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## NGOs in the Sahel

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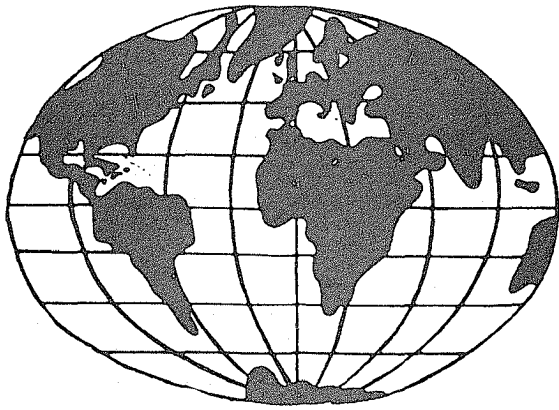


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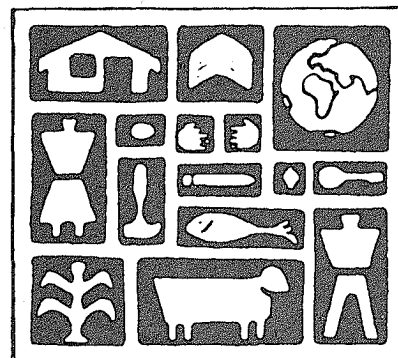
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**Jonathan Otto**

**NGOs IN THE SAHEL**

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*CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION*

Occasional Paper Series on Non Governmental Organizations

**Jonathan Otto**

**NGOs IN THE SAHEL**

Actors and Issues in Natural Resource Management

Edited by Ronald Bosch, Helen Fox, Sherry Kane and Clifford Meyers

## FOREWORD

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The Occasional Paper Series on Non Governmental Organizations is the product of global collaboration. The authors, Jonathan Otto, Mansour Fakhri and Eloy Anello, have brought their extensive NGO experience from the Sahel, Indonesia and Latin America. These three advanced graduate students were encouraged to develop a transnational perspective of their development organizations at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts.

During initial meetings each participant presented the main issues, constraints, strategies and potential for future development in their region. Much to their surprise a picture emerged which showed great similarity despite vast differences in context and resources. This became a good starting point for the authors to share their experiences from different continents and receive relevant feedback and suggestions from the others.

During the last decade there has been a near exponential increase in the number, type and impact of NGOs in less industrialized countries. While this phenomenal growth took place, not much was being published that offered a critical analysis of NGOs as social change agents and promoters of development. The three manuscripts offered an opportunity to reveal some important knowledge. The Center for International Education brought together a group to edit and clarify the papers and is pleased to present three new titles which have relevance for development work worldwide.

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This paper grew out of a presentation made jointly by Anne Drabek and the author at the African Studies Association Meetings, Atlanta, 1989. Comments on various drafts were made by Mark Freudenberger, Alan Miller, Michael Brown and Louis Siegel. Also, innumerable Sahelian and northern colleagues have contributed to the author's continuing education and training over the past two decades. In acknowledging the generous assistance and support of these colleagues, the author retains all responsibility for errors of fact and interpretation.

## 1. Introduction

Some thirty years after the end of colonial rule and over twenty years into a period of drought and environmental degradation, the nations of the western Sahel have reached a critical point. International funders that largely bankroll Sahelian states are demanding reform of the economic and administrative structures that they helped create. What is more, aroused populations in several countries are pushing forcefully for far-reaching political reform. Changes that seemed distant or impossible not long ago now appear inevitable. Authoritarian governments with their centralized institutions and policies are being forced to transform themselves rapidly or risk being overthrown. A basic reconsideration of civil relationships is taking shape.

Due to disillusionment with large-scale statist development programs, and because governments are now disengaging from rural areas, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are frequently cited as an alternative for grassroots development efforts. In the long term crisis of the Sahel zone, NGOs' emphasis on participatory approaches has particular significance in supporting improved local management of natural resources.

National NGOs are emerging at an accelerating rate in the West African Sahel as in other areas of Africa. Although the various national NGO movements in the Sahel are only about 15 years old and are still quite fragile, they are now attracting considerable attention from Sahelian governments, donors agencies, and others individuals and organizations concerned with development. The expansion of NGOs is matched by a veritable explosion of autonomous self-help groups among rural producers. Considered together, NGOs and rural organizations are key elements in the struggle for sustainable

development and in the evolution of new civil societies.

The objective of this paper is to situate the NGO movement of the West African Sahel within the context of the evolving regional situation, with particular reference to the paramount concerns for managing natural resources. What is the impetus for the emergence of NGOs and rural organizations; what are the attributes, capacities and problems of both NGOs and rural organizations, how do national and foreign NGOs relate to each other and to other institutional actors; what are their roles in reshaping local governance of resources; what are the opportunities, responsibilities and risks for NGOs at this juncture. These are the questions we will attempt to address.

