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CONFIDENTIAL

PROGRESS REPORT - PROJECT TIN AICHA, MALI

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Introduction

The first year of the drought rehabilitation project at Tin Aicha has been successfully completed and the second phase of this three-year effort is now underway. After the initial three months the population has remained stable at approximately 558 people (100 families). All program components foreseen in the proposal and budgeted for have been put into effect; the social worker has not yet arrived on the team, but this aspect has been covered in the interim by the AFSC representative Eva Mysliwicz. Ample harvests of grain and vegetables, plus milk from livestock, allowed the community to be almost entirely self-sufficient in food until a major rat infestation in the Sahelian region destroyed supplies and made it impossible to replant for three months.

The second group of 100 refugee families has been formally incorporated into the project and has established its own community near Tin Aicha. The group, including 131 men, 162 women and 206 children, is presently living in mat houses or the tents which they had brought with them. It shares the services of the Malian team with Tin Aicha -- school, dispensary, agricultural, veterinary and nutrition education -- but maintains its own geographical and political identity.

Financial Overview

The Interministerial Committee made every effort to keep the project within the 25,000,000 MF allocation. A 1.2%/month rate of inflation has raised the cost of animals, Land Rover, gas and oil, and materials above the amounts budgeted. Wherever possible these overruns were absorbed by other sectors of the budget so that the final balance shows an excess expenditure of only 2,423,745 MF.

The AFSC has received an official accounting for the four trimesters of 1975 and the first for 1976. This includes a notarized letter from the ministry recapping the totals received, expended, and remaining, a complete record of transfers into and out of the project account, a compilation of the expenses according to each trimester's budget, with breakdown according to budget items, and a complete set of receipts for all expenditures (other than those for which receipts are impossible to obtain, such as straw for building). The accounting to this point has been correct and extremely complete, although in the last case, rather slow. The delay seems due to the procedure which necessitates a full accounting in Goundam of the expenses made at the cercle level (livestock, seed), which is then sent to Bamako for addition of ministry expenses (indemnités) and a further review. The Interministerial Committee will be considering ways of streamlining this process.

Project expenditures by the Mali government are included in the general government audit. A local accountant, Jean-Claude Potvain, has been retained to monitor the AFSC accounts.

The project budget for 1976 remains substantially the same as for 1975, with the major expenditure -- livestock -- now shifting from Tin Aicha I to Tin Aicha II. However, several new sub-projects are envisioned for this year -- cooperative store, motorboat for sale of produce, reforestation, etc. -- that may require special funds.

The accounting system used in connection with this project is as follows: an initial grant to cover one trimester's expenses is transferred to the project account. Through the signatures of the Minister, and/or his assistant, plus the Ministry accountant and Eva Mysliwicz, money from this grant is released for specific expenditures. These expenditures must be fully accounted for before the next trimester grant can be transferred. A small reserve of funds is kept in the project account to avoid delay in meeting project needs during the trimester accounting period. The AFSC is currently examining whether it should continue to be a signator for the release of funds from the project account considering the excellent accounting record of the Ministry, the relative unavailability of the AFSC representative when located at Tin Aicha, and in order to initiate the devolvement of the financial responsibility from the AFSC to the Mali government.

Infrastructure

Administration of the Tin Aicha project is proceeding according to plan. The Inter-ministerial Committee, composed of representatives from each national ministry involved at Tin Aicha, retains major decision-making responsibility. It has taken a strong role in coordinating the activities of each ministry and ensuring that the activities assigned to them are actually being carried out. In its November meeting it discussed the past 11 months of the project, basing its evaluation on formal summaries by the project director, Demba Diallo, and the AFSC representative, Eva Mysliwicz, and the monthly program reports from the field team members to their respective ministries. Most admitted to being initially skeptical of the project, which accounted for some diffidence in carrying out their assigned tasks, but were now very much encouraged. In particular the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was censured for its failure to provide the project with a social worker and its unsatisfactory financial accounting. The Department of Cooperatives was formally added to the Interministerial Committee in order to assist with development of cooperatives at Tin Aicha. The committee made several specific recommendations, including the decision to maintain the budget at the 1975 level, and the creation of a local counterpart of the Interministerial Committee.

This "comité de gestion", now formed, meets monthly in Goundam and includes the cercle directors of each of the services represented at Tin Aicha. Its purpose is to facilitate communication between the Tin Aicha team and their respective ministries, (giving these ministries a sense of more informal and direct involvement in the project), to take over some of the responsibility for immediate decision-making from the project director, and to exert mutual support and control so that planned activities are carried through to an effective conclusion and each service fulfills the responsibilities expected of it. This comité has decided, among other things, that project activities need to be planned more concretely and that a system of feedback between the isolated Tin Aicha team and its Goundam directors should be set up.

The project director, Demba Diallo, has been replaced by the new Commandant de Cercle, Soumana Traore, because of the former's recent transfer to another post. Mr. Traore has taken an active interest in the project and in the comité de gestion. He has stressed the value of "intermediate" rather than capital intensive technology and methods for projects such as Tin Aicha, so that the participants will not need to rely on outside assistance. In this way Malians will be able to assume

full responsibility for their own development and be able to take over and run their own projects as soon as possible. He is sensitive to the effects of the drought on the nomads and sees the responsibility lying on the team and other Malian citizens to help them become productive again.

A new community council for Tin Aicha I was elected in October, after residents found the previous one did not meet their needs. Seven people were chosen, two of whom are women. Tin Aicha II has also elected its council, a dynamic and self-motivated group.

Sites: Tin Aicha I itself has moved to a more permanent site above the high water mark of Lake Faguibine. Now that it has its own well, it is less necessary for the community to be within easy reach of the lake. Tin Aicha II has switched from the west side of Tin Aicha to the east. It is possible that the third group, which is due to begin the project in the third year, will be located at some distance from Tin Aicha on Lake Oro so as not to overtax the environment. The land at this site is also government-owned and, at present, is being used temporarily by civil servants.

The team members at Tin Aicha have been allocated small pieces of land to farm along with the Tin Aicha residents.

Personnel: The team at Tin Aicha now seems to be functioning smoothly after an initial period of strain caused by cultural differences and lack of support from their ministries. The agricultural extension worker and nurse have been replaced and a third teacher -- a specialist in Arabic and the Koran requested by the Tin Aicha residents -- was appointed on December 15th. Several other educated nomads have applied to work at Tin Aicha as teachers should openings arise. Because of the difficulty in finding a trained social worker who would accept placement in isolated Tin Aicha, the search was opened to local women who had the interest but no experience. One has been chosen and she will undertake a rapid course in a community development project at Timbuctoo. Three young women from Tin Aicha itself are being trained as health/nutrition aides, and two men as agricultural assistants. At present they help in explaining new concepts and encouraging their fellow residents and later may serve as replacements for team members.

The question of hardship stipends (indemnité) for team members has been under considerable discussion in the Interministerial Committee. Some feel that it is necessary for technicians serving in isolated areas, where food and living requisites are more expensive, to receive some recompense; others believe these technicians should accept the additional inconvenience as part of their service to their country. It was finally decided that an equal amount of indemnité would be granted to all team members working at Tin Aicha.

Technical Aspects

Agriculture: The October rice harvest at Tin Aicha was "sensational". Plans were made for a cooperative storage system whereby the families would sell their grain crop to the community co-op at the official rate and then be able to buy it back later as they needed it at the original rate. This would ensure their getting a fair price for their produce, some ready cash for purchase of necessities, and would prevent their being exploited by urban grain merchants when they needed grain late in the season. The Ministry of Production has offered 1,500 million MF for construction of the communal storehouse. In the meantime, rice would be stored underground in large plastic bundles in the center of the village.

The rats began to increase in mid-October, had reached crisis proportions in November and finally began to abate in February. This situation was devastating throughout Mali, Senegal and Niger and is likely to reoccur next year. Although Tin Aicha residents continued to try to plant wheat (the cold season crop) and vegetables, the rats ate every seed put in the ground. They also chewed through tents, clothing, bedding and consumed all stored food so that once again the community was dependent on government gifts of millet and powdered milk. The only system of eradication that was feasible or available was clubbing them. An incentive was established by offering a bounty of dried milk to anyone bringing in 100 rats. In a one week period 99,000 rats were killed and burned. The psychological effect of this infestation over the four-month period was very serious -- team members were irritable, a few residents left, some livestock began to disappear.

When the rats finally left -- not destroyed but returned to the desert -- they left behind lice. These overtook every inch of the village, the people and their belongings, so seriously as to make it impossible to sleep at night. The infestation is occurring throughout the entire lake area of the Sixth Region and there is great concern about a typhus epidemic.

In March a small potato crop ($1\frac{1}{2}$ tons) was ready for harvest. Families were beginning to establish their rice seedlings and most had begun planting wheat, millet, some corn, beans and watermelon. The regional agricultural service has been showing considerable interest in the progress of these crops and supporting the team agricultural agent. In general the campaign appears more promising than that of last year. The fields are being tended more evenly and rationally.

A portion of land has been set aside for demonstration and for experimental projects that will test whether certain crops will adapt to local environmental conditions. This plot is maintained and cultivated collectively. At present it boasts a thriving crop of sugar cane that hopefully can be developed as a good source of animal fodder.

Reforestation: On their own initiative, Tin Aicha residents began to plant trees to replace the wood that was being cut and used for the village. Although not as part of its general reforestation program, the Ministry of Rural Development sent Tin Aicha 100 Nime plants to assist them. The schoolchildren each took responsibility for watering and protecting a tree. Unfortunately, only seven of these have thrived because of several factors: the fragile nature of the plants, inadequate watering, the roots being too short, and sand storms. This experiment will be tried again, however, during the rainy season. A citrus grove is also being planned.

Well: The well at Tin Aicha I has been deepened and funds have been advanced for the building of a second at Tin Aicha II.

Livestock: This aspect of the project continues to be emotionally and physically sustaining to the population, and social upheavals are found to register in this sector more than in others. For instance at times of great disillusionment, such as the rat and lice infestations, livestock become lost or are sent away to distant areas by their owners. One herd of 60 cattle (composite of several families) was recently allowed to stray because its guardian had not been adequately reimbursed for his time away from the fields.

The nomads have requested that mating of their sheep be controlled so as not to overburden the range at the expense of the herd. Since sheep normally bear young twice a year, they feel that limiting this to once a year will allow sufficient pasture to be maintained for all their animals.

Livestock for Tin Aicha II has been purchased. It is expected that the third group will search out their own animals and buy them rather than go through the intermediary of the nomad chiefs, who facilitated the buying of the first two groups.

A chicken co-op is now being developed, funded by savings in the price of livestock. Sixty thoroughbred chicks are on order, the coop has been built and surrounded with wire fencing. This is intended as a school project to teach successful methods of chicken raising and their nutritional and economic value. Funds from the sale of eggs and meat will be applied to support of the school canteen.

Health: The winter season at Tin Aicha was unusually cold this year and there were 12 deaths during December and January. Surrounding towns have been registering similarly high mortality rates.

At Tin Aicha II the general level of health is much inferior to that of Tin Aicha I. There are many more cases of malnutrition, clinical tuberculosis and deformities among children. Plans are being made to step up health and nutritional efforts; the government is observing the situation closely to see if a massive vaccination campaign against Plague and typhus is in order.

Education: The Interministerial Committee has been debating whether the curriculum taught in the school at Tin Aicha should be "ruralized", that is, adapted from the formal French system to one more appropriate to local conditions. Some feel that the current system is culturally alien to the population and would encourage an exodus of the young people in search of further education or the foreign elements it introduced. Others argue that imposing a rural system of education on nomads would close other possible career doors to them. The decision of the Committee is to begin a national model school at Tin Aicha which would attempt to adapt the best elements from both systems to the special needs of these people; there are two other such schools in Mali.

As of January 1, a school canteen began operation to provide students from both Tin Aicha I and II with a noon meal. This is funded by UNICEF.

Cooperative: The Ministry of Production has advanced 1,500 million francs to organize a consumer's cooperative at Tin Aicha. This effort will include the stocking of a store and the training of Tin Aicha residents as manager and staff.

Summary and Associated Concerns

Since Tin Aicha was intended as a pilot project to test various techniques and stimulate similar projects, efforts such as the following are being made to expand its impact and share more widely the experience being derived from it.

The AFSC seminar program - the West Africa Dialogues - held a conference near Gao, Mali, on the future of nomadism. Nomads and officials involved with rural development and nomad affairs shared their varying perspectives on this issue in these confidential sessions. Four people from Tin Aicha attended. The objective of this and similar AFSC seminars is to provide an opportunity for groups with often antagonistic viewpoints to meet in an atmosphere of frankness and confidentiality, to get to know each other as people, and to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Preparations are going forward to provide input on Tin Aicha at the U.N. Conference on Desertification that is being held in 1977. Reports are now being prepared on the psycho-social impact of the drought on the nomads, which will serve as background materials at the Conference; and, hopefully, a spokesperson from the project will be able to attend.

Tin Aicha has had at least one concrete spin-off. UNICEF has agreed to finance a project on the Tin Aicha model near Gossi in Mali's Sixth Region.

In summary, the end of the first year and beginning of the second of the Tin Aicha project show that it is becoming an increasingly stable community despite major environmental and social challenges. It retains also a dynamic element in the several new experimental sub-projects being initiated, such as: adapted education, para-professional training, cooperatives, reforestation, and demonstration crops. The Tin Aicha program is still highly respected by the government as the "only positive action program which has actually been put into effect in that country and because of the nature of the relationship between the voluntary agency and the Mali government."