lying down.
>
> Today, now that most of our cattle have died, we are obliged to farm the land. Those who have lost their animals now waste much time dreaming about how they can reconstitute their herds. (Cross, 1990)

This brief picture of the Sahel does not purport to be analytic or historical. It says little of the mechanisms of distribution that condition access to food and productive resources and how and why these mechanisms have changed. As well, it does not discuss in any depth the uneven benefits that monetization and capitalism have had among people of the Sahel. Although the vast majority of the Sahel's population are asset-poor, there are subtle but important distinctions that have been brought about by civil service employment, formal education credentials, and ethnic affiliation and access to and control of, for example, the state or inter-regional trade networks. These too have contributed to a destructuring of Sahelian societies and an accumulation of tensions (OECD, 1988) within and between groups, whether these groups be predicated on class, ethnicity,

gender, kinship or household. What has emerged is economic stratification and resource competition between and within communities and households in the Sahel. As economic and social pressures within the household accumulate, they accelerate trends toward fissioning into smaller, more vulnerable households -- a process that is clearly evident among the Hausa in Niger (Arnould, 1990:341; Delahanty, 1988). Tensions between collective and individual self-interest have resulted. Changed and changing socio-economic conditions have favoured the addressing and advancing of individual interests over those of the collective. The diminished importance of addressing collective needs and interests or of meeting individual and household needs through inter- or intra-community cooperation can work against local institutional development.

Yet effective local institutional development remains an attainable goal, as was evident from discussions with national NGO representatives in Mali and Niger and community members and organizers from the villages visited. Villagers in particular were excited about developing institutional forms which would meet both individual and community needs. Tensions do exist but perhaps it is necessary for these tensions to be acknowledged, understood and drawn upon for a positive purpose. For institutional development to take place in the changed circumstances of the developing world, there needs to be, as one analyst of development management noted, a "creative tension between forces which provide stability and those which drive

change" (Korten in White, 1987:173). Perhaps non-state actors -- NGOs -- are in a good position to address these tensions and struggles through their programs and partnerships. It is to them that we now turn.

NGOs

There is indeed a semblance of euphoria as to the contribution and relevance of NGO activity in Africa. The media see NGO activity as being 'good copy' and the public perceive their work as a grassroots presence and as growing out of altruism and humanitarianism. Staff members and volunteers are seen as committed while the administratively-light NGO approach is perceived as a far better alternative than that of big government (Clark, 1991:52). Funders may be inclined to finance NGO activities to a greater extent now than in the past. Northern NGOs collectively now transfer more funds to the South than does the World Bank group (Clark:3). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted that net grants from NGOs rose from less than $800 million in 1982 to $1.4 billion in 1989, making up more than half of the total private flows to Africa. Also, in the latter part of the decade, public flows were providing another $1.5 billion per year (AR, September, 1991:42). The increased financial flows through NGOs have translated to a plethora of NGO activity in the field, so much so that one observer commented on the veritable "agencification" of the Sahel (Cross, 1990:20). In Mali alone, the number of legally-registered

NGOs has increased from 30 in 1982 to 120 in 1985 to 250 in 1991.

Numerous conferences in the past several years on the African continent give evidence of the more prominent role now being played by NGOs. At the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, held in February, 1990 in Arusha, Tanzania, participants agreed that a new era needed to emerge, one in which democracy, accountability, economic justice and development for transformation would be granted much more importance. The initiative for the conference came from the submission of the NGOs to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the mid-term review (September, 1988) and assessment of the implementation of the United Nations Program of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD). Among the recommendations of the Arusha Charter was a call for NGOs and grass-roots organizations to be recognized as valuable in the development process and instrumental in promoting effective and open dialogue with government policy-makers (UNECA, 1990:26-27). The Arusha Charter was subsequently adopted by both the Organization of African Unity and the the General Assembly of the United Nations.

A regional conference in Segou, Mali, in May, 1989, sought to underscore the importance of local participation, information-sharing, land tenure and ecological rehabilitation. It was organized jointly by the Club du Sahel and CILSS and was unique in that it invited rural Sahelians to participate and provide

input into the conference proceedings. Here, however, NGO representatives were grouped together with members of the international community in general. Jonothan Otto of InterAction commented that NGOs were not involved in the Segou process even though they were very active in natural resource management in the Sahel, the overarching theme of the conference. "Their exclusion could not be justified," he noted (Haramata No. 6:4-5). Eighteen months later, however, in November, 1990, CILSS and the Club announced that NGOs would be invited from then on to join the 'After-Segou process.' In order to follow up on the Segou recommendations, there would no longer be a 'trialog' between Sahelian governments, Sahelian rural organizations and donor agencies but a 'quadrilog' in which NGO participants would also be integrated as a partner (Haramata No. 7:4).

NGO potential is being promoted in many quarters. The World Bank, too, is stepping up efforts to encourage the involvement of NGOs in the activities it supports. The Bank notes in a 1990 report that "opportunities are growing for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to work together with governments and intergovernmental institutions in helping people improve the quality of their lives" (World Bank, 1990:5). As the significance of NGOs grows, so too is the notion and need of NGO collaboration. Partnership between northern and southern non-state institutions doing development work has existed for decades but it is only recently that analysts and practitioners are trying to give clarity to the concept. Partnership Africa-Canada

(PAC) in 1989, with research support from the Pan African Institute for Development, has sought to define 'partnership' in terms of mutual respect and trust, transparency and reciprocal accountability and as a relationship which favours a two-way exchange of information and joint decision-making (PAC, 1989:12-13). The Africa Partnership Project defined partnership as "building the appropriate tools, mechanisms and climates for linking people together" (Ndiaye and Hammock, 1991:2),.

"Partnership and Popular Participation in the Management of Natural Resources in the Sahel" was the title of another seminar, held in Lévis, Québéc in November, 1990. It was co-organized by Solidarité Canada-Sahel and the American NGO consortium, PACT (Private Agencies Collaborating Together). The intention of this conference was to discuss the role of NGOs and specifically, the potential for north-south NGO partnership in addressing the concerns raised by the Ségou conference eighteen months earlier. A common thread that underlay the recommendations that came out of Lévis was the belief that a collaborative approach between northern and southern NGOs would be a substantial aid in promoting popular participation and effective natural resource management.

A conference in January, 1991, sponsored by the Fondation de France and held in Cotonou, Benin, promoted this similar theme. Without detracting from the overall importance of NGO partnership in the enhancement of people-centered development, the conferees also recommended that northern NGOs be active in promoting

development education and policy advocacy work and that southern NGOs seek to participate and strengthen south-south cooperation networks. Both northern and southern NGOs need to be proactive in influencing media representation and in revitalizing civil society through the broadening and strengthening of channels of communication between rural groups and the state.

One of the development groups participating in Cotonou and in several of the others mentioned above is the Forum for African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO). It emerged following a continent-wide meeting of African NGOs in May-June, 1987 in Dakar. The conference took place several months after the Overseas Development Institute and the Journal of World Development meeting in which international NGO representatives called for "a *genuine* partnership between northern and southern NGOs to replace previous dependence, mistrust and paternalism" (Drabek, 1987:x). Southern representatives in particular emphasized the need for core funding to replace project financing but also that development in their countries was primarily their responsibility. FAVDO's May-June conference provided a forum of encounter for the NGOs participating and it laid the groundwork for further networking, between African NGOs themselves and with state and northern NGO representatives. In a follow-up meeting of FAVDO's Governing Council in July, 1987, it was agreed that FAVDO would serve to provide a platform for coordination, cooperation and mutual support among African NGOs (Johnson and Johnson, 1990). FAVDO is the only continent-wide NGO network created and

managed by Africans, carrying a mandate of seeking to facilitate to emergence and strengthening of indigenous African NGOs (Robinson, 1989:43-44).

NGOs are certainly playing a more prominent role in African and Sahelian development discourse and activities. Moreover, they are increasingly determined to have a voice in policy formulation and in elaborating how ODA can be best channeled to the continent. Tim Brodhead, former Executive Director of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), said at the time of the UN-PAAERD review in 1988 that NGO participation in the proceedings had markedly increased. "In 1986, we were banging on the doors. This time around we pushed and the doors opened." (Brister, 1988:30). In 1986, a group of African and northern NGOs had contributed a "Declaration of NGOs on the African Economic and Social Crisis" to the UN's special session on Africa, at which time UN-PAAERD was launched but it took several years before their credibility in policy analysis would be established and their input sought. Since then, NGO representatives have been sharpening their advocacy efforts and have become more influential in setting policy priorities as well as in promoting further partnership and awareness-building, both in the north and in the south. The Background Documentation for the NGO position paper, Beyond UNPAAERD: From Talk to Action, presented at the September, 1991 final review of the UN-PAAERD program demonstrates clarity and sophistication of argument.

Much of the optimism over the strategic relevance of NGOs

that has come out of various fora of discussion in the past half-decade finds somewhat of a parallel in the writings that have been done on the strengths of NGOs. In the 1980s, much attention was paid to the potential of NGOs as an alternative conduit of development assistance. Part of this can be explained by the widespread public belief that bilateral and multilateral channels of ODA had been too capital-centered and that they have largely failed to meet the needs and help realize the potential of developing countries. There is growing disillusionment with the promises held out by modernization or trickle-down development theory. Northern and southern NGOs are felt to be more innovative and better positioned to address the concerns raised by the poor. Northern NGOs offer a small-scale, people-centered approach to development whereas southern NGOs are more closely attuned to the more place-specific issues of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and existing patterns of distribution and accumulation.

The increasing importance of popular participation in at least the theory if not always the practice of development work has had implications for NGOs as well. The practice of participation in rural development, for example, has been shown to be beneficial both in terms of valorising the indigenous knowledge and technical skills of the farmers, herders, artisans or others living in the countryside as well as in enhancing long-term program effectiveness and efficiency. For example, a number of NGOs have developed a well-recognized expertise in certain

areas of activity, such as water harvesting or soil conservation. As well, NGO salaries are also comparatively smaller than those of larger official agencies: one analyst refers to a 2:1 differential between salaries of government agency personnel and those of NGO representatives (Thièren, 1991:273). But even laying aside the gains that may be earned through a program in which there is a lower-cost management structure and in which there is wide local contribution, participation can be an empowering experience in and of itself, in terms of strengthening solidarity networks and community confidence. The increased amount of NGO activity has helped to promote such an ideal.

The re-think that has taken place over the need and benefits of participation has also had spill-over effects onto how NGOs are perceived. Being smaller in scale and thus easier to administrate and being motivated by a more humanitarian and less political orientation, NGOs are seen as more willing and able to work with men and women at community-level, where the physical and socio-economic needs are most pronounced. A UN-NGO conference in 1988 noted that "NGOs can play a key role as catalysts and channels of participation" (in Shaw, 1990:12). Hyden notes that NGO staff are closer to the poorer sections of society than is the government, allowing them to develop an affinity and empathy with them and become better aware of local customs, values and farming practices (Hyden, 1983:120). Also, being closer to the people, they are best equipped to assure that their interventions are ones that are locally-expressed by the majority of the

community and not just by certain individuals or elite fractions of the community. Chambers adds that a key NGO advantage over government strategies is the ability to act quickly and flexibly (in Bratton, 1989:572). It is for reasons as such that The World Commission on Environment and Development in Our Common Future recommended that high priority be given to NGO activity by all public and private funding sources. In the realization of development needs, increased support for NGO services "represents an indispensable and cost-effective investment" (WCED, 1987:328-9).

NGO potential, however, may often be more imagined than real. Tendler, in her 1982 study, noted that international NGOs "'describe themselves as being good at reaching the poor, as using participatory processes of project implementation, as being innovative and experimental, and as carrying out their projects at low cost'" (in Staudt, 1991:185). However,in her actual analysis of 75 NGO projects in Latin America, she concluded that what exists is "a mixed picture, a combination of relief and development, a management style that ranges from authoritarian to participatory, a distributive approach that ranges from skewed elite/male capture toward wider distribution of benefits" (ibid). Indeed, Tendler and others have pointed at the near-absence of disciplined and comparative evaluations of NGO programs and the tendency for them to present an overly positive picture of their activity in developing countries for the benefit of their home constituencies. Jon Moris noted in 1988 that, after long field experience in the eastern Sahel, the efforts of many NGOs are

poorly organized, lack coordination, reintroduce ideas that have already failed and lack viable new ideas on technology (in Farrington and Biggs, 1990:489). Thomas Dichter, an Oxfam administrator for many years, notes that "NGOs do not always act on what they know. Worse, what is known is not based on much hard data" (Dichter, 1988:177).

A somewhat similar concern is raised by Peter Oakley in his evaluation of popular participation. NGOs, he notes, often promote the picture of a broadly-based participatory development but fail to understand the processes that propel such development from below. "It is a curious situation that, despite their widely acknowledged support of bottom-up processes, few NGO-supported project files capture the essence or the detail of participation, and there appears little concern to understand its methodology, its tactics or its processes (Oakley, 1991:272-3). Sheldon Annis has also analyzed NGO performance in light of the supposed strengths that they offer: He noted that,

> in the face of pervasive poverty 'small scale' can merely mean 'insignificant,' 'politically independent' can mean 'powerless' or 'disconnected,' 'low cost' can mean 'underfinanced' or 'poor quality,' and 'innovative' can mean simply 'temporary' or 'unsustainable.'
> (in Clark, 1991:63)

Thus, although NGOs may have inherent potential strengths as a result of their size, motivation and approach, they may also carry potential shortcomings that result, at least in part, from the presence of such strengths. As well, it is very possible that NGOs seek to promote wide and continually growing community involvement in a particular program but it may happen that the

NGO personnel do not have the methodological tools or resources to carry out on-going participatory evaluations. As far as enhancing rural popular participation is concerned, "NGOs undoubtedly carry the flag, but frustratingly so many of their initiatives have no more than a local impact" (Oakley, 1991:275).

The possibility of northern and southern NGOs working together at community level may help to broaden, lengthen and amplify the impact that a development initiative presents. The northern and southern NGO can each bring strengths and insights to a partnership; in doing so, effectiveness and efficiency can be strengthened. Yet there are inherent weaknesses in such a north-south arrangement, a large one stemming from the all-too-evident fact that financial and other resources flow primarily from the north. This can give a disproportionate weight to the objectives espoused by the northern NGO and can facilitate an atmosphere of paternalism and dependence. Elliott has observed that because northern NGOs receive a large amount of money from governmental or intergovernmental sources or through official co-financing schemes or matched funding programs, they may be very wary of agreeing to a southern NGO's agenda of activism and community empowerment (Elliott, 1987:59). Indeed, in 1986, 37% of NGO revenues came from non-private sources, relative to a figure of 2% in 1970 (Thièren, 1991:268). He noted that "the greater the dependence of northern NGOs on government funding through co-financing, the greater institutional weight is likely to be given to modernization-type projects" (Elliott, 1987:59) What takes

place all too often in an organizational partnership is a

> dialogue of the unequal, and however many claims are made for transparency or mutuality, the reality is -- and is seen to be -- that the donor can do the recipient what the recipient cannot do the donor. There is an assymetry of power that no amount of well-intentioned dialogue can remove (ibid.:65).

It is questionable, then, as to how beneficial the input an international NGO can have in working with African community groups and African NGOs. An important concern is often raised as to how much spread-effect there is to the benefits received by the community in which the project or program took place. Given environmental, demographic and socio-economic variation, it can be difficult to transfer and replicate project experience and benefits from one community to another. As well, an NGO micro-project may be relatively effective in attaining objectives in a given community but relatively inefficient in the use of transportation, material and financial resources needed to do so (Bratton, 1989:572). How relatively sustainable NGO projects are compared to those supported by bilateral or multilateral donors is yet another concern. Empowerment of communities through the medium of organizational partnership is a long-term process in which macro economic and political structures need to be challenged. In this light, the capacity of NGOs to promote and sustain the empowerment of the poor is, according to one observer, naive (Allen, 1990:68). As Bratton noted rather bluntly, "NGOs in Africa face the danger of being oversold" (Bratton, 1989:572).

This study finds a large part of its orientation and

circumscription from the ideas and concerns expressed in the above two sections of this chapter. The first section underscored the insecurity of the Sahelian physical and socio-economic environment and the constraints with which this particular region of Africa is faced. In this region, there are numerous struggles and often conflicting claims made on a diminishing resource base. Moreover, there are macro-realities (among others, debt, high factor costs, regional dependence on ODA, declining and variable rainfall) which have an important bearing on subsistence production. This means that it is all the more difficult for NGO support to make a long-term difference for Sahelian communities and individuals in need.

The second section emphasized that, although NGOs have strengths relative to other actors in the area of development assistance and that NGO partnerships may present additional and longer-term benefits for African communities and African NGOs, the potential for these strengths to be realized is far from certain. Alan Fowler has observed that, indeed, NGOs do have a potential comparative advantage in micro-development, in so far as relations with intended beneficiaries and a more flexible and responsive mode of organization is concerned (Fowler, 1988). However, he notes that, particularly in Africa,

> NGOs have difficulty in realising any substantial degree of their comparative advantage, and in the past their doing so was seldom achieved or tackled in a systematic way.... There is now a realisation that the benefits of NGO comparative advantage have to be organised and worked for, they don't just happen.
> (ibid.:13)

Chapter Three

State-Society Relations

Regional constraints and NGO potential are thus two significant departure points for this study. Yet a further set of constraints and potential is encountered in the realm of state-society relations. The evolving nature of state-society relations in Mali and Niger has served to condition the scope of organizational initiatives outside the purview of the state. Although in varying ways and with varying success, the Malian and Nigerien governments have sought to claim pre-eminence in defining development strategies and in promoting local initiatives. As a result, opportunities for non-national and national NGO activity as well as for NGO partnership have been severely limited. Yet recent developments in the region (the holding of national conferences on democratization, for example) have shown that state/society relations are not fixed and that their reordering opens up possibilities for significant and positive change.

This chapter will briefly discuss how state/society relations in Mali and Niger have evolved. The purpose, however, is not to present a chronological recap or something historically contiguous but, rather, to point out how the socio-political environment in which NGOs working in Mali and Niger has taken the shape it has. Inherent in the discussion is an understanding that the socio-political context offers opportunities and constraints for NGO collaborative strategies and that the structure of the

state in Mali and Niger has permitted disproportionate, albeit still limited, amounts of space for social forces in the two countries to express themselves and attain legitimacy. State/society relations both before and after independence need to be considered, given that the former time period gave much shape and impetus to the latter. For Mali and Niger, Independence did not mark a break or even a major reconfiguration of the state/society alignment. Indeed, an understanding of the fragility or even absence of institutionalization of social forces outside of the state needs to be rooted in an awareness of colonial designs and arrogation. The first section of the chapter, then, will look broadly at the development of state-society relations in colonial Soudan (present day Mali) and Niger. The second section will discuss state/society relations in independant Mali and Niger. At the end of both sections, a number of conclusions will be drawn that are important in understanding the changing socio-political environments in Mali and Niger and how these environments provide a framework within which NGO development and NGO partnership can be analysed.

State/Society Relations before 1960

The current configuration of state/society relations in Mali and Niger needs to be traced back to the early days of colonialism. This is not to imply, however, that state and social formation are something unique to the days after the French arrived. Indeed, the history of the region is replete with

wealthy kingdoms and strong states. At the time of the arrival of the French, the Tukulor had established effective control over an area centered around the fertile Niger inner delta. The latter half of the 19th century also witnessed the evolution of the centralised Hausa state of Damagaram, presided over by the powerful *sarauta* and deriving surplus wealth from slave plantations and from the control it maintained over the flourishing trans-Saharan trade routes. Small-scale irrigated agriculture was in place as was a textile factory linked with locally-produced cotton and indigo (Horowitz et al., 1983b:24). Damagaram was just one of a large number of pre-colonial Sudano-Sahelian states in which sovereignty over a population within a well-defined territory was maintained. In the nineteenth century as well, Tuareg warrior-nobles, by demanding tribute in millet and offering protection in return, were able to exert a quasi-sovereignty over the farming population of the desert-edge region of Damergu (Baier, 1980:35).

Although state and societal formation in independent Mali and Niger are indeed animated by pre-colonial relationships, particularly in state efforts to assure hegemony and centralized rule, it was the colonial model that brought deep and lasting changes to patterns of human organization. The French in the early twentieth century, for example, reversed the centralizing trend of the second half of the 19th century in central Niger. The military authorities circumscribed the power of the sarauta through the abolition of slavery and, in the late 1920s and early

1930s, oversaw the introduction of groundnut plantations, the revenues and taxes from which provided the colonial administration with much of its operating expenses. The demise of Trans-Saharan trade -- precipitated in part by the establishment of French trading houses and the evacuation of groundnuts to the Kano railway terminal -- hurt the Hausa chiefs but also weakened the Tuareg warriors. After two decades of periodic but brutal 'pacification' by the French, their control and prestige had been significantly diminished.

Indeed the French succeeded in strengthening opposition to pre-colonial Hausa and Tuareg masters and in splitting existing political entities. Especially in the early decades of colonial rule, the French employed 'crush and destroy' strategies in those areas where individual chiefs did not show allegiance and acquiescence. Firm canton boundaries were drawn and redrawn to meet French needs for control. When there were vacancies for the position of a local chief, the French often intervened to ensure that the most collaborative of the pretenders would be chosen, even if it meant circumventing established modes of succession (Fuglestad, 1983:70). In Gobir, a region in central Niger and a part of the colony's groundnut belt, the French did away with the pre-colonial form of appointing successors to the ruling *sarkin*. Not only had the special council of nine dignitaries been mandated to decide the next king at the *sarkin*'s death, it had also been their prerogative to depose the king if they felt him to be incompetent. This provided checks and balance on leadership

and promoted an element of reciprocity between the rulers and the ruled. The devastating impact of the French conquest together with the incessent interference in the affairs of the chieftaincy, however, rendered both the *sarkin* and the council of nine incapable of exercising political authority and maintaining historically-evolved patterns of distribution (Robinson, 1975).[1]

The French established in Niger what Fuglestad refers to as an 'indigenous chieftaincy model.'[2] This proved useful to the French among the Hausa in central Niger but also among the Zerma/Songhay in the western part of the colony. Throughout much of the colonial period, until the 1950s, the French found allies among some of the Zerma chiefs and allotted to them power over such matters as land disputes and interpretations of customary law as well as responsibility for tax collection.[3] Not having

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[1]Robinson (1975:146-7) noted that between 1809 and 1899, a tumultuous period in Gobir because of Fulani attempts at conquest and control, there were 13 *sarkins* who ruled. The French, meanwhile, in their first 27 years in the region, installed 11 new *sarkins* in an attempt to find an amenable collaborator who at the same time would wield sufficient influence to be useful to the colonial regime.

[2]Robinson refers to the period until 1932 as one of 'indirect rule,' in which chiefs were chosen in light of their western administrative capabilities and allegiance to the French. Indigenous institutions and traditional claims to the chieftaincy were of little consequence.

[3]For example, in the Dosso area, the French strengthened the position of the *djermakoye* above that of other rulers even though he was but one of many rulers of small Zerma principalities. The *djermakoye* was loyal to the French and in exchange benefitted from the protection of the French from the Fulani and Tuareg. In addition, the French assured that appointees would come from the *cirembeye* lineage in spite of the fact that it was but one of several lineages in the area and that the chieftaincy rotated among these different lineages in pre-colonial days (Robinson,

had such power before the arrival of the French, the arrangement proved satisfactory to the chiefs as well as to the French, whose administrative control over the area was made more certain. In 1927, the French moved the capital from the Hausa city of Zinder (and the capital of Damagaram) to Niamey, a small military post at the time but one that was nearer to the other French colonies and in a predominately Zerma-speaking region. But the region was also one in which numerous struggles for political, ethnic and religious ascendency were taking place. The Zerma chiefs who were receptive to colonial rule benefited from the protection and resources offered by the French and were thus able, as one colonial administrator noted, to "éxigé, pillé, et ménacé" (in Fuglestad, 1983:70). What resulted "was a complete realignment of the pre-colonial rapports de force, not only between but also within the various entites and societies of the West" (ibid.). Unlike what occured in Hausaland, where political power bases were eroded, the coming of the French in the West had the effect of accelerating the evolution towards an authoritarian society, one in which authority was often exercised arbitrarily and social relations made more and more antagonistic.

Colonial actions and policies in Niger had parallels with those in Soudan (present-day Mali). French military activity was more intense in Soudan but it was directed to a large extent against the Islamic, revivalist Tukulor -- an alien and illegitimate power in the eyes of the mostly animist Bambara --

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1975).

and the Muslim but transient army of Samory Toure. Yet similarly harsh rules and penalties were placed on the people of Soudan as was the case in Niger: rule by decree, absence of elections, forced labour, forced recruitment, forced taxation and forced storage of grain as decided by the French. In Soudan, too, traditional chiefs were enlisted via a combination of rewards and threats, to serve as useful auxiliaries for the transmission of orders and the collection of taxes. A French soldier in Soudan in the late nineteenth century had elaborated the 'oil spot policy,' in which a center of French control would expand, using the power of the local chiefs (Imperato, 1989:45). Throughout the colonial period, in both Soudan and Niger, chiefs were used by the French, often hated by the people and moved about from region to region to assure what the French hoped would be their impartiality. And although resistance to French rule did occur -- from religious activist sects, Tuareg factions in north Soudan and west and northern Niger, railway strikers in Soudan in 1947, forcibly recruited peasants at the Office du Niger[4] -- the colonial state remained perched above society and, for the most part, oblivious to the disintegration of the pre-colonial socio-political structures by which, before their arrival, their 'subjects' had governed themselves and their environment.

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[4]Van Beusekom (1989) notes the nefarious means by which the French forcibly recruited workers ("colonisation indigène") for the large Office du Niger irrigation project as well as the forms of resistance used by the recruits: flight, negligence of irrigated fields, farming foodgrains outside of the Office, trading (sometimes secretly) on the informal market.

Several differences between the two colonies did emerge in the latter two decades of colonial rule which are notably important for this study. In Soudan, and in Bamako in particular, there developed numerous voluntary associations -- literary clubs, mutual aid, trade unions, sports groups, cultural and alumni associations -- especially among the educated elite.[5] Associational life was high and brought about inter-ethnic dialogue among the various club members (ibid.:52). This proved integral in the development of ethnically heterogenous and ideologically concerned political parties in Soudan after the Constitution of the Fourth Republic was ratified. In the colony of Niger, ideology and party platforms played a minimal role in seeking voter allegiance; rather, personal patron-client relations were much more readily observable (Charlick, 1991:53). However, with the mostly urban-based 'patrons' of the different parties not having sufficient material resources themselves to pass on to primarily rural client groups, Nigerien leaders such as Hamani Diori and Djibo Bakary found their power bases to be fluid and temporal. In Soudan, although it is true that the 1946 Constitution favoured those urban dwellers who had assimilated the values and norms of the French, it is also true that "what distinguished the parties was not ethnicity but ideology and objectives" (Imperato:55). In fact, Modibo Keita, by 1958, had become the territory's leading political leader, partly because

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[5]Meillassoux (1968:58) notes that there were 149 registered African associations in Bamako during the fourties and fifties.

of his militant stance against colonialism and his avowed socialist alternative but also because of his appeal to most levels of society and all ethnic groups (ibid.).

Colonial rule has been an important, some say the primary, determinant of the organization of political power in post-colonial French-speaking West Africa. A number of characteristics of colonial rule are particularly significant to our study. One, in Niger, political opportunities that had been made available to the minority Zerma/Songhay by the French were not similarly accessible to other ethnic groups. After independence in 1960, it became clear that not only did the ethnic arithmetic not equal the political arithmetic (Higgott and Fuglestad, 1974:384) but that in order to survive as minority rulers with limited resource availability, control and suppression of those ruled would become, in their eyes, essential. Second, as was alluded to, the French colonial project withered away many of the checks and balances that had existed previously, superimposing an institutional framework which corresponded neither to existing expressions of political culture (Fuglestad, 1983:81) nor to existing bases of political community (Foltz, 1965:13). Third, political legitimacy and accountability were given shortshrift by the French and, to use Fuglestad's terms, by the 'subimperialist' chiefs who had been absorbed into the system. Fourth, colonial rule helped to entrench an ideology of superiority of the rulers over the ruled more deeply than was the case before the twentieth

century.[6] Although the Tuareg warrior-nobles can be said to have promoted such an ideology over their dependents, there was a degree of reciprocity which made the relationship somewhat mutually beneficial and not as acrimonious and resentful as was the case under the French who demanded taxes, foodstuffs, transport animals and numerous days of forced labour and gave relatively little in return.

Fifth, colonial development funds, skewed as they were to the coastal countries, did not reflect a purposive strategy to strengthen the economies of Soudan and Niger. The Fonds d'Investissement de Développement Economique et Sociale (FIDES), for example, failed to establish strategic priorities, explore and promote industrial linkages or ground its interventions in locally-made decisions, if not at the community level then at least regionally. Final decisions on FIDES allotments were made outside of the colony (Jones, 1976:105). Sixth, education initiatives were minimal, particularly in Niger. There, in 1956, less than 2% of Niger's children, were attending primary school. Most of these were Zerma (Charlick, 1991:35). In Mali, the ratio was higher, a reflection of greater receptivity among the

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[6]The French belief in the superiority of European knowledge and in a social evolutionary framework was especially visible in the design and promotion of the Office du Niger. As well, the French strongly encouraged Asian (*sativa*) rice varieties over the local floating *glaberrima* varieties, of which the peasants in the 1930s could identify 31 varieties and whose forebears had cultivated them for 1500 years. Through the Office, the French pursued a strategy of private property, nucleated families, and 'ordered' living areas. Such processes, they believed, would hasten the process of social evolution (Van Beusekem, 1989).

different ethnic groups to formal eductation, a dislike by French schoolteachers of a Niger posting (it was seen as the colonialists' penitentiary) and a relatively large budget share for education. In 1957, 25% of Soudan's colonial budget went to education. However, even in Soudan, boys outnumbered girls 3:1 in primary schools and 10:1 in secondary schools at about the same time period (Imperato:89).

Finally, French colonialism, particularly during the Third Republic (1904-1946) allowed for only very limited participation of the population in their own governance. Little effort was made by the French to become aware of community needs and wishes or understand existing rule systems regarding access and use rights. In so doing, colonialism depreciated the value of an indigenous and decentralized social infrastructure. Colonial rule was, in the final analysis, elitist and absolutist and relied heavily on hierarchical, centralized mechanisms to order human relationships (Wunsch, 1991:23). Although local organizations were not thoroughly eradicated, neither were they institutionalized through law. Non-governmental associational skills that existed or had developed in the latter decades of colonialism, particularly in Soudan, were not sufficiently drawn upon or encouraged by the colonial state. As Wunsch noted, the colonial state disabled society in a fundamental way:

> The key point is this: colonial administration... neglected, distorted and sometimes destroyed local rule systems through which persons were able to take collective action.... they removed the *necessity* for persons to discover, and the *opportunity* for them to sustain local collective mechanisms to solve local

> collective problems.... Local residents were... neither involved in their formal governance (centralized in the capital or overseas), nor left alone to solve their own problems and to build on their existing institutional infrastructure.
>
> (ibid.:27)

Pastoral grazing rights in the inner Niger delta in Mali (Gallais, 1984) and woodlot harvesting rights in south-central Niger (Thomson, 1986) were but two of the indigenous codes that had been subverted by colonial rule as opposed to being strengthened, built upon and rendered functional in the context of wider environmental and demographic changes.

State/Society Relations after 1960

In the several years immediately following independence, the regime of Modibo Keita in Mali was seen as 'avant-garde' (Foltz, 1965:172) and, after Guinea, the most intent of the former French West African colonies to carve out a separate and distinct path to national development. Stronger relations with the European East bloc were forged while the French-supported currency was discarded. Ambitious goals were laid out for the transformation of society in both its structure and the size of its Gross Domestic Product. Keita promoted a democratic centralist model of participatory development, in which state import-export agencies and grain-marketing boards, village cooperatives, collective fields and rural pilot schools would play an integral role in mobilizing support and increasing production. A cohesive program of rural socialism would not only strengthen solidarity and nationalism, it would allow for the creation of 'a new man' in

the villages and the releasing of previously untapped potential in the countryside. High results were expected, not so much from state investment in rainfed agriculture but from the socialist orientation that rural Malians would latch on to.

Although Keita undoubtedly borrowed upon pre-independence structures and predominant urban perceptions of rural life, he overestimated the supposed drawing power of the socialist model in a subsistence economy where the unit of production and consumption was more the household than the larger community. As well, the administration 'underconsulted' the Malian people. Membership in the cooperatives were compulsory as were sales to the state grain marketing board. Collective fields were seen as foreign implants and intrusions while extension and training services remained very hierarchical and controlled. Efforts to regulate all commerce and establish fixed prices were met with resistance by private traders and discouraged smallholders from 'realizing their potential.' And although the years 1960-68 saw a proliferation of second or informal market activities, the Keita administration throughout these years increasingly clamped down on opposition political parties and spokespersons, many of whom were exiled or executed. Voluntary organizations, such as women's organizations, youth groups, labour unions and the veteran's association, were either suppressed or absorbed into Keita's political party. Outside of the party structure, there were no organized groups capable of expressing political dissent (Imperato:60).

In attempting to gain greater national acceptance for a socialist vision for Mali and confident that his variant of socialist ideology was the correct one, Keita created a popular militia to uncover corruption and root out dissent. He presented himself as Le Guide Eclairé, the proclaimer of economic decolonization and the supreme guide of a Maoist-type Cultural Revolution. The sloganeering and suppression proved out-of-step, however, with Mali's people and particularly its military who established a new government, headed by Moussa Traore, and promised a regime legitimated by majority approval.

Several aspects of Traore's regime are interesting in our study of state/society relations. Throughout its twenty-three year span (1968-1991), it gradually followed up on promises to usher in a new constitution, restore a measure of civilian rule and diversify economic and political ties with the international community. Although advocating a one-party state to the very end, the Malian people were able, as of 1985 in elections for the National Assembly, to choose among a number of candidates belonging to the Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien (UDPM). The Traore regime abolished forced collectivization and obligatory memberships in cooperatives, extolling instead the virtues of the 'ton,' a Bambara word signifying a village collective in which decisions were made and needs addressed. The tons predate the arrival of the French and assured a varied although almost always determinative role in maintaining community cohesion. Within its structure are associated both cultural and leisure activities and

civics training for youth. Traore stated that the tons would have greater direct responsibility for village development programs and in 1979, an important UDPM document stated that the ton would not be a part of the party structure, particularly in so far as its organization and decision-making structure were concerned (Diarrah, 1990).

Although the regime did not seek to overtly co-opt the tons into the party apparatus, neither did it make a consistent effort to strengthen its structures or build development strategies upon them. Rather, much of the state energies were channelled to the Opérations de Développement Rural (ODR). The impetus for the creation of the ODRs came in 1972 during the Annual Conference of Rural Development Operations. It was believed that the ODRs would provide for a more strategic line of communication between the state and the rural population and serve, among other things, to increase production of cotton, rice, millet and peanuts. Large amounts of foreign aid funded ODR initiatives, the expectation being that results would be clear and quantifiable and achieved by using well-delineated methods of planning and accounting. Several of the operations were and remain relatively successful, particularly those promoting cotton production in southern Mali.

But analyses of ODRs in general have shown that the emphases placed upon commercialisable surpluses and individual profit-making have served to fragment the tons, devalue artisanal skills and accentuate stratification and social differentiation. A political economic study of one of the ODRs, Opération Riz-Ségou,

showed how state administrators resisted the transfer of real power to smallholders, much to the detriment of realizing objectives (Bingen, 1984:90). Jacques Giri noted that ODRs have often been conceived and implanted in rural areas without the peasants having their say in the matter and without receiving a reasonable recompense for the work they are called upon to do (1986:81). Jean Gallais, from his many years of study of Malian rural development, commented as well that the ODRs have benefited business and strengthened the urban ruling class much more so than that of the rural population (1984:224). Cheick Oumar Diarrah, summarized in his study of agricultural projects and programs that the state needs to see farmers and herders as free and responsable citizens:

> De l'indépendance à nos jours, les gouvernements maliens n'ont pas réussi à trouver la forme adéquate d'organisation du monde rural.... Le paysan malien est toujours 'infantilisé'.... Il *subit* le processus du développement,plus qu'il n'y participe.
> (1990:112)

In independent Niger, similar state/society tensions and contradictions have been apparent. The Zerma-dominated regime of Hamani Diori, the country's first president, was much more cautious than Keita was in Mali. Bureaucratic structures were relatively much less developed. An embryonic statistical office, for example, was only created in 1959 (Jones, 1976:143). And while the Malian government drew away from de Gaulle and France, Diori drew closer to the French, relying, for example, on its technocrats for help in policy formulation. Yet, cozying up to the French and the Western community in general did not endear

him or his regime to the Nigerien population. Nor did it strengthen a resolve to broaden participation in the political and development process. Like the French regime, the Diori administration was one in which the average African voice was silenced and all other political activity sterilized (Fuglestad, 1983:143). The largest competing political party, the Sawaba or Freedom Movement, was banned in 1959 while the electoral gains that it had made were taken away. In the 1960s, the distinction between party and government faded as well as Diori dismantled the Parti Progressiste Nigerien (PPN). By 1968, in effect, "Niger had become a no-party state dominated by Diori and the inner elite of his supporters" (Charlick,1991:58).

The urban bureaucracy did grow, however. In 1970, 18,500 workers or 55% of the country's wage earners were employed in the public sector. The budget became, as one analyst remarked, "exclusively an instrument for the distribution of purchasing power" (in Fuglestad, 1983:176). Under Diori, the tax burden on rural producers took up to 40% of their revenues; observers remarked in the drought year of 1973 that tax collection efforts were more effectively carried out than food relief operations (Charlick, 1991:60). The coup d'état in 1974 brought a military regime to political power in Niger yet the manner in which the state structures articulated with the peasantry did not significantly change. The government of Seyni Kountche remained and, eventually, became even more personalist, statist and directive (Horowitz et al., 1983a:1). The new regime suspended

the Constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, banned all political parties and sought to crush those movements that were deemed at all threatening.

What was different under Kountche were the efforts made to revitalize the traditional chieftaincy from the marginalized status that it had under Diori and to restructure the Nigerien rural landscape into what was called a Development Society, one in which all of Niger would participate. In 1975, the Association of Traditional Chiefs gathered together for the first time since prior to independence. Kountche saw the chiefs as the embodiment of high moral values but he also saw them as being able to maintain order and mobilize public support and serve as building blocks within an all-encompassing national development plan. That national strategy took a more distinct form in 1979 with the putting in place of the Société de Développement or Development Society. It sought to promote popular participation and provide bottom-up channels whereby youth, farmers and various socioprofessional groups could voice their concerns to departmental administrators. Kountche believed the model would be successful in facilitating an upward flow of information, in broadening his base of political support and encouraging a more community-directed rural development. Not only would the Development Society catalyze support for him and his policies but it would enhance national integration as well.

Although the Development Society reflected a number of good intentions and a seemingly alternative approach to a top-down

model, the very fact that it sought to structure participation through officially recognized and state-controlled bodies meant that it resulted in being more counterintuitive than beneficial in addressing and meeting needs. Kountche believed that what was needed was to "responsabiliser les paysans" while supporting documents of the strategy also stressed the need to change peasant mentalities and motivation, rather than address the objective conditions that disempower villagers (Horowitz et al., 1983a:2). Research by Pearl Robinson in 1983-1984, several years after the Development Society was initiated, showed that over one-third of her sample informants were unaware of the existence of their local development council, supposedly a foundational part of the larger national structure. Part of the reason may be attributed to the fact that the responsibility for creating the local council belonged to the area representative of the Ministry of Rural Development, not to the community members themselves. Another reason she notes is that the councils were asked to carry out government dictates (as to school enrollment, cattle destocking, for example), assure that taxes were collected and relay to the population the fact that the government had no money with which to finance local projects (Robinson, 1991a). Indeed, the way in which the Development Society model was structured and promoted revealed "an attempt" by the Nigerien state "to project legitimacy through the facade of quasi-democratic institutions, while at the same time trying to overcontrol politics" (ibid.:163).

The relative underplaying in the rural development discourse in Niger of place-specific and sustainable participatory strategies was evident as well in how the larger regional 'productivity projects' were designed and implemented. The emphasis of the projects, which had been given greater impetus and donor backing after the 1968-74 drought years, was to increase food-crop production and soil conservation techniques, to introduce new and treated seed varieties and selected chemical fertilizers, and to encourage modest technological advances among 'progressive' and 'demonstration' farmers (Charlick, 1991:114). An analysis of one of the regional programs, the Niamey Department Productivity Project (NDPP), shows that in spite of stated efforts to establish self-managed village organizations, the heavy emphasis on productivity proved too overbearing. Standardized agricultural packages could neither account for specificities at the local level nor provide a more flexible extension approach. As well, the Niamey Department project, focusing more on input storage and delivery systems than on environmental conditions and degradation, oversimplified its understanding of resource constraints and the social and economic bases of production (Painter, 1986). Moreover, the difficulties encountered as well as the successes that several of the Productivity Projects did generate were not assimilated and built upon in such a way to ensure that overall efficiency and effectiveness would be heightened (Charlick:164).

Many of the larger state and donor-funded projects in Niger,

such as the NDPP, came under scrutiny in a 1982 seminar conducted by the Ministry of Planning in Zinder. Both national and foreign development workers participated. The seminar took place just as the Development Society was being implemented and as the first evaluations of the productivity projects were being released. It became aware that even productivity goals had not been achieved: yield results in project and non-project areas did not differ. As was asked at the conference:

> Why is it that those projects, which had been based on integrated measures and had intended to achieve an intensification in the medium and long run, have the tendency to become financial monsters with practically no impact at all on the rural environment?
> (CEC et al., 1986:77)

It was subsequently claimed that "farmers are not the target group of a development policy but rather an excuse to distribute funds to those who are already better off" (ibid.). Participants noted that insufficient attention to recurrent costs and a weak absorptive capacity for effective delivery and use of funds worked against the realization of project objectives. Foreign development practitioners had not been aware of local risk-management strategies or on-farm conditions while limitations in the policy environment and state control over the project process squelched local initiative and willingness to participate. The seminar proved sobering and blunt: "Almost twenty years of rural development activity were nearly totally invalidated, and the death knell of the *grands projets* had sounded" (Charlick:117).

In the recent histories of Mali and Niger, including that of the pre-colonial era, there is indeed ample evidence of

misunderstanding, mistrust and struggle between state and societal forces. State strategies of control have often been met by resistance, anger and non-participation from farmers, herders and others in the rural population. Traore held tenaciously to power until the violent overthrow of his regime in March, 1991. Until his death in 1987, Seyni Kountche held onto "a corporatist vision of society based on class harmony and the interdependent functions of an organic whole" (Robinson, 1991a:155). Yet state policies and approaches, including developmental strategies, have not allowed for a forging of an organic link between the Malian and Nigerien state and their respective rural populations. At the Ségou conference referred to in the first chapter, rural Malians expressed the need for donors to recognize the central role of the government but also that governing bodies needed to express less pressure and more trust and grant greater freedom to rural organizations who seek to organize and manage their own activities (OECD, 1989:48-9) At the 1991 National Conference in Niger, the 42 rural delegates said they were sick of poverty and of being exploited and that what was necessary was a purge of organizations concerned with the rural economy (EIU, 1991:26). In both countries, there existed and continues to exist a feeling that peasants have been marginalized by a technocratic notion of rural development. Diarrah remarked that the state must be in service to the nation and its people, not the other way around:

> Il faut reconcilier les citoyens avec l'Etat, afin 'd'établir la connexion en profondeur entre le pouvoir politique et la société civile'
> (1990:195 q. Edgar Morin in Le Monde, September 22, p. 2)

A number of concluding remarks need to be made regarding state/society relations. One, it is true that the state in Mali and Niger has overextended itself in seeking to control economic and political life. The central government in Mali, even after a decade of gradual privatisation and bureaucratic streamlining, still spends 69% of the country's gross national product (Wunsch and Oluwu, 1991:4). Until the mid-1980s, parastatals were responsible for coordinating most of the formal economic activity while political opposition was neutralized at almost every turn. Not only was private entrepreneurial activity regulated or forbidden but the near absence of non-state organizations made it more difficult for the state to become aware of where needs were most prevalent, to learn from criticism, and to gain credibility and legitimacy among the population. Moreover, having to function in a context of declining resource availability and increasing competition for and conflict over these resources meant that the task of the state was made all the more trying.

Second, neither the state nor society are monolithic institutions and their articulation with each other has been frought with numerous contradictions. The state, in spite of its post-colonial movement towards one-party rule or even a party-state, represents a site of numerous struggles for personal and communal ascendency and aggrandizement. Elements of a prebendal structure[7] of state patronage have set in, through which

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[7]A prebendal structure is one in which state or public offices are sold or auctioned off (for money or for other favours) to the 'highest bidder.'

resources are funnelled into the funding of client networks. This too creates competition and conflict within the state and serves to work against efficiency and promotion based on merit and effort. Also, Malian and Nigerien societies vary greatly within; present are affinities based on language, ethnicity, kin and community.

Thus, we see the difficult scenario of a fractious state seeking to hold together a relatively unintegrated population within artificially-imposed borders, having to do so in a context of a shrinking political economy and using procedural notions of constitutionalism and bureaucratic rule that are foreign to indigenous political cultures. Indeed, premature bureaucratization resulted from Sahelian states such as Mali and Niger having to adopt and adapt to institutions that had gradually evolved in European states over the course of several hundred years (Sandbrook, 1985). In a drive to maintain unity and integration, and in light of little popular support and approval, post-colonial rulers have resorted to repression of their own population. From 1966 to 1989, the armed forces of the nine Sahelian countries increased in number from 79,000 to 515,000 (Bennett, 1991:148). Control and territorial integrity have been pursued to the point of undercutting legitimacy and the meeting of needs. The overextended but underperforming state is not only a contributor to but a consequence of Mali and Niger's social and economic plight and historical encapsulation into the global political order and international capitalist orbit. The state, in

trying to be too much, ends up by being too little.

Third, for much of independence, state and society have had distorted understandings of each other. In Mali and in Niger, one can agree with Otwin Marenin that the state has been perceived by society as a great benefactor:

> everything is asked of the state, much is expected and the state is perceived as the most powerful, first and final guarantor of general welfare, economic development and individual advancement.
> (in Chabal, 1987:222-3)

One can agree as well with Wunsch and Oluwu that the state has perceived society and in particular rural society as a sort of 'tabula rasa' in which there is serious organizational, knowledge and skill deficiencies and on which it could impose institutions and laws. This is especially evident in Mali under Modibo Keita and in Niger under Seyni Kountche. Peasants see access to the state as an open door to resources and privileges while officials and bureaucrats see the rural constituencies as reservoirs of economic resources and popular legitimation. These very contradictions in perception work against the necessary curtailing of state intrusion into rural society and of the necessary revalorising of local and associational initiative.

Fourth and finally, the attempted and actual suppression by the state of institutionalized opposition, whether it be of political parties, trade unions, student movements or development associations, has hurt both the state and society. State functioning in Mali and Niger has suffered from lack of criticism and fresh ideas on more effective governance. Dissent and

disapproval have often been met with exile or elimination. Ethnic-based concerns, such as those of the Tuaregs in northern Mali and Niger, have resulted in state efforts to control rather than mediate. And not having the resources to 'systematically' and effectively control, the end result has often been intensified conflict and many lives lost. What has been institutionalized within the state structure has not been administrative efficiency and processes for addressing and meeting widely-felt needs but a vulnerability to err when elaborating and implementing strategies.

Mamadou Toure noted that in the evolved socio-political framework in Africa, one in which crisis and repression have fed upon each other, state institutions are, in essence, being emptied of their substance, their statutes and governing rules and functions side-stepped yet lingering on and draining away significant human and financial resources (Toure, 1990:39).

Society has suffered from the lack of stronger, state-sanctioned institutions. Not only has the centralized state arrogated all authority to itself, it has eroded the diversity of organizations that would have flourished otherwise. The lack of institutional opposition and tolerance for open disagreement has, in effect, disallowed the possibility for negotiation and cooperation. It has "pre-empted the social learning that midwives new norms which help resolve new problems" (Wunsch, 1991:22-23). The concentration of power among fewer and fewer individuals, at times without the check of a constitutional framework, has

brought about a decrease in civics capacity. The civics and associational skills that the Bambara tons sought to inculcate among its youth do not find a concomitant expression in how contemporary Malian and Nigerien citizens learn from each other. A significant part of the reason for such a change can be found in an understanding of how state/society relations in Mali and Niger have been fundamentally reordered, both in the time of colonialism and independance. State laws, structures and procedures have not allowed for, enhanced or promoted such social and organizational learning. Rather, they have facilitated, dare say even furthered, a disempowering or disabling of rural communities. It is in this perspective that we examine, in the following chapter, how current changes in state/society relations in both Mali and Niger affect national NGO emergence and NGO partnership and how these changes may, at least theoretically, have measurable impact on the strengthening of civil society.

Chapter Four

Socio-Political Openings and Opportunities for Institutional Development

In the past several years, state/society relations in Mali and Niger have undergone significant realignment. New political and economic realities have caused the state to retreat from the intrusive, foreboding role that it had played until the mid-1980s. Niger, in particular, has suffered from drastic shortfalls in uranium demand, declining market price and high production costs in its mines in the north-central part of the country. Both countries are responding to Structural Adjustment Plans with budget reductions, a streamlined bureaucracy and a push towards privatisation or liquidation of cost-inefficient parastatals. A new liberalised tone of government has resulted. Nigerien head of state Ali Saibou, even before his post of president was reduced to a figurehead role during the country's national conference, had talked of the need to 'gouverner autrement' and to promote dialogue and concertation. After the oligarchic, domineering days of Kountche, Saibou promised 'décrispation' or a relaxing of the socio-political environment. Niger's second constitution, ratified by referundum in September, 1989 was subsequently amended to facilatate the transition to political pluralism. In Mali, too, the aftermath of the March, 1991 coup gave further momemtum to what has now become a veritable proliferation of political parties and vocal opposition groups. In the capital city of Bamako, 1991 was a banner year for a diverse and

independent press. In June and July of that year, hardly a week passed when there was not a 'volume one, number one' of a new journal being sold at the newstands or on the roadside.

This study does not seek to explain the reasons for the shifts in recent state/society relations in Mali and Niger. There are political and economic, global, continental and national factors that have all had a bearing on those shifts. There continues to be growing anger and demand for change among the Nigerien and Malian people while there is less ability and, perhaps, less desire within the Nigerien and Malian states to control and suppress these demands and paper over socio-economic disparities with promises of international aid and state or formal-sector employment. Although there is much uncertainty as to how state/society relations will evolve in the next few years, what is quite clear is that there is currently much opportunity for civic associations to emerge, develop and play a significant role in the shaping of a new and less precarious state/society alignment.

These changes have numerous implications, many of which are positive and promising, for national NGO emergence and NGO partnership. There are possibilities for national NGOs in Mali and particularly Niger as there have never been before. It is within this context -- of new-found freedom and a liberalized, although still fluid, environment -- that this chapter finds relevance. It is divided into two sections. In the first, it will look at the changing socio-political and legal environment and

specifically as to how it offers varying opportunities for Northern and Southern NGOs operating in Mali and Niger. In the second section, it will look at the theoretical significance of issues such as institution-building, learning, and the development of civil society for NGOs working together in partnership. These are particularly important in the light of declining state capacity and control and greater acceptance of society-led initiatives in that they signal the potential of NGO partnerships to contribute to the revitalization of civil society and a furthering of the development process.

The Changing Socio-Political Environment

In Niger, there have been recent significant changes in the socio-political framework in which NGOs operate. As recently as June, 1989, of 86 NGOs having legal accreditation to operate in Niger, only six were national groupings and most of them, although independent in structure, were created and initially nurtured by a Northern NGO. But two years later, in June, 1991, of the 90 NGOs with legal status, 18 were national NGOs. By year's end, that number had surpassed 25. Indeed, the climate became more favourable and even legally possible for national development associations to form, secure recognition as a non-governmental organization and attain the tax exemptions and relative freedom of movement that accompany such accreditation.

A number of reasons for these changes can be stated. Particularly important was the adoption of a National Charter in

1987 and the return to constitutional life that Niger experienced in 1989. The republic's first constitution had been suspended at the time of Kountche's take over in 1974. The second constitution, adopted by a council of ministers in January of 1989 and ratified by a nation-wide referundum in September of the same year, recognized the right of freedom and association for Niger's people. Saibou, having opted for a regime based on rule of law, opened the way for voluntary development associations to be born.

Indeed, prior to 1989, the institutional framework in no way facilitated an emergence of national NGOs. The first law promulgated on the creation of associations was in 1964 yet it stipulated that only associations affiliated to the political structures of the first Republic would be viable and legal. The ordinance 84-06, dated March 1, 1984, allowed for the creation of associations but not non-governmental associations. Rather, the associations were to support the strategies laid out within the Development Society. Indeed, from 1974-1989, when a policy of 'opening up' emerged, the state sought to limit the emergence of associations outside of its structures. The Development Society alone would catalyze and absorb all initiatives. One prominent Nigerien NGO representative, when asked in 1990 why there were so few national NGOs in the country, responded by saying, "la Société de Développement bien sûr, mais vous ne trouverez aucun document là-dessus" (Thomas and Oudard, 1991).

On June 21, 1989, the Groupement des Aides Privées (GAP)

held a 'reflection day' on Nigerien NGOs. The participants of one of the workshops articulated what had been common knowledge in the NGO development community in Niger:

> les textes législatifs et réglementaires en vigeur au Niger constituent par eux même un frein à l'émergence des ONGs. En effet, les textes régissant les Associations ignorent les ONGs comme partenaires de développement.
>
> (GAP, 1989:7)

Along with this came the very uncertainty of how these laws would be applied. Some have said that the confusion in application of the 1964 and the 1984 laws was tantamount to a juridical vacuum. Others in the national NGO community have said that had they tested the 84-06 ordinance in attempting to form and legalize a non-state development association, they would have been faced with imprisonment.

In May, 1991, there was, however, further modification to ordinance 84-06. Article 20-1 of the ordinance was modified so as to permit national associations to legally form as NGOs:

> les organisations non gouvernementales de développement sont des organisations apolitiques et sans but lucratif. Elles sont créees à l'initiative de personnes physiques ou morales autonomes vis-à-vis de l'Etat, animées d'un ésprit de volontariat qu'elles mettent au service des autres et dont la vocation est l'appui au développement à travers des activités sociales et/ou économiques.
>
> (in Pelletier, 1991:2)

Coupled with this new and more permissive legal framework was a relaxing of government efforts to regulate the process by which accreditation was granted. National NGO representatives have noted that the time it takes for accreditation to be granted decreased to about one month in 1991; a similar process, had it

taken place in 1989, would have taken at least six months. As well, with the 1991 law came a state declaration that legal permission for national NGOs to legally establish themselves could be done at the local, arrondissement level; it was no longer necessary to obtain the protocol in Niamey, a far distance away for many who live in the interior of the country.

Some of the legal modifications found momemtum within the Direction du Développement Régional et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (DDRAT), the division within the (now defunct) Ministry of Plan that contained the sub-division of NGO co-ordination. There, in 1990, it was conceded that the division never had a mandate or mission to help national NGOs. From 1986 to 1989, there were three different heads of the DDRAT, a fact that worked against a consistent building up of relations between the government and the NGO community and national NGOs in particular. What was needed was a more permanent NGO-state liaison, state funding of national NGO initiatives and a sensitization of the media and public over the importance of Nigerien-based NGOs. The 1990 document released by the DDRAT noted as well that overseas donors questioned whether aid would be more effective if it was channelled through local NGOs and not international NGOs. Although the document did not openly recommend an ending of a partnership between overseas donors/northern NGOs and regional government technical services, it did suggest that other funding avenues could be opened up alongside its own channels; moreover, it recommended that

northern NGOs should diversify and work more with southern NGOs and, in so doing, build up their credibility and capability (République du Niger, 1990a).

Perhaps the most significant turning point for Niger's NGO community was the Seminar/Workshop held in Dosso, Niger from May 7-10, 1990. Here, government, multilateral, bilateral and NGO officials were among those who grouped together to share ideas on how to better facilitate popular participation and how more effective dialogue could be promoted and inserted into the development process. The Secrétaire-Général of the Ministry of Plan noted in his opening address that the seminar should propose

> de programme d'actions en faveur de la création d'ONG nationales susceptibles de devenir des acteurs éfficaces dans le processus d'auto-développement.
> (République du Niger, 1990b:2)

Among the recommendations from the seminar was the need to promote greater information-sharing among the different actors involved in NGO development (including funding agencies and government technical services). There was an expressed need for more and regular meetings at the regional and sub-regional level and round-table discussions between national NGOs and the DDRAT. Moreover, what was integral to the emergence and maturity of national NGOs as well as of NGO partnership was a further "redynamisation" of the ministerial division responsible for NGO coordination. The division should have new and real decision-making authority and be invested with significant human and material resources. In creating a more effective state-NGO liaison structure and in enhancing an exchange of information

among the various actors, there would occur both a freeing up of the environment in which NGOs operate and an important following up of their logistical and project activities. There would be greater capability among the NGOs in designing and delivering development programs and heightened credibility in the eyes of funding agencies. Through it all, Nigerien NGOs would benefit from greater legitimacy and prominence.

The Nigerien NGO environment has indeed undergone much reshaping in the past several years. Its socio-political framework can be further understood by contrasting it with that of Mali. In June, 1989, at a time when Nigerien NGOs were just struggling to emerge, almost one-third of the NGOs operating in Mali (26 out of 83) were nationally-based. From September 19-21, four months after the Dosso conference, a seminar on partnership in Mali was held in Bamako, organized by the Washington-based PVO/NGO Initiatives Project/Datex, Inc. and the Malian NGO collective, Comité de Coordination des Actions des ONGs (CCA/ONG). Whereas the Dosso conference discussed conditions which would facilate national NGO emergence and development, the Bamako seminar, held in the same year, was discussing how the various forms of partnership (NGO-NGO, NGO-population, NGO-funder, etc.) could be strengthened and made more effective at the grass roots.

As Mali and Niger entered the 1990s, the development of their respective NGO communities was quite dissimilar. Several reasons for these differences were alluded to earlier in this

study: higher investments in colonial Soudan/independent Mali in human resource development; the higher resource availability in, particularly, southern Mali; a greater importance placed by Soudan/Mali and on inter-ethnic dialogue and on forming and belonging to associations; a stronger sense of shared membership in the Bambara tons in Mali than in similar indigenous units in Niger. Indeed, observers and practitioners familiar with the rural societies of both countries and of other countries on the continent comment on the relative near-absence of cohesive organizational structures at the community level in Niger.

Part of the reasoning behind this can be located in an understanding of state/society evolution in Mali and Niger, as outlined in the preceding chapter. In the 1980s, a less repressive regime existed in Mali than in Niger. As the decade progressed, the Malian state was more encouraging or, perhaps more accurately, less discouraging of NGO activity. For example, when Band Aid/Live Aid representatives sought to channel money into local initiatives in Niger, they were deterred by the heavy bureaucratic regulations which they felt they could not satisfy (Johnson and Johnson, 1990:25). Meanwhile, at roughly the same time, Johnson and Johnson note that the working environment for NGOs in Mali was very open and permissive (ibid.:61). But in Niger, northern NGOs were obligated to follow tight protocol in getting approval for carrying out projects and to work in collaboration with the employees of the local technical services of the government, many of whom had not had the advantage of

sufficient training and were working in areas with social structures different from those where they had grown up and with which they were familiar. Moreover, the government extension officers often rotated from post to post. This not only worked against building up a sense of corporate memory and strong relations, it meant less resources were available to strengthen community development associations. Furthermore, it made Niger a less attractive place for northern NGOs to come and work.

One final but significant component of the socio-political environment is the noticeable difference between Niger and Mali's NGO collectives in facilitating and promoting national NGO emergence and NGO partnership. Mali's CCA/ONG was created in 1986 although it has roots in a slightly-different structure that had taken form in 1984 in the wake of the drought of that year. Yet it also was formed at a time when Malian NGOs were already playing a prominent role in the country's NGO community; having, from the start, dynamic individuals in coordinating positions committed to the need for Malian NGOs and north-south partnership, the CCA/ONG encouraged and, in so doing, lent credibility to existing and nascent national NGOs. It also granted them field or operating experience by seeking to link potential partner agencies, by channelling funds from donor agencies to NGOs operating within the country and by setting up a follow-up mechanism to assure as much as possible that the aid would be well-delivered. This monitoring and evaluation agency, the Comité d'Appui des Techniques Financières (CATF), received

its initial infusion of funds from Bob Geldof and his Band Aid/Live Aid while, since then, it has benefitted from further assistance from such donors as USA for Africa and the Netherlands-based ICCO.

The GAP, meanwhile, was created in 1974, well before the participation and partnership discourse became institutionalized and just as Kountche was stepping into power. Yet although GAP had a similar mandate to promote information-exchange, reflection and coordination, it remained dominated by northern NGO representatives, many of whom did not believe that the collective should function as a conduit for northern aid to NGOs operating in Niger. Of course, there were few national NGOs working in Niger until the late 1980s and those that were had established networks among the international confessional and secular agencies who had initially helped to establish them. And the northern NGOs themselves were already performing the role of conduit and executor of donor agency/constituency funds. To do so within GAP as well would be unnecessary and redundant.[1]

In both Mali and Niger, there is much and new opportunity for NGO partnerships to develop. The relaxing of laws and the advancement of thinking on the significance of partnership

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[1]Until 1991, the annual members dues established by the GAP, the Nigerien NGO collective, for all NGOs was 250,000 FCFA. This was changed in 1991 under pressure from several of the newly-created national NGOs. NGOs seeking to become members but disposing of few funds could apply for special considerations under which they would pay 1/3 the fee for the first year of their membership, 2/3 for the second year and the full amount the third year. In Mali, the annual dues for all NGOs are 50,000 FCFA.

contributes to a favourable socio-political working environment for NGOs. The 'playing field' has not however been totally levelled, in spite of recent constitutional engineering and legal modification in Niger and of efforts by the Malian government in the late 1980s and early 1990s to keep closer tabs on NGO activity. Yet opportunities for national NGOs to emerge and for NGO partnerships to form abound as do possibilities for these to facilitate and promote local institutional development. The following section pulls out several of the component parts of institutional development and notes the importance these have for NGOs working in partnership.

Institutional Development

Institutional development is essential to the development process. The recent shifts in the state/society balance in Mali and Niger and the consequential openings for civil society formation make institutional development more tangible but also more necessary, particularly given the double effect of state cutbacks and overall economic crisis. Yet institutional development needs conceptual clarity and depth if it is to be truly meaningful and effective. In his discussion of institutional development, Uphoff notes that

> [e]stablishing local institutional capacity requires not only time and resources but also appropriate strategies and concepts. Demand for [local institutional development] will not create its own supply any more than supply will necessarily create its own demand. (Uphoff, 1986:188)

A clear and analytic understanding of institutional development

is integral to this study and to those non-governmental agencies seeking to promote institutional development as a partnership objective. This section then seeks to discuss institutional development from three different angles and, in so doing, broaden and deepen an understanding of its significance. Although there is much overlap and a good deal of artificiality in making such distinctions, such an approach allows for a greater appreciation of its complexities and of its importance to NGO interventions.

a. Institutional Strengthening

That there is a growing consensus over the relevance of institutional strengthening is rarely questioned in Niger, Mali, or elsewhere. Few, if any, question the need, for example, of institutions in which roles and responsibilities are well laid out and followed, in which opportunities and incentives are made possible, and in which are enshrined important working rules, whether it be on how decisions are made and implemented or on how access to and use of resources are attained and regulated. Effective development institutions can help to assure that existing and future resources will be well used and that, when outside or supplemental resources stop flowing in, benefits will continue to be generated. If the end objective of development assistance is redundancy or removal, then such institutions are essential. Not only will they better assure an efficient use of human and financial resources during the course of a partnership, they are the best future guarantee that human and financial

resources will be available and that aspirations are being addressed and met. Indeed, "there is widespread agreement that involvement of local institutions in managing resources is critical to sustainable development" (Thomas, 1987:559).

Unfortunately, cooperative development work has all too often strengthened hierarchical power structures, weakened local initiatives and failed to bring about sustainable changes. Some consider the lack of improvement in institutional capacity as the greatest failure of development efforts in the Sahel. Part of the reason certainly lies with the 'institutional imperative' inherent in the northern non-governmental sector. As the Office of Technical Assessment noted in its 1986 report on agricultural development in the Sahel:

> the desire to have measurable results to show members and financial supporters can create a situation where staff of US PVOs does much of the work themselves, rather than support the efforts of the local group to carry out the project. The pressure to produce quantifiable results often constrains PVO effectiveness in building local capacity. In the African view, the major role of the outside PVOs in Africa is to support and build the capacity of the African PVOs.
> (OTA:120)

David Korten notes as well that when there is additional money moved to and through northern, non-state development groups, there are additional procedural and accounting demands and a higher likelihood that strengthening local institutional capacity will be relegated to a position of lesser importance (Korten, 1990). The seemingly 'institutionalized' notion that PVOs or NGOs need to move money so as to get more money stands in

contradistinction to the southern institutional imperative: the need to build capacity and develop and support skilled management.

A second reason for the paucity of successful institution-strengthening strategies is not so much a neglect but a misunderstanding of the region's economic and organizational realities. Hyden has commented on the 'nature artificielle' of much of Africa -- a result of the superimposition (as opposed to a displacement of old ones) of many new and radically different norms and structures (Hyden, 1983:157). These add to the high levels of uncertainty and social complexity with which support agencies must come to terms. Yet what often happens is both an 'underconcern' for the specific institutional context and an overconcern with the values, norms and successfulness of Western managerial models. Finding the appropriate fit is a delicate matter (Brinkerhoff, 1986:15). There is a need to form and maintain new action modes that are supported either by newly- and widely-embraced norms and values or by those existing norms and values which are change-nurturing (ibid.) At the community level, there is a need to seek out, understand and build upon existing institutional norms and structures. Among southern NGOs, it is essential that their representatives be granted space and time with which to structure a development organization that frames objective-setting and procedural concerns within a culturally-specific context that they themselves are left to interpret.

The building of appropriate community and national

institutions constitutes a significant challenge for northern and southern NGOs. Indeed, institution-building is "the long, slow process of building capacity" (OTA, 1986:75). It involves a shift in orientation from project to program funding or at least a merging of institutional-building strategies into project design. It requires that support be provided in a timely, sensitive and appropriate fashion (Broadhead, 1988:53). It means tending to the details of accounting as well as of accountability -- to funding groups, an overseeing board, partner agencies and community members. The process of building capacity must not terminate with an institutionally-developed 'product;' rather, it should allow for continued experimention and and re-orientation. It seeks to increase not only the capability but the credibility of the institution among other institutions with which it could perhaps link and network. For NGOs working in partnerships, it means creating an enabling environment, outside of state channels, in which human resource development and planning and analytic capacity can grow. And, certainly, successful institution-strengthening means that this environment will continue to enable as the northern NGOs phases out and withdraws its support.

b. Learning

A second area of importance for NGO partnerships is that of learning. By this, it is meant that a priority is placed on experience-based learning and engaged or collaborative planning. The emphasis is on process not product or results and, from the

onset, it is understood by all that mistakes and misperceptions may be made either in project design or in its approach. And rather than denying or externalizing errors, they are embraced, that is, dealt with and seen as "a vital source of data for making arrangements to achieve a better response to client needs" (Hyden, 1983:158). Feedback mechanisms and timeline flexibility assure that people's views are heard; means and ends are adjusted in response to an evolving understanding of existing needs and available resources (Brodhead, 1988:51). Lessons learned are linked with ongoing action. Organizational learning and institution-strengthening are understood as processes pushed along by iterative experimentation and wide involvement. As Cernea notes, "learning processes need to be institutionalized to absorb error and to experiment with the new institutional arrangements" (1987:15).

A learning environment is particularly significant in Africa today. This is not so much because of the lack of indigenous knowledge and problem-solving capacity but as a result of relatively little attention paid to organizational and participatory learning in the past. What has developed all too often is what Nyoni refers to as an attitude of 'self-colonization' in which a penetration of outside influences are permitted to replace local thinking. There is a dependence on the skills of foreigners, a skepticism towards local innovation, a rejection of indigenous technology and a lack of confidence in locally-produced goods (1987:53). New forms of technology,

teaching and healing, although significant, have often quickened a process of de-skilling rather than built upon existing knowledge and methods of resolving disputes or inculcating civic values. For these reasons alone, a learning environment in which partners seek to share skills and understanding and co-ordinate action and response serves as a good corrective to previous approaches in which learning was not really learning at all but teaching: prescriptive, directive and discrediting of local knowledge and skills.

Northern NGOs may be reluctant to promote a learning-process approach. Accountability requirements, for example, may constrain agencies' abilities to fund activities that cannot be specified in advance. Most agencies are reluctant to admit to open-ended funding or high levels of experimentation in their programs (Brinkerhoff, 1986:26). There is a preference for control, specificity, a pre-planned structuring of action to be undertaken and a juxtaposition of inputs with outputs. Adherance to a 'blueprint' is often deemed essential by northern NGOs when it comes to securing funding; it is difficult to retain budget allocations, for example, by reporting on experimentation that has or is taking place and by being unable to specify objectives, targets, timetables or resource needs (Brinkerhoff and Ingle, 1989:489).

Yet, nonetheless, a learning approach is integral to sustainable development. NGO partnerships can offer a framework and perhaps a model for others in which each agency learns from

experience and from each other. Such a learning enviroment is conducive as well to integrating the results of locally-conducted socio-economic research and gender analysis into ongoing programming. There is room for regular and critical assessment of, for example, the applicability of project or program methodology. It allows opportunity for experimentation with imported but possibly appropriate and beneficial technology. Project design is mutually shaped by agencies working together in partnership but remains responsive to concerns and anxieties expressed at the community level or by agency representatives themselves. Indeed, partner agencies can "draw synergistically on the distinctive strengths of each other" (Korten and Brown, 1989:1).

The need for a learning-process approach is significant, even crucial. Whether Sahelian social structures and state-society relations are seen as unstable and unpredictable (Hyden, 1983:157) or dynamic and evolving (Brinkerhoff and Ingle:489), a development process in which learning is given high priority can allow for successful service delivery in the short run and sustained problem-solving capacity in the long run (Brinkerhoff, 1986:23). In this light, shared knowledge about development ends and means is itself a goal (Uphoff, 1988:56). A 'learning' bias in institutional development allows for lateral thinking to be stimulated, knowledge and insights to be further developed and causal associations to be made between actions (White, 1987:160-162). This does not mean that plans should not be made or

resources allocated but, rather, that there needs to be the opportunity to periodically revise these plans and allocations in light of experience (Uphoff, 1988:56). Indeed, when a community organization is understood as being an equal partner in the process with significant input to offer, local knowledge is valorized and the particular development program is given greater credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the rural population. Moreover, a strengthened community organization or national NGO is the best repository for a base of knowledge that has been experimented with and built up, that has been deemed culturally, environmentally and financially feasible and that has been adequately adapted to meet local needs.

c. Development of Civil Society

The third issue of importance for NGO partnerships is that of the role they can play in revitalizing civil society and contributing to the processes of democratization that are operative in Mali and Niger today. In the wake of retreating states, there is left much space and opportunity for non-governmental associations to form and bring about change. As the Malian and Nigerien states pare down, the building of civil society has taken on a particular urgency as the severity of social disintegration and the economic crisis become clearer. Yet as the state retreats, it is in no way a foregone conclusion that identifiable civic organizations will be exposed and/or able to be built up. The GAP, in its reflection day on Nigerien NGOs in

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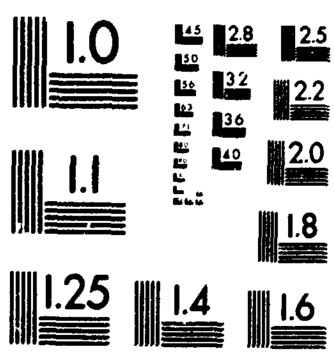


PRECISION[SM] RESOLUTION TARGETS

PIONEERS IN METHYLENE BLUE TESTING SINCE 1974

1989, commented on the lack of civic mindedness and the relatively little enthusiasm for local and national associations, governmental or not; government circles, too, noted the near-absence of a voluntarist movement. For Niger, if these observations are correct, the process of non-state organizational development and capacity-enhancement may require more time and learning. Yet the need for strong civic structures persists and NGOs, because they are mostly perceived as not being affiliated to state structures and not being too politically suspect, are best poised to contribute to the strengthening -- and, perhaps at times, the emergence -- of democratic, civic organizations (Diamond, 1988).

Mazide N'diaye, president of FOVAD, notes that northern and southern NGOs have an important critical role in helping African countries become more democratic. This may be by apprising people of their rights under the law and/or nurturing a sense of political self-confidence. FAVDO itself, and through the NGO partnerships it encourages, seeks to strengthen the capacity of African people "'to effectively participate in the democratic process'" (in Robinson, 1989:43-4). Indeed, NGO partnerships, in that a principle intent is to strengthen decision-making, feedback and accountability mechanisms, help to institutionalize checks and balances as well as opportunities and sanctions. They help to pluralize the institutional environment and cultivate democratic norms and structures. And by facilitating and promoting a more participatory political culture, there is a

pushing ahead of a process of democratization, even if it be at a slow pace and on a small scale.

But as Ghai points out, small grassroots organizations as such may be regarded as the foundations of a democratic society. They can provide an example of an embryonic democracy at work, embodying principles of dialogue, discussion, regular elections, problem-resolution and consensual decision-making. When they are most effective, they can prevent a concentration of power and a perpetuation of hierarchical relations (Ghai, 1990:241-2). As Sara Berry noted at the 1989 conference at the Carter Centre:

> the effective aggregation, articulation and negotiation of interests through voluntary associations and informal local institutions can facilitate the de facto democratization of African societies.
>
> (Carter Centre, 1989:98)

Strong and learning-oriented grassroots groups and local NGOs that are also inclusive and visionary can be seen as nuclei of democratic participation that can interface well with other organizations and with the state and can 'scale up' without losing effectiveness.

Democratization is not merely about competitive party politics, representational legislatures and national elections; it is about responsiveness and a regulated body of rules concerning access to and preservation of available but limited resources. Moreover, responsiveness and regulation can be given the greatest credence and legitimacy when a good deal of the responsibility for their maintenance lies with community associations in which community members have a stake and from

which they derive benefit. Effective local governance is advanced as is a counter-vailing force to promote effectiveness and responsiveness from the state.

Civil society is composed of organizations such as these. They are part of the arena in which -- as space and resources are freed up -- many social movements and commercial and non-state organizations "attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests" (Stepan, in Bratton,1989:33). But, as Claude Ake warns, the presence of grassroots organizations, although it may increase the number of players within civil society, says nothing about their health or vitality. Their existence or number does not necessarily mean that their voice will be heard or that they will be able to leverage change within larger institutional frameworks. Their attempt to express themselves and advance their interest may remain just that: an attempt but one that fails (Ake, 1990:5-6).

Part of the response is that partner agencies need to, as Korten says, build the capacities of people to make demands on the system and work to build alliances with enlightened power holders in the support of action that makes the system more responsive to the people. The amplified voice and the strengthened capacities of local institutions are more likely to reposition resources and shift system dynamics in a more desirable and democratic direction (Korten, 1990:121). Furthermore, partnership arrangements between southern and

northern NGOs can allow for the concerns of community organizations "to be articulated up the funding chain to the points of aid decision making in the industrialized world" (Bratton, 1989:584).

NGO partnerships can be effective in helping national and community non-state institutions attain credibility and leverage change. Yet the attempts of these latter to become legitimate and capable organizations may fail nonetheless and for a variety of reasons. It may simply be because of lack of appreciation of the importance of civil society development and institutional linkages. Or it may be a result of a lack of concern for the inner workings of institution-strengthening and organizational learning. And, to reiterate once again, a large part of the difficulty, especially in Mali and Niger, stems from resource-limitations (not only financial and environmental but human resources as well).

Yet this does not invalidate the theoretical significance of the three issues raised in the second half of this chapter. Indeed, they are integral if institutional development -- as noted in the first chapter -- is to be understood as a dynamic process and one in which a learning organization becomes increasingly capable of influencing and adapting to a changed environment. The three dimensions of institutional development noted here are particularly important given the realigning state-society configuration in both countries and the consequent growing and perhaps foreboding 'disinvolvement' of the cash-

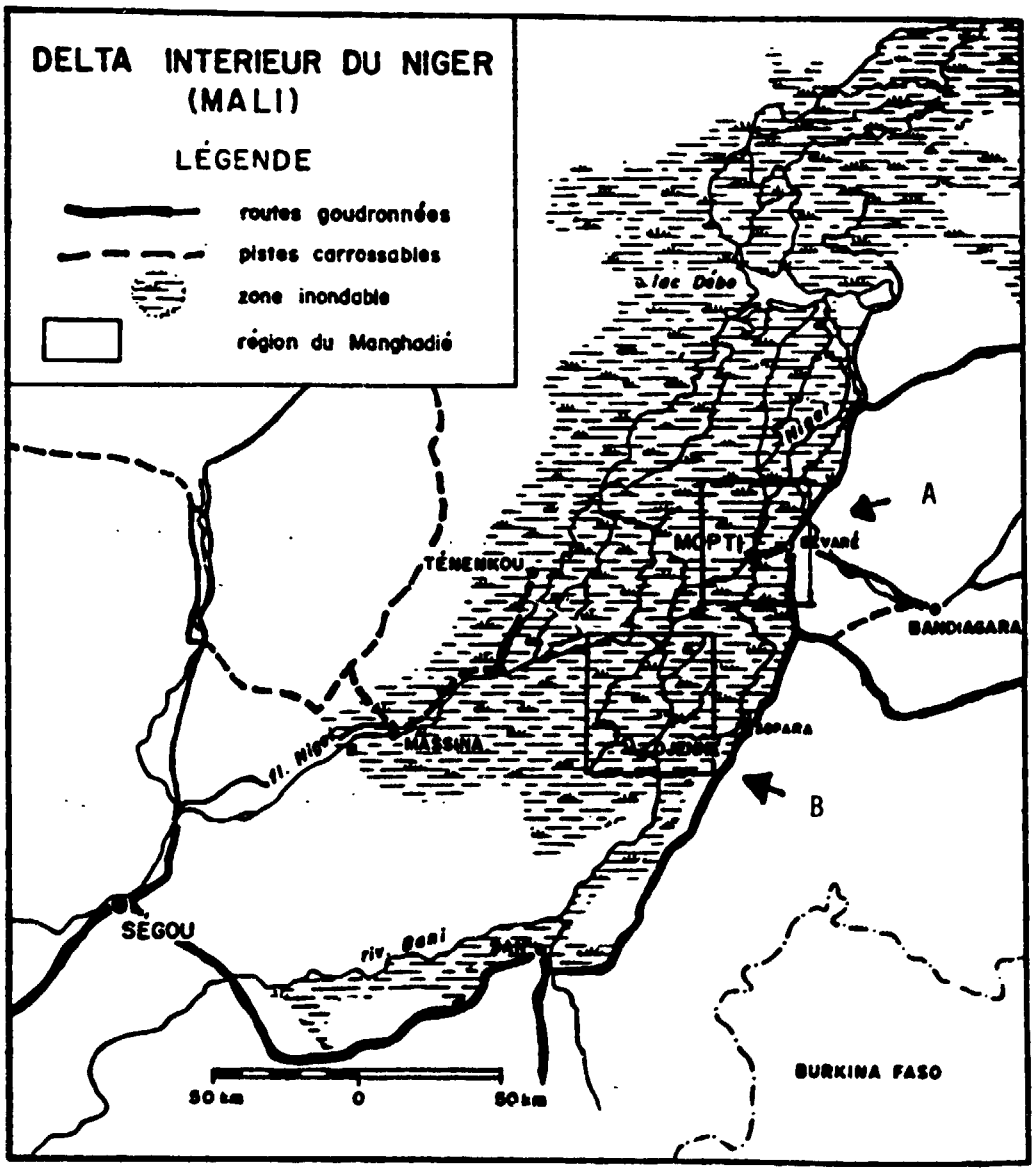
strapped state from vulnerable rural communities. Just as there is potential for NGO partnerships to contribute to institutional development, there are also opportunities offered by the changing socio-political framework of Mali and Niger for this potential to be realized. As previously-occupied political space is vacated in Mali and Niger, both the need and the opportunities for partnering agencies to address these issues has become all the more imperative.

Chapter Five

Projet Missira (UNAIS-OMAES)

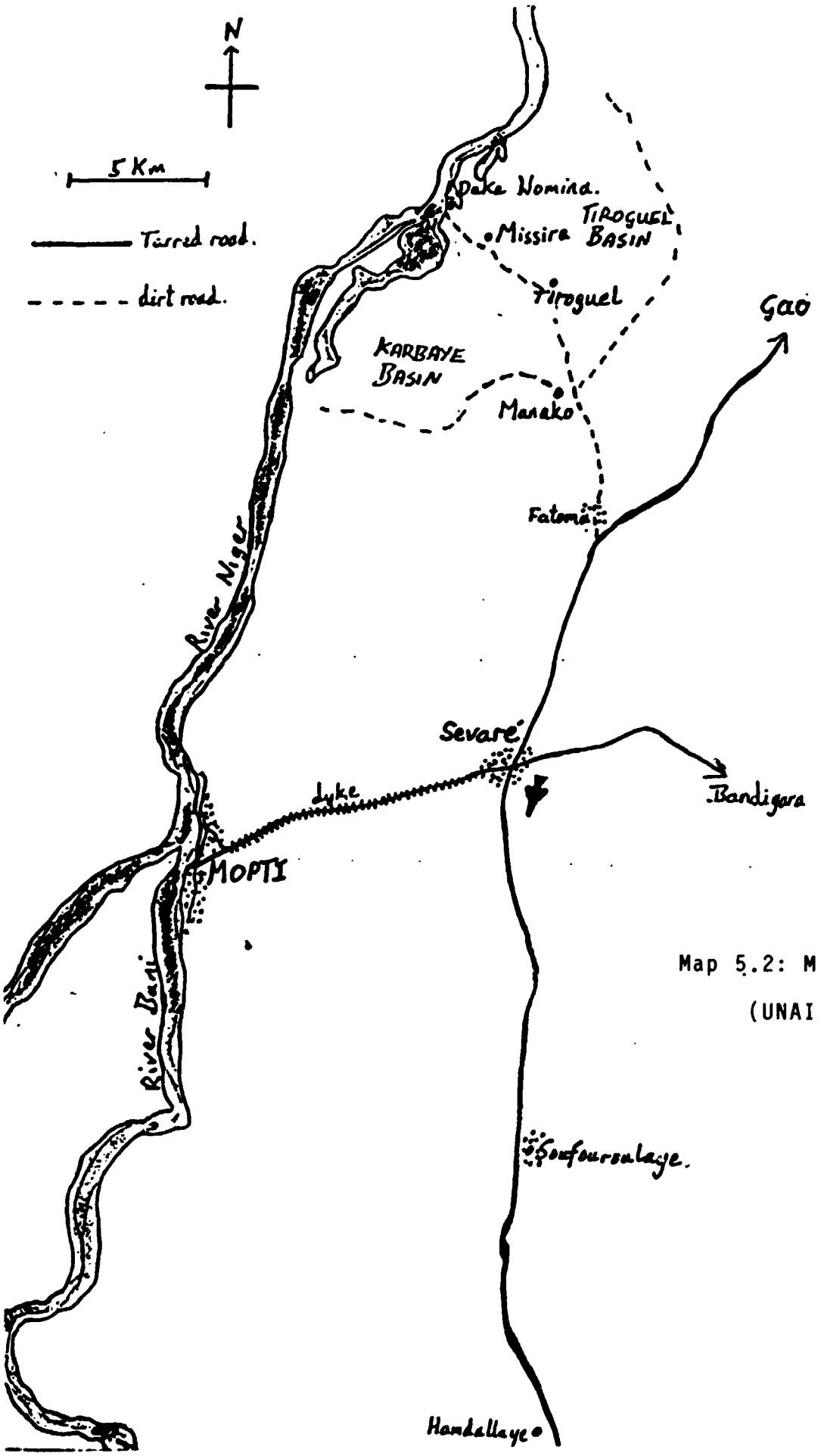
The first of the partnerships that will be discussed here has come to be known as a showcase project for the two NGOs directly involved in its implementation. Officially, it is known as the "Fixation et Sédentarisation de 100 Familles Nomades a Missira (Région de Mopti)." (See Maps 5.1 and 5.2.) In its initial stages, the project was entitled, "Appui aux populations flottantes autour des villes de Mopti et Sevaré" or simply "Populations Flottantes." It is often referred to as the "Projet Missira." The two NGOs involved in the project are the United Nations Association - International Service (UNAIS) and the Organisation Malienne pour l'Aide aux Enfants du Sahel (OMAES).

UNAIS is an agency of the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom (UNA-UK). The members and agencies of the UNA-UK work to promote the principles of the United Nations, particularly that of internationalism. UNAIS seeks to sensitize the British public to the problems of developing countries and to the fact that most of the constraints to development are found in the industrialized countries. Yet it also seeks to support and share knowledge with communities and national agencies in developing countries. Accordingly, UNAIS lends technical competence in the areas of primary health care, hydrology, soil conservation, agricultural research, public hygiene and in assisting the handicapped. It insists that the qualitative dimension of assistance is as significant as the quantitative,



Map 5.1: The Inner Niger Delta
A. Area surrounding Missira (Sevare, Mopti)
B. Area of the Manghadie (Mangha plain)

(Simard, 1990:7)



Map 5.2: Missira

(UNAIS, 1988)

citing the importance of attitudinal change, increased motivation and confidence, and skill development. Its London headquarters oversee the agency's overseas activities, which are based in several countries of Latin America, in the West Bank and Gaza, and in the Sahelian countries of Cap-Vert, Burkina Faso and Mali. UNAIS, although it is not a funding agency, works to help national partners find necessary financial resources from donor agencies. The office in Mali began operations in 1979 but in the late '80s committed itself to elaborate projects with national partner agencies and to a policy of 'progressive disengagement' from project sites. Normally, the UNAIS' Malian office notes, the partner agencies with which the technical assistants work should be able to maintain the projet after their departure.

OMAES was founded in November 1982 to address the welfare of children and their families, notably those at risk due to natural disaster. It was created to complement government efforts in improving the socio-economic conditions of Mali, particularly as it related to the well-being of children. OMAES became a fully-accredited NGO in 1986. Through its interventions, OMAES seeks a more harmonious integration of children into their environment. The agency brings material, financial and food assistance to populations in need and, through its extension work, encourages the use of suitable technology, such as in housing construction and cooking. OMAES also works in nutrition, primary health care, education and small-scale production.

Pursuing a broader-based set of objectives stems from the belief that, as the agency's secretary-general noted, for children to benefit, development actions need to assist the entire family and particularly women, as they are the ones who spend the most time with and are most responsible for the care of their children. In addition, OMAES insists that it does not do development projects; rather, it helps others, namely rural villagers, do projects and take charge, little by little, of their future.

This chapter is divided into two parts: in the first part, the background and objectives of the Projet Missira are discussed, although with an emphasis on the broader institutional objectives and relationships; in the second, it will discuss the project and the partnership in light of the theoretical framework of this study, that of institutional development -- at the level both of the village and that of the NGOs themselves.

Background and Objectives

In Mali in 1985, 1.2 million people were affected by drought, famine and related diseases. The loss of animals and crops drove 200,000 people toward the urban centers of Timbuktoo, Gao, and Mopti. From May to August of 1985, 1,610 people were known to have been struck by cholera and 286 of them eventually died. For many, the temporary migration became permanent as relatively few of those taking refuge had animals with which to take up herding activities when the rains of 1985 proved more abundant. In Mopti, the socio-economic infrastructure

deteriorated. There were numerous shortages of goods and high inflation. Moreover, conflict intensified among the refugees living on the city's outskirts as they not only had to adjust to new and restrictive living conditions but compete each day for handouts, food leftovers and the few menial jobs that existed (Okwudiba, 1989:170).

Although food aid met some of the shortfalls, Malian government officials and NGO representatives working in the 5th, 6th and 7th regions, believing that pastoralism no longer offered a viable and sustainable way of life, began planning for the sedentarization of those camped on the city outskirts. The Office Malien du Bétail et de la Viande (OMBEVI) issued a report which recognized, albeit in passing, that the nomadic model had historically evolved and was a rational response on the part of pastoralists seeking to exist in marginally productive areas. The norms, structures and behaviors that made up the model were also the components of a wider and coherent socio-economic system in which agriculturalists and traders were also a part. Yet the document took it as essential, even as unquestionable, that herd reconstitution was no longer possible and that sedentarization strategies would need to be developed. Moreover, the support and participation of NGOs in the settlement process was understood as being not only a necessity but a given (Republique du Mali, n.d).

In August and September of 1986, UNAIS personnel conducted a feasibility study in the camps on the outskirts of Mopti, seeking to learn how it could most effectively lend assistance to the

refugees and to Malian government strategies to settle them permanently. UNAIS and OMAES had already developed a working relationship in other project sites in Mali and, although no agreement had been signed about collaboration in a sedentarization program in the Mopti area, both NGOs were willing to discuss such a possibility. It was personnel from UNAIS that initially contacted the Direction Regionale des Affaires Sociales (DRAS) in Mopti. Together with OMAES personnel, they met camp members, most of whom were Bellah and from the region of Timbuktoo. They proceeded to take a census and, with the participation of the camp members, to determine what needs and aspirations existed. A full week was spent in the camps and, afterwards, efforts were made to contact other agencies (state and non-state) involved in relief and development among the refugees. Camp members were mistrustful of all the questioning and of the fact that DRAS workers accompanied NGO workers from time to time in the camp. They were also angry about where they were living and the scorn with which they were treated by the city people. As the chef of Camp Touguel said at the time,

> Ce n'est pas un plaisir pour nous de vivre dans ce bas-fond ou toutes les mauvaises eaux de la ville viennent se rencontrer; et d'ailleurs nous sommes traités par les populations d'accueil comme des ordures, les gens faits pour la corvée.
>
> (in UNAIS, 1986:1)

Yet, after the UNAIS/OMAES workers presented the possibilities for permanent resettlement nearby, there emerged a consensus that a new village would be a welcome idea, provided that there would be enough land for food to be grown.

A protocol was signed between UNAIS and OMAES on December 3, 1986. The two NGOs agreed on the holding of meetings every two or three months in which there would be discussion of past and on-going activities and of future orientations regarding an eventual sedentarization project. Financial responsibility would remain, however, with UNAIS. The OMAES secretary-general, for example, could not sign cheques or access project funds. Indeed, the protocol noted that UNAIS would assume "le role du premier responsable du projet." The major funding source at this point was US. For Africa (USAFA). UNAIS received funds from USAFA and was financially accountable to their office in California. OMAES, in the first phase of the project -- which would come to an end in July, 1989 -- received about US$20,000 from Oxfam-America for the payment of running costs and salaries.

The first objective in the project, securing a site for the project, was not realized until April 6, 1988. Until then, much effort was invested in trying to secure a site near Hamdallaye, which was initially suggested by some of the government administrators. But it also came with a steep price: 5 million FCFA. This was in part because Hamdallaye is classified as a town and to redraw boundaries and secure well sites would have required substantial work by state Topographic and Urban services. Moreover, the site has religious significance dating back to the Peul Ké-Macina empire of the 19th century. For that reason, others in the administration hesitated to give their approval. However, after sixteen months of negotiations,

Opération Riz-Mopti (ORM), a state agency with a mandate to encourage rice production and its commercialization, granted permission for the site at Missira, about 35 kilometers from Mopti, to be settled by some of the refugees still waiting at the camps. By that time, however, almost two years after the first contact was made by UNAIS and OMAES with the refugees, the camps' composition had changed significantly. When inscription lists were passed among the camp members, over half of those who signed up were Maure and the rest Kel Tamashek/Bellah. In total, over 300 individuals from about 90 households would eventually move to the new village of Missira.

Once the site was secured, work began on meeting other objectives: building houses, constructing cement wells and a grainstore, establishing communication with neighbouring villages, buying tools and equipment and transporting materials to the site. In the latter half of 1988, market gardening and the planting of 1000 trees began. The larger objective of Projet Missira, however, was to assure food self-sufficiency for the settlement. From the beginning, it was believed that the agricultural component would be the project's pillar of success. ORM, who had legal title to the land, gave almost 50 hectares of land for rice cultivation and almost 50 hectares for millet cultivation. Each family was given 1/2 hectare in both the rice field and the millet field. Abundant rains in the first year of settlement, 1988, allowed for a significant harvest of both millet and rice and heightened the enthusiasm for the project

among the population and among the staff of the partner agencies involved.

In some of the early project documents, there is reference to local institutional development. Its importance as an objective varied. The first UNAIS project worker involved in the Projet Missira noted "establishment of village association" as number eight on a list of eleven objectives for the latter half of 1988 (UNAIS, 1988). A 1990 document recalled that one of the initial objectives of Projet Missira was to reinforce the social organization of village structures so as the population would be able to maintain the project once outside support would phase down (UNAIS, 1990b). A 1989 document underlines the importance of a local organization with which the team members could work:

> Quand la population fût installée au début à Missira, elle était fragmentée et individualiste. Toutefois, si le but principal du Projet, à savoir amener les populations à s'autosuffire, il est nécessaire qu'une organisation interne soit crée et que la coopération au sein de la communauté soit développée. Donc l'encouragement de l'organisation interne, à travers l'animation au cours des réunions et discussions, a pris la meilleure partie du temps de l'équipe du programme.
>
> (UNAIS, 1989a:3)

Yet devoting time and energy to internal organizational reinforcement and seeking to work with local associations did not necessarily mean that this actually or always took place. An 'auto-évaluation' carried out by the five team members in October, 1989 and documented by the UNAIS field co-ordinator noted that practical animation skills were needed in communicating techniques and ideas and that the team members themselves did not have the experience and skills with which to

do so. Furthermore, regarding the ability to support and strengthen internal organization, the report said that

> this is another area where the team has gone as far as it can with the knowledge and experience it has and yet still falls short of the mark.
> (UNAIS, 1989b:2)

What was needed were on-the-spot training and opportunities to visit other nearby project sites and participate in seminars. A better-trained and better-informed team would be able to more effectively communicate ideas regarding not only technical improvements but also local organizational development.

Prior to the second phase, which was to begin in January, 1990, a new protocol was signed between UNAIS and OMAES. In the document, signed by the Secretary-General of OMAES and the Bamako Representative of UNAIS on September 19, 1989, it was agreed that the two NGOs would work closely together in the execution of activities but that OMAES would be "le premier responsable du projet." As well, both NGOs would have equal responsibility in finding and in managing finances. There were several reasons for these modifications. In the first phase of the project, it was believed by team members living in Mopti/Sevare and by staff in the Bamako offices that roles and expectations were not well defined and that changes needed to be made before the second phase of the program would begin. The first-phase UNAIS field co-ordinator, for example, was believed to have had an inordinate amount of influence, dampening the inputs of other team members. As well, a new UNAIS country representative arrived on the scene, bringing with him a strong desire that the protocol agreement be

based upon the principles of partnership and a gradual phasing out of UNAIS from the project; indeed, as the second phase of the project began, UNAIS's refined goal in Missira was to lend sufficient support to OMAES so that it could continue to support the village once UNAIS would leave. Oxfam-America also promised to increase its financial assistance to OMAES, giving the Malian NGO greater bargaining power when it came to renegotiating the protocol with UNAIS.

The second phase lasted from January, 1990 to December, 1991. During this time, drainage basins and washing areas were built near the already-existing cement wells and the construction of houses in Missira continued. More than half of the houses being built in the early months of 1991 were by women heads of household. A health center was completed in 1990 but, due to lack of funds for medical equipment and supplies, it was not functional as of July, 1991. The new UNAIS field co-ordinator encouraged women to make basketware, jewellery and leather products; the co-ordinator sought to help in finding a market for these products in Mopti and in Britain. Women of Missira were also lent money with which to buy products in bulk which could be re-sold in smaller quantities and at a slightly higher unit price. Donkies and carts and later, oxen and ploughs, were given to nine groups that had evolved out of the ethnic fractions and extended families living in Missira. When the DRAS Regional Director visited Missira, he insisted that three additional groups be set up exclusively of women and that they be given

donkies and carts to rotate amongst themselves as well.

For much of 1990 and 1991, however, the team members were involved in distributing food and trying to integrate it with suitable food-for-work programs. In the years after the successful 1988 harvest, the yields were low; for some, they were so low, that they could not allow for a subsistence diet of more than a few months. There were hopes expressed by community and team members that funds could be found to build a several hectare-large irrigated area near the Niger River (about five kilometers from Missira). A diesel-powered pump would irrigate the perimeter at regular intervals. Similar projects exist in other villages, one of which team members and several villagers visited in early 1991. The plan would allow for two harvests per year of six tons of rice. Funding proposals were being sent in 1991 to several possible donors for a third phase of development in Missira to begin the following year. In this phase, however, OMAES would be the only participating NGO. Indeed, OMAES has developed both credibility and capability to carry out such an initiative without the technical or human resources from a partnering northern NGO; nevertheless, as the following section shows and as the experience of its five-year partnership with UNAIS makes clear, it could benefit from increased attention to the inner details of institutional development.

Institutional Development: Constraints

An NGO partnership in a resettlement project, as is the case

in the Projet Missira, encounters difficulties that are not found in other projects that are done in the context of an already-existing and evolved socio-economic structure. In Missira, basic agricultural skills needed to be learned and not just refined or supplemented with new technology. The value and status inherent in livestock ownership would not quickly or even necessarily be transferred to that gained in millet or rice production or in a form of co-operative arrangement revolving around the lending out of oxen or the storage of foodstuffs. Moreover, new spatial living arrangements, in the village itself and with neighbouring communities, would need much adaptation as well as patience and restraint.

This particular sedentarization project incurred other constraints that worked against the meeting of objectives and limited the institutional and learning benefits that otherwise may have been attainable. The poor harvests of 1989 and 1990, caused not only by irregular and insufficient rainfall but also by damage from grasshoppers and birds, deflated the high morale that existed after the successful 1988 harvest. It also showed the precariousness of an objective of food self-sufficiency. Men in particular left the village, often for long periods, in search of work and cash. With Mopti facing economic difficulties, opportunities for the Missira women to sell craft products also dissipated and when sales were registered, the terms of trade for millet were already heavily against them. After two small harvests in the region and an almost fully deregulated grain

market throughout the country, there was not only insufficient food available but when it was available, it was expensive. Millet prices in Mopti had reached 12,600 FCFA per 100 kg. sack in March, 1991 -- double what they were a year earlier. The coup in that month -- in which the Traore administration was overthrown -- was followed by the looting of government medicine and food stocks. Not only did these factors hasten a scramble for food but it also hurt efforts by the UNAIS/OMAES team to impelement projects and strengthen community structures.

There were also a number of other problems, some of which according to team members could have been avoided and should have been dealt with earlier. The project vehicle, having not been sufficiently registered, was locked up by local customs officials. Also, the project office in Sevaré (25 kilometers from Missira) was destroyed by individuals in the area who, angry after armed Tuareg attacks elsewhere in northern Mali, sought to take revenge on those organizations having any connection whatsoever to the Tuareg people, as did the Projet Missira. Interviews and project documents also brought to light what seemed to be never-ending cash-flow problems that were encountered by office and field staff from both NGOs. Promised funds from USAFA (which disbanded in 1991) and Oxfam-America often arrived late or were limited to specific budgetary line items, such as house construction or architectural fees. The situation deteriorated to such a point that field staff were not even allowed to ask the Oxfam-America Bamako representative when

funds would be arriving. Moreover, falling exchange rates for the CFA relative to the American dollar in the late 1980s resulted in there being an estimated 4 million CFA less to fund the project. Finally, shortfalls in budgetary planning also brought about delays, for example, in the finishing of the health center and in paying the team agronomist. Insufficient thought had been given to running costs -- such as stocking and maintaining the health center with medicine. In 1991, over a year after it was built, the center still remained inoperative.

The limited and restrictive nature of the budgets made it difficult for purchasing and transporting seeds and food aid -- elements that were deemed essential if the resettled population at Missira would remain in the village and plant their fields. Villagers noted that seeds often arrived late and were of the wrong variety. At one point, the UNAIS field co-ordinator in the projects's second phase noted how funds for a amount of food aid were found and released three months after the request was made; the higher market price for the millet consequently resulted in a lesser quantity being purchased than was necessary.

The mere conditions then in which the NGO partnership could facilitate institutional development suffered in two distinct ways. First, efforts to strengthen community structures and enable a degree of autonomous decision-making to emerge were hampered by increasing food needs and increasing dependency on food aid. The strategies for institutional development and capacity enhancement were thwarted by the need for the people of

Missira to simply survive. Second, the constant need to re-allocate funds -- which were also becoming increasingly limited -- hurt efforts to train staff in planning and programming. The UNAIS field co-ordinator in the second phase had a particular expertise in cross-cultural management and training but was frustrated by the rigid and insecure funding framework in which she was obligated to teach accounting techniques. As part of a wider training process, she encouraged the rotation of financial management responsibilities among the team members and a shared monitoring and co-ordinating of program activities. However, the constant liquidity problems made it difficult to plan without knowing what the planned expenditures would be and when the funds would arrive.

Institutional Strengthening at the Village Level

In many ways, it is important to note, the strategies implemented by UNAIS and OMAES sought to facilitate organizational learning and the development of viable and sustainable institutions which could interact well with other state and non-state organizations. In Bamako, staff members from both NGOs sought to share ideas and co-ordinate action. Indeed, an increasingly larger share of the responsibility rested with OMAES in the knowledge that UNAIS was to totally phase out its participation in the program by the time the third phase would begin in 1992. UNAIS' field co-ordinator during the second phase believed her role to be one which would facilitate UNAIS'

withdrawal by transferring management skills, delegating duties in, for example, the writing of reports, and giving greater responsibility to the other team members, namely OMAES' extension worker and the DRAS' technical assistant.

Although strategies were developed for supporting and strengthening Missira's village association, they underwent some revision and, as the second phase was winding down, proved inadequate to the task. Initially, in 1987 and 1988, the strategies revolved around working with those delegated by the members of the different ethnic fractions represented in Missira. A collective field was proposed and regular meetings were held with a village assembly. However, what often happened at these meetings was that the same hands would be raised and only a few individuals would speak. It became clear that a much more participatory dialogue took place within the smaller ethnic groups or extended families. As well, little effort was put into farming the collective field as it was not certain who would even benefit from the grain that would be stored afterward and how the distribution of the grain would take place.

Instead, the newly-settled villagers vested energy in the fields that they as small groups were given. This evolved into something of a competition between the groups as to which could produce the most grain. The field team made note of the greater attention paid by the villagers to their own smaller groups yet the team also noted that there needed to be a sufficient amount of collaboration between the groups if conflict was to be

avoided. Hence, the oxen and the ploughs that the project received were given to each group (one pair of oxen and one plough per group) to rotate amongst its members as it saw fit but, at the same time, several pair of oxen and ploughs were given to three groups together. As well, groups were each given the same amount of land for gardening purposes but needed to collaborate with each other in building and maintaining the thorn fence around it and ensure that no animals could enter through any part of it. General assemblies were held once per month with team members participating and problems discussed.

It became apparent, however, that neither the groups nor the village association were capable or structured enough to address such problems as food scarcity or varying labour inputs into, for example, the building of the cement wells. On the one hand, villagers said in July, 1991 that collaboration would increase if there was simply enough food to eat; on the other hand, had greater effort been put into developing the decision-making structures of the groups and of the village association earlier in the project, the people of Missira may have been able to lessen the difficulties that faced them in the food-deficit months of 1990 and 1991. Problem-solving and rule-making mechanisms, had these been given greater significance from the very beginning of the project, could have allowed for efforts and resources to be pooled, for the community to remain more cohesive and mutually supportive and for dependency to be diminished. In 1988, for example, it was noted that "le projet a maintenant

commencé à utiliser les groupes comme le fer de lance dans l'évolution de la vie communautaire" (UNAIS, 1989a:4). However, a team member noted in 1989 that the groups were not even operational and that the team was focusing its institution-strengthening efforts on local health and hygiene committees as well as on a management committee (UNAIS, 1989c:2).

Part of the reason for the ambiguity as to which group of villagers formed which committees and which would be the focus of organizational development stems from the lack of training of the team members and, perhaps, a lack of appreciation for the value of local institutional development. Early project documents are ambiguous as to how significant a role a local association would play. As well, documents produced in the second phase and for the projected third phase all refer to the need for strengthening management capacities in both production and organization but make no or little mention of what has already been achieved.

Moreover, team members themselves referred to their own uncertainties in knowing how to effectively communicate ideas, elicit discussion and facilitate a clear and community-wide understanding of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. What is more, this needed to be done in a context in which members from several distinct cultural groups were present in the village. An external project evaluation in July, 1989 noted that team members were inexperienced when it came to encouraging group discussion and a more participatory atmosphere and that they needed on-going training and greater contact with other project

initiatives in the area (UNAIS, 1989d). Two years later, similar concerns were heard. The two remaining team members remarked that their greatest handicap remained not being able to participate in training seminars or obtain access to reading material that would keep them informed about aspects such as extension and capacity-building. Although it is quite conjectural, had the field staff been more familiar with such techniques and had greater importance been placed in phase one upon working with the different groups and the village association and strengthening their decision-making and regulatory structures, perhaps more mutually agreeable decisions would have evolved to address the difficulties that arose in phase two. In 1991, the UNAIS field co-ordinator noted in her final report,

> The population is not yet sufficiently coherent and do not have a history of working together to resolve common problems. They are not yet confident of their position vis-a-vis the local administrative and political structures.
>
> (UNAIS, 1991a:8)

This is not to imply that community members were not interested in becoming informed and involved in the project operations. But rather, a significant concern voiced by the people of Missira in July, 1991 was that they wanted to become more aware of funding proposals and decisions made regarding, for example, seed and animal selection. They wished to become more involved in the actual management of the funds allotted to the project by donor agencies. If they had been, it is possible that they would have been less reluctant to doubt their autonomy as a community and that they would have been more certain that they

would remain in Missira in the future.

Gender Issues

Where important progress was made was in organizing women in Missira and giving them confidence and a decision-making role that they may not have had otherwise. Addressing gender in institutional development is important. It encourages inclusivity, it promotes a wider spread of learning and it allows for a broader pool of resources to be drawn upon and invested in during the life-cycle of the project. Indeed, its inclusion is essential given the neglect of gender in previously developed models of institutional development. As Kathleen Staudt notes, institutions have historically been the means by which gendered outcomes have been produced. The legacies of past gender constructs have been to direct property, income, public representation and state benefits into the hands of husbands or fathers. "Women rarely have voice in conceptualizing... institutional forms" (Staudt, 1990: 10-11).

The UNAIS staff, both in Bamako and on the field, were instrumental in assuring that the concerns and the needs of the women of Missira were addressed. The Bamako representative, for example, noted after a 1989 visit to Missira that men had a monopoly on information and decision-making and that women's representation in meetings -- although encouraged by both NGOs from the beginning -- was merely an alibi. In fact, over 40% of the household heads in Missira are female. He added that it is

not enough that women express their needs; their concerns need to be specifically addressed within the project and the assisting NGO could play a role in assuring that men do not seek to circumvent that from happening. At one point, when villagers were asked to return a list of names of those individuals who wished to participate in a health and hygiene course, the team members noticed that the list contained only the names of men. The men were then asked which of them wished to give birth. The end result was that for future training sessions, an equal number of men and women would participate (UNAIS, n.d.:75-76).

UNAIS also specified in its partnership agreement with OMAES that the field co-ordinator be a woman. The field co-ordinators of the first and second phases worked to a large extent with the women in Missira, not only in craft work and the rotating credit fund but also in facilitating exchanges with well-organized groups of women of nearby villages. The second field co-ordinator noted that the project had shown particular interest in the concerns of women yet it might not necessarily have been the case had there been no women team members. She had asked for a Malian woman extension worker to be hired and made part of the team in 1991 but funds did not permit and the responsibilities for "le volet femme" were given to the two remaining male team members.

Communication and Accountability

Perhaps one of the most significant institutional weaknesses in the Projet Missira was the inadequate development of

communication and accountability structures both between the field and the Bamako offices and between the two NGOs themselves. In the first phase and under the first protocol which gave principal project responsibility to UNAIS, the field co-ordinator took unilateral action on a number of occasions and, at times, even an after-the-fact relay of the decisions made was neglected. Part of the problem can be attributed to the administrative bottlenecks that resulted in seeking to secure a resettlement site; this may have necessitated a number of impromptu decisions. A deeper difficulty is that the protocol agreement did not specify how office-field links would be maintained and how exactly UNAIS and OMAES would collaborate in project planning and orientation.

In the second phase and under the revised protocol agreement, which gave principal project responsibility to OMAES, the communication and accountability structures were changed but not necessarily made better. In 1989, UNAIS and OMAES felt the need to be closely and directly involved in the management of the project and remove power from the project team with respect to financing and overall decision-making. This had several significant implications for the project. Team members often did not receive copies of reports or requests submitted to funding agencies. To take one example, the Secretary-General of OMAES sought to find funding for a project animatrice from different sources but did so without input from the field co-ordinator and other team members; the proposal for the animatrice, noted the

field co-ordinator who had worked with women since her arrival, suggested a level of organization within the women's groups that did not exist.

The absence or neglect of mechanisms for communication worked against the building up of responsiveness and accountability. For example, in the second phase of the project, not only were unilateral and sometimes hasty decisions made in Bamako, no action could be taken in Missira without the agreement of OMAES' Secretary-General and an authorized release of funds. Reports, letters and proposals sent by the field co-ordinator were often ignored or responded to only when the situation at hand had severely deteriorated. Also, in the event of grievances, there were no channels through which they could be resolved or a body or board to whom an appeal could be made. The second protocol stipulates that whereas team members would submit written plans and reports every four months, the OMAES Secretary-General would visit team members and Missira at regular intervals and the UNAIS country representative would do so only when necessary. Specifics regarding responsiveness and co-ordinated action between the office and field were neglected.

A large part of the problem stems from the fact that much of the decision-making authority in OMAES rests with its Secretary-General. There is no structure, the field co-ordinator wrote in her final report, which ensures the accountability of the Secretary-General to OMAES. Indeed, the person and the organization seem one and the same. "OMAES needs to develop a

structure which does not invest all power and responsibility in one person," she wrote (UNAIS, 1991a:7). At one point, there was an eleven-month interval between visits from the Secretary-General to the field, causing not only frustration but also a degree of paralysis in the making and implementing of plans.

Indeed, Malian NGOs, such as OMAES, that have to operate with insufficient core funding and insecure project funding do invest much time and significant resources in corresponding with and meeting other development agencies and prospective donors and obtaining the necessary finances to assure that its projects continue. However, in the interests of effectiveness and efficiency, it is important that the projects that are undertaken are done in full consideration of the need for sound communication and accountability mechanisms. UNAIS, as a partner in Projet Missira and because of its responsibility to funding agencies, could have done more to encourage OMAES in this direction. Already in 1989, the external evaluation done by a Malian consultant noted the need for UNAIS to take a proactive role in helping to shape OMAES' internal structure (UNAIS, 1989d). The fact that UNAIS did not seek to do so and did not ensure a greater role in the supervision hurt the Projet Missira in a number of ways. Mechanisms of response and delivery to the village of Missira were not sufficiently addressed or strengthened. Nor was the broader institutional development of OMAES -- which would take over as sole implementor of Projet Missira in phase three. As the field co-ordinator noted in 1991,

the absence of a better collaborative structure was demoralizing for the team members, it did little for the credibility of UNAIS and OMAES and the local government often perceived the intervention as a 'muddling through' operation (UNAIS, 1991a).

Communication and Learning

The insufficient amount of attention and resources devoted to capacity building and co-ordination lessened the amount of organizational learning that took place. Ideally, learning should allow for knowledge generated by both error and success to be fed back into on-going decision-making processes. In the Projet Missira, there has been a significant amount of technical learning but less organizational learning -- the learning which arises out of reflection and allows for a better design of structure and strategy. Between the two NGOs involved in implementing Project Missira, there were efforts to correct communication weaknesses and reverse the paternalism that was shown towards OMAES staff in the project's first phase. The protocol was revised and OMAES received a significant say in the selection of the second field co-ordinator. What resulted, however, was seeming overcompensation to the point where accountability and co-ordination were still neglected.

One further area of co-ordination in which UNAIS in particular may have been able to play a meaningful role would have been between the several resettled villages in the Mopti area and between the different NGOs involved in these respective

resettlement processes. There are three new villages of former pastoralists within twenty kilometers of each other yet there is no formal communication links between them. The other two villages -- Barbé and Tilwatt -- are settled with people from different ethnic factions. Indeed, some people in Missira were against any notion of twinning or joint programs. However, some of the tensions that have emerged since 1988 could have been avoided: Barbe received many more oxen and carts; Tilwatt had access to medicine supplies which Missira had not yet received; and food aid provisions were not evenly distributed between the three villages.

The UNAIS country representative remarked that indeed an element of organizational jealousy had emerged, that the NGOs had different sets of preferences and that there developed a small sense of competition among them. Although there was no shortage of opportunities to do so, in the end, there were few within the three northern NGOs who were willing to exchange ideas; moreover, the relationships that developed among them were, for the most part, irregular and cursory. This too worked against a forward process of organizational learning. Learning benefits could have circulated between the non-national and national NGOs involved in resettlement in the Mopti area. Instead, the potential for greater learning -- as well as more efficiency and evenness of assistance to the three communities -- was curtailed.

Opportunities

The Projet Missira highlights nonetheless important progress in institutional development. Since the mid-1980s, OMAES has become increasingly perceived by others in the NGO and aid community as a more credible and capable NGO than it was before. Then, in 1986 and 1987, the UNAIS country representative noted that practically no one would partner with OMAES. Those northern NGOs who did, the OMAES's Secretary-General added, would impose and not listen, maintain control over all management and financial responsibilities and treat the Malian NGO as an executing agency, not as a full partner. Since then and with the experience gained while working in partnership with UNAIS, OMAES has become more independent and confident as an NGO. It is prepared to defend its own goals and objectives and, accordingly, has become more critical in deciding with whom and with which northern NGOs it will work. Since beginning his term several years ago, the Director of Africare noted that his appreciation for OMAES's work in Mali has grown. Others too in the NGO/aid community in Mali speak favourably about OMAES' operations. OMAES and UNICEF have recently begun to collaborate in the 'Bamako Initiative,' an urban, partially user-funded health program.

UNAIS, too, has developed a greater degree of credibility among northern and southern NGO representatives. Its country representative readily shares with them its set of criteria for working with local partners and implementing mutually agreeable strategies. Moreover, the organization has also emerged with a

wide reputation for dispensing critical advice to Malians seeking to form or develop their NGO and contact funding sources. Following its two project phases and four years of partnership with OMAES, UNAIS' country representative noted,

> UNAIS est certaine du rôle primordial que doivent jouer les ONGs nationales dans le développement grace aux énormes progrès qu'a fait OMAES et grace à sa vision et son sérieux. Grace aux conseils de OMAES sur la dynamique du milieu, UNAIS connait mieux la zone et son intervention dans d'autres projets de la region est fortement influencée par l'expérience acquise avec OMAES. (UNAIS, 1991b:14)

In Missira itself, in spite of severe harvest shortfalls, the population remains confident that OMAES can continue to lend needed assistance. In one of the early first-phase project documents, the field co-ordinator noted that, initially, the presence of an expatriate NGO gave people the confidence that the project would be properly supported and supervised (UNAIS, 1988:5). In the middle of the second phase and three years later, the field co-ordinator concluded a report by wondering whether he presence contributed to a 'dependency syndrome,' particularly given that the other (OMAES and DRAS) team members were much better equipped than before to carry on with her functions and responsibilities (UNAIS, 1990:3). Part of the change may be attributed to different perspectives from different field co-ordinators; yet interviews with office and staff members and observations gained from within the village itself do suggest that there has been a qualitative improvement in how villagers perceive the project and OMAES' role in it. Such a perception extends to members of all the different ethnic groups and

fractions represented in Missira. They note OMAES's assistance in breaking down some of the mistrust that existed between them at the time the project began.

> Former nomad pastoralists including Tamasheq and Maure ethnic groups, and their former Bellah slaves, have moved from a position of mutual distrust to collaboration and mutual respect in creating their village.
> (UNAIS, 1991a:8)

Conclusions

The resettlement project at Missira has allowed for some local institutional development to take place. The village association in Missira meet once a month with men and women from all the different ethnic groups participating. The DRAS, being involved in the project from its inception, is particularly interested in seeing this project succeed and the village association becoming unified in carrying out specific objectives. OMAES, too, is well known and appreciated in the government departments that have supervisory responsibilities for NGO activity. Its stronger position with government officials helped OMAES to establish a working relationship with UNICEF. It also has stronger bargaining power with other potential northern NGO partners. The organization's Secretary-General is clear about how he perceives and articulates the idea of NGO partnership. NGO partnership will only lead to development, he said, if there is an increased amount of working together and an increased capacity for working together -- that is, there must be progressively more space in which joint working relationships can evolve. Only then, he added, will partnership "se vit réelement et effectivement."

However, local institutional development was not addressed or advanced as much as was necessary. UNAIS has not sufficiently thought through the role it can play in moving a partnering relationship beyond that of simply working and reflecting together to addressing and making clear the importance of issues of responsiveness and accountability and suggesting means by which these can evolve and be useful in the longer term. If this had been the case, OMAES may have become more effective as a national NGO; unfortunately, the roots of its own institution do not go deep. Indeed, OMAES does not have the institutional strength that would make it even more effective, particularly, in the future. The presence of checks and balances within OMAES -- a regularly-meeting board, a mechanism by which complaints and concerns can be heard, a diffusion of power and responsibility -- would allow for the organization to minimize or forestall error and make decisions that result from a larger input of critical reflection. Indeed, a greater amount of detail to institutional development by representatives of UNAIS and OMAES may have made clearer the importance of institutional development at the local level as well. The question of how support is given, not just how much, is relevant to an appreciation of institutional development (Uphoff, 1986:188) and particularly so here in that UNAIS, not being invested with a large resource base itself, did nonetheless have the opportunity to offer consistent management-strengthening advice and make that a part of the agreed protocol. Similar missed opportunities were evident in Missira. There, village

members were asked at different times to form a variety of different types of committees for different purposes (health, hygiene, dues collection); yet it had not benefitted from adequate and consistent amounts of training in how to structure even one of them as a rule-making and problem-solving entity.

This particular example of NGO partnership did not isolate institutional development as a goal in and of itself. Rather, it sought to facilitate the settlement of former pastoralists in as effective and efficient a way as possible. However, had greater priority been put on the significance of institutional development, difficulties that arose over communication and responsiveness could have been more adequately addressed. Indeed, it is argued in this study that effectiveness and efficiency can be better realized, particularly in the long run, if serious consideration is given from the very beginning to the importance of structure and strategy, of checks and balances, of transparency and accountability, and of co-ordination and dialogue with other civil and state actors. Perhaps the objectives were too ambitious and the human and material resources too few. UNAIS' second-phase field co-ordinator noted in her final report that inadequate planning and insufficient thought were given to how specific objectives could be achieved within certain time periods. These are all key factors in understanding that although institutional development is a time- and resource-consuming endeavour, they are time and resources well invested.

Chapter Six

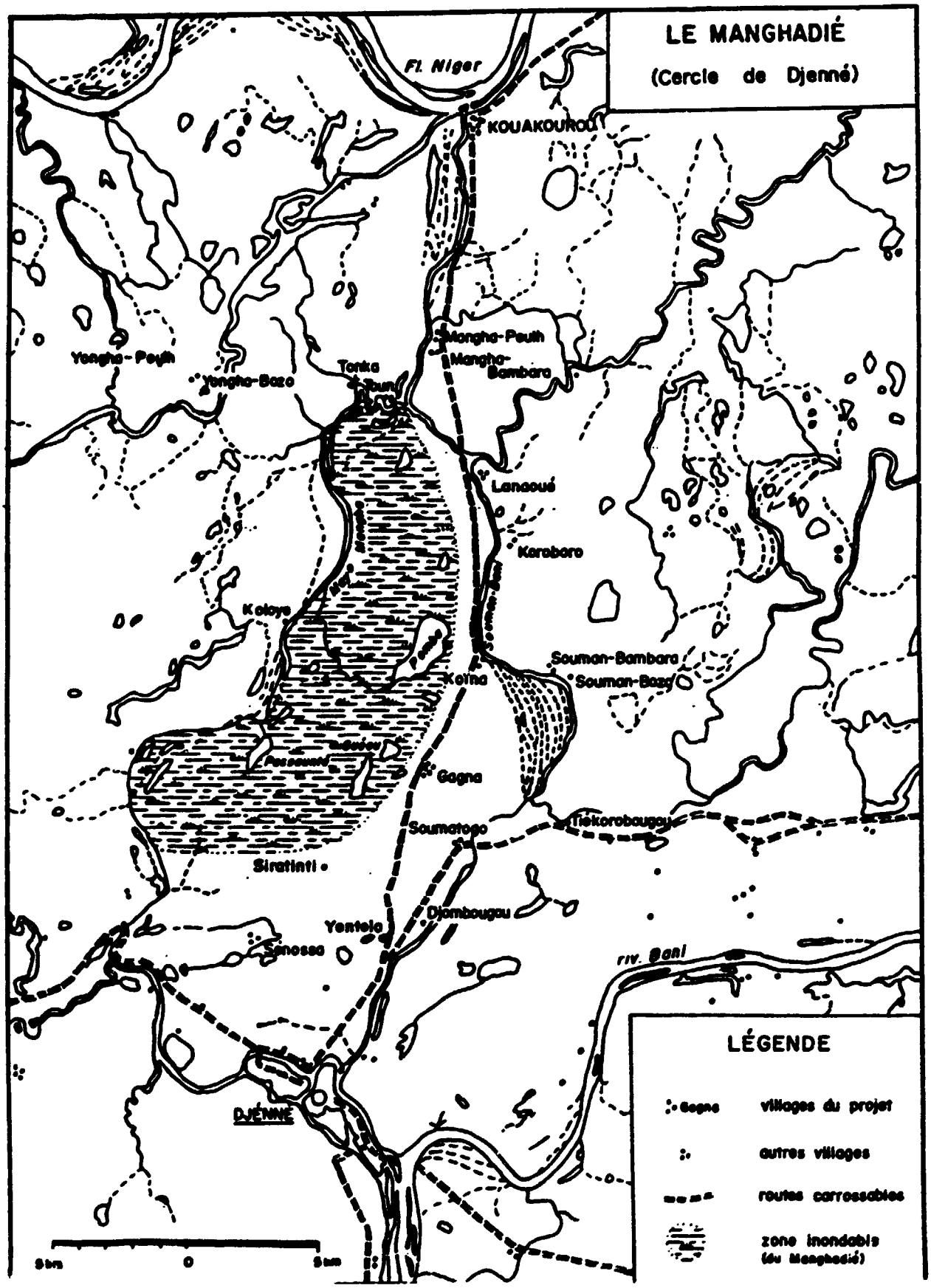
Projet Manghadie (SUCO-AED-AMIPJ-AETA)

The second case study in Mali is also well known, perhaps as much for its ambitious objectives to group together four NGOs and one inter-village committee in one project setting as it is for the innovation and transparency it seeks to develop. Formally, it is known as the "Projet Manghadie: Aménagement Villageois et Auto-Organisation Paysanne." The project area is the plain of the Mangha river, located slightly north and east of the historic Malian city of Djenne and situated within the inner Niger delta. (See Map 6.1.) Although the Projet Manghadie is now more than a decade old, it is primarily the most recent phase, that begun in April, 1990, that will be studied here. It is at that point that protocol agreements were signed between the Canadian NGO and the three Malian NGOs.

The Canadian NGO, Service Universitaire Canadien Outre-Mer (SUCO) was created in 1961. One of its objectives is to support local projects in developing countries that seek to increase the capacities of the population to chart and control their future. SUCO also has an objective to work with grass-roots organizations and national NGOs and strengthen their internal organization and management capacities. As of 1991, SUCO had established programs in Peru, Nicaragua, the West Bank and Mali. It sends volunteers to work alongside national counterparts in such areas as health and nutrition, reforestation, cooperative development and the strengthening of women's collectives. It also seeks to increase

Map 6.1: The Manghadie (Mangha Plain)

(Simard, 1990:12)



Canadian awareness of development issues, focussing on the need for generating solidarity between people of the industrialized and the developing world. It does so often in collaboration with other organizations, such as the Centre Sahel in Quebec City, the Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI) and the Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique Australe (CIDMAA). The attainment of sustainable results is integral to SUCO's work, both in Canada and overseas.

The most long-standing Malian NGO in the consortium is the Association d'Etudes des Technologies Appliquées et d'Aménagement en Afrique (AETA). It was founded in 1982 with an objective to increase agricultural production in rural areas in Mali, to improve rural and urban living conditions and to support and strengthen village development organizations. Its principal avenue of support, however, has been in the application of appropriate technology. AETA has become known as one of the A.T. NGOs in Mali.

The Association d'Entraide pour le Developpement (AED) is perhaps the largest Malian NGO when one considers constituency size (over 1000 members). It was established in 1978 as the Fédération pour le Développement des Coopératives Feminines (FEDEV) with the support of the American Friends Service Committee. As a federation of about 30 women's cooperatives, it has sought to develop a number of rotating credit funds, stimulate handicraft production and marketing and offer training

in gardening, functional literacy and animal husbandry. In spite of the obstacles planted in its way by the officially-recognized (under the Traore regime) Union Nationale des Femmes du Mali, FEDEV has been successful in "building autonomous transnational networks in civil society to cut across the cleavages of national political life" (Robinson, 1989:45). State permission to become a registered NGO was granted only in 1989 and only when the Federation's name was changed to that of AED. Its principle objective remains the same: to support rural women's groups and womens' income-generating activities.

The Association Malienne pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Jeunes (AMIPJ) was created in 1986 by a group of young college graduates, some of whom had already been involved in the broader NGO community. Its objective is two-fold: to generate employment for its graduate-members while contributing to the socio-economic development of the poorest of the Malian population. AMIPJ staff come from a wide number of academic disciplines and technical backgrounds and, consequently, trains rural Malians in many sectors, including micro-enterprise development, animal husbandry and fisheries.

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first looking at the background and objectives of the Projet Manghadie (primarily in its post April, 1990 phase), and the second looking at how the project objectives and activities articulate with the theoretical framework in which this study is set, that of institutional and partnership development.

Background and Objectives

Being situated in the inner Niger delta, the Mangha plain has historically benfitted from a commodity which for much of the rest of Mali is a rare and precious resource: water. Each year, the waters of the Niger river and its tributary, the Bani river, flood a large part of the Mangha plain. The abundance of water yields numerous fishing grounds that have been exploited by the first of the people groups to arrive in the area, the Bozo. As well, when the waters gradually retreat after the rainy season, rich pasture areas appear for Fulani livestock. The principal crop grown in the area is rice. The Bambara and Marka farmers who cultivate most of the rice are today seeking greater security in its production, a factor brought on not only by growing demand but by the weak rainfall of the past two decades and the consequent decline in river water levels. With the fields no longer sufficiently flooded to permit the rice to properly mature, farmers in the Mangha plain are encroaching on the low lying areas that have not traditionally been planted with rice but rather left fallow so as nutritionally-rich forage could grow (Simard, 1990:15).

It is in this context of sporadic flood water levels and actual and potentially greater conflicts over access to land that many of the people of the Mangha plain grouped together to try to find a solution. In 1981, they built an earthen dike which they believed would control the rising water of one of the tributaries of the Niger river and assure that a right amount of water would

be channelled to the rice fields.[1] By so doing, it would assure that the Fulani livestock would have enough dry season forage and that the Bozo would have sufficent areas in which to fish. Rice production would be made more secure and pastoral and fishing activities would be rehabilitated. As well, the building of the dike would circumvent the problem of encroachment and tenure conflict. Unfortunately the dike collapsed and the population realized they lacked both the technical expertise and the material resources to ensure the durability of such a project.

What did evolve from this experience was a determination by the people of the villages in the Mangha plain to work together. In 1984 and in wake of the drought, the population formed a ton inter-villageois, a representative body of the 17 villages of the plain. Contact was established with Oxfam-America, AETA and SUCO and an agreement was made for two reinforced dams to be built. Most of the funds for what is now referred to as the first phase of the Projet Manghadie (1984-1988) came from Oxfam-America while the principle water technician was an AETA employee. SUCO offered extension and some supervisory support. It was hoped that the dams and the accompanying set of canals and dikes would allow for secure rice production on 4000 hectares of land and a guaranteed pasture area of 10,000 hectares. Much of the local labour for the

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[1]Although the evidence from project documents and interviews is not conclusive, it seems that most of the initiative for building the dam came from farmers in the villages of closest proximity to where the dam was built. However, the evidence points quite clearly to the involvement of some of the Fulani and Bozo.

building of the dams was provided by women. During this phase as well, SUCO lent some management support to the ton and rotating funds were allotted to three women's collectives or 'tontines' representing three different villages. Moreover, women benefitted from technical and market advice regarding their garden plots. Other tontines also asked to participate. An intermediate phase (1989) allowed for some improvements to be made to the two existing dams and for additional efforts to increase the capacity of the ton to mobilize and manage resources. It also allowed for further elaboration of what additional project activities to undertake and how best to proceed.

The second phase of the Projet Manghadie -- upon which this case-study is primarily based -- was initiated in early 1990. Much of the funding has been granted by Solidarité Canada-Sahel (SCS) through its Actions Concertées de Coopération et d'Education au Développement (ACCED). The focus of SCS and particularly its ACCED program is to encourage concerted action by Canadian NGOs who work in the Sahel and to promote Canadian-Sahelian NGO partnerships, the underlying notion being that institutional collaboration is not only ideologically progressive but more effective in delivering development assistance to communities in need. NGOs benefitting from ACCED funds also commit themselves to a significant awareness-building program in Canada. Indeed, the Canadian NGO must contribute at least 14% of the total project costs with money raised from its own constituency members, not through other official aid channels.

Until recently, the Canadian NGO, having raised the required 14%, would assume the role of pivot organization in the partnership, assuring not only a smooth continuity of the partnership but also an accountability to SCS for funds put at the disposal of the partnership and program.

In the second phase of Projet Manghadie, SUCO has assumed the role of pivot organization. SUCO is responsible, for example, for submitting regular reports to SCS and responding to questions and concerns that may arise. However, there has been a significant attempt to share project responsibilities among the four NGOs. AETA, for instance, is in charge of maintaining and improving the dam and canal structures that have so far been put in place, to assure that stones and clay are transported to the sites when needed and to make adjustments and future plans that are in accord with the wishes of the population. AED assures the diffusion of gardening techniques both within and between the tontines. New garde seeds are distributed for experimentation purposes and women gardeners are encouraged to organize themselves so as to facilitate both production and marketing. As well, AED hopes that at project end, one-third of the women of each of the participating villages will be functionally literate. AMIPJ's responsibilities are in studying land use patterns and degradation (erosion, for example), eliciting discussion on issues of tenure and land and water use and in presenting ideas to the project consortium and to the people of the area as to how resources can most effectively be managed and maintained. SUCO,

other than being the project's pivot organization, also offers training to ton committee members and advice in well construction, fish farming and reforestation.

Although the different NGOs have different sectors of intervention, the division masks the reality of a particular objective in the project's approach: the various extension workers and technicians work not so much as representatives of their respective NGOs (although the field leader of each sector sends regular reports and narratives to his or her NGO) but as members of a team.

> Les agents doivent se considérer comme des agents Manghadie et non des agents d'un volet ou d'une ONG, et ce, pour assurer une responsabilisation de tous dans l'atteinte des objectifs du projet.
>
> (SUCO, 1992:2)

The emphasis in the Projet Manghadie is on presenting a unified team approach to the population and to underscore the principle that the four areas of intervention are component parts of an intersectoral objective: broadly, to better the lives of the population of the Mangha plain or, more specifically, to render more inclusive and sustainable a strategy of natural resource management. Accordingly, continually increased efforts have been devoted to working with the ton inter-villageois and elaborating joint management strategies. Transferring project responsibilities to the ton -- or, as SUCO's country representative noted, to "dégage une piste sure pour la prise en charge du projet par la population" -- is the overarching goal towards which the project is working.

Yet the three Malian NGOs have a specific role to play in the overall planning and budgeting within their particular sector of intervention and in assuring an adequate and periodic follow-up and evaluation of that sector. Each is given funds to do so as well as a block grant to help defray administrative costs that are incurred in daily operations. Every six weeks, consortium members -- that is, representatives from the four NGO offices -- meet to delineate and/or modify project orientations. Biannually, the team and the consortium meet to discuss past and on-going interventions as well as the feasibility of future activities. In July, 1991, present at the fifteen-day meetings were team members, the SUCO country representative and, at times, administrative representatives of the three Malian NGOs.

It is significant as well that this particular example of NGO partnership makes very clear the connection between partnership and institutional development.

> Un des objectifs recherchés à travers le projet Manghadie est de favoriser le partenariat et le renforcement institutionel des ONG nationales.... Le modèle de fonctionnement... vise à responsabiliser les ONG nationales.
> (SUCO, 1991:2)

Yet at the same time, there exist uncertainties as to how effective the model espoused by the Projet Manghadie is in strengthening the institutional capacity of the participating Malian NGOs and the ton inter-villageois. Ambitious objectives and a large team presence may allay the institutionalization of rules and regulations that need to be adopted if effective resource management strategies are to endure and withstand the

gradual withdrawal of the project.

Nevertheless, consortium and team members are willingly seeking to understand some of the structural shortcomings of the partnership and make appropriate modifications. There is indeed openness and willingness to learn from these mistakes and modify the approach and objectives accordingly. As the Projet Manghadie enters its final year of the second phase and as preparations are made for what is hoped to be a third phase, what has been effectively established is a process of learning and transferral of skills and responsibilities to the community-based ton inter-villageois. What remains a struggle, however, is how to achieve these objectives while also favouring a process of learning and institutional development among the four NGO partners.

Institutional Development: Context Constraints

Examining institutional and partnership development in the Projet Manghadie needs to be prefaced with an understanding of the particularity and fragility of the tenure system in the Mangha plain. Indeed, both social relations and natural resource management on the Mangha plain have undergone much change since the early 1800s when the Fulani warlord Cheick Amadou codified a system of temporally-and spatially-defined access rights to the land and water of the inner Niger delta. The legislation (or dina) that was enacted allowed for a relatively peaceful and mutually-agreeable coexistence of the different ethnic groups and of the three principal modes of production that had developed in

the Delta. However, since the fall of the Fulani empire in the Delta in the mid 1800s, resource tenure positions have been modified, sometimes very drastically. The Tukolor Empire, French colonialism and the Malian state all offered different interpretations as to how and by whom resources should be managed. Bambara agriculturalists, because of their strong ties first to the colonists and then to the independent state, were the most active in asserting increased decision-making authority over the Fulani and the Bozo as to the manner in which resources would be used. The increased demands made on a relatively limited resource base, however, have brought about a scenario where there exist overlapping and competing claims to what historically have been specifically-designated farmland, ricefields, pasture areas, livestock pathways and fishing grounds.

The objectives of the Projet Manghadie are indeed a response to the resource and management needs of the region and its people. Yet nonetheless, its implementation also entails risks that the benefits brought by the project will be unevenly distributed. Although the project objectives do seek to address the needs of farmers, herders and fisher folk and to do so in as equitably a manner as possible, there is the possibility that some of the initiatives will yield more results than others or that some of the people on the plain will participate to a greater extent than others and, in so doing, appropriate a greater share of project benefits for themselves. The president of the ton inter-villageois noted that some of the 17 villages

are not interested in the project but also, that the project cannot realistically help all the villages in the same way. As well, project documents repeatedly refer to the need to stimulate increased participation. The building of the two dams has unquestionably changed the plain's ecosystem yet there is a realization now that more reflection and extension work should have taken place at the time the dams were built, not so much over whether they were needed but, rather, over how and by whom the land and water would be managed after their construction. As a result of the changes that are being brought about, the Projet Manghadie may be contributing, as one sociologist in the region noted, to a strengthening or legitimizing of the farmers' claims in defining access rights and resource allocation. In the longer term, it may promote yet a further realigning of power relations in the Mangha plain and, possibly, intensified social and economic differentiation.

The project has sought to minimize such a possibility by placing priority on its relationship with the ton inter-villageois. Indeed, the ton inter-villageois is "le partenaire priviligie" in the Projet Manghadie. Support for the ton and consolidation of its mobilization and management capacities has been a project objective at the time the Projet Manghadie was presented to SCS for funding.

> Le Ton est le partenaire légalisé et initiateur du projet Les mécanismes prévus pour qu'il assure la continuité sont ceux du renforcement organisationnel et de formation à la gestion.
>
> (SUCO, 1989:8)

The ton inter-villageois has been structured by the people themselves to contain 34 members (17 villages x 2 delegates) of which 11 would form the administrative council. However, the very structure of the ton minimizes the opportunites for the non-sedentarized livestock-owning Fulani to participate and contribute. Their relative absence from the decision-making circuit could possibly result in a further concentration of project benefits in the hands of the agriculturalists. Indeed, there is relatively little mention made in project documents and planning strategies about benefits that would be extended to pastoralists who live in the Mangha plain for part or all of the year.

Project staff have realized the potentially stronger weight of the farmers in the ton. Accordingly, they have encouraged a sharing of some of the project funds slotted for credit purposes with one of the Bozo fishing villages. Although their villages are represented in the ton, they are nevertheless a minority. In order to increase the interest in and participation of the Bozo in the Projet Manghadie, the project encouraged the ton to agree to lend one of the fishing villages a sum of 640,000 FCFA. Although initially there was some disagreement and tension over the credit extended to the fishing village, the exercise has been helpful for the learning it has imparted in credit-management and for the experience that it has given to the ton in recuperating the principal and the agreed amounts of interest.

Gender Issues

Team members of the Projet Manghadie have also been helpful in extending a greater awareness of project-related gender differences to the ton and to the people of the area in general. Part of the motivation has come from one of the team co-ordinators -- who is also in charge of AED's project activity component. Until March, 1991, when SUCO's field co-ordinator/chargé de projet arrived in Manghadie, she co-ordinated all the field activities and was instrumental in a January, 1991 co-production of a socio-economic/gender study. The report noted that

> nous visons essentiellement à travers ce volet à constituer des ressources humaines compétentes dans les programmes féminins. C'est donc dire que notre étude socio-économique des femmes de Manghadie... devient un vaste laboratoire de recherche-action qui nous permettra de développer des stratégies d'interventions pour rendre plus effective la participation des femmes dans la circulation de l'information et dans la prise de décision les concernant.
>
> (SUCO, 1990b:7)

For example, it was learned that, prior to the arrival of an AETA dam technician, women were already organized and managed and rotated their own money. However, with an infusion of project-related rotating funds and the putting into place of a written accounting system, a literate man needed to be found to take over the management role. The study noted that women lacked but wanted the skills to perform this task.

Team members are conscious as well of the fact that much of the physical work in the construction of the dams, dikes and canals has been performed by women yet it has been men who have

benefited to a greater extent than have the women. Women have no tenure rights to the rice fields while men own most of the herds. Representatives of the ton have been for the most part receptive to encouragement by the field team and the NGO consortium that there be not only a number of specific project activities for women but also that there exist a more regular dialogue between men and women through their respective decision-making committees. As noted in one of the initial project overviews:

> La place que [les femmes] ont occupé dans le travail sur les barrages et les digues leur donnent droit de cité dans le Ton et le projet.
>
> (SUCO, 1989:8)

A twofold strategy has been implemented by the Projet Manghadie to broaden and strengthen women's input into decision-making processes. On the one hand, management advice and credit rotation funds have been extended to the womens' tontines while organizational support has been offered to a newly-ratified (April 2, 1989) women's inter-tontine or inter-village association. On the other, the ton inter-villageois has been strongly encouraged to open its discussion setting and problem-solving functions to the participation of women. This is important, among other reasons, in assuring that there is security of access to and control over the land on which women's gardens are situated. It is also important in assuring that womens' garden wells be dug and maintained on a regular basis; a discussion with one woman and one man noted that that it is much easier for men in the Mangha plain to secure a well site and mobilize needed resources to assure well-construction and

maintenance.

Some of the men in the ton initially expressed concerns that women were too busy and that there were insufficient means of transportation for them to come and participate in the meetings. Yet a compromise was found: three women delegates from three different parts of the Mangha plain would participate in the ton and several days notice would be given to the women delegates so that they could attend. As the AED field representative/co-ordinator remarked, the different visions of women must be made known to the ton; it is important that "les femmes aient la part qui leur revient au niveau des prises de décision du Ton intervillageois Manghadie."

Local Voice and Input

As efforts have been made to make the ton more inclusive and participatory, so too has the Projet Manghadie sought to strengthen the voice of the ton in overall project planning. In the biannual planning meeting in July, 1991, there were no representatives of the ton present. As the SUCO country representative noted, "on les informe plus qu'on les consulte." The president of the ton inter-villageois noted as well that the ton did not have a clear idea as to the direction of the project: "ils vont nous aider mais on ne sait pas comment." In a discussion of the progress of the actual partnership with the ton, it was noted that

> [le ton] n'est pas impliqué directement dans la planification de ces activités. L'implication des responsables

> à ce niveau est impérative pour faire en sorte de les responsabiliser davantage et de rendre effective la prise en charge graduelle de la gestion des infrastructures et des activités.
>
> (SUCO, 1991:2)

Two important steps were taken to rectify this. One, the following biannual planning meeting (in December, 1991) was held in Djenne, near the actual project site. Eight representative from the ton participated, including the three women delegates. Budgeting, the timeline, the phasing out and phasing in of activities were all dealt with openly.

A second important step taken was to hold a five-day workshop with ton members to discuss the historical development and internal composition of Malian rural organizations as well as the various types of local contribution that a given population can make to the organization's development. Also, discussion was elicited as to how a newly-developed ton inter-villageois with its control and supervisory processes could build upon previously existing village associations which, although less participatory and inclusive in nature, possessed a significant degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the population. There was much enthusiasm as well about a suggestion that there be exchange visits and discussions with other tons regarding organizational developmert.

At the workshop, the legal status and ramifications of a ton were also discussed at length but not so much with the idea of strengthening the eventual bargaining position of the ton relative to, for example, the grouping of state service directors

that comprise the region's Comité Local de Développement (CLD). The ton has indeed developed a sense of negotiating acumen but it is unclear as to how significant a role it will play in civil society when the Projet Manghadie phases out its activities. The series of workshops and the planning meetings in which the ton representatives participate certainly increase the capability of the ton and its members to voice their perspective. However, when there are discussions regarding the project, the CLD has, in the past, convoked Manghadie team members, not ton representatives. Moreover, the January, 1990 organizational chart does not directly link the ton and the CLD; rather, they are both linked separately to the SUCO chargé de projets. This is partly understandable when one considers that the CLD has few resources other than personnel whereas SUCO has at its disposal relatively large financial and material resources. Yet staff members are nonetheless hoping to encourage a better and more direct working relationship between the ton and the CLD. As mentioned in a January, 1992 biannual report:

> La phase d'application du schéma risque fort de s'étendre sur plusieurs années. Une collaboration effective sur le terrain pourrait permettre au CLD, à travers les Services Techniques, de prendre le relais du projet après une phase de transition de quelques années et ainsi assurer un développement integré de la zone du projet de concert avec le Ton inter-villageois Manghadie, et ce, sans intervention extérieure.
>
> (SUCO, 1992:3)

Learning

Indeed, the Projet Manghadie shows an open willingness to learn from and not ignore or deny errors or insufficiencies in

project approaches and strategies that had been employed earlier. To take another example of progressive organizational learning, there have been significant amounts of attention paid to an even and concerted development of the different sectors of intervention. However, in the first year, this did not happen. The women's support initiative fell behind schedule as the AED representative assumed full field co-ordination responsibilities and was unable to carry out the specific AED objectives. AETA objectives were pushed back as materials did not arrive on time. The AMIPJ field team (five people in total) were finishing training courses in Bamako before assuming field duties. The only sectoral intervention to begin on time was the one for which SUCO was responsible, that of village organizational support, reforestation and well-construction. Indeed, between the end of the intermediate phase in 1989 and the beginning of the second phase in 1990, SUCO maintained a field presence in Manghadie. What resulted was an eventual competitior and even non-collaboration between the representatives of the different NGOs. Also, the representatives of the three Malian NGOs assumed that extension and animation objectives for all the sectors were being carried out by the SUCO field members. The confusion as to role and job description together with the fact that the development of the ton inter-villageois was still rather embryonic had repercussions on the population as well: project participants were uncertain as to which sectors they were being asked to contribute to and from whom they were to receive instructions.

SUCO's role at this particular time was described by one of the Malian NGO staff as being that of a police officer.

Yet corrective efforts were decided upon, usually in a consensual manner. Monthly team meetings and more regular consultations were held and, as noted above, workers were encouraged to identify themselves first and foremost as Project Manghadie team members, not as representatives of their particular NGO. Significant opportunities were given to team members to go to the Centre d'Etudes Sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CESAO) in Burkina Faso where they could enroll in courses, an underlying theme of which is the promotion of solidarity, networking and consistent extension work. As well, the field co-ordination promoted more inter-sectoral cooperation. AMIPJ women literacy trainers would help AED attain its objectives; an AETA consultant would offer practical training on well-maintenance to villagers participating in the realization of one of SUCO's objectives; SUCO and AED would share organizational-support strategies that would help strengthen the tontines and the women's inter-village association.

Some of the inter-sectoral difficulties may have been allayed had the protocol agreement which established the partnership been worded differently. AED, AETA and AMIPJ are not officially partnering with each other; rather, each has established a partnership with SUCO. This certainly increases a perception that SUCO's role in the partnership differs from that of the three Malian NGOs. Nevertheless, as the three-year second

phase of the project reached its midpoint, important changes have been implemented and what has been learned has been fed back into the project process. A further development for the remaining portion of phase two or, perhaps, for a third phase, may be a diminishing of the size of the field team. SUCO's country representative noted that the large size of the team may be an obstacle to the population taking effective charge of the project.

> Comme il y a beaucoup d'intervenants 'professionnels,' la population a tendance a s'en remettre à eux, et l'équipe également à tendance à se suffire à elle-même.
>
> (personal correspondance from SUCO country representative, February 18, 1992)

A small number of animators permanently on the field with several teams of technical advisers making periodic visits may be more effective in equipping the population with adequate skills and in transferring management responsibilities fully to the ton inter-villageois. Indeed, the flexibility demonstrated in the Projet Manghadie is apparent from project documents and from interviews. Priorities and strategies were not set in stone but redefined in accord with an on-going assessment of project activities.

Concerns of the Malian NGOs

Although the ton inter-villageois has remained the 'partner of privilege,' the Projet Manghadie has also sought to carry out these objectives in the context of a north-south NGO partnership. Moreover, the institutional development of the participating

Malian NGOs has been a project objective from the beginning of the second phase. Yet it remains unclear as to the balance of effect on the Malian NGOs. Discussions with Manghadie field members and administrators of the Malian NGOs reveal that the progress of this particular partnership has limited benefits as far as the institutional development of their NGOs is concerned. On the positive side, the NGOs say they gain an awareness of the area and a better understanding of how to extend and apply technical advice to rural populations. The individual field members gain expertise and experience in their sector. The NGO administators themselves, in so far as they participate in the consortium, contribute to the establishing of a broad orientation for the project. The Secretary-General of AMIPJ added that the consortium format is particulaly interesting in that it creates opportunites to meet other NGOs and allows for common discussion and reflection on development issues that are specific to Manghadie.

Yet the NGO partnership component of the Projet Manghadie also has significant weaknesses. Representatives from all three Malian NGOs are concerned that the funds allotted to them for evaluation and follow-up are very limited. Two of them said that in order to carry out the evaluations, they needed to draw from the core funding envelope. There exists a feeling among some in the Malian NGOs that if project activities are successful, SUCO is credited but if project activities performed under their sectoral objectives fail, then their NGO takes a disproportionate

share of the blame. A strong sentiment persists that the Malian NGOs are 'service NGOs' or executing agencies on behalf of SUCO. What one administrator involved in the project consortium interpreted as a top-heavy project administration is reflected perhaps in the weighty restrictions and regulations that bear down upon the Malian NGOs, leaving them with less space to initiate change at the consortium and field level .

SCS and partnership design

A significant cause for such feelings among the Malian NGO representatives can be found in the actual design of the partnership program from which the Projet Manghadie receives most of its funds. The existence of a pivot organization -- as required by SCS in its ACCED program -- reifies the differential amount of resources and the relative operational security that SUCO enjoys. Although mechanisms have been put in place to broaden the management process -- through consortium meetings every six weeks, detailed planning session two times per year, separate field evaluations -- the underlying sentiment expressed by some in the Malian NGOs is that it is SUCO that manages. AETA has noticed the shift from the first to the second phase. In the first phase, AETA received and managed funds that came directly from Oxfam-America and, looking back, believes that significant skills in financial management were developed. Indeed, errors were made but these provided an opportunity for learning and institutional development. In the Projet Manghadie, the Malian

NGOs participate in preparing the budget within their sector of intervention but they do so within the limits of a predetermined sum of money and, then, when the money arrives, it is managed by SUCO and the field co-ordinators. Funding requests on the field still need to be approved by the SUCO charge de projets. Many of the details agreed upon in the biannual planning process are still contingent upon reception of funds from SUCO-Montreal.

It cannot be denied that an NGO partnership is constrained when only one of the partners has access to the cheque book and the bank account. Yet it would be difficult to construct a scenario in which it could be otherwise. An important rethink has occured in SCS over the need for and role of an organizational pivot. There is agreement that a pivot organization remains essential to a smooth functioning of a partnership but that the pivot does not need to be the Canadian NGO accountable to SCS for how the funds are used. Rather, the pivot organization would be "le plus apte à animer la concertation des partenaires tout au long du projet" (SCS, 1988:38, adopted in general assembly in 1991). A Malian NGO, then, in partnership with at least one Canadian NGO, could assume the pivot position and a larger, overall co-ordinating role. The Canadian NGO could take on a lower profile in the actual project management. How likely it would be for the Canadian NGOs to enter into such a scenario, however, is questionable. It would require the Canadian NGO to provide at least 14% of the total project budget, using money

that has been raised among its Canadian constituency[2] and then allowing a Sahelian NGO to co-ordinate the program. SCS's charge de projets in Montreal does not believe that Canadian NGOs are ready to enter into such an agreement. To the extent, however, that it does not happen or that new arrangements for project co-ordination do not emerge, a significant obstacle is put on the path to institutional development; moreover, it places a severe limitation on the potential for NGO partnerships to push such a process along.

Conclusions

The partnership developed in the Projet Manghadie brings to light significant observations for institutional development. Strong, working relationshsips have been formed with two other NGOs working in the area -- Care and LACIM (Les Amis d'un Coin de l'Inde au Monde). As well, there is much innovation and creativity in the process, particularly in how the project seeks to strengthen the planning and mobilizing capacities as well as the legitimacy and credibility of the local partner, the ton inter-villageois. There is also openness to learn from past errors or weaknesses and, somehow, turn them to advantage in rendering more effective and efficient the process of service delivery and collaborative development. The SUCO country representative, after several years in the field, notes on one hand that "le partenariat, c'est le business" -- a fact for which

[2]This is a stipulation of the Treasury Board of Canada.

he admits he was not prepared. Yet on the other, he added that "on cherche toujours une meilleure stratégie de partenariat." The Projet Manghadie is exemplary in its openness to modification and learning.

Yet the project also brings to surface two potential difficulties in the relationship between north-south NGO partnership and institutional development. One, working in partnership with national NGOs can become a legitimization strategy for the northern NGO, not only in the accessing of funds but also in the justifying of one's project and presence on the field. Funding sources are limited and many of the newer funding programs specify the need for the northern NGO to work with at least one southern, national NGO. Secondly, a partnership with one or more NGOs and particularly one in which sectoral responsibilites are divided among the different partners can open up the possibilities for an uneven apportioning of credit and blame for successes and failures. An easily-imaginable scenario is one in which the embryonic but resource-strapped national NGO is blamed for failure while the more established and supposedly technically competent northern NGO is credited with success. This works against both the development of credibility of the national NGO and an adherance to accountability for the northern NGO. In the Sahel, these possibilities are made even more real. The SCS/ACCED program creates conditions for the first scenario while the development of the second is even more possible and likely given the extreme resource constraints of Mali and Niger and the

skepticism of many in the NGO/aid community as to the level of national NGO capacities.

Although a study of the institutional relations that have developed in the Projet Manghadie offers important insights in issues of flexibility, responsiveness and learning as well as in the focus on inclusivity and sustainability at the community level, it also uncovers significant shortcomings in partnership design and institutional development. The lack of focus on institutional development among the NGOs themselves diminishes their present and future capability to absorb assistance, reflect on self-funding strategies and co-implement projects. The Malian NGOs participating in Projet Manghadie, as Kingston Kajese writes in reference to the many African NGOs with which he is familiar, are too busy 'doing' and fulfilling donor requirements to become truly effective. 'Doing,' he notes, must be balanced with 'reflecting' on the organization's mission, goals and objectives, on its structure and overall strategy and on its purpose and future growth (Kajese, 1991:21). Dixon adds that development organizations should allow opportunity for its employees to engage in critical reflection, that is, to observe their actions and interactions in order to discover more effective ways of functioning within the organization" (Dixon, 1992:74).

Reflection and analysis as such are not free, without cost or easily incorporated into existing structures or ongoing program activities; rather they require training resources, the space in which to experiment and make mistakes and the

opportunity to refrain from doing and having to seek small amounts of financial support from a variety of different sources. NGOs have a tendency to shortchange reflection in favour of action, Dichter has observed. To move ahead successfully, reflection and regular self-assessment are needed (Dichter, 1988:178). Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, too, have noted that with reflection, particularly reflection on feedback from performance, comes the possibility of altering how the system is configured, which may in turn facilitate a new, higher level of performance (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 1990)

For AETA and AMIPJ in particular, the constant need to do in order to survive and the relative absence of regular and purposive reflection on institutional structure and strategy has brought them in 1991 to positions of having to seriously and inchoately address questions of institutional depth and viability. In the course of their partnership with SUCO in the Projet Manghadie, the institutional development of AETA and AMIPJ as intermediate development organizations was not enhanced; indeed, the broader issues of organizational legitimacy and absorptive capacity were not effectively adressed -- in spite of the opportunities presented by regular consortium meetings and formal and informal contacts and discussions. Indeed, for all its positive learning benefits, this study of the Projet Manghadie nonetheless makes clear, as did the study of the Projet Missira, the relevance of a better defined and more intentional linkage between NGO partnership and institutional development.

Chapter Seven

Clusa-Cooperatives

The third case study, drawn from Niger, is unique for its efforts to give priority to national leadership, institution building and administrative training. It is not, however, a partnership between northern and southern NGOs and one could conclude that it is not a partnership at all, particularly if measures such as transparency, mutuality and equitability between the collaborating groups are taken into consideration. Rather, it involves the support that an international agency provides to village-based cooperatives. Neither the staff from the cooperative support agency nor the members of the cooperative executives make particular use of the language of partnership in describing strategies and goals towards which to work. This case study does bring to light, however, an appreciation for the significance of longer-term capacity-building and an enabling atmosphere in which locally-defined development initiatives can be carried out. Significant deliberation, energy and resources are invested in the institutional development of the cooperatives in an effort to strengthen their operational and strategic capability as well as the commitment and sense of ownership of their members. The case study provides interesting insights for those designing and implementing partnerships between NGOs. Indeed, the practical and empirical knowledge that is generated in this collaborative project can be usefully drawn upon by both northern and southern NGO planners and practitioners.

The outside support agency is the Cooperative League of the United States of America (Clusa). It was founded in 1916 but since 1953, has been known as the National Cooperative Business Association. At home, it serves as an umbrella group for numerous housing, consumer and farm cooperatives as well as savings and credit associations a d, abroad, it represents the United States in the Geneva-based International Cooperative Alliance. Its International Division still carries the name of Clusa in many of the developing countries in which it operates. Other than Niger, extensive cooperative support programs have been implemented in India, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea and Mali. To these countries and others, Clusa has lent technical assistance in such areas as the management of cooperatives and income-generating activities, in the processing and storage of foodstuffs and in the commercialization of grain, fruit and vegetables. Through its support, Clusa seeks to enable cooperatives to become viable and active business enterprises that are member-owned and member-managed.

The two village cooperatives in which a more specific study of the relationship with Clusa was made are Tamaske and Roukouzoum. Both are located in the Department of Tahoua in north-central Niger. The cooperative in Tamaske was created in 1962 and that in Roukouzoum in 1965, under the auspices of the parastatal Union National de Credit et des Cooperatives (UNCC). Cooperative members from both villages, however, note that their cooperatives were practically inactive in the twenty-year period

prior to Clusa's arrival. Since 1985 and with the loan collateral and organizational support offered by Clusa, the cooperatives have been particularly involved in the commercialization of millet and onions and in the operation of a village store. Roukouzoum's cooperative also manages a six-hectare woodlot, a project that was initiated by a now phased-out multilateral program. In Tamaske, there are 13 neighbourhood quarters that comprise the cooperative while in Roukouzoum, there are five. In both, executive committees have been elected and neighbourhood representation in the general assembly, in which most decisions are made, has for the most part been observed.

This chapter looks at Clusa's approach to rural-based institutional development. The chapter discusses, first, some of the background of Niger's cooperative movement and the essential objectives of Clusa's program in Niger, in general terms and then more specifically as it relates to the cooperatives in Tamaske and Roukouzoum. Second, the chapter will look at aspects of institutional development that have taken place. Although there are significant difficulties that serve to impede institutional development among the cooperatives that are supported by Clusa, there are also numerous opportunities for such progress to occur. These opportunities arise out of both the methodological approach taken by Clusa and the actual content of the assistance given to the cooperatives. However, both the approach and the content bring to light further concerns which need to be addressed and resolved if both true institutional development and the pooled

interests of cooperative members are to be advanced.

Background and Objectives

The cooperative sector in Niger has since independence been the state's primary institutional mechanism for channelling local participation into development activities. Through it, the state has sought to increase agricultural production, maintain supervisory control over the rural areas, and provide credit and services to the peasant population. However, credit provision was invariably tied to the cooperative members adopting new techniques and seeds. On the one hand, this led to a form of resistance (or, in the eyes of state officials and donors, conservatism or passivity) on the part of the farmers to incurring debt and increasing risk of crop shortfalls. Resistance was invariably fueled by the farmers' resentment that they were not given a voice over which technologies and the amount and forms of credit they would receive. On the other hand, the tying of credit to the use of new technology led to the increasing attempts at control by the state and a more selective allocation of credit to those individuals who could afford to take risks and who were deemed credit worthy by cooperative officials (Painter, 1984).

In 1984, the UNCC was integrated into the newly-revamped Société de Développement as the Union Nationale des Coopératives (UNC). Government cooperative extension agents would hence play a diminished role in decision making and implementing while the parastatals that had been designed to monopolize agricultural

input, production and marketing would see their legislative authority and material resources drastically reduced. The cooperative structure, however, would remain vertical or pyramidal in design but it was believed nonetheless that a reorganization of the sector would allow for cooperative development to conform more closely to the consensus reached at the 1982 seminar in Zinder, namely, that peasants themselves should make and implement decisions that affect their well-being.

There were many obstacles, however, that prevented peasant-initiated cooperative development in Niger in the post-Zinder period. These can be briefly summarized. With deepening nation-wide economic woes and a virtual end to groundnut export production, many village cooperatives as well as the national and regional umbrella structures were heavily indebted and were no longer credit worthy. At the village level, cooperative member equity had severely decreased. In the 1970s and early 1980s, private traders, by buying earlier and paying higher prices to producers and by offering seasonal or bridging capital to peasants in need, were able to capture a large part of the staple and cash-crop market and strengthen their web of control over individual farmers -- whose allegiance correspondingly shifted away from their cooperatives and notions of farmer solidarity. When merchants would offer credit, it would be on an individual basis and sometimes at 200-300% interest. In many villages where cooperatives had commercialized cereals and groundnuts in the 1960s and 1970s, they found themselves in the 1980s in situations

where mutual liability was drying up while, at the same time, conflicts of interest and struggles for power were intensifying (COPAC, 1985).

A true grassroots cooperative movement that was independent from both private traders and the government never had the opportunity to emerge. Charting a new path for the cooperatives was made even more difficult by legal restrictions that continued to be in effect even in the post-Zinder era. Clusa's Final Project Proposal to USAID, presented in 1989, noted that by 1985, only 15% of the country's cooperatives were estimated to have had even a marginal amount of savings; most of those who did were recipients of donor-supported projects. Yet the donor support for cooperatives until this time had failed to emphasize training and capacity strengthening but, rather, sought to provide the equipment and financial resources that were felt to be lacking (USAID/Niger, 1989:23).

In broad terms, the goals and objetives that have been set by Clusa were a response to this situation. One of the goals has been to contribute to a 'de-officialization' of Niger's cooperative sector, seeking changes among government ministries that would give cooperatives the legal space that would permit them to set out a self-defined course and subdivide their cooperative if they felt it to be necessary. Accordingly, Clusa seeks to work with the cooperative extension agency of the Ministry of Agriculture by engaging in regular dialogue on planning and policy formulation. Clusa also funds study tours for

civil servants who have positions of high responsibility in the department.

Clusa devotes most of its resources, however, to seeking to revive the sector by providing cooperatives with the skills and access to credit that they believe to be essential if profitable activities are to be sustained. Such initiatives contribute broadly to American government objectives of food self-sufficiency, institutional decentralization, private initiative and liberalized trade (ibid.:27).

From 1985 to 1989, Clusa received US$1 million in financial support from the Agricultural Support Program of USAID. Over 80% of these funds were earmarked for a rolling loan guarantee fund at the Banque Internationale de l'Afrique Occidentale (BIAO). The security of repayment that Clusa gave to the BIAO (111% of loans granted) allowed for the bank to lend to those cooperatives participating in Clusa's program. By 1989, Clusa could claim that it had organized 158 cooperatives, that the members of these cooperatives had identified and implemented 280 economic activities and that the default rate was zero (ibid.:1). The first phase of the program was followed by a second, begun in September, 1989 and to last until October, 1994. A substantially increased budget of US$9 million would permit Clusa to expand and further institutionalize the development of participative self-managed cooperatives throughout Niger. To do so, Clusa administrative staff in Niger refer to the importance of human resource development and the building up not only of skills but

of a feeling of ownership by members for their cooperative. Clusa's country representative noted that what is essential for cooperative development is an effective management of power. The rural power structure, noted a Clusa director, needs to be rearranged and Clusa can be instrumental in seeing this happen.

The cooperatives in Tamaske and Roukouzoum have been assisted by Clusa since 1985. It is not certain as to where the initiative for the collaboration with Clusa lies. Clusa methodology specifies that it assists cooperatives only upon request whereas villagers refer to a Clusa assistant coming in late 1985 to explain the program. Likely, it was after the presentation of Clusa's approach that village members agreed to work with them. The two cooperatives have since been offered regular technical and economic advice -- regarding roles and responsibilities of cooperative board members, processing, storage, distribution, community feasibility studies, bookkeeping, inventory-taking and optimal purchasing, pricing and selling strategies. Generating and disseminating options for collaborative decision-making and problem-solving are significant elements of the program. To communicate ideas and elicit interest and discussion, Clusa makes extensive use of audio-visual material, case studies, role playing, and small theatre presentations. Regular meetings, voting quorums and the taking of minutes are strongly encouraged for the executive, the administrative council and the general assembly.

Tamaske and Roukouzoum have also been offered access to

unsubsidized credit, that is, the cooperatives themselves are responsible for repaying the loan with interest on terms established with the bank. Clusa provides neither money nor equipment for the cooperative to initiate, carry out or manage its economic activities. It has however paid local instructors to give classes in literacy and numeracy. Didactic material has been prepared in both the Hausa and Zerma languages. Clusa strongly believes that for Tamaske and Roukouzoum as well as for other cooperatives it supports to develop institutionally, literacy and management training need to be tied to the carrying out of specific business transactions. (For an example of a French/Hausa transaction record, see Appendix 2.) Moreover, training needs to be concrete, incremental, localized and both practical and theoretical in nature with a high priority placed on feedback mechanisms between trainers and trainees. Clusa's approach then seeks to link newly-acquired skills with the identification and operation of economic activities.

Having agreed to collaborate with Clusa in 1985 and having since developed a number of managerial skills, Tamaske and Roukouzoum can now boast the establishment of active multipurpose cooperatives in their villages. Tamaske's cooperative has helped to check the growing influence of the local merchants while that in Roukouzoum has become known as the 'marabout of cooperatives' in the sense that the village regularly receives visitors asking for advice as to the functioning of a cooperative. Indeed, a closer analysis of Clusa's program, particularly as it relates to

the support offered to the cooperatives in Tamaske and Roukouzoum, brings to light important issues in the study of institutional strengthening and organizational learning.

Institutional Development

Ownership

In many ways, cooperatives that have been supported by Clusa have developed to the point of there being a strong degree of self-management and ownership. An externally-commissioned socio-economic study carried out in 1989 of 10 Clusa-supported cooperatives, two of which were Roukouzoum and Tamaske, found that a large majority of the members were satisfied and even proud of their achievements. On the whole, the study reported, cooperative members said that since their collaboration with Clusa, there had been a growth of solidarity, autonomy and awareness of aspects such as market prices, selling techniques and record-keeping. There were only few instances where individuals -- even those outside of the local administrative structure of the cooperative -- were uncertain or incorrect about how the body was structured. Members even referred to an increase in their purchasing power. One cooperative member said at the time,

> avant l'intervention du Projet tout venait du 'haut' et était imposé, nous n'avions aucune connaissance de ce que voulait dire une coopérative, nous étions aveugles... à l'heure actuelle, tout se fait par concertation, consultation, nous sommes associés a toutes les decisions, et les décisions prises engagent l'ensemble des coopérateurs.
>
> (Djibo, 1989:13)

Visits to Tamaske and Roukouzoum two years later (in November, 1991) found that enthusiasm for the cooperatives remained quite high and that commercial activities were continuing apace. In Tamaske, those who comprised the administrative council expressed much satisfaction with the management and marketing training received. The secretary -- who held the same position prior to 1985 -- said that before the collaboration with Clusa began, he did not even know what his role was. Now he wishes for even more training so that he can train others. The president added that there is a big difference now from before. Now, he said, there are documents and everything concerning bank payments and stock transactions is justified and open for all to see.[1] When they are not able to attend meetings, the Vice-President and the Treasurer can call members and ensure that mutually-agreeable decisions are made. A locally-trained financial controller is paid two times per month to inspect the record books of the cooperative and then report back to the General Assembly. (See Appendix 3 for a summary transaction record.) The cooperative also looks after the salary of the manager of the cooperative supply store and provides funds to pay for the books and writing materials for those who attend literacy classes.

In Roukouzoum, cooperative members negotiate on their own for grain along the Niger-Nigeria border and have recently opted

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[1]In Tamaske and Roukouzoum, cooperative members were open and eager about showing me their record books and explaining to me how accounts were kept.

to purchase larger amounts of millet so as to minimize the per unit transport costs incurred. Residents from other villages now come to Roukouzoum to purchase grain in the months before harvest and are able to purchase it at a lower price than that offered by the region's private grain merchants. There are even private traders who come to the cooperative to try to rebuild their stocks. Members from other cooperatives in Niger visit Roukouzoum on study trips sponsored by other international NGOs working in Niger. The cooperative trainer for Roukouzoum now lives in a village thirty kilometers away in which there is a fledgling cooperative seeking to carry out economic activities. He believes that the cooperative in Roukouzoum needs his assistance less and less: "They're free to do what they want, I offer training and give help only when they want, I attend their meetings only when they ask me but even then, I go rarely and they simply show me the minutes afterwards."

Obstacles

Nevertheless, there are obstacles that prevent institutional development from taking a more prominent and forward-moving role. On a general level, one can refer to an underlying premise of cooperative development, that of the need to broaden opportunities for commercialization, profit-making and investment. However essential these may be for longer-term rural development, they also promote an integration of rural areas into wider (regional and global) circuits of commodity exchange on

terms that make their livelihoods, to use Painter's words, "increasingly dependent on returns from agricultural commodity production" (Painter, 1990:59).

On the one hand, for the cooperatives of Roukouzoum and Tamaske, operating in these circuits has indeed brought monetary gain and opportunities for skill development in financial management. Yet, on the other hand, it also has made possible a situation in which decision-making and information become centralized among the local cooperative administrators. Djibo noted that this may work against greater community participation in the cooperative. As these two villagers noted,

> c'est surtout quand il y a des possibilités de profit que le [conseil d'administration] se refuse à diffuser les informations
>
> à la longue, les coopérateurs se désintéressent de la coopérative et assistent de moins en moins aux réunions
> (Djibo, 1989:6)

However, not only is it possible that institutional development that is linked to access to credit and financial management can bring about bitterness within the community, it can also bring about feelings of betterment among those who have such access towards those who do not. A member of a Clusa-supported cooperative said in this regard,

> c'est l'accroissement des connaissances qui nous a ouverts l'ésprit et les yeux, dorénavant nous nous sentons differents des membres des coopératives ne bénéficiant pas de l'assistance du Projet, nous les considérons comme les gens de la brousse, alors que nous nous percevons comme des citadins, nous sommes nettement au dessus des autres, réelement en avance sur eux.
> (Djibo, 1989:14)

At the level of the two cooperatives themselves, other problems

are evident. Clusa-designed monthly evaluation -- revolving around changes in amounts of stock on hand and credit outstanding -- are conducted by Clusa staff; cooperative members do not have an opportunity to influence the content of the evaluation or how it is carried out and used by staff members. Tamaske has been unable to resolve and diminish tensions that have arisen between one large village neighbourhood and the rest of the village. Efforts in the past several years to sanction those in Tamaske who do not wish to attend general assemblies have brought about indifference and retrenchment from these same individuals. Several of the executive in the Tamaske cooperative are also small grain merchants, a fact which brings about contention when it comes to the cooperative determining prices and selling times.

In Roukouzoum, the cooperative store closed because of embezzlement and inefficient management. In 1991, the cooperative there also registered a large financial loss because locally-grown onions were stored too long before a decision to sell was made. The Clusa cooperative assistant noted that Roukouzoum had lost money from rotting onions three times in the past six years but had not sufficiently invested energy and resources into building better storage huts. Nor had they weighed the longer-term and risk-reducing advantages of selling the onions at a slightly earlier stage. And in Roukouzoum in particular, there is little consideration being done about linking on-going economic development with social development, for example, the building and stocking of a pharmacy or dispensary or the making available

of credit to women who wish to earn income from raising small livestock.

Confidence and Credibility

Although these problems are very real and serve to weaken institutional development, the cooperatives of Tamaske and Roukouzoum have nonetheless become more capable and credible as institutions. Both are able to provide grain during the difficult pre-harvest months at prices lower than those offered by the merchants. In Roukouzoum, farmers also sell to the cooperative at a higher than market price. The cooperatives serve as a venue for the selling of onion seed and the purchasing of the onions for later sale to regional merchants. Prior to 1985, documents and community members note that individual onion farmers sold their product to local merchants. Since 1985, individuals have grouped together under the cooperative banner to sell onions and purchase seed as well as other goods, realizing important scale economies in both production and market transactions. In 1991, the onion growers were seeking to negotiate the direct sale of their product to coastal markets in Côte-d'Ivoire.

Significantly, the cooperatives have also presented possibilities for much learning and training within the villages and in so doing, have opened up options for further socio-economic development. Roukouzoum's cooperative is functioning so well that the village was chosen among hundreds of others in the area to receive several motorized grain mills and a cement

warehouse as a gift from the Japanese government. In Tamaske, the town's mayor talks favourably about the role the cooperative now plays in the community. The mayor noted that people have more money with which to buy necessities, the cooperative is now taken seriously as a vehicle for meeting needs and the power of the money-lenders has been curtailed. School graduates talk enthusiastically about the cooperative working to "casser les classes." Not only, for example, have they succeeded so far in offering lower pre-harvest millet prices, the supply stores that have been set up offer goods at lower prices than what the local, private stores had sought to charge. The cooperative supply store in Tamaske, by offering widely-popular and locally-manufactured Marseille soap at 115 FCFA/bar, have forced the merchants to do the same. Prior to the action, the soap was selling at 150 FCFA/bar. For the members of the community, the success over the private merchants became not only a financial victory but also a symbolic rallying point for the village and cooperative members.

Clusa and learning

Clusa has also learned from its experience thus far in Niger with the cooperative sector. Its staff has maintained enough flexibility to adapt the program as the situation unfolds and as problems are encountered. However, the adaptations have not always been smooth or welcomed. For example, after the modest successes of the first phase (1985-1989) and having obtained a large infusion of new capital, Clusa embarked on a training and

credit-provision program that would seek to incorporate 150 new cooperatives (for a total of 308). In each, administrative, financial, and business management skills would be transferred and functional literacy courses offered. The model developed in the first phase would be replicated, expanded and refined and important gains would be made in the scale, diversity and efficiency of agro-pastoral product markets (USAID/Niger, 1989). The Clusa model would become a referent for other organizations involved in cooperative development activities in Niger.

The first and second years (1990 and 1991) of the second phase did make clear to Clusa that, although its training model was indeed replicable, its goals needed to be significantly scaled down. Faced with persistent market and production uncertainties and the needs of cooperatives for recurrent training, Clusa has had to come to terms with a large number of loan defaults. The reimbursal rate -- which was reported at 100% in 1989 -- fell to 85% for the entire 1985-1991 period. Defaults in the first two years of the second phase had reached 30%. In what Clusa now refers to as 'outside the zone of concentration,' 11 out of 16 loans that were given out following the previous year's harvest (that is, in the October, 1990 - January, 1991 period) had not been repaid by October, 1991. One of Clusa's staff members acknowledged that although the rights of access to credit had been successfully trarsferred, the responsibility to manage the funds had neither been exercised nor transferred. "Because we haven't successfully transferred responsibility [for

managing and repaying the credit]," he added, "we have had to exercise it ourselves by saying '[the next time] we can take the money elsewhere.'"

Clusa's response has been to narrow down or redirect more of its resources to what are now called 'zones of concentration,' that is, areas where the economic potential is highest and where cooperatives seemingly have a more likely possibility of earning returns on investment. Intensified efforts to follow up on loan defaults have been carried out while stronger criteria for future loan guarantees have been established: full repayment of old debt to the bank, no record of past embezzlement, progress towards recuperation of locally-distributed credit and a positive audit.

Clusa has also deemed it necessary to adapt its method of extension and animation at the cooperative or community level. The original strategy was for a Clusa trainer to spend 6-9 months in the village, assisting in the shaping of a local administrative structure and working closely with a 'village assistant' who would receive a salary from Clusa and who would replace the trainer after the nine month period. In 1991, this idea however has been progressively phased out partly in the realization that the assistant could not possibly carry out all the work that the trainer could do. Clusa staff realized that the amount of work required was simply too much for one person who had not had more formal training in management and community development.

In its place was instituted a system of 'noyaux' or core

members who would be chosen by each of the neighbourhood districts that comprise the cooperative. In Tamaske, for example, the 13 districts would each select 5 representatives who would be responsible for assuring communication links and a degree of accountability between the neighbourhoods and the cooperative administration. They would also serve to channel information and concerns between the two. The noyaux -- many of whom would have at least primary, if not secondary education -- would be trained on a regular and ongoing basis (initially, two weeks per year) in cooperative and community development. Over time, it is believed they would be able to train others in the neighbourhood as well as members from other communities. It is Clusa's understanding that the neighbourhood districts would eventually pay the noyaux for their extension work; yet there is also a tacit assumption relayed by the noyaux of Tamaske that part of their work would be to follow up on local non-reimbursed credit.

Part of the reason for Clusa's new emphasis on the noyaux is the less than desired amount of member support for and participation in the cooperative. Djibo noted in 1989, "le faible développement chez les coopérateurs de la base de l'ésprit coopératif" (Djibo, 1989:27). In the neighbourhood district of Gangawa in Tamaske, residents in a meeting also said that they were not well aware of the cooperative, what it did and how they could benefit from participating. Part of the reason for making use of the noyaux will be to increase the interest in and understanding of the cooperative and its benefits at the

neighbourhood level. The noyaux, it is believed, could also play important roles as nuclei for mini-cooperatives that may be established in the near future. This is in accord with Clusa's longer-range plans for decentralization in the cooperative sector as well as with the Government of Niger's recent revision of statutory provisions that would allow this to happen.

On one hand, the shift to employment of noyaux reflects Clusa's flexibility and readiness to adapt extension modes. On the other hand, however, the change is indicative of decision-making at the top. The shift to implement noyaux in the place of village assistants was made by Clusa staff and in conjunction with the NCBA office in Washington. However valid the decision may have been in seeking to render the cooperative more inclusive, its validity and acceptability certainly would have been greater had the decision been made in collaboration with the villagers themselves. Moreover, as most of the noyaux chosen thus far were male school-leavers or graduates, it is not readily apparent how legitimate their extension efforts would be with all the population.

Community members in both Tamaske and Roukouzoum refer to other decisions that were 'top-down' or relayed to them in a similar way. Clusa staff decided several years earlier that literacy class participants would no longer receive a small per diem or food subsidy from the World Food Program; Clusa decides on the content, approach and frequency of training courses; and Clusa staff are the ones who decide when direct training

assistance will be withdrawn. Such decisions when they were or are made may not be inappropriate but the manner in which they are made do serve to reinforce an imbalance in the relationship and limit a fuller participation in and ownership of the cooperative.

Gender Issues

Addressing gender in cooperative development is essential. In Niger, several studies (one of them Clusa-commissioned) have explored the male bias in cooperative development and sought to encourage non-national NGOs to offer training and credit or loan guarantees to women members of the community as well as to men. In 1982, the Comité Nationale pour la Mise en Place de la Société de Développement underlined "la nécessité de promouvoir l'intégration économique de la femme au sein des coopératives" (Keita, 1982). There existed among donors and government officials "une méconnaissance du role de la femme dans l'économie agricole, d'une sous-estimation de son apport dans la constitution au budget familiale" (ibid.). Moreover, she added, the fact that women are not in the cooperatives limits their participation in the circulation and distribution of goods. By 1989, Djibo noted from her own visits to the Clusa-supported cooperatives that

> très peu d'attention a été accordée à l'intégration [des femmes] dans les coopératives, jusque la chasse gardée de leurs homologues masculins.
> (Djibo, 1989:3)

She observed that the exclusion of women from the cooperatives

that had benefitted from Clusa's assistance was more the rule than the exception. Many women, however, wanted to participate and benefit from the cooperative:

> Les profits que les hommes tirent de la coopérative, nous les voulons aussi, les améliorations que celles-ci leur a apportées, nous y aspirons aussi.
> (ibid.:17-18)

Clusa staff acknowledge that they have failed to adequately consider the gender implications of their intervention. This is in spite of the strong emphasis given in USAID/Clusa's 1989 project paper to significantly reduce the marginalization of women from the cooperative sector. Although interviews with cooperative administrators in Tamaske and Roukouzoum showed reluctance on the part of most men to having women be a part of the cooperative,[2] Djibo recorded interviews from male cooperative members who said that women's participation in literacy and training courses would be welcome, that women were more reliable creditors and that women should either be integrated into their cooperative or be a part of a separate parallel cooperative structure which could be supported by Clusa. In a meeting with several Clusa trainers from north and central Niger, the general feeling was that more and more women wanted to participate in the cooperative but that women trainers would need to be hired if this were to happen. By 1991, however, only 3 of

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[2]In Tamaske, the male administrators with whom I talked concurred that women only follow their husbands but that, once the cooperative was on a sure footing, women could participate. In Roukouzoum, administrators said that women were not interested in the cooperative, in management-training nor in the literacy classes that were offered.

the 57 trainers were women.

Nonetheless, learning is taking place. Informal ties have been established with the Société de Développement International Désjardins (SDID). SDID trainers work in credit and economic-activity programs with women in south-central Niger and have noted significant success in implementing credit programs with groups of twenty-thirty women. As seclusion is practiced, training sessions and discussions can only be held at night and even then, it may take four of five village-wide invitations before more than several women come to attend. But committees have been formed and economic activities begun; women are encouraged from the beginning to fund initiatives from interest payments and devote part of the principal to another newly-emerging committee in another neighbourhood or village. SDID's October, 1991 report notes that

> [o]n peut constater que [cette méthodologie d'implantation] est bien adaptée au milieu rural ou les femmes se connaissent bien, ont des activités communes et un sentiment d'appartenance a une communauté.
>
> (SDID, 1991:9)

Clusa has sought input from SDID on their methodological approach and in their general assembly in December, 1991, a large block of time was to be devoted to reflection on the topic of women and cooperatives.

Social Investment and Building on the Indigenous

One additional difficulty in Clusa's program may lie in the manner in which it promotes rural investment and savings. Clusa

strongly encourages village cooperative administrators to invest money in and carry out transactions with the local bank branch, located about 40 kilometers away from both villages. Program administrators believe that this will familiarize cooperatives with formal bank processes and ensure to as great an extent as possible that the cooperatives will be credit worthy when Clusa removes its loan guarantee provisions. However, in both Roukouzoum and Tamaske, many of the cooperative members were anxious to repay their loans to the bank and be free from further obligations to it. Members in Tamaske said that the village, if disciplined enough, would be able to manage its cooperative on its own within three years without having to resort to bank loans. Only a small portion of the cooperatives' profits are invested in a savings account at the bank, a fact that the local bank manager said would work very much against the cooperative being able to access loans in the future without Clusa's presence.

Profits, however, are not simply kept with the treasurer of the cooperative. Rather, cooperative administrators prefer to loan out funds in small portions to other members of the community. Social investment has become a preferred strategy to formal capitalization. Allowing money to remain in a bank, albeit while collecting interest, is seen as counterintuitive in light of pressing needs for cash in the village. This is a difficulty that reflects the regional capital structure (that is, very undercapitalized) and, relatedly, the preference by members to

redistribute surplus rather than increase group equity (Braverman et al., 1991). As Clusa has offered no training in local credit management, the local lending of money is shrouded in secrecy and has often been plagued by lateness and even failure to reimburse. Indeed, Clusa trainers and village noyaux are seeking to curb and discourage the local distribution of credit. In Tamaske, for example, a 'reimbursal committee' has been set up, primarily with Clusa's support, to try to recuperate these funds.

Clusa's insistence that the cooperatives it supports liaise with formal banking structures and its unwillingness to validate and strengthen even a small community credit structure could harm an institutional development that would otherwise build upon indigenous preferences for organization and investment. Claude Ake notes the importance in the African context of "sustaining development on the indigenous." It is important, he notes, that for projects and local institutions to be sustainable, non-local organizations must consider post-project monetary returns *and* the connection to the cultural and organizational forms of the local community. To the extent that this does not happen,

> we are still left at the stage of merely making concessions in the framework of an essentially top-down view of development that does not take the people as they are or respect the validity of their social institutions. What is called for is to study the institutions and organizational forms on the ground and build on them.
>
> (Ake, 1991:12)

Several of the residents of Gangawa -- one of the neighbourhood districts of Tamaske -- when asked about their perceptions on implementing noyaux within the cooperative framework referred to

the existence of functional traditional organizations that could have been used instead. Indeed, sustainable institutional development -- a central plank in Clusa's approach to working with rural cooperatives -- needs to be more fully perceived as "the process of creating a new pattern of activities and behaviours that persists over time because it is supported by indigenous norms, standards and values" (Brinkerhoff in Israel, 1987:17)

Conclusion

In sum, it can be said that Clusa's support of the cooperatives of Roukouzoum and Tamaske, although not without contradictions and impediments, has helped to evolve institutional development in a positive direction. After years of dormancy and inadequacies, cooperative members have made significant progress towards re-appropriation. A foundation made up of a variety of skills has been laid, to be potentially drawn upon and built upon as needs are identified and addressed and efforts made to meet them. What was seen as a concentration of knowledge and of power in the hands of a few prior to 1985 has been diminished. Responsibilities have been diffused and it is hoped that the implementation of noyaux will further this diffusion and widen the amount of participation. Moreover, trainers and villagers note the stronger bargaining position of the cooperatives vis a vis local government officials and area merchants.

Clusa as a support agency has learned and for the most part has sought to modify its program according to field experience and feedback. Program administrators are currently seeking to set up a parallel national NGO in Niger that can continue to offer training support and selective loan guarantees to cooperatives when Clusa withdraws in 1994. In the meantime, it is seeking to work its expatriates out of a job. Its experience thus far in Niger has shown the importance but also the time-consuming characteristics of institutional development. As Braverman et al conclude in their study of rural cooperatives in Africa, "building strong and viable cooperatives is an involved and demanding task, that cannot succeed if carried out in haste" (1990:38). After the disappointments and drastic scaling-down of expectations in the 1989-1991 period, it is still uncertain as to whether or not Clusa has sufficiently admitted and absorbed this essential ingredient of institutional development; equally unclear is the degree to which Clusa recognizes the limitations and inherent shortcomings of its own executing capacity or appreciates the variations in north-south and even local community-community management cultures and local patterns of organization and investment. Furthermore and in spite of some dark and constant traces of decision making from above, project documents and interviews suggest that the onus of responsibility for successful definition and implementation of economic activities rests primarily with the cooperative itself, not on a mutually-agreeable evolvement of the relationship between Clusa

and the cooperative.

This case study brings to light interesting analyses in its own right but also adds greatly to the discussion of NGO partnership. This is so even in spite of the fact that cooperative development, and particularly so in Clusa's case, relies on working in zones of high economic and human potential. The emphases placed upon recurrent management training and the absence of a transfer of money or equipment from the external agency to the southern organization need to be given greater attention by NGOs working in partnership. The approach used by Clusa as well as the content of its assistance -- not to mention the relative success that has resulted -- suggest means by which other NGOs working in north-south partnership can improve and render more sustainable their own interventions. The NGOs partnering together in Misrira or in Manghadie, for example, could have benefited from increased attention to those aspects consistently emphasized by Clusa: developing and strengthening rules, roles, and routes of communication of accountability. Even the difficulties mentioned in this study -- the absence of a consistent gender approach, the attempts to do too much too quickly, the danger of promoting rather than eroding inter- and intra-village stratification -- generate knowledge that northern and southern NGOs working in Mali or Niger or elsewhere need to incorporate for themselves. A sign in Clusa's meeting room in Niamey reads,

> l'expérience demeure la meilleure inspiration de changement

The words have meaning not only for cooperative members and administrators but also, as this case study has shown, for Clusa itself and for other NGOs and development bodies seeking to bring about lasting and equitable change.

Chapter Eight

Foyer Féminin de Keita - Centre avec des Elles de St.Gabriel

The fourth of the case studies, although quite unlike the examples of north-south NGO partnership and institutional development that have been explored thus far, nonetheless adds an important element to a fuller definition of NGO partnership. Indeed, this partnership, between the Centre avec des Elles of St. Gabriel-de-Brandon in rural Quebec and the Foyer Féminin of Keita in north-central Niger, is more a partnership of collaborative consciousness-raising and mutual appreciation between the women of their respective organizations than it is a partnership where priority has been given to capacity building or successful local initiatives. These latter exist to a small degree but the *raison d'être* of the partnership remains that of mutual learning and heightened understanding of the opportunities and constraints that women in the north and south encounter.

The Centre avec des Elles is a member organization of the Comité régional d'éducation pour le développement international de Lanaudiere (CREDIL). CREDIL carries out development education work in the area of Joliette, seeking not only to inform but to develop and strengthen a sense of solidarity between groups of people in the North and South. CREDIL-sponsored partnerships have been formed between cooperatives, youth groups, friendship clubs, student associations and villages in Quebec and those in Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Paintings by Africans hang in local schools, products from a Peruvian cooperative are sold in local shops, a documentation centre is

accessible to the local public and open dialogue and learning is encouraged by local radio and television stations. CREDIL was created in 1977 although the past several years in particular in the Lanaudiere have witnessed more focused efforts on awareness-building through joint visits, home stays, and discussions on all topics that may otherwise remain shrouded in wrong assumptions or prejudices.

The Centre avec des Elles itself was created in 1983 on the initiative of several women of the region. Since then, numbers have steadily increased, with members welcoming and listening to any and all who have questions or concerns, The center's recently-purchased and centrally-located house seeks to be, the women there note, "un lieu d'appartenance." In St. Gabriel, the centre seeks to help single women in need, battered women as well as women who for whatever reasons must deal with the courts. The centre's house has one room full of documentation on subjects that are of particular relevance to women. As well, centre staff (one paid and many others volunteering) help women and men fill out tax forms, apply for licenses and register for courses. Monthly meetings/workshops always follow a communal meal.

In the fall of 1991, the centre began a twice-weekly 'cuisine collective' in which women would cook together in the basement of the house and take a portion of the meal home with them for the family dinner. This has allowed women with limited financial means to save money. It also has provided women of the centre with the opportunity to spend more time together and less

alone in their respective homes. Indeed, a principal goal of the Centre avec des Elles is to break the isolation and solitude that many women face and to develop a network of mutual help -- so that through the centre (as implied in the homonym of *elles*: *ailes*), women may 'fly' on their own. An extension of this goal of solidarity among the women of St. Gabriel has been to form links with and learn of the experiences of other women in different cultural settings, such as that of Keita.

The Foyer Féminin of Keita is one of the many foyers that originally were sponsored and structured by the Association des Femmes du Niger (AFN). The AFN, until its dissolution in late 1991, was an integral part of Niger's Société de Développement, purporting to channel and respond to women's concerns throughout the country. Theoretically, there was one woman representative in each of the 25 villages that comprise the arrondissement of Keita. However, and particularly from 1987-1991, the national bureau of the AFN had little contact with the villages although its mere existence did make it impossible for alternative community women's groups to form and set an independent agenda. Nonetheless, the foyer continues to function regardless of the demise of the AFN while the women who administer it say that all women who wish to join can do so. At the foyer in the village of Keita, women can learn new skills, such as sewing and craftwork, and develop and strengthen social ties with one another.

This chapter looks at the partnership that has evolved

between the women of St. Gabriel and Keita. It is divided into two parts. First, it will discuss the background and objectives of the partnership, examining briefly the exemplary pattern that has evolved as a result of the learning-oriented relationship between two other villages, one in Quebec and one in Mali. Second, the chapter will look at the difficulties and opportunities that such a partnership presents -- for the villages concerned but also for the development of deeper and longer-lasting partnerships between northern and southern NGOs.

Background and Objectives

This particular partnership began in 1988 when CREDIL, with financial support from SCS's ACCED program, facilitated the visit of 2 AFN women from Niger to the Lanaudiere region. CREDIL was just initiating a 'raz-de-marée' strategy in St. Gabriel. CREDIL operates in such a way that a sustained, blanket coverage of North-South issues rotates from one village in the region to another. CREDIL organized meetings throughout the community and dealing with a variety of educational issues pertaining to international development. Radio announcements and television commercials were aired, brochures were distributed, information was published in parish bulletins and 10,000 napkins carrying the CREDIL message were distributed to area restaurants.

At the same time, CREDIL also arranged for two Nigerien women to visit the region. The two women, one of whom was the AFN representative in Keita (which explains the eventual choice of

Keita's women's group as a partner by CREDIL and the Centre avec des Elles), visited schools, the town hall, senior citizens residences and people's homes. They were also interviewed by local radio and newspapers. The Nigeriens spent much time with the women of St. Gabriel although CREDIL, looking back, sees the partnership with the Centre avec des Elles as being somewhat accidental in that many associations in St. Gabriel were approached to serve as hosts but only the Centre agreed. Since then, and with the help of additional funds from SCS, women from the Centre avec des Elles have visited Keita on two occasions, in January, 1989 and again in November-December, 1991. In 1990, two women from Keita stayed in St. Gabriel and the region for four weeks.

Much of the impetus for and understanding of the partnership between the two women's groups of St. Gabriel and Keita came originally from a partnership that had developed between St. Elizabeth (a small village also in the Lanaudiere region) and Sanankoroba, a Malian village about 35 kilometers from Bamako. As a result of several exchange visits, a strong bond has developed between the people of the two villages. Hundreds of letters are exchanged; moreover, Sanankoroba is a focal point for the people of St. Elizabeth to concretely understand North-South issues. In Sanankoroba itself, there is a growing demand by men and women for literacy classes in French and Bambara -- which are now offered at night in the village school. St. Elizabeth offers support to Sanankoroba not through traditional donations of money

but by cultivating a collective field -- a linking activity with the people of Sanankoroba who also cultivate several collective fields. Villagers together work the field and proceeds are sent to Sanankoroba. This money helped initiate an innovative oxen-and-plough lending program and several gardens. As well, the success of the project already in its early stages brought about a release of additional funds from CIDA's Africa 2000 budget.

During the exchanges with St. Elizabeth and others which followed with Jeunesse Canada Monde and Canadian Carrefour International, basic management and accounting skills were taught. The administrative committee that was formed in Sanankoroba is now better poised to negotiate with the local chef d'arrondissement. In their Friday evening meetings, the committee believes they are now on an even bargaining ground with the state structures, that they can disagree with the chef d'arrondissement and other local state officials and, most importantly, that together they can chart a better future for the people of Sanankoroba. In 1991, a pharmacy was being built and plans were underway to purchase one or two grain mills. In interviews conducted at Sanankoroba, villagers openly attest that the confidence they have in their abilities to define and initiate development projects has increased; the committee is proud of the fact that it is allowed to and able to manage the project itself -- unlike what they have seen in other NGO initiatives nearby and previously in their own village. Residents of St. Elizabeth, too, take pride in the partnership and refer to the changed

perspective that the village now has of the constraints and opportunities that exist in Sanankoroba.

The St. Elizabeth-Sanankoroba partnership -- now referred to by CREDIL as Des Mains pour Demain -- has served as an effective model and motivator for other similar partnerships between Quebec villages or associations and developing-country communities, such as the one between the Centre avec des Elles and the Foyer Féminin. An essential objective of this partnership has been to make Niger and Quebec better known, respectively, to the women of St. Gabriel and the women of Keita. As one of the Keita women who has been to St. Gabriel said,

> notre mission consiste à sensibiliser et informer les gens du Québéc de la réalite des Nigeriennes et s'informer à notre tour de leur expérience.

The women of St. Gabriel believe there is a need to evolve a form of partnership through which a clearer sense of north-south issues can be grasped by those who have not had formal learning opportunities in international development. As Lambert et al. (1991:14) noted,

> La forme que devait prendre le partenariat a fait l'objet des prémieres discussions au Centre de St. Gabriel. On voulait développer une forme de coopération nouvelle où on ne crée pas de besoin et ou on n'agit pas 'comme bailleurs de fonds.' C'est plutôt la compréhension des aspects quotidiens vécus mutuellement qui intéresse les Québécoises. Les femmes du Centre disent ne pas etre 'intéressees par les grandes analyses sur les liens Nord-Sud,' mais plus à des thèmes qui les préoccupent.

In this particular partnership, the members of the Centre avec des Elles and the Foyer Feminin have come to understand some of each other's concerns but they have also come to appreciate and

valorise the struggles and contributions of women in different social contexts.

Learning and Awareness-Building: Opportunities

The partnership between the Centre avec des Elles and the Foyer Feminin has created important opportunities for learning and awareness-raising. From the beginning of the partnership, this has been the primary objective. Together, the women have talked in open forums about polygamy, excision, contraception and Islamic laws and have shared ideas and experiences on family, male-female relations, child education, cross-cultural commonalities and differences as well as constraints and struggles that are particular to women. To facilitate an understanding of these issues, the women of Keita and St. Gabriel have also made use of small theatre presentations and role-playing/switching. For the two villages, the importance of these issues is highlighted by the fact that while immigration into the St. Gabriel area is practically non-existent, male seasonal migration out of Keita annually averages 38% (Monimart, 1989:38).

Discussions with women from the centre and the foyer revealed significant changes in the mutual perceptions of the Nigerien and Quebec women. For example, the Keita women who had visited the Lanaudiere on exchange said that, prior to going, they felt that all Canadians were rich and living relatively problem-free lives. Seeing the poor and homeless in Montreal and

meeting Canadian women unable to get off welfare underscored needs with which women in Keita could identify. The women visiting from Keita also met members of the Groupe Populaire d'Entraide de Lavaltrie, a regional association that seeks to increase self-help and mutual help or solidarity between people with few resources. In St. Gabriel, the Nigerien women participated in two meetings of the Conseil d'Administration of the Centre avec des Elles, studied the accounting and managing methods the centre used and observed the dynamics that had developed in the staff-member-volunteer relations. Among other things, the visitors were very impressed by the absence of any hierarchy, particularly in the status of the Centre's president. One of the Nigerien women, upon her return to Keita, commented on the solidarity that had developed in the Centre: "j'ai été très impressionnée par les efforts consentis pour défendre les intérêts des femmes."

In St. Gabriel, too, opportunities for learning and awareness-raising have developed as a result of their partnership with Keita. The exchange visits with the Keita women have enabled the women of St. Gabriel to

> mieux comprendre la réalite des femmes nigeriennes jusqu'à la nécessité de démystifier les 'quelques' prejugés parfois bien ancrés en nous.
> (Centre avec des Elles, 1991:8)

One of the women at the Centre noted as well that "nous avons des problèmes bien sûr, mais il faut qu'on se rend compte des problèmes des autres aussi." The women and men of St. Gabriel now have an idea as to the nature of poverty and the possibilities

that exist for struggling against it. The St. Gabriel women who visited Keita were impressed and motivated by the efforts of the women of the villages in particular to earn revenue and contribute to the food needs of their families. The politeness with which they were greeted throughout their stay in the Keita area was for all surprising and embarrasingly overwhelming. A nearby village was so motivated that it developed an exchange program with a village in Togo in which several Togolese women would visit their village in Quebec as well. And finally, for the women of St. Gabriel, the longer lasting effects of the partnership are evident in the increasingly critical perspective through which television programs and films on poverty or on developing countries are viewed while they now attest to being more open to international questions and concerns and to the development education initiatives of CREDIL.

Difficulties

Although a great deal of learning and awareness-building has taken place in Keita, several difficulties or impediments remain. One is the fact that the Foyer Féminin is restricted by its inherently small size and the only marginal amount of legitimation the group has in the arrondissement. Being a product of the AFN and being physically located in the town of Keita itself, twenty to thirty kilometers away from many of the district's villages, most women neither wish to nor are able to benefit from the services that the Foyer may offer. Cremona, in

her 1986 socio-economic study of the women of the arrondissement of Keita, noted the discredited nature of the AFN among many of the district's women population. Not only was the AFN perceived as an elite and imposed state structure but its administrators were selected by male leaders without the women of the arrondissement even being aware (Cremona, 1986:18-19). Moreover, the AFN members who were invited to attend village and district meetings "ne constituent qu'une simple présence physique car elles n'interviennent en aucune manière aux débats" (ibid.:20). Many of the women from the outlying areas also expressed concern that their traditional women's organizations had dissolved with the creation of the AFN.

Although the Foyer Féminin has moved somewhat away from its roots and has sought to attract membership and participation in areas outside of the town of Keita, the elitist tendencies are still evident, for example, in the use of such terms as 'sophisticated' or formally educated and 'non-sophisticated' -- the overwhelming majority of the women. That the Foyer has become a partner women's organization to the Centre avec des Elles may have enhanced its respectability among some yet certainly not to the point of it becoming a credible grassroots catalyst and channel of women's concerns and needs.

Another difficulty arises out of the fact that the partnership brings few material benefits or opportunities for the women of Keita. Being primarily a collaborative effort in consciousness-raising, little money has been set aside for actual

projects which may help to create revenue-earning possibilities. In a meeting with about twenty of the members of the foyer, a number of the women were not certain whether a new well or mill or seed money for a credit fund would not have been a better investment on the part of CREDIL. One woman remarked that learning about and from each other is important but "first, we must have money to buy things." The needs are substantial as Monimart notes from her visit to Keita: some women from outlying villages have to walk very long distances to earn money by selling a pail of water in town for 25-30 FCFA (Monimart, 1989:33). Yet not only are there acute needs throughout the arrondissement but an atmosphere of dependency has also set in as a result of substantial previous grants to the Foyer from an Italian town and by the physical presence in Keita of a large and capital-heavy rural integrated project operated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Even the building of wood-saving mud stoves was said to be better left to 'le projet.' Both of these phenomena -- the acuteness of material needs and the depth of material dependency -- work against a wide and large amount of enthusiasm for a project experience in awareness-building.

The nature of the material support offered -- yarn, cloth and kits for sewing -- may present a third difficulty in that it meets neither practical nor strategic needs of women in the area. Farm tools, garden seeds, medicines, cement wells or grain mills do not figure into the project -- even though these practical needs were cited as being most needed by Cremona and by women in

a November, 1991 meeting held in Keita itself. Nor is there a block allotment of money for herd reconstitution or the seasonal raising of goats and sheep -- activities in which women in the area have often earned income. Strategic needs were also not addressed. The partnership between the Centre avec des Elles and the Foyer Féminin du Keita does not seek, for example, to break down structures between gender or classes or institutionalized forms of discrimination such as the unequal allocation of farm land or the very marginal input that women have at village and arrondissement meetings.

Instead, sewing skills are perceived as a linking activity between the two women's groups and one which may bring income-earning possibilities for the Keita women. The women of the Centre avec des Elles also see the activity as one around which women in Keita can socialize, organize and find solidarity. Yet the difficulty persists in that for the vast majority of women in the region, learning to sew is not a concern nor are the finished products competitive in local markets -- which are for the most part replete with inexpensive and sometimes second-hand clothing from industrialized countries.

Conclusions

The changes in understanding and perceptions that have occured in Keita and St. Gabriel indicate a further direction in which North-South NGO partnerships may need to go in order for wider constituent support to be built up and for deeper changes

to be realized. If, for example, institution-building efforts are to be sustained and positive returns felt at the project- or village-level, increased consideration needs to be given to the objectives set and -- to a large extent -- realized in the partnership between the Centre avec des Elles and the Foyer Féminin of Keita. Mutual understanding and solidarity between the people who support and comprise the partnering agencies, although perhaps not sufficient in and of themselves for bringing about a realization of local aspirations, are nonetheless necessary, even essential, components of partnership development. As Fowler notes, the pursuit of NGO partnership in the 1980s was fueled to a large extent by growing Northern NGO commitment to solidarity with people from Southern countries (Fowler, 1991b:14). NGO partnerships ultimately need to link the people who make up their respective organizations and strengthen their sense of commitment and ownership. For this to happen, CREDIL explains, "chaque partenaire doit avoir un effet mobilisateur sur sa communauté" (CREDIL, 1990). It is essential that community members be encouraged to be involved and be open to re-examining their own values. Societal stereotypes, too, need to be questioned. As CREDIL members noted in a recent day of reflection on partnership, each initiative undertaken should allow for an "élargissement de notre tissu social" and a "changement de notre vision de développement."

The partnership between the Centre avec des Elles of St. Gabriel and the Foyer Féminin of Keita has faced and continues to

face difficulties which limit the diffusion and sustainability of the awareness-raising efforts that have been initiated. This is particularly evident in Keita where members of the Foyer would have preferred a linking of educational and income-earning objectives. Indeed, this particular form of partnership was not elaborated together with the women of Keita but, rather, suggested by CREDIL, whose mandate remains limited to development education. Efforts by CREDIL and the Centre avec des Elles to link the Foyer in Keita with a funding agency or program were unsucessful, in large part because of the presence of three separately-funded projects in the arrondissement. There are difficulties as well in the future orientation of the partnership: the sending of letters and the shipment of sewing material limit direct 'participation' to those who are can read and to those who are able and willing to learn to sew.

Nevertheless, the St. Gabriel-Keita partnership is a significant effort in breaking down barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice. By itself and according to the women from the two villages, there is now a more accurate and fuller understanding of the constraints and struggles faced by women in different social and economic contexts. The women who did participate in the actual exchange were mandated to relay their experiences to others in the area upon their return home. In St. Gabriel, diffusion was undoubtedly more prominent than in Keita, in part because of the novelty of the exchange (very few in the village had much knowledge about West African women and their concerns)

and because of the sustained support of the media and the regionally-based CREDIL. In Keita, diffusion could have been strengthened if a greater link had been made with income-earning activities from which the majority of the arrondissement's rural women could participate and derive benefits. As well, the presence of other development agencies in Keita, in particular the FAO, minimized the impact that the partnership endeavour would have otherwise enjoyed. Yet the partnership does make a step in the direction suggested by a group of Canadian and non-Canadian NGOs at a May, 1991 conference in Quebec, namely, that north-south partnership ultimately needs to be between social or people's movements and that structures of direct participation should be built and sustained. Canadian NGOs, the conferees noted, need to maintain closer contact with the Canadian grass roots. If the constituency is ignored, institution-building risks becoming bureaucratic (CCIC, 1991). A 1991 Roundtable sponsored by the Society for International Development reached a similar conclusion: for long-term development to take place, northern constitutencies need to be informed and galvanized; NGOs, the participants concluded, are best equipped to make this happen (SID, 1991).

Indeed, this particular partnership can be seen as an example of one where constituent support has been mobilized and barriers of disinterest broken down. For ongoing NGO partnerships such as those in Missira and Manghadie -- where funding is a significant concern -- the building up and strengthening of

constituent support can allow for the generation of greater and sustained financial support. Moreover, efforts to promote an informed but relevant understanding of north-south issues and disparities can encourage people of the north to re-examine their own lifestyles and advocate for broader political and economic changes. Not only can such an initiative be replicated in other villages and associations but its objectives of awareness-raising through exchange visits can be effectively inserted into NGO partnership programs that seek to nurture change among both the northern constituency members and through the southern institutions that are best positioned to make a wide and lasting difference in the communities in which they work.

Chapter Nine - Conclusion

In retrospect, the 1980s, during which the case studies analyzed here have their beginnings, may very well turn out to be the 'NGO decade' (Fowler, 1989:1; Bratton, 1989:569). NGO lobbying, campaigning and networking reached unprecedented heights of effectiveness and visibility. As Clark notes in his review of the decade, "[n]ever before have [NGOs] been so powerful, not just in financial terms but also in their credibility with decision makers at all levels" (1991:175). Northern NGOs working in Africa have been instrumental as well in raising international concern for famine-prone regions of the continent, eliciting understanding often above that of the prevailing and simplistic images of corruption and indifference of African governments (ibid.:183). Meanwhile, the sheer number of African NGOs and grassroots associations has increased dramatically all across the continent.[1] 'Partnership' between NGOs as a defining term has taken on 'hard currency status' (Kajese, 1991:22), contributing to but also a consequence of the emergence of Southern NGOs as a major force in the development of their own countries (Campbell, 1989).

Yet the high profile that NGOs have developed and continue to enjoy as the 1990s get under way needs to be held under closer scrutiny than has so far been the case. The motivations and

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[1]A recent report by the Southern Africa Development Co-ordinating Council notes that there are roughly 4000 NGOs in that region (in ARB-P, April, 1992:10559).

implementation of partnerships between northern and southern NGOs also need to be understood in a way that penetrates beneath the rhetoric of mutuality and transparency. Far from resolving some of the contradictions and injustices that have characterized aid relationships in the past, north-south NGO partnerships can very easily perpetuate them and create a few more of their own. This is not to say that partnership will necessarily become another self-defeating game that northern NGOs in particular play in an attempt to channel aid in such a way to convince themselves that communities and local institutions are indeed being strengthened. Indeed, the case studies presented here have shown that the potential for NGO partnerships to facilitate community and institutional development is attained in part and can be even more fully realized if greater attention is paid to the issues and concerns that are raised in this study.

This concluding chapter will seek to thread together these issues and concerns in the context of the conceptual framework of this study and in light of the broader insights of the Malian and Nigerien NGO/aid environments and the academic literature pertaining to NGO activity and institutional development. The first of the three sections of this chapter returns to the primary research question and looks at how and whether institutional development and its three component parts have been advanced as a result of the four specific examples of partnership studied here. The second section brings in the comments and perceptions of other NGO and aid actors in Mali and Niger;

knowingly or not, their words and actions are helping to shape the set on which the future and fate of NGO partnership is being played out. The third section widens the analysis to include a number of theoretical and empirical observations that are critical to unravelling the complexities and contradictions of NGO partnership and institutional development.

Partnership and Institutional Development: Lessons from the Case Studies

Perhaps the most readily-apparent element that links the four case studies presented here is that they all set out with very ambitious objectives. In the Projet Missira, UNAIS and OMAES sought to facilitate the settlement into a farming village of 200 nomadic families who had come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and fractions, who had seen their already small herds depleted in the 1984 drought and who had minimal skills and experience in cultivating on marginal lands. In the Projet Manghadie, SUCO, AED, AMIPJ and AETA have implemented a multi-sectoral program through which 17 villages would benefit from effective water management throughout the plain, improved rice production and fishing, gardening, reforestation and a strengthening of local, rotating credit funds. Clusa's program to assist cooperatives in Niger sought to incorporate skill development in food stock management, bookkeeping and market analysis, banking transactions and repayment of loan principal with interest and training in literacy and numeracy -- and all in a context of increasing participation of the various village neighbourhoods. Through an

exchange and home-stay program, the women of the Centre avec des Elles of St.Gabriel and of the Foyer Féminin of Keita sought to build mutual awareness amongst each other of their respective concerns and constraints and then to share that awareness with other women and men of their respective communities -- the expectation being that perceptions and understanding would be founded thereafter on a more solid, experiential basis.

Not only were the four case studies ambitious in what they set out to do at the community level, they also sought to implement their initiatives through the framework of organizational partnership which, too, drew upon project resources. Design and implemention were carried out in such a way that not only would individuals be assisted, so too would the organization of which they were a part. Intentional efforts were made and resources set aside to work not only through but with the local NGO, the community cooperative, the women's association and local village or inter-village structures. Although the enhancement of their capability and legitimacy was seen by field and administrative staff as a means by which more effective and efficient service delivery to the community could take place, the strengthening of these organizations was also perceived as being an important goal in and of itself. Particular in the first three case studies, institutional development -- the process by which an organization learns and becomes increasingly capable of delivering goods and services and influencing, adapting to and leveraging resources from a continually changing environment --

was integral to project objectives. Whether it was through consortium meetings, general assemblies, protocol design, evaluative field visits by the administrators of the national NGOs or the mere allowance of space in which to make and implement decisions, purposive efforts were made to address the capability of the partner organization to assess needs, identify priorities, monitor progress, solve problems and develop a vision for future direction.

The degree to which these capabilities were actually developed or even fully addressed, however, was much less than intended. Making institutional development an explicit objective for the national and community organizations and devoting resources towards that objective did not necessarily signify nor was it sufficient to allow for a build-up of capacity to implement and strategize.

a. Institutional Strengthening

The first of the three component parts of institutional development, for example, that of institutional strengthening, was evident but only minimally. Cooperative administrators in Tamaske and Roukouzoum, for instance, knew their roles and responsibilities very well while the cooperative provided financial incentives to participate in the selling and purchase of produce to and from its warehouse. Nevertheless, participation in decision making and awareness of decisions made was only gradually extended beyond the executive into the general assembly

and the village neighbourhoods. In Missira, there remained much ambiguity regarding the consolidation of committee responsibilities and even over which committee(s) were the focal point(s) of assistance.

Institutional strengthening was also impaired by the absence of clear rules and agreement which would define how individuals and the participating organizations would interact and cooperate. For example, not only were information flows and accountability mechanisms inadequately established in the two protocols between OMAES and UNAIS, they were also insufficiently adhered to even where mention was made in the protocol of mutual expectations -- such as field visits and data collection, analysis and exchange. In Manghadie, field staff were equipped with a specified set of roles and responsibilities as to implementation, monitoring and report-writing but these would have little transferability to the Malian NGOs of which they were a part. Although dialogue was maintained between the partner NGOs in Missira and regular consortium meetings were held among the partner NGOs in Manghadie, there remained little specificity as to which mechanisms of supervision, staff support, grievance settlement and planning and analytic capacity would be addressed and, if at all possible, institutionalized.

b. Learning

The amount of learning that the partner agencies experienced varied and in some cases was significant, but on the whole

remained less than what would have been preferred for a more sustained and forward process of institutional development to have taken place. In Missira, weaknesses in the design of the protocol and misunderstandings and misperceptions in office-field communication were not overcome by an effective reshaping of individual and organization relations which would better respond to the needs of efficient service delivery and the imperatives of widening involvement and iterative experimentation at all levels. In Manghadie, however, significant emphasis was placed upon process and learning. Here, implementation errors and shortcomings were not denied or externalized to environmental constraints but, rather, dealt with in group settings, both in the consortium meetings and during the semi-annual project meetings in which village representatives too were encouraged to present their views. In Manghadie and in the cooperative development program in Niger, staff and community administrators benefited from recurrent training programs. Indeed, the process for upgrading performance became increasingly regularized and institutionalized within the set of project objectives and expectations.

Although in all the case studies and to a certain extent, goals and objectives were specified in project documents and by the personnel involved, neither the design nor implementation were rigidly cast in stone. Rather, modifications were made and means and ends adjusted in reponse to an evolving understanding of existing needs and available resources. However, the

adjustment process was not consistently or coherently driven by a collaborative assessment mechanism by which change could be planned and integrated into the life cycle of the project. Other than the regular meetings in Manghadie, there was no systematized process that would allow for ongoing critical assessment of local aspirations and difficulties and of the human and material resources that were available to meet those aspirations and difficulties. Clusa's model of support encouraged the institutionalization of participation but details and plans were nonetheless formulated without significant amounts of input from cooperative members or administrators.

In the first three case studies, only minimal efforts were made to draw upon the strengths of each other's organizations and to broaden and systematize decision making in such a way that the concerns of the community associations or national NGOs would be sought out, valorized and purposefully fed back into the planning and implementation of ongoing and future project activities. Learning did occur but it was more reactive than responsive, that is, more of a 'knee-jerk' or ad hoc reaction than a planned and collaborative response to operational or technical difficulties.

c. Development of Civil Society

The opportunities and potential for the organizations involved in the case studies to contribute to the development of civil society in Mali and Niger were great although only marginally met. At the end of the second phase in Missira, it was

reported in the May, 1991 semi-annual narrative that the population was not able to aggregate their concerns and articulate them to local government officials and departments in such a way to make these officials more responsive and attentive to their needs. Government offices in Mopti could not provide more than the one DRAS extension agent to the project and no additional resources for the village could be found. This may have been different had the internal processes of the community association been strengthened well enough to allow them to negotiate for, say, a weekly visit from a woman extension officer or an initial supply of medicine for their health center. Relations between UNAIS, OMAES and DRAS were good according to the administrative and field staff interviewed but after the granting of the land to Missira in 1986, little effort was made to try to secure additional resources from DRAS or other government departments. Had time and resources been invested earlier in the project to align planning and decision-making with that of the two other nearby recently-sedentarized villages, a stronger voice could have been presented and, possibly, a greater amount of human and material resources leveraged. Given that it was an explicit interest of the Malian government to see such projects succeed and be replicated, a strong negotiating position of the combined villages could have shifted system dynamics and freed up and/or repositioned critical resources in their

favour.[2]

Neither the ton inter-villageois nor the Malian NGOs participating in Manghadie were sufficiently strengthened to be able to scale up operations and more credibly and capably interface with other civil and state actors. The ton received a larger share of institutional support than did the Malian NGOs but local government officials still, in 1991, opted to discuss the project with the field team and, usually, the two field co-ordinators, one of whom was the SUCO chargé de projets. The Foyer Féminin in Keita became more known in the surrounding areas because of their partnership with the women of St. Gabriel but their bargaining position with local government authorities did not improve. This was perhaps partly due to the absence of revenue-generating activities but also a result of the limited resources available to the partnership; as well, the priority objective was that of individual consciousness-raising, not institutional development. In Tamaske, meanwhile, the cooperative was able to pressure merchants to keep prices of essential products low while in Roukouzoum, the cooperative was able to successfully draw upon other donor resources. Both grew in self-confidence and interviews revealed that they had built up a crucial amount of perceived legitimacy with local bank managers

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[2]As well, the conflict between the Malian state and the Tuareg people that had (re)developed in 1990 and 1991 in the Mopti and Tomboctou areas could very well have made the state more amenable to devoting additional resources and/or extension workers to assuring the viability of these newly-sedentarized communities.

and district state officials.

To a certain extent, the case studies, and particularly the village-level associations or cooperatives, present examples of embryonic democracy in action: regular meetings, dialogue and elections, a degree of increasingly participatory decision-making, analyzing and attempted resolution of problems. Indirectly, although inadequately, the NGOs involved were given resources and consequently, space in which to explore and develop institutionally. However, the ability of the NGOs as of the community associations to influence and make greater demands on the environment and on the system in which they are players, not to mention on the partnerships in which they participated, was limited. A fuller understanding of these limitations as well as of the deeper complexities and contradictions of NGO partnership institutional development can be had by looking more closely at the broader Malian and Nigerien NGO/aid environment.

The NGO/aid environment in Mali and Niger

In spite of political decentralization and state disengagement in both Mali and Niger and the greater space that has been opened up for local organizations, including national NGOs, there remains nonetheless a certain hegemony enjoyed by non-national actors as to how partnerships will be constructed and institutional development pursued. The resource differential between northern and southern NGOs is made particularly clear by the mere fact that while non-national NGOs in Mali and Niger can

afford to operate in a more leisurely 'sift and select' mode when it comes to identifying potential partners, national NGOs need to continually 'scramble and search' for a partner or funding source. As SCS's country representative in Mali noted, "without partners, NGOs do not do anything and it is hard to even classify them when they do not have a partner." Although this statement opens up other questions -- such as why national NGOs without a partner do not explore other avenues of support or whether training, research into constituent development, small feasibility studies or micro test projects could be conducted in the meantime -- it does make clear the dependent relationship that has evolved of national towards non-national NGOs.

NGOs engaged in institutional development

The NGO/aid environment in Mali and Niger is witness, nonetheless, to a number of efforts by both northern and southern NGOs to develop effective institutions. The Lutheran World Relief (LWR), for example, promotes what they refer to as 'accompaniment' with national NGOs in Mali and Niger. Emphasis is on working and walking together in a development process. LWR arranges for the exchange among its 10 or 12 national partners of annual financial reports and a regular newsletter written by various members of these NGOs. It also co-ordinates seminars in accounting, management and organizational design for staff members of the national NGOs with which it partners.

World Education is training trainer-members of several

different women's NGOs in the city of Bamako in micro-enterprise, credit and savings management. Recurring seminars on institutional analysis are conducted so as members of the different NGOs can discuss and anaylze each other's missions, goals, organizational structure, project design and financial systems. World Education has also arranged an exchange program between Malian women and Tototo Home Industries in Kenya during which needs assessments workshops were conducted to enable Malian women to better analyze the training and support needed by their organizations. Together, they have designed a new training project to promote economic opportunities for women in Mali. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) works with several national NGOs in Mali and, through workshops, consultancies and training sessions, seeks to strengthen the link between community ownership of a project and the development and strengthening of the internal structure, strategy and participatory processes of the board of the NGO that oversees the project.

Another non-national NGO working in Mali, the SDID, completed a three-year program in 1991 in which it sought to strengthen the organizational capacities of two Malian NGOs. Recurrent training was offered in the improvement of the decision making structure of the executive and general assembly, in cost-reducing service delivery, in the development of self-financing strategies and in overall financial and office management. Innovations et Réseaux pour le Développement (IRED) is

particularly active in building south-south networks and in the intensive management training of development association members in Niger. In December, 1991, IRED arranged for 21 Nigerien representatives of national NGOs and peasant associations to spend several weeks with Burkinabé practitioners, learning from them the steps they took and the difficulties encountered in moving toward greater effectiveness and efficiency (Younoussi, 1992:42).

Other important efforts to promote institutional development are noticeable among a number of national NGOs themselves. At times independently and at times in collaboration with foreign partners, national NGOs have worked to develop their internal capacity and linkages with other actors in the external environment. The organizational structure of Guamina, for example, a Malian NGO that has worked for several years with a number of northern NGOs, has developed to the point of there being a board of technical advisers and a two-tiered supportive constituency, one with full voting rights and another with rights to offer advice and raise questions to the general assembly but without consistent and obligatory financial responsibilities. World University Services of Canada and the Near East Foundation, two of its current partners, attest to the growing capacity of Guamina to deliver assistance. Another national NGO, l'Association Malienne pour la Recherche et le Développement, having worked with numerous northern NGOs, has established a reputation for consultancy, research and technical training in

local languages. They are also selective about the number of northern partners with which to collaborate and the amount of money it believes it can absorb in a given year. Notably, its administrative budget (about 12% as a proportion of its total budget) has also decreased to a point lower than many of the northern NGOs working in Mali. A Nigerien NGO, the Organisation Nigerienne des Volontaires pour la Préservation de l'Environnement, hosted a 1991 seminar on the environment in an area in which they are beginning to work. They have intentionally sought to limit their focus geographically and sectorally. The Malian NGO, Adev, working in several arrondissements in central Mali, has begun to hold its annual general assemblies with village representatives. Each of the dozen or so villages that work with Adev have one vote in the assemblies, are given copies of Adev's budget and are asked to give suggestions as to the direction of the executive. These NGOs and a growing number of others are establishing a degree of credibility and capability among government ministries and among the NGO and non-NGO aid communities in Mali and Niger.

The Underlying Discourse

Discussions with expatriate representatives of northern NGOs working in Mali and Niger reveal the underlying power imbalance when it comes to deciding upon and implementing partnership. This is evident even among those NGOs that do seek to promote institutional development. There, efforts are not deliberately

framed within the context of a longer-term strategic vision nor are they necessarily conducted in tandem with initiatives to build up inter-institutional linkages. Denominating the discourse in which partnership is understood and experienced are concerns and fears that prevent effective institutional development from taking place. A typical cross-section of comments is as follows:

- **national NGOs need to be at a proven level of experience before we will consider them as partners**
- **having to work with local NGOs may be yet another layer or unnecessary checkpoint on the way to delivering aid to communities - a checkpoint not to to verify operational efficiency but to say yes to even more bureaucratization**
- **national NGO accounting systems must be up to American government standards before we can work with them**
- **there needs to be a movement or constituency behind the national NGO**
- **many of the national NGOs are all brains and no hands**
- **we cannot take the risk with our constituency and funders back home by getting burned in a partnership that carries with it too many risks and may take too long to generate results**
- **time will weed out the local NGOs.**

Comments such as these make particularly clear the fragile base on which the southern NGOs seek to establish and develop themselves as contributing agents to the needs of their own countries. Indeed, the concerns also reveal some of the operative discourse in which partnerships are situated and constructed and through which expectations are differentially maintained.

Yet the prevalance and seeming intractability of this discourse and the unevenness of the expectations is further reflected in the perceptions and concerns of Malian and Nigerien national NGO representatives with whom interviews and discussions were also conducted. A cross-section of their concerns is as follows:

- we give information to our northern NGO partners but we do not know how it is used
- southern NGOs are underestimated while the approach of northern NGOs dominates
- Canadian NGOs in particular impose or parachute in their expatriates and adventure-seeking volunteers as a condition of partnership and sometimes we do not want them. Development is a serious task and we cannot afford northern tourism within our partnerships
- if a southern NGO executes, it's blamed if the project goes wrong yet there is no credit given if it goes right
- it would be good to have at least 5 years of guaranteed funding -- we cannot strategize without it
- partnership as an instrument of development was imposed on us by northern NGOs
- the northern agency came for two days to do an evaluation on our projects and did not even tell us ahead of time that they were coming nor what they wanted to evaluate
- northern NGOs have a monopoly on information and communication with donors and international agencies -- we want to be dependent on our own means but how can we not be dependent on them (i.e., the northern NGOs).

This representation of views from southern NGO actors is not to suggest that partnerships do not create opportunities for learning and effective and appropriate community assistance and institutional development. Those interviewed are clear about benefits received from past and ongoing partnership initiatives. Yet the underlying concern in comments such as these and from the over one-hundred interviews of southern NGO representatives is that the premise and rationale for partnership -- mutuality, transparency, reciprocal accountability and joint decision-making -- is often overcome by yet a further and more deeply-embedded set of rationale within northern NGOs, that of control, territoriality, organizational inertia and a reticence to disempower oneself or one's institution.

Some of the more incisive and insightful comments in regard

to the broader NGO/aid environment and the discourse that underlies it come from Malians and Nigeriens who have worked in both northern and southern NGO settings. USC-Canada's Malian representative, who is also a founding member of Guamina, noted that there is a complex in belonging to a local NGO. National NGO members have less confidence in their own structures than those of the non-national NGO, even though these latter may operate with serious shortfalls in efficiency and effectiveness. Meanwhile, he notes, the adult-adult metaphor that many equate with NGO partnership is seriously distorted by the differences in resources or influence that the two (adults or partners) enjoy. What is worse is that the relatively larger amount of resources that one enjoys over the other can paper over managerial and operational weaknesses and keep them from view.

The country representative of IRED, a Nigerien with wide involvement and experience in north-south and south-south issues, noted that for Niger and Mali institutional development usually does not happen. National NGOs are caught in a vicious circle from which they cannot easily escape and advance. However, the circle has also become more crowded. A previous general secretary for the NGO coordinating agency in Mali noted that there are many more NGOs in 1991 than there were even five years earlier while donors and northern NGOs, when they are open to further collaboration, are increasingly particular about which potential partners they consider. This increases the dependence of the national NGOs but also the leverage that the non-national NGO can exert.

The Funding Environment

A large part of the reason for this unwillingness on the part of northern NGOs to remove themselves or take on a lower profile is the nature of the funding environment in which they operate. Although funding programs such as those operated by SCS, USAID, the European Development Fund (EDF), the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are making increasing reference to the importance of national NGOs in Malian and Nigerien development, some of their support mechanisms do not necessarily facilitate or even encourage NGO partnership formation, much less a process of local institutional development in which national NGOs would be key actors. The EDF, for example, gives small grants to national NGOs for executing specific projects yet funds must be requested from the Liaison Office in Brussels and normally, note EDF representatives in Mali and Niger, the grant does not include a budgetary line for core institutional development.

Officials at the UNDP/NGO desks in Mali and Niger note that their Réseau Afrique 2000 and Partnership in Development (PID) programs seek to facilitate the emergence and development of local NGOs but are uncertain as to how the NGOs who receive small implementing grants can develop institutionally. An evaluation that UNDP conducted in 1990 noted that the small grants accorded were too small to make a viable difference for the community or for the NGO's operational capacity but also, that the UNDP was not logistically able to follow up and give institutional support

on such aspects as monitoring and information flows. For the UNDP officers, national NGOs are "difficult to supervise" and given what they say is the UNDP's limited staffing and budgetary constraints, the organization can contribute little to assist national NGOs to improve their capacity to implement projects (Koehn and Seubert, 1990). Other than by gaining experience through implementation and perhaps evolve a certain amount of familiarization with logistics and operations, there is no means by which the recipient NGO can benefit from specifically engineered institutional assistance. Moreover, the emphasis on execution, the growing competition from other local NGOs and associations and the smallness and short-term nature of these grants as well as those offered by the EDF, the World Bank and various embassy funds together diminish a national NGO's capacity to develop institutionally. Having to give primary attention to the raising of funds from a variety of sources and to the implementation of small projects simply in order to stay solvent, national NGOs often overlook the importance of their institutional needs. Furthermore, by not making institutional development more of a priority in the grant proposals, donors inadvertently strengthen the notion that this need not be a priority for the national NGOs either.

The small grants program administered by SCS -- the Fonds Delegué -- has sought to correct this notion by slotting a significant portion of its grants towards the organizational consolidation of national NGOs in Mali and Niger. The objective

of the Fonds Delegué is to

> permettre aux ONGs saheliennes de se constituer, de se renforcer au niveau des moyens et des outils, de développer leur expertise et d'acquerir de la crédibilite afin de devenir de plus en plus efficaces et opérationnelles dans le développement de leur pays.
>
> (SCS, 1992:1)

In the six-month period ending September 30, 1991, 16 such grants of .5 million to 2.5 million FCFA were given by SCS/Mali and 7 by SCS/Niger to national NGOs or development associations (ibid.). The purpose of the grants were to foster either the organizational development of the emerging national NGO or to strengthen their operational skills by way of implementation of a small field project (installing a grain mill, building schools, constructing and maintaining an irrigated garden). The grants designated for organizational or institutional support, however, were to purchase office furniture and equipment, a motorcycle, defray a portion of office rent or top up secretarial salaries. Although these may be essential to the operational life of the NGO, they do not necessarily constitute or promote institutional development.

Indeed, equating institutional support merely with the provision of a photocopier or a motorcycle presents a false picture of institutional development. This is particularly the case when such support is not provided in the context of managerial/ financial training or regular and purposive reflection on strengthening a group's vision and strategies or developing linkages with other civil and state actors. Whereas many of the grant programs available to Malian and Nigerien NGOs

and development associations inadvertently diminish the importance of institutional development, SCS's program weakens the essence of its definition and, perhaps again inadvertently, contributes to a depreciation of the value that institutional development might otherwise have in actual NGO partnerships. This is corroborated by discussions with Malian and Nigerien national NGO representatives; the majority perceive institutional development as either capital/office equipment or administrative salary support and not as a strengthening of internal participatory processes or an organization-wide capacity to liaise with, learn from and leverage resources from other actors in the environment.

The NGO/aid funding environments in both Mali and Niger are important determinants to the formation of viable north-south NGO partnerships and institutional development. One of the newer and perhaps soon-to-be largest NGO partnership programs is that of the U.S. government. Somewhat similar to the ACCED partnership program that SCS administers in the Sahel, the co-financing programs designed by USAID for Mali and Niger will open up substantive resources for NGO activity and north-south partnership.[3] In both programs, although quite dissimilar in

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[3]The USAID/Mali Co-financing Project (688-0247) is directed at strengthening NGO contribution in the sectors of Child Survival, Natural Resource Management and Micro-Enterprise Development. The USAID/Niger Agriculture Sector Development Grant II (683-0257; 683-0265) seeks to promote policy reform at the government level, the satisfaction of which will allow for successive 'slices' of money to be released. Part of the grant is to support NGO initiatives in natural resource management.

structure and rationale, national NGO participation is encouraged and sometimes even essential to the approval of a funding proposal of an American NGO. The grants however require lead agencies (in Mali) or funding co-ordinators (in Niger). These NGOs would be responsible to USAID for monies alloted and they would also serve as a liaison between the partnering NGOs and the funder (Poulton, 1990; USAID/Niger, 1990). Legally, notes the Co-financing Project coordinator in Mali, USAID can only distribute funds to NGOs registered with the Washington-based agency.

> [The NGOs] need not be American (although most of them are), but they need to meet a pretty stiff set of regulations... For virtually every Malian NGO, the requirement would be too difficult to meet in 1990. To work with USAID directly, you need to have substantial resources, large teams of back-up staff, highly professional accounts (with professional audits), etc.... There is a complicated initial Environmental Examination for all programs (even those which do not appear to be working with natural resources). AID likes people to work in English. AID likes computer print-outs. USAID is in fact a very demanding partner...
> (Poulton, 1990:20)

The American government strategies for national NGO assistance in Mali and Niger are subsumed within expressed concerns for viability, reliability and capability of the agencies with which they will work. These are important qualities for both national and non-national NGOs. USAID staff in both countries suggest that an NGO partnership can allow for the development of these attributes and that through a partnership the national NGO can learn from the American NGO. Yet the requirement for lead-agency or co-ordinator accountability to USAID (and the lack of a provision for a required or eventual

transfer of these responsibilities to the partner) makes it unlikely that human and material resources will be set aside to build up national NGO capacity in these areas. Together with the internal constraints of the American NGOs themselves -- having to meet perceived constituent expectations, generate immediate results, streamline financial operations -- USAID's policies regarding national NGO development can also make it difficult for American NGOs to lessen their involvement and to deliberately transfer expertise and for national NGOs to "prove themselves competent" and "earn" the confidence and reputation that are deemed essential by USAID/Mali for future collaboration (Poulton, 1990:5,20).

There are then numerous constraints in the NGO/aid funding environments in both Mali and Niger. The proliferation of small grant programs and the internal contradictions of the larger NGO partnership programs make it difficult for national NGOs to develop institutionally. Moreover, what results is that small grant funding practices actually disrupt or inhibit the development of capacity-building potential among national NGOs (Carroll in Bendahmane, 1991:33). "When funding depends on short-term project results, grantees tend to cater to 'more accessible clients who already have some capacity and hence can assure a quicker pay off'" (ibid.:36). Indeed, the nature of the funding environments in both Mali and Niger creates conditions and reproduces the dominant elements of a discourse in which the vital issues of legitimacy, sustained capability, external

linkages and internal participatory processes are not sufficiently addressed, much less isolated as being integral to the viability of the national NGO and the projects it implements.

Two recent studies conducted in Niger -- and commissioned for USAID and the UNDP, respectively -- emphasize nonetheless the critical need for institutional development as well as the opportunity that northern NGOs have to contribute to its realization:

> The nature of northern NGO support for Nigerien NGOs should at the outset focus on <u>institutional strengthening</u>. This includes highlighting organisational strengthening and specifically, personnel management for technical and administrative tasks.
> (Sidibé *et al*, 1990:7)

> The time is ripe for a catalytic program to enhance collaborative efforts among partners, to assist in disseminating information and to provide much needed technical assistance and management skills training, as well as seed monies for NGOs.
> (E.I.L., 1991:6)

The following section broadens the analysis offered thus far by including a number of additional comments from both practitioners and academics regarding the opportunities and constraints offered by north-south NGO partnerships to promote institutional development. In the section, attempts are made to piece together a number of the components of this study and, in so doing, offer a coherent picture and perspective of partnership and institutional development in Mali and Niger.

Partnership and Institutional Development: Some Concluding Comments

This study has sought to explore and understand the possibilities and effectiveness of north-south NGO partnerships in facilitating institutional development in Mali and Niger. It is informed by an understanding of the historical evolution of state-society relations in these two countries. An awareness of state-society developments is essential for appreciating the difficulties in undertaking initiatives that seek not only to strengthen local and civil institutions but to ensure their strength and viability over time. The colonial and post-colonial states wrestled away influence and authority from local communities, weakened indigenous decision-making structures or substituted them with new ones and reworked and universalized the many historically-developed but place-specific sets of rules and responsibilities by which community needs were met. New state formations of the twentieth century ushered in a reconfiguration of locally-evolved social formations. In the colonial and in much of the post-colonial regime, communities were not expected and, particularly in Niger, not even permitted to map out choices and developmental responses on their own. Instead, the state would become the locus for doing development, the harbinger of resources and right action.

Yet carrying through the analysis of state-society relations into the 1980s and 1990s reveals that the state -- whether it be by default, deliberation or a combination of both -- has pared its services and allowed more room for non-state actors to

legally emerge. In Mali and Niger, these civil actors, whether they be at the community, regional or national level, are able to reconstitute and re-energize those spaces that have been freed up. The emergence and formation of national NGOs in both countries is to a significant extent a response to a new although still fluid state-society configuration. Moreover, the consolidation of national NGOs and regional and community development associations can also favour a consolidation of the spaces that the structures of the state had once sought to fill. For northern NGOs, promoting institutional development as an integral and purposeful part of their partnership with a national NGO or local association can contribute favourably to a reshaping of state-society relations and a redirecting of influence and benefits to the communities themselves.

The two 'points de départ' as discussed in the second chapter of this study -- the resource constraints and vulnerabilities of the Sahelian region and the potential and limitations of NGO development -- not only shaped the gathering and processing of information related to this study but also took on greater significance and impetus throughout the course of the research. The lingering economic crisis, an environment in decline, a seemingly structural food shortage and erratic rainfall patterns throughout the Sahel circumscribe the possibilities for carrying out effective and sustainable development work. National and non-national NGOs in Mali and Niger, although often embodying a 'micro methodology' of action,

a relatively high staff motivation and an economy in their operations, are circumscribed nonetheless by their own personnel and material limitations, the irregularity in the conducting of socio-economic analyses and external evaluations and what they perceive as pressure for quick and tangible results from donors and constituents. One long-time observer of the NGO community in Mali and now a member of a national NGO noted that NGOs in Mali are not synonymous with efficiency. They are rarely aware of the socio-economic reality and do not always implement with future implications in mind. Moreover, they can motivate but not necessarily any better than state structures.

The Significance of Committed Individuals and Leaders

What became clear in the course of the study was the high reliability that NGOs have on the individuals who represent them. Through their actions and attitudes, individuals -- program directors or field staff -- have significant power to positively or negatively influence project outcomes, form external linkages and manage and mobilize resources. The commitment of individuals in OMAES, UNAIS, SUCO and the field cooperative trainers in Tamaske and Roukouzoum appeared to be enormously important to overall success. The field director of a large NGO partnership initiative in central Mali noted that the success of almost everything in the project with which he was involved depended on the good work and commitment of the individuals engaged by the project.

On the one hand, this speaks to the fragility of the

institutions themselves. On the other hand, it suggests the necessity of strong staff commitment to a project's development and the importance of building leadership that is both visionary and facilitative. Institutional development in Mali and Niger, particularly in the non-state sector, is weak and fragile. For a process of organizational learning and institutional strengthening to take root, committed leaders are needed to identify and articulate goals and priorities and translate them into a coherent set of strategies, objectives and plans (Kiggundu, 1989). Leadership is integral to mobilizing the resources and technical and political support that are consistent with the expectations and objectives of the members of the organization and ample enough to meet longer term goals of sustainability. As Esman notes,

> Leadership is considered to be the single most critical element in institution building because deliberately induced change processes require intensive, skillful, and highly committed management both of internal and environmental relationships.
>
> (in Blase, 1986:334)

The defining charactersitic of leadership, Uphoff and Ilchman note, is "an acute faculty for strategy, that is, the use of resources over time" (ibid.:337).

Moreover, effective leadership is needed to assure that administrative procedures and project operations do not devolve into simple routinized functions of a dull bureaucracy. Leaders can create an environment in which a vision and values can be "shared with, contextualized for and put into effect by others" (Hunt, 1992:16). Leadership can maintain the focus and integrity

of the organization as well as protect that integrity from outside interference (Kiggundu, 1989). In the Sahel, where a relatively non-flexible bureaucratic mentality still weighs heavily, there is a need for an administrative process by which core values are reinforced and in which planning, problem-solving and project activities are understood by how they contribute to accomplishing a corporate vision. As Hunt notes, "an institution can be going full steam ahead and still be going nowhere" (Hunt, 1992:16). In the NGOs working in Mali and Niger and in the efforts made to promote institutional development, enlightened and committed staff and leadership are essential.

Yet too large an importance attributed to leadership can also work against institutional development. Dependence upon a small group of leaders may mean that an institutional identity is foregone and that other members become less interested in participating in assemblies or activities. In an NGO partnership in which considerable time and energy are spent in developing leadership, a result may be that fewer resources will be invested in assuring the accountability of leaders to their constituencies and a strengthening of internal checks and balances (Uphoff, 1986:202). A consequence of this may be a reinforcement of top-down and non-participatory decision-making and objective-setting. The field director of the partnership in central Mali mentioned above noted that while there was great reliance upon individual commitment to project activities, there was also little initial thought given to a mode of operation and

to the terms of reference by which the project would operate. In the Projet Missira, a greater concern on the part of UNAIS for the institutional viability of OMAES and to actual project design was undoubtedly forestalled by an almost singular reliance upon the abilities of its general secretary.

Fox notes that leaders too can discourage, divert and weaken and that increasing attention needs to be paid to the development of participatory subgroups as counterweights to what otherwise could turn into concentrated leadership (Fox, 1992). Clusa's efforts to develop a system of neighbourhood noyaux are a step in this direction. The rotation of field management responsibilities in Missira also aimed to share and broadly inculcate leadership functions; rotation as such, Uphoff notes, avoids a monopolization of authority or access to information (1986:203). There is no denying that leadership development is important; this became increasingly clear in the course of this study. However, so too is a supportive management infrastructure that can lessen the dependency and the demands placed upon the leader and limit the clientelism and elitism that, too, are elements of Sahelian bureaucratic culture.

Benefits from and Obstacles to Institutional Development

This study has sought to underscore the important role and opportunity that NGO partnerships have to promote institutional development both at the national NGO and at the community level. Although it is both time- and personnel-intensive, the longer

term may allow for the development of an institution that is more aware of its strengths and objectives and more able to appraise its own structure and strategy in light of the resources that are available or accessible to it. Yet even in the shorter term, the benefits of institutional development are evident. OMAES would have been more able to respond to field concerns and deliver more appropriate and timely assistance if attention had been paid early in its partnership with UNAIS to rendering more participatory and transparent its own internal structure and operations. AMIPJ and AETA could have benefited from a built-in linkage between money made avilable for their quarterly evaluations in Menghadie and resources and time devoted to strengthening their wider internal monitoring and evaluation systems and information flows. From his analysis of aid effectiveness, Cassen (1986:202) concluded that efforts devoted to institutional development do yield a higher return than investments in which institutional development is not perceived as an objective.[4] Carroll, too, suggests from his extensive analysis of NGO collaborative initiatives in Latin America that investing in the organizational capital of national NGOs more effectively nurtures the capacity building process that those NGOs promote at the grassroots level (in Bendahmane, 1991:37).

However, from the research conducted in Mali and Niger, this

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[4]Cassen refers to a World Bank project performance review in which 82% of the projects that achieved at least partial success in institutional objectives yielded returns of 10% or more while 73% of the projects with poor institutional results produced low or negative returns.

study can also surmise that true institutional development is not a priority in the design and implementation of NGO partnerships. Other studies concur with this finding. Derman noted that under the conservative aid policies begun in the 1980s that target macro-policy reforms, institutional strengthening in the rural non-governmental sector in the Sahel has actually lessened as a donor priority (in Otto, 1991:26). From his work in the Sahel and particularly in Burkina Faso, Sharp noted that northern partners will provide the funding for the projects of indigenous Sahelian NGOs "but are seldom prepared to help with the training or institutional support needed if they are to become effective and fully-fledged development agencies" (Sharp, 1990:41).

There are several reasons for the neglect or down-sizing of the importance of institutional development. One, the design of the existing, larger partnership or co-financing programs of SCS, the EEC or USAID is not conducive to a built-in transfer of responsibilities or a transparency in managerial and financial operations. The northern NGO is ultimately responsible for how funds are allocated. The majority of national NGO representatives interviewed in Mali and Niger felt that their organizational roles were limited to that of executing agencies. Second, as mentioned earlier, is the perceived need by national and non-national NGOs for short-term, proximate results and to meet donor standards and expectations. The competitive nature of the small-grant funding environment in Mali and Niger bolsters those perceptions. Third, NGOs working in partnership are often

absorbed and overwhelmed by the day to day operations and logistical difficulties of working in the Sahel and maintaining a minimal flow of services. Efforts to promote institutional development are easily relegated off the priority list by concerns for such things as health, banking and vehicle maintenance. Fourth, institutional development is often understood as being a by-product or automatic consequence of working together in partnership. Doing, it is believed, will bring about learning and produce a level of familiarization with how development organizations are run and how their operations can be improved. However and particularly for the Sahel, simply being content with a 'learning by doing' process usually means that what is being learned is the nature and severity of the many constraints that are encountered -- not means by which these difficulties can be addressed and surmounted through a set of established but flexible response mechanisms.

A fifth reason for the seeming absence of purposive and effective institutional development became particularly apparent in the course of this research. Relatively little attention is paid and appreciation given to the *detail* of institutional development. What Oakley noted about NGOs and participation -- that there appears to be little concern for capturing the essence, developing a methodology or understanding its processes -- is apparent in the relationship between NGO partnership and institutional development as well. Israel notes that there is an implicit acceptance that anybody from any profession could deal

with institutional issues. As a 'soft' subject (the 'hard' ones being the provision and installation of physical infrastructure and equipment), it is believed that institutional development can be handled by anyone in the course of normal operations. However, "[s]ince institutional development is everybody's business, it often becomes, in practice, nobody's business" (Israel, 1987:ix). What results is a woefully inadequate amount of purposive and regular reflection, room for error, human resource and management training material, administrative block grants, institutional-technical assistance and organizational and information exchanges being made available to further the process of institutional development. While efforts to translate rhetoric (affirming the importance of institutional development) into action (actually doing it and seeing it done) continue to be forestalled for reasons such as these, the gap between potential and reality widens.

Reinvigorating the Debate

The gap that does exist between rhetoric and action and between potential and reality requires *a priori* a rethinking of of the debate that underlies partnership and institutional development and an informed awareness of the motivations, contradictions and constraints that define the debate. For Mali and Niger, a strategic rethink is essential for all the actors involved as to their roles and relationships with other actors involved in development in those countries. Indeed, a growing number of individuals and institutions are suggesting means by

which to create conditions for NGO partnerships to foster institutional development.

A former general secretary of the Malian NGO co-ordination committee and now a director with a northern NGO noted the contradictions in NGO partnerships seeking to promote institutional development. NGO partnerships are the only way, he noted, by which local NGO capacities can be reinforced and local NGOs often end up compromising themselves in order to enter into such collaborative relationships, becoming, in the process, mere executing agencies. Yet he added that southern NGOs need to be much more active in using their available resources to develop an organization-building methodology and operational strategy and perspective, make contacts with other national NGOs to learn from their strengths and experiences, study innovative ways to raise money locally and formulate a clear idea of why, where and in which sectors and regions they wish to carry out certain initiatives. A litmus test for a successful national NGO, he explained, is really how much time, energy and resources its members are willing to sacrifice. In order to succeed, a national NGO needs to build and maintain a supporting constituency.

Kajese adds that an African NGO needs to arise out of such a constituency, to be a genuine people's movement, rooted in its own culture and values. 'Rootedness' is essential. It is very important, for example, to ask 'who owns an NGO?' and 'whose guiding image informs the self-image and mission of an African NGO?' (Kajese, 1991:22-3). Not to ask such questions or be

concerned with a focused, well-thought out approach to implementing and strategizing entails the risks that an African non-governmental organization could evolve into a non-grassroots organization (Odhiambo Anacleti in Fyfe, 1991).

While observers and analysts do not deny the need for African NGOs to be strategically and clearly focused and well-connected both to grass-roots communities and to a supportive constituency and set of stakeholders, few of them would deny that north-south funding and collaborative arrangements need to be altered. Kajese notes that current funding patterns and a depreciation of the importance of institutional development have facilitated the emergence of a class of local NGOs that can write proposals better than they can help rural people (in Ward, 1989:88). The contradictions of partnership are too great and the contingency upon individual personalities too high for currently designed partnership arrangements to be of much real and long-lasting value to national NGOs (Ward, 1989:91-4). Ward and others are suggesting that, instead, secure and regular financial support needs to be channeled directly to national NGOs, not necessarily without conditions or expectations but certainly without the on-field control over the purse strings by a non-national agency. This type of control impairs learning and inhibits institutional development.

Recognizing this, the European Parliament noted that present methods of funding southern NGOs through a European NGO pose the

danger of monopolization and the stifting of the emancipation process of southern NGOs (Dreesmann, 1987:55). Such comments do not find an echo, however, from interviews with EDF representatives in Mali and Niger. There, the approach taken to national NGOs remains one of caution and suspicion. USAID/Mali has also set aside the findings of a comprehensive self-commissioned survey of NGOs in Mali and concluded that Malian NGOs do not have the capacity to administer AID grants and should be excluded from direct funding (Otto, 1991:23). Robinson, who has conducted much of her research in Niger, has advocated the need to amend the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act so as to facilitate more direct funding arrangements, greater opportunities for south-south NGO networking and trans-nationalization of relations among African NGOs (1991:45). Current partnership arrangements maintain a vertical north-south (or south-north) direction as opposed to encouraging horizontal linkages or south-south, cross-border working partnerships. One could add that rather than the national NGO being an additional or cumbersome layer or check point on the path to meeting community needs as some in Mali and Niger have commented, the non-national NGO may be that layer, its very presence being a barrier to productive exchanges within civil society.

This study has shown the need to rethink and rework NGO partnership and invest greater effort and resources into the institutional development of national NGOs and community-based development associations. A partnership between northern and

southern NGOs -- in which there is a two-way exchange of information, a mutually-agreeable division of labour and a joint input of comparative strengths -- appears in many ways to be a creative mechanism by which community needs can be best met. However, given the limitations of the funding environment, the reticence of key non-national actors and the serious resource constraints of the Sahel, partnership often devolves into what Fyfe refers to as a "disguised northern manipulation of southern NGOs... a polite myth so obtrusive in the NGO rhetoric" (1991). The northern NGO's more secure financial position and greater access to computers, means of transportation and even national highly-skilled staff who can command higher salaries assures that the relationship will be imbalanced. As Smillie notes,

> Much talk and far too little action-oriented thought has been expended on the concept of 'partnership' between southern and their northern supporters. In truth, the terms of the partnership... are not equal. Many, if not most northern NGOs treat their southern 'partners' the way they themselves are treated by their own bilateral funding agencies: with vast amounts of confusion, paternalism and obfuscation, great and inexplicable time lags, and misunderstandings which occasionally have disastrous repercussions.
>
> (Smillie, 1989:77)

These analyses uncover many of the contradictions and constraints that lessen the likelihood that north-south NGO partnerships can foster institutional development. Moreover, the particular prevalent nature of these contradictions and constraints in Mali and Niger make the choices and priorities that need to be made all the more important.

Strategic Choices

For the NGO community, there are strategic but crucial choices that need to be made insofar as determining their modes of collaboration with southern NGOs or community associations. In spite of the confluence of difficulties that impinge against partnership and against institutional development, the importance of investing in institutional development remains high. This study has shown that there continues to be a significant need for a collaborative arrangement, even one that may still be referred to as a 'partnership.' The potential for northern NGOs to advance a process of institutional development is contingent, however, on the choices that they make. To a large extent, these choices should flow out of their respective comparative strengths.

Northern NGOs are well-situated, for example, to facilitate linkages between southern organizations and other institutional actors. They can make available to the national NGO conceptual and empirical knowledge and research results that have been generated elsewhere and that could be of use locally but in a form that is interpreted and adapted by the members of that organization in collaboration with the communities it serves. Murphy, in this light, has suggested that northern NGOs can help to assure a "democratization of the information flow" (1990:202). Most importantly though, northern NGOs can build the credibility and capability of southern NGOs and associations by investing regular and significant resources in their organizational capital, that is, by helping to strengthen their internal

participatory processes of monitoring and evaluation, decision-making, problem-solving, needs-assessment, conflict-resolution, objective-setting, and strategy-formulation. Moreover, they can help to assure that such processes are designed to allow for or even institutionalize regular review and feedback from community members, field staff and other influential stakeholders.

The case studies here and the growing body of literature on NGO activity, some of which has been cited above, concur that institutional development needs to be more of a focal point in the support that northern NGOs lend to their southern counterparts. Non-national NGOs are often overinvolved in the financial management, the day to day operations and even the establishment of goals and a direction of national NGOs. By virtue of their relatively more secure position, they can project themselves and their priorities on to their 'partner' agency. After many years of work with Oxfam-UK, Dichter notes that northern NGOs are conditioned to see themselves as important yet remain neglectful of the nuts and bolts of doing development (1988:178). Unfortunately, overinvolvement on the one hand is 'balanced' by underinvolvement on the other; there being 'too much of one thing and not enough of the other,' makes for both a wrong mix of ingredients and a wrong sequence of steps to follow in promoting institutional development.

In spite of growing demands for and interest in the scaling up of national NGO initiatives to embrace other communities and

more macro socio-political activities[5] -- which remains a vital tenet of civil society development -- greater efforts need to be given to consolidating existing organizational structures so that they can adequately absorb resources and execute projects and, gradually but eventually, broaden their impact and reach. Korten's suggestion (1980) that actors in development first learn to be effective (discovering what works), then learn to be efficient (doing what works for less) and then, finally, learn to expand may demand more time and patience than what non-national actors are usually prepared to invest. Yet, as the empirical and broader analytical evidence shows, they are investments that are more likely to yield returns -- both at the community level and for the national NGO.

The difficulties of raising constituent funds has led many northern NGOs operating in Mali and Niger to rely on larger funders who, too, may see in northern NGOs a relatively effective and efficient means by which local communities can be served. USAID, the World Bank, the EDF and others are asking northern NGOs, if not to maintain their presence, to take on an even greater role; national NGOs, meanwhile, want their non-national counterparts to take on a lesser presence and a lower profile.

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[5]Kenneth King commented at the Edinburgh conference, "Critical choices for the NGO community: African Development in the 1990s," that "the pressure to 'scale up' the project and to explore its application beyond its immediate community is powerfully driven by external funding" (1991:iv). The desire for broader results, although certainly laudible, can mean that the more internal needs of a national NGO are consequently given less attention and importance.

Several national NGO representatives mentioned the need for movement toward endowment funding and the establishing of a capable consortia of 'peer' northern and southern NGOs who would monitor and evaluate and show consistency and resourcefulness in the lending of institutional support.

The choices that non-national NGOs working in Mali and Niger make need to be critically informed by the conditions in which their national counterparts work. An understanding of the socio-political environment that has evolved out of the present rebalancing of state/society relations is crucial to historicising and situating current constraints. It is also crucial that they be aware of future implications that their interventions and presence have on the non-governmental development sector. Not making resources available for or promoting dialogue about objectives and strategies may shortchange the future in favour of a quicker pay off in the present. Opting to 'Malianize' a non-national NGO, as many prefer to do, may also mean choosing not to help in the strengthening of a nationally-staffed Malian institution that could potentially play a significant future development role at the community level but also within the broader civil society.

One additional critical requirement for non-national NGOs is -- and again, as this study has made clear -- to become more accountable to those in whose name they have justified their existence as humanitarian agencies (Murphy, 1990). Accountability is essential not only for funds received but also for results

achieved with those funds (Herbert-Copley and Brodhead, 1988) and the means by which those results are achieved. To borrow from Bernstein, NGOs working in Africa need first and foremost to be accountable to Africans. Partnering with a national NGO or local association does not necessarily increase accountability. Yet accountability is strengthened when foreign NGOs seriously consider the future consequences of their present interventions. This study has shown that investing in institutional development is more likely to yield future benefits than if present needs of management, organizational learning and linkage-building are neglected and left to evolve on their own.

National and non-national NGOs can together address issues of accountability, constituency development, autonomy, ownership, fund raising and education as well as the risks of bureaucratization, top-down decision-making and high overhead costs within their organizations. Doing so can promote transparency but also greater appreciation of the constraints that each other faces and of the contradictions that need to be managed, if not resolved. Indeed, Malian and Nigerien NGO representatives are not aware of the resource-constraints of some of the non-national NGOs operating in the Sahel and the demands that are placed upon their representatives in the field. "Listening," noted the co-chairs of the Africa Partnership Project, "is at the cornerstone of effective partnership" (Ndiaye and Hammock, 1991:6). Such a mutually-supportive relationship, one in which both 'sides' also show a willingness to be mutually-

vulnerable (Smith and Ricci, 1991:250) -- whether it be called partnership or not -- can promote honesty and frankness and it may stimulate a better projection or image of each other's organization in their respective countries.

Means and Ends

Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs are not goals in and of themselves. Institutional development, too, should not be seen as an end product if the lives of individuals and communities are not improved by its interventions. A strengthened national NGO may still be limited by economic or policy constraints that impinge upon its ability to deliver services and support grassroots initiatives -- although here, too, national and northern NGOs can collaborate in studying how macro processes affect conditions at the micro level and providing relevant policy advice to the larger, influential policy-making institutions. The 1990 World Conference on Education For All made clear the importance of international and indigenous NGOs in helping to meet basic learning needs and in contributing to setting of future policy (WCEFA, 1990; King, 1991).

Institutional development is more than just a means to an end, whether that end be health, literacy or improved policy. Credible, learning-oriented and influential non-governmental bodies need to be perceived as vital components of the socio-political environment, particularly given its actual fluid and

fragile nature in such countries as Mali and Niger. More viable institutions can help in both the rebalancing of the state/society dynamic and the building of an enabling environment. Investing in institutional development can allow for and promote greater freedom of expression, association and initiative but it can also promote ownership, accountability and learning as important and valued priorities for the people who are involved in and who benefit from the building and strengthening of these institutions.

For Mali and Niger, however, NGO partnership and institutional development remain at a critical conjuncture. In both countries, there exists new and significant socio-political *space* for non-government partnerships to form and for national NGOs to emerge and consolidate their operations. Yet, the *depth* of commitment to institutional development, particularly as a process in which non-national NGOs can play an important role, remains disturbingly shallow. What can certainly inform the choices that need to be made, however, is the comment from one national NGO representative who has had significant experience in the NGO community in both Mali and Niger: "Those who work for national NGOs," he said, "want to be useful. They do not want this NGO phenomena to pass them by."

APPENDIX 1

Guideline Interview Questions

A. Where there is already a partnership in existence consisting of at least one international non-governmental organization and one local non-governmental organization.

a.) What are the origins of the international NGO presence and activities in the given country/region? Why has this particular region been chosen? How was it identified? By whom? Are there other activities in which the international NGO is involved in a different region of the country or in another Sahelian country?

b.) What are the origins of the local NGO presence and activities in the area? Is it headquartered in the area of development? Is it an extension or a by-product of a specific indigenous structure or association? Has this particular NGO been initiated by those born in the area? Have their leaders received additional education and experience outside of the development area?

c.) What are the broad aspirations and priorities of the international NGO(s) and the local NGO(s)? Are these aspirations and priorities applicable to the develpment area or have they been/are they being necessarily modified to account for local differences (in terms of resource-availability, location within the country or region, population composition and structure, existing modes of production)? What is the projected or anticipated time-span given for the realization of these aspirations? What amount of flexibility exists in the setting of and adherence to development priorities?

d.) How and when was the international-national NGO partnership initiated? Did the partnership originate at the same time that the different international and national NGOs concerned began development activities in the region or country? On whose initiative was the partnership drawn up? How or through which mechanism or process was the initial dialogue on potential joint activities begun? Were other NGOs involved at this time? The national NGO coordinating committee? A government agency or department?

e.) What contribution does the international NGO offer the local NGO in its development efforts? Of what nature is the support: personnel, managerial, administrative, technical, material, financial, training? How are these contributions decided upon? How are they sequenced and in which increments? Who decides upon the sequencing? Has the sequencing thus far been according to original design? If not, why and what changes have had to be made?

f.) Has the current form or process of partnership changed significantly since the relationship began? Why and How? Has the form and/or process of decision-making altered? Has it been made more inclusive or participatory -- by design or otherwise? Is the current relationship limited to the office-level or does it extend to the field-level?

g.) Through which mechanisms (formal meetings, informal discussions, correspondance and literature exchange) are responsibilites and objectives decided upon? Have one or another of these mechanisms been altered in favour of another? If so, why? Are there any projected future shifts in use of such mechanisms?

h.) Other than indigenous or already-existing local-level associations or structures, has there been an effort to incorporate existing skills and knowledge? Has this been done in a systematic format or in a more informal fashion? Has there been or is there currently underway a program which seeks to understand and make use of socio-ecological data? What part do the needs and knowledge of women play in project design and implementation? Do the partnering NGOs separately or together make use of or have access to material pertaining to historically-developed modes of production and how these have changed or been altered?

i.) How and when are project evaluations and appraisals carried out? Which contributions are expected and sought from each of the partners? Is such a division of responsibility very 'set' or is it subject to such aspects as the technical or social nature of the project, the personnel present at the project site or the amount of external contribution (financial and other) to the particular project? Are there periodic evaluations of the nature of the partnership and of the possibilities to redirect plans or rearrange internal decision-making structures.

j.) What opportunities exist for national NGO personnel to participate in supra-local meetings or conferences, that is in settings where the agenda is not related only (or perhaps not at all) to the development projects and partnership in which the national NGO is involved? Are there avenues open to national personnel to participate in meetings or training seminars outside of the country?

k.) Are national NGO personnel serving currently on the international NGO's board of directors? If not, is such a possibility being discussed for the future? In general, what access do national personnel have to information, technical or management manuals, material detailing development experiences, etc. that may not be readily available in their home country? What options exist through which national personnel can conduct

research in or outside of the region? How much mutual awareness and empathy exists between national personnel and the local population and the supporting constituency of the international NGO? How much effort is being expended to build up this mutual understanding?

l.) How essential are the needs and plans for developing networks with other NGOs? How does the international NGO or the national NGO seek to build up networks in the region -- with other NGOs or international government organizations, with government bureaus, with parastatals, with private market agents? Are there periodic regional meetings? Are these beneficial? Do these networks serve to broaden the local knowledge base, strengthen project planning and implementation, enhance the possibilities for more successful local development, increase the managerial and mobilization skills of the national NGO? Are there limits to networking per se, that is, does there come a point where the national NGO perceives itself to be less able (perhaps less in control) to catalyse local development?

m.) What constraints (insofar as partnership is concerned) exist that impinge upon either the international or national NGO from doing what it believes to be best and correct? Do personnel in the national NGO believe that this latter could be made more effective, efficient and enduring? In what ways? What would they add or take away to make the partnership more equal or beneficial? Are personnel in the international NGO aware of such concerns and can they be acted upon? Is there a feeling of mutual transparency between the partners concerning long-term planning and aspirations, local knowledge, report-writing, etc?

n.) How active is the international NGO in addressing 'root causes' of underdevelopment, in lobbying international agencies, in petitioning and informing the governments and media of their own home countries and in educating their constituency and others about persistent injustices, inequities and misperceptions of Africa and Africans?

o.) How successful do personnel in both the international and national NGO feel their partnership is in regard to facilitating and encouraging local development? In their opinions, how can the partnership and the projects that may be catalysed through the collaborative work be improved or strengthened so as more of the women and men in the area -- and especially those with tenuous or no access to productive resources -- are given greater security and confidence in their own actions and aspirations.

B. The second and third parts of the questionnaire are directed to those where (a) international NGOs are seeking to partner with local, national NGOs and where (b) local, national NGOs are seeking to partner with international NGOs.

a.) What are the reasons for the international NGO wishing to partner with a local NGO? Which criteria are used to determine where and with whom? What has already been accomplished on the field and what is planned? How flexible are these plans? What social, economic and/or ecological studies have been done or are planned? What type of support would be offered and in which sequence and increments? How does the international NGO hope or expect to be strengthened by the collaboration?

b.) What is the origin of the local NGO and why is it seeking collaborative support at this particular point in time? What has already been accomplished in terms of personnel recuritment, resource mobilization, area study and/or planning and project implementation? What is expected to be gained through joint work with an international partner? What criteria are held in determining partner selection? What is the expected duration of collaborative work?

Coopérative de : Roukouzoum

USRC d'Illéla.

Appendix 2: French/Hausa Transaction Record
from the cooperative at Roukouzoum
(page 1)

compte d'exploitation final mil (87-88).

L'argent pour le mil vendu.		L'argent dépensé pour le travail du mil	
- Première vente :	1801500	- l'argent qui a payé pour payer le mil	2158135
- deuxième vente :	608300		
- troisième vente :	154525	- Frais personnel	20.865
- quatrième vente :	262500	- transport du mil	272 000
- total des ventes effectuées	2826325	- autre frais	900
		- total des fonds qui a servi pour l'achat du mil	2451.900
	Profit		Perte
	374925		x

245

Barikin: illela
Kungiyar: rukuzum

takardar tahiyarda aikin albasa dan sanin riba ko faduwa

(Fili zuwa)

Kudin da anka saida albasa	Kudin da anka kashe wajen tahiyarda aikin albasa
- saidawa ta dai : 3500 x 157 : 549 500	- kudin sayen albasa 1287930
- saidawa ta biyu - 3700 x 112 = 414.400	- kudin runfuna 348750
- saidawa ta ukku - 4600 x 35 = 161 000	- biyan ma'aikata 40920
- saidawa ta hudu - 5000 x 103,5 = 517500	- sauran kashe-kashe bayan an saida albasa 83400
- saidawa ta biyar - 5000 x 12,5 = 62500	- jimillar kudin da anka kashe ma albasa - 1761.000
- saidawa ta shidda - 7500 x 10 = 7500	
- saidawa ta bakwai - 4250 x 37 = 157250	
- jimillar kudin albasar da anka saida 1937150	

riba ko faduwa ?

176150	X

246

Appendix 3: Summary MILLET purchase and Sales Record from the cooperative at Roukouzoum - 1986-87

BILAN DE L'OPERATION MIL DANS LA COOPERATIVE DE ROUKOUZOUM

COUT D'ACHAT	QUANTITES (sacs)	POIDS 1 sac (kg)	PRODUITS VENTES	PROFIT
1 500 000	563	65	1 688 000	188 000
1 556 000	512	55	1 618 000	64 500
800 000	283	55	872 500	72 500
2 168 200	583	60	307 800	58 600

* 505 sacs du dernier approvisionnement représentant une valeur de 1 919 000 francs ont été donnés à crédit aux coopérateurs. Ce prêt a été intégralement remboursé en espèces en novembre 1986.

En definitive, cette opération aura rapporté à la coopérative un profit net de 303 600 francs. Sur ce montant, 172 615 francs ont été consacrés à la réfection et à l'équipement de la boutique de la coopérative. Le reste soit 210 985 francs a été déposé dans le compte d'épargne de la coopérative.

(Sene, 1988:77)

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