This survey of NGOs and other major actors involved in natural resource management presents an overview of the complex institutional relationships found in the Sahel. In taking this focus we will touch upon other related issues, such as public finance, economic policy, ethnic factors, the special problems of rural women, pre-colonial history, and technical aspects of agro/silvo/pastoral production systems, among many others. Although the focus on institutions emphasizes political factors, this emphasis in no way denies the environmental, economic, demographic and other factors contributing to the current crisis in the Sahel. It is hoped that this overview of relationships among institutional actors will open the door to further, more integrated investigation of relationship dynamics and to better understanding of how improved relationships can improve the management of natural resources.

This paper is intended to be provocative and critical of the way key institutional actors have behaved. It is not prescriptive in specific technical, policy or program terms. The analysis is biased by a conviction that the enduring Sahelian crisis can only be solved if the



actual resource users regain a major role in the local governance of land, water, forests and other resources. The debate over control of natural resources is profound. It anticipates fundamental redistribution of authority including the empowerment of local institutions.

Little by little the notion of rural populations re-acquiring tenurial control over natural resources, which prior to the colonial era was in the hands of indigenous states and communities, is gaining credence. At this point it cannot be proven that a return to greater local control will lead to better resource management. The failure of resource management based on usurped authority by colonial and post-colonial governments, however, underscores the importance of detailed knowledge of local environments and management approaches adapted to highly variable patterns of human production and resource use.

A complete return to pre-colonial management structures that were based on extensive production systems is neither possible nor desirable. A new set of structures must be created. NGOs and the communities they work with are evolving autonomous organizational structures and testing innovative approaches to local control of renewable natural resources. These developments are still scattered, tentative, and often not well documented; yet they may contain the seeds of rural renewal for this devastated region.

After a brief presentation of concepts and definitions, this survey begins with an introduction of the major institutional actors: governments, donors, NGOs and rural organizations. Certain aspects of the historical context are then reviewed before we move on to explore relationships among the actors. Given the importance of mutual support among NGOs, our attention turns to the issue of solidarity among NGOs. Next we consider relationships among NGOs and other actors involved in the area of

natural resource management. We close with brief remarks of the possibilities for reform in natural resource management.

To simplify matters somewhat the focus is on just a few Sahelian nations, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Niger, with secondary references to neighboring states. Even with this narrowing of focus the range the subject is vast, and this survey is far from exhaustive. A liberal use of examples and short case studies are employed to indicate the range and variation of actors and issues that cannot be explored in more detail in this overview.

### Concepts and definitions

Sahel, an Arabic word meaning edge or border, is applied with varying degrees of precision to the arid and semi-arid lands that stretch across Africa just south of the Sahara. As a geographic term the Sahel encompasses all or parts of about 20 countries, from Cape Verde, Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean to Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. These Saharan borderlands are characterized by low levels of rainfall unevenly distributed in a brief rainy season.

For all its surface uniformity, the Sahel region contains great ecosystem complexity and corresponding variation in human activity. Its arid and semi-arid lands are home to mobile and sedentary pastoralists, farmers of rainfed and irrigated crops, fisher folk, hunters, oasis dwellers and many other non-exclusive categories of people exploiting a bewildering array of micro-environments. Before the colonial era, a functional interdependence of desert and savannah zones, and stable systems for controlled use of natural resources, contributed to the maintenance of ecological balance in the fragile near-desert environment of the Sahel (Baier).

Wetter and drier periods have alternated throughout recorded Sahelian history. Droughts lasting as long as thirty years have been chronicled in the northern Sahel as early as the fifteenth century. In the West African Sahel it appears that taken as a whole the twentieth century may be the most arid in over a thousand years. Agricultural expansion into marginal lands during a period of consistently high rainfall throughout the 1950s and early 1960s has had tragic consequences during the prolonged period of sub-normal precipitation that has followed. Severe widespread drought has occurred twice in the West African Sahel in recent years, from 1968-1974 and again in the early 1980's, further exacerbating the degradation of this ecologically fragile region (BOSTID; Baier),

Beginning in the late 1960's the term Sahel increasingly came to connote the drought-stricken countries of West Africa. It was officially appropriated by these countries in 1973 when they formed the regional agency Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS), the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. CILSS membership now includes Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. Thus, the Sahel has become a West African geo-political entity, and this is how we will use the term in this paper unless noted otherwise.

In the Sahel, natural resources are commonly considered to comprise both physical and biological systems associated with agricultural lands, range lands, forests and water. By using the word management, attention is focused on how human decisions effect the environment for better and worse. The construct of natural resource management, NRM, might be seen as occupying some middle ground between the "frontier economics" mentality of

unlimited growth and domination of the environment, and the "deep ecology" no-growth philosophy that subordinates humans to nature (Colby).

A focus on NRM moves beyond limitless exploitation on the one hand and absolute environmental protection on the other to take a cautious and practical view of how human needs can be met in the present without sacrificing future possibilities for sustained resource use. Proper NRM leads to sustainable development. NRM, as used in this paper, cuts across many sectors or activities, such as agriculture, range management, or soil and water conservation. The discussion of NRM encourages analysis of who controls management decisions, for whose benefit, with what incentives for sustainable use. In this paper we are particularly concerned with local level governance of natural resources: the rule systems, decision-making arrangements and arbitration institutions that permit rational use of specific resources on a local level (Thomson; Otto 1988).

Linked to an analysis of NRM is the concept of decentralization of government structures. In order for any kind of modern resource management system to work effectively a certain level of government involvement is required to legitimate management regimes, adjudicate disputes and enforce decisions. To make local level management of natural resources possible, some of these authority functions must be available at reasonable cost and within a reasonable distance of the resource users. In other words, user-based governance of natural resources requires a well-articulated network of officially sanctioned authorities backing up the community level bodies in their exercise of resource management.

While decentralization is now widely used as a generic term for any transfer

of authority or responsibility outside of the central government, four distinct kinds of decentralization can be noted. Deconcentration is the handing over of some authority to lower levels within the centralized structure. Delegation refers to transfers of defined functions to organizations outside the regular bureaucratic structure, such as parastatals. Devolution implies the creation or strengthening of local units of government with their own legal status, with limited executive, legislative and fiscal authority, such as state or town government. A fourth kind of decentralization pertains to the divestment of certain responsibilities to voluntary agencies or private enterprises which is sometimes known as privatization (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema).

Decentralization, often used in an intentionally vague way, has become a rallying cry for giving more power to the people. At times it is acclaimed as the panacea for the problems of overly centralized governments. Yet, decentralization in developing countries has rarely lived up to expectations. In many countries it was never seriously implemented or was followed by re-centralization because the ruling elites found concentrated power served their purposes better (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema).

Many Sahelian states have some level of deconcentration. Workloads and minor level of authority are shifted outside the capital city, but remain within the centralized government structure. Delegation has been used quite widely in the Sahel, often under pressure from international donors, as a way of circumventing unresponsive and inflexible government bureaucracies. Assumptions of delegation are that semi-autonomous organizations will be managed in a more efficient manner and can provide better accounting for funds. Devolution to autonomous local government units, which implies

popular election of representatives on governing bodies, has seen little application in CILSS member nations.

Privatization must be broken into several categories to be useful in considering natural resource management in the Sahel. One category is the divestment of state-owned or state-operated businesses, functions and services to private entities. Across Africa, this taking place under the rigors of structural adjustment programs. Privatization also takes place when voluntary organizations, under specific government agreement, assume responsibility for delivery of services. Examples include an independent farmers' cooperative, credit association or a professional group which is sanctioned to take over functions previously performed by the state. It is probably not useful to consider the broad sweep of services provided by NGOs and other development organizations in their project activities as privatization unless such service provision is the subject of specific authority and responsibility negotiated with the government.

Privatization is now taking place in many areas of the Sahel, as governments disengage from rural areas without always providing full assessment of local capacities to assure orderly transfer of services and functions to others. In some cases this might better be termed abandonment, for the process has not left privately-controlled, sanctioned structures in place that are capable of filling the government's former roles.

One other category of privatized authority that is of special interest in considering local management of natural resources is the transfer of NRM authority to locally constituted resource user groups. Re-privatization might be a better term for a process which returns to rural people what once was theirs: the self-management of local resources. Pre-colonial NRM structures were

eclipsed in this century and were partially superseded by centralized state authority, with disastrous results. The re-privatization of the management of natural resources means re-empowering groups of the actual resource users. Ideally, these local NRM structures will include a variety of interrelated, site-specific, user-designed institutional arrangements that take into account overlapping and sequential uses of lands, water points and other resources by different user groups. Such NRM structures would provide tenurial security to users as security provides the incentives for investment in protection and enhancement of resources (Thomson; Otto 1990).

To revitalize and empower these resource user arrangements will require more than political will and financial resources to create congruent structures. It will require understanding and appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems and resource users' relationships; it will require building confidence of the rural resource users in a decentralization process which genuinely seeks to empower them. And it will require a period of experimentation, training and institution building. NGOs can play important roles in this process. Let us now move on to introductions of the NGOs and the other actors in this scene.

## 2. The Institutional Actors

In order to understand the NGO movement in context, we need to identify the main actors and look at their changing relationships. The decision to concentrate on these four institutional actors -- governments, donors, rural organizations and NGOs -- does not infer that other forces are not also at work here. This limited focus is not intended to minimize the importance of political parties, trade unions, private sector entities, student associations, professional groups, class-based organizations and other interest groups.

We concentrate on these particular actors because of their importance in understanding the institutional context of the NGO movement in the Sahel. Introductions are in order.

### Governments

The present Sahelian governments are the inheritors of colonial political boundaries and centralized power. Some governments have enjoyed long periods of relative stability, though it is the stability of authoritarian military regimes in most cases. Senegal alone has maintained a level of multi-party electoral democracy. Other countries have at least experimented with parliamentary systems.

Most West Africa Sahelian nations have not suffered the civil wars that plague countries on the eastern end of the continental Sahel zone including Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. Chad's civil war is a major exception among CILSS members. Guinea-Bissau suffered years of devastation before winning independence in 1974. Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of internal conflicts in Mali and Niger between Tuareg groups and central governments, and a smoldering secessionist movement in the Casamance of southern Senegal.

Inter-country conflicts within the western Sahel are also infrequent, although recent clashes between Senegal and Mauritania caused considerable disruption and loss of life. Mauritania was also embroiled in the struggle over territory of the former Spanish Sahara. A minor border dispute between Mali and Burkina Faso flared up a few years ago. For the most part the CILSS countries have had few major conflicts.

Increasingly governments of the West African Sahel are facing strong demands from students, trade unions and other civil groups to make major reforms. In Cape Verde, the ruling government

turned over power in 1990 after losing the first multi-party national election, a rare political event among sub-Saharan countries. Burkina Faso's military regime has been pushed to promote a democratic constitution in 1990 and to hold elections in 1991. Niger suffered fatal confrontations between protestors and police in 1990 and its government has been pressured to hold multi-party elections. In 1991 Mali's long-standing military regime was toppled in a bloody popular uprising when it refused demands for more democracy. Whether this represents fall-out from the historic changes of Eastern Europe or the culmination of frustration from decades of dictatorial rule and economic stagnation, the ruling elites of the Sahel are under enormous pressure to reform the relationship between governments and citizens.

### Donors

Donor in this paper refers to those bilateral governmental and multilateral inter-governmental agencies that contribute financial and technical resources to support Sahelian governments and development efforts in these countries. Among these major donors are the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the US Agency for International Development (AID), the European Community's Fonds Européen de Développement (FED), and the French Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique (CCCE). The World Bank is also a major donor. The United Nations family of agencies is well represented in the Sahel by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Sudano-Sahelian office (UNSO), among others.

In counterpart to the Sahelian inter-governmental agency CILSS, a number of bilateral donor organizations formed the Club du Sahel in 1976 as a link between CILSS members and the northern countries that are active in this region. The CILSS and Club du Sahel

Secretariats play a central role in promoting regional discussions and providing guidance to decision makers, with environmental and productivity issues high among their priorities. CILSS and Club du Sahel fund research, publish high quality documents and in general attempt to influence policies relating to a range of issues.

There are other categories of donors that we will not consider directly, although they are important for NGOs and rural organizations in some countries. Thus we exclude private donors like the Ford Foundation. Also excluded are agencies related to foreign governments but not usually involved in macro-level policy formation having to do with official aid, such as the African Development Foundation of the US, and the International Development Research Center, IDRC, of Canada.

Each donor has its own constituencies, including national parliaments for bilateral donors, which impose their own demands and expectations. The US Congress, for example, puts earmarks or funding targets on its appropriations to ensure that a given percentage of foreign assistance is spent via NGOs, or that a certain sum is spent on supporting natural resource management in Africa. Funding levels may jump (or drop) by hundreds of millions of dollars in one year, as recently happened with AID's Development Fund for Africa. With next year's funding dependant on complete obligation and accurate accounting of this year's allocation, the institutional imperative for donor agency personnel is to move money rapidly with maximum ease of monitoring. The result is a bias for large scale, low risk, short term, equipment-intensive projects with easily measured results that are managed by established bureaucracies (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne).

This bias in donor modalities appears to be at odds with the requirements of local level improvements in natural resource management. Such efforts are

generally small, experimental, labor-intensive, long term, and not always amenable to quantifiable verification. Improved NRM often entail providing resources to new and inexperienced groups. A central component of improved NRM is institution building or capacity strengthening, from the level of resource users on up to regional and national entities. Such institutional reinforcement is often slow going and not physically impressive.

### Non-governmental Organizations (NGO)

NGOs in this paper includes those agencies known in the U.S. as Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), in French as Organisations Non-Gouvernementales (ONG), as Volunteer Development Organizations (VDOs), in some African circles and as NGOs in most of the world. NGO was first used in the 1940's by the UN to differentiate voluntary non-governmental agencies from governmental and inter-governmental organizations.

Each of these terms has nuanced differences in meaning. The word voluntary in PVO denotes the significance of voluntary contributions from the private sources as opposed to government funding, even though most PVOs receive funding from both. VDO is a term recently coined by certain African NGOs to emphasize the importance of volunteerism or freedom of participation in their organizations, and to avoid any negative or anti-governmental connotation attached to the term non-governmental. While naming is in itself a important process, VDO has yet to become widely used among Sahelian groups. The more broadly applicable collective term of NGO will be retained here, with the understanding that we are talking about development agencies rather than those which are essentially cultural, social or political in purpose. The adjectives northern, international, external and foreign are used almost interchangeably

to denote NGOs whose headquarters and primary registration are outside the country under discussion. Finally, we will use the term national rather than indigenous when referring to Sahelian NGOs, due to the pejorative connotation of a similar sounding French word, indigène (FAVDO; Mulyungi).

Several categories of organizations closely resemble NGOs in purpose and program, such as independent cooperatives and non-profit research groups. Government registration is often the easiest way of distinguishing NGOs from these fellow travelers.

The principle source of financial and technical cooperation for national NGOs in the Sahel has been through partnerships with their external counterparts, northern NGOs. The consideration of both African and foreign NGOs is not meant to de-emphasize the distinctions between Sahel national and foreign NGOs in terms of size, resources, legal status, agenda or other descriptors. Rather, the strong interdependence and working partnerships that link many Sahelian and external NGOs makes it appropriate to study them in tandem.

National NGOs can be considered in several broad categories, each with variations. One category consists of professional or service NGOs set up to provide services to particular beneficiary or client groups. Their beneficiaries are most often groups rather than individuals, such as a farmers' association or a group of women involved in dry season gardening. Services may include training, technical assistance, research, small grants and loans to beneficiaries. Sometimes these service NGOs are set up as membership organizations. Members provide guidance and resources, but do not benefit directly. For example, a group of people from a particular village or district who are living in the capital city may launch an NGO to benefit their home district.

In many cases national service NGOs function in much the same way as external NGOs that provide such services. The vast majority of these national NGOs depend on financial resources generated from outside sources. While these sources are typically northern NGOs, a few national NGOs are now attracting bilateral and multilateral donors. An important element in the definition of an NGO is its not-for-profit nature. As NGOs strive for greater financial independence, however, they are looking for creative ways of balancing their non-profit status and spirit with the desire to earn income from their services. Some NGOs are experimenting with fee-for-service contracts with their client groups, especially when income generating activities are involved.

A prime example of a successful service NGO is RADI, Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégrè, (African Network for Integrated Development), based in Dakar. Working directly with grassroots organizations, many of RADI's activities are related to NRM and income generation in irrigated agriculture, food processing, and animal husbandry. Local institutional development is emphasized through training seminars and internships. To diversify its own financial base and to assist client groups with low-cost commercial services, RADI has set up two income-generating affiliates. RADI/COM offers transportation of produce to regional markets for farmers, while RADI/MECHANIQUE contracts with groups or individuals to repair and maintain water pumps and other small equipment. RADI is also exploring the possibility of providing financial management and accounting services to other national NGOs, a much needed service for young organizations. Having launched its operations in Senegal, RADI now has activities in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, and plans a measured expansion into other areas (Booth and Ly).

A second category of national NGOs is comprised of membership organizations which are created to meet members' needs or use member's professional skills. Membership may be limited to only a few people or may include hundreds. Examples include NGOs made up of unemployed young people seeking work in development, like the Association Malienne pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Jeunes/Groupes Jeunes, an association for professional placement of young people in Mali and the Association des Bacheliers pour Emploi et le Développement, an association of graduates for work and development in Senegal. Note that such NGOs have programs to serve their members, although their activities may also benefit others.

There is an important distinction to be made between national NGOs and formal or informal community groups at the local level which we will discuss in the following section. Prior to the recent emergence of national NGOs, community groups were sometimes referred to as "local NGOs" but this nomenclature is now misleading. One main distinction between national NGOs and community groups is that in most countries they have completely different legal status and registration requirements.

Other elements which distinguish national NGOs from community-based organizations have to do with institutional vision, level of organization, and base of support. NGOs, as the term is currently used, share a national perspective. They often operate multiple activities in several regions. Their paid professional staff reports to a separate board of directors and the whole organization depends on outside financial support. Community groups typically have a local perspective and a local agenda of specific needs. Their base is centered within their constituent membership in terms of decision making and financial support, i.e., membership dues, which in some cases are significantly augmented by funds from

local migrant workers in urban areas. Their leadership is usually unpaid, chosen or elected from among the group and their management systems are very basic. Even when community groups grow to considerable size, attract outside funding and hire staff, their locus of interests and actions remains local.

Community groups do sometimes form a larger federation or association of individual groups, and this federation may then be registered as an NGO. These groups band together to form a federation for reasons of solidarity, fund raising, advocacy and advancement. This represents another type of NGO. The membership groupings in Senegal demonstrates this possibility. NGO membership groupings may be organized on a regional basis, such as the Fédération des Associations du Fouta pour le Développement which serves the Fouta region. Other federations are organized by constituency, such as women's advancement in the Fédération des Associations Féminines du Sénégal, or by professional interest such as the Association des Jeunes Agriculteurs de la Casamance, AJAC, which represents 120 groups of farmers. A national coordinating organization for community organizations in Senegal, FONGS, Fédération des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales du Sénégal, is an organization that has a membership of regional and departmental associations of community groups like AJAC. FONGS membership is comprised of 17 associations of community groups with 175,000 total members (Booth and Ly).

Foreign NGOs define their tasks and methodology in many different ways, making categorization difficult. For our purposes one key characteristic of external NGOs involves the manner in which they relate to national agencies, particularly Sahelian NGOs. On one end of the spectrum, some external NGOs set up operational programs to implement activities themselves at the village or sub-regional level without a national partner agency. On the other end of the

spectrum are external NGOs that have no permanent presence in-country, and function uniquely as providers of financial assistance to national or local organizations which carry out their own programs. In between these extremes is an array of partnership arrangements among external and national NGOs. These partnership arrangements may include staff training and technical assistance with or without direct financial assistance for the Sahelian partner; or, financial assistance may come through joint implementation of activities.

An example of such north-south partnership involving NRM is the relationship between Oeuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel, OMAES, a national NGO, and World Education Inc., WEI, based in Boston. OMAES was begun in 1982 essentially by Malian government functionaries living in Bamako who wanted to contribute to the development of the Tinankou area of central Mali. Within two years their group was legally recognized by the government, had engaged a voluntary Permanent Secretary, and was looking for partners to help them get started with field activities. WEI, which had limited previous experience working in Mali, was looking for a national partner. In 1985, OMAES teamed up with WEI, which agreed to help with organizational development and management training for the OMAES board of directors, regional development committees and staff.

Working together, WEI and OMAES designed a program of wells and irrigated gardening in Tinankou which received funding from two US-based agencies. One atypical aspect of this north-south NGO partnership was that OMAES, with WEI's assistance, secured its own direct funding because one of the donors, USA for Africa, preferred to support national organizations directly. In this mutually beneficial arrangement, WEI had the opportunity to learn about the Malian environment,



to use its professional skills, and to establish its reputation as the base for an expanded program. Through its relationship with WEI, OMAES was able to strengthen its young organization, engage salaried staff, and gain the experience of implementing a sizeable project.

The nature of relationships between northern and southern NGOs has been on the agenda of a growing list of national and international meetings among NGOs. The range of this dialogue within the NGO movement is illustrated by citing a few such encounters, beginning with the 1987 landmark World Development/ Overseas Development Institute Symposium of NGO leaders from around the world. A two-year examination of NGO partnerships across Africa that involved a series of encounters in Africa and North America was recently co-sponsored by the Forum for African Voluntary Development Organizations, FAVDO, and the American Council for Voluntary International Action, InterAction. On the level of the Sahel, NGO leaders from Canada, US and seven Sahelian countries were joined by European NGO leaders and a few donor representatives for a November 1990 conference in Quebec on "Partnership and Local Participation in the Management of Natural Resources in the Sahel." On a national level, the Malian NGO consortium CCA-ONG and the AID-funded PVO/NGO Initiatives Project recently organized a week-long Seminar on Partnership in Mali.

The literature that is coming out of such events analyzes the complexities, difficulties and importance of creating and maintaining equitable relationships of mutual trust. Both northern and southern NGOs deplore the competition among NGOs that is fostered by perceptions of competition for funds. Southern NGOs express considerable frustration at their financial dependency on northern NGOs, and at the lack of transparency in many of these relationships. At the same time,

improved awareness and efforts at equality in these partnerships are noted (Drabek; FAVDO and InterAction; SCS 1990; Datex).

One other form of partnership that is getting more and more attention is south-south relationships, and regional cooperation among African NGOs. A major step in this direction was the founding in 1987 of the Forum for African Voluntary Development Organizations, FAVDO, a pan-African grouping which has its headquarters in Dakar. In the NRM area, African NGOs have formed the African NGOs Environmental Network (ANEN), which is based in Nairobi and has member NGOs in almost all African countries that allow national NGOs. Preliminary efforts to form a Sahel regional grouping of NGOs have not yet produced results, but there is an increasing number of functional connections, especially at the level of the national consortia of NGOs. These consortia, while not exclusively made up of African NGOs, play a lead role in promoting national NGOs, as discussed in the section on NGO solidarity. As national NGO communities develop in Sahelian countries, their desire to open direct channels for communication, to discuss and conduct research on topics of regional significance, and to relate to specialized regional bodies like CILSS, may well lead to the formation of some form of regular regional NGO cooperation (FAVDO; Kinyanjui).

#### Rural Organizations

Rural organization, RO, refers to a wide variety of formal and informal institutions, from traditional mutual assistance groupings to multi-purpose new associations. Terminology commonly used in English includes peasant organizations, community organizations, village associations, farmer groups, producer groups, grassroots development organizations, among other terms, and in French by

association des jeunes, comité villageoise, entité autonomes de développement, groupement villageoise and association villageoise de développement, among others. By selecting the term rural organization we mean to include a broad range of local institutions that are made up of rural people organizing to solve their problems, either on their own or with outside impetus.

Typologies have been suggested for citizen organizations, both urban and rural, with contrasting criteria for inclusion and exclusion. One might choose to categorize such organizations according to their objectives, range of activities, membership, authority base or legal status (Esman and Uphoff '84).

There are few specific qualities that can be used to describe Sahelian ROs. For our purposes, we are most interested in organizations created and managed by a local group whose interests they are meant to serve, and which work in some aspect of NRM. These ROs are distinct from government sponsored organizations, such as cooperatives that are government controlled or local affiliates of a political party in a one-party state. Rather, the emphasis is on self-help groups which have been established by groups of people attempting to deal with the deteriorating social, economic and environmental realities of the Sahel. In fact, this crisis situation seems to be a driving force in the emergence of new ROs (OECD 1988; Ba)

One dichotomy among ROs distinguishes those that are self-initiated and those that are induced by outside forces. However, since few ROs are set up completely independent of other influences, this distinction might best be considered as a continuum along which most ROs can be located. Many ROs, spawned by government or development agencies, subsequently move towards autonomy of purpose and program.

What scattered data are available indicate a rapid expansion of organizations of many types. Far from the uninformed image of a immobile peasantry passively accepting its fate or waiting for government top-down instructions, the Sahel is experiencing a surge of new autonomous organizations. These organizations are often capable of analyzing their problems and defining their support needs. They guard jealously their independence while welcoming non-controlling assistance (Republique du Sénégal 1989b; Hochet; Ba).

Definition of ROs remains an issue. Some mutual assistance activities, such as savings clubs or seasonal work groups, may never become organized in a formal sense and are often undervalued. Also, there are times that an entire community may function temporarily as a development unit for a particular task. Perhaps the only viable definition of an RO is the self-definition that the group selects for itself.

The purposes and activities of ROs cover the range of rural concerns, with an emphasis on the major preoccupation of greater food security. Given the central role of agriculture, many ROs are groups of farmers. Frequently such groups are geared toward collectively securing inputs and services which are then used as each individual sees fit. Cereal banks have also been a favorite focus of ROs, as they try to assure that sufficient grain will be available in the village throughout the year at a reasonable price. In Burkina Faso, where NGOs launched the first cereal banks in 1973, 20% of all villages now run a grain bank. Many ROs form around the need for local health care, although this single activity may not sustain the group. Health focused groups that have been able to survive the difficult first stages of training and organizing have established rudimentary health posts that become part of village life. Literacy classes, school construction, social services and technical training are also

common activities of ROs. In the village of Oussouye in southern Senegal, a citizens group built a handsome child care center to resolve a major problem when mothers are required to work in the rice fields (Snrech; Ba).

The early origins of rural groupings are considered in the historical section below. The movement towards independent ROs took off at the end of the 1968-1974 drought. The breakdown of pre-existing structures that began in the colonial era was accelerated through the turmoil of drought, disaster and displacement. This created the social space for new community structures in rural areas. The RO movement received further impetus through governmental disengagement from many services and long held roles in rural development during in the 1980s (OECD 1988).

In the mid-1970s in Burkina Faso, the repeated failures of attempts to set up centrally controlled local structures finally led the government to encourage a new form of local structure, groupements villageoises, (GV). In some regions GVs themselves were virtually imposed in standardized fashion, while in others they seem to have evolved into self-directed ROs. By 1979 there were 3800 GV, with an estimated 6000 in 1988 (SPONG).

The origins of ROs can be attributed to many factors. Certainly a major early impetus for launching ROs was the arrival of foreign NGOs with famine relief supplies. The drought itself also convinced farmers to look for new survival strategies, such as banding together into ROs. Many ROs have been encouraged or even set up by NGOs looking for local partners. Some ROs are created by charismatic local leaders or retired public servants who have rallied other people around their vision and enthusiasm. Migrant workers returning from Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire bring back their experiences with self-help groups and apply them in the Sahel. One Burkinabé RO that is discussed below was

started by eleven young men trying to figure how to get a football for their village team. More compelling are accounts of women's ROs formed in desperation to fight soil erosion in order to save their families and salvage their way of life (Snrech; Mercoiret).

Quite a few ROs are composed largely or completely of women. Such groups often included all the women in a community, giving these united women a stronger voice in community affairs. Women have played the major role in organizing many anti-desertification activities, despite the fact that women's access to land is severely circumscribed. Once they are organized into ROs women begin to consider new economic activities that their combined strength makes possible: a small savings program, petty commerce, cereal banks, or the purchase of a grinding mill or agriculture equipment. In one case, the women of a cooperative on Santiago Island, Cape Verde set up a tree nursery, produced 10,000 seedlings, sold them to the forestry service, and plan to repeat the process. In another case, the women's group of Achram in Mauritania opened a restaurant along the national highway -- a giant step forward for women long isolated in their tents (Monimart).

While many ROs are individual village level organizations, others are part of larger groupings. Two Burkinabé examples indicate some of the possibilities. Association Vive le Paysan (AVLP), was started in 1979 by a rural football team, and had grown into an organization with over 2000 dues-paying members in 58 villages of the Saponé department. Under the slogan of "Millet and Water for Everybody" AVLP slowly expanded into supporting group-selected activities such as a credit scheme, construction of anti-erosion rock bunds called diguettes, a pharmacy, and welding shop, among others. Fifteen millet grinding mills are managed and maintained completely by association women. Since the association is

convinced that cultural development is also important, the modest AVLP quarters in Saponé include a dance floor where both modern and traditional music is heard. The association has a strongly democratic constitution and operating style. Far in advance of most other ROs, AVLP has developed a high level of internal management, and its members recently approved a three-year program plan. AVLP leaders will gladly share their experience with rural populations elsewhere, but AVLP will remain focused in its own region (AVLP).

In contrast to the self-imposed spatial limits of AVLP is the Naam movement which is based on the traditional Mossi village organization of the same name. One of the pioneers in the rapid expansion of rural organizations in 1967, the Naam movement has grown to thousands of chapters across the country, and has aided similar self-help groupings get started in Senegal, Mauritania, Niger and other countries. The movement's methodology is to build on customary mutual assistance groups that are helped to carry out activities selected and managed by the groups themselves. In the field of NRM, these have included soil conservation, cereal banks, irrigation dams and reforestation, among others. To aid the growing Naam movement, an international NGO was set up in 1976 whose name catches the potential for better utilization of the long dry season, (Six "S", *Se Servir de la Saison Sèche en Savanne et au Sahel*), making use of the dry season in the Savannah and the Sahel. The Naam movement, however, remains solidly based in the villages (Harrison).

The actual number of ROs in the Sahel is unknown. Many are unregistered and the movement is constantly growing. Burkina is perhaps the leading country, with estimates ranging up to 10,000. Senegal counts 800-1000 registered ROs with many more unregistered. Figures are probably lower for Mali and other countries. Only a small percentage of

the entire rural population is involved in ROs and they are distributed quite unevenly. Taking the most optimistic estimate of 15,000 Sahelian ROs, and calculating 50 to 80 members per group, one might estimate that at most one million people, or under ten percent of all rural Sahelians, participate in some kind of organized group (Snrech).

Many ROs are poorly organized and managerially weak. Some ROs are not representative; after all, rural communities contain disparities in wealth and status based on gender, seniority, social class and ethnic grouping. Despite these realities, the emergence of locally controlled groups is widely considered to be one of the few bright spots in the bleak picture of rural development in the Sahel. The levels of inter-group cohesion and federation already reached in Senegal, which were noted above, may indicate the future potential for ROs if they are given the political space and outside assistance they need. At the very least, the ROs of today are a testing ground for building experience and capacities towards self-defined organizations and an eventual return of resource management control to local levels.

In closing this brief introduction of rural organizations, there is another kind of rural institution to be remembered. Somewhat outside of the framework of organizational cooperation, but nonetheless crucial to natural resource management in the Sahel, are the rules and relationships that have traditionally governed the allocation of local resources among rural populations. These decision-making arrangements regulating the intra- and inter-group behavior of resource users are, in effect, institutions. They have been officially ignored, superseded, partially abandoned, and recently re-discovered as potential assets in the struggle for environmental rehabilitation. Such local governance regimes, both newly negotiated ones and those of long-standing, should be

considered along with ROs as instruments for user-based management of community lands, water and other resources (Thomson).

### 3. The Historical Context

Our consideration of the current status of NGOs, their partners and the environment in which they function must include an appreciation of the colonial and early post-colonial eras. This condensed historical review will also give us a chance to consider the impact of colonial policies and practices on the environment. After this overview, the origins of official attempts to organize the rural population will be summarized, followed by a historical note on the arrival of foreign NGOs and the creation of the national NGO movement.

#### Colonial policies and practices

The impact of the colonial era in the area of natural resource management began roughly a century ago and continues today. After several centuries of European coastal contact based largely on slave trade, the French began a military occupation of the western Sahel around the turn of the century. Well documented influences on the environmental decline of the Sahel in this period include the cultivation of exportable cash crops, particularly peanuts and cotton, forced labor, obligatory centralized grain storage schemes, controlled prices for grains, taxation and the need for cash, inappropriate new agricultural technology, disruption of customary pastoralist patterns of transhumance, and arguably, increased commercialization of animal products. By the 1950's there was clear reason for concern about accelerating population growth and environmental degradation (Franke and Chasin; Roberts; Gervais; OECD 1988).

The mindset and intellectual baggage inherited from the colonial era includes a number of ingredients particularly germane to the issue of present day problems in NRM. These include an abiding misunderstanding of the complex Sahelian ecology, the economic goal of transforming rural systems in order to maximize exportable production, and a combination of ignorance and disinterest concerning peasant farming systems including the indigenous knowledge that produced them.

A central colonial concept of power sees the state in charge of everything, appropriating virtually all authority to itself. French policies had far reaching impact over the region; yet, administration over the vast interior of the Sahel was too extenuated to exercise detailed control over local level natural resources in individual sedentary communities or distant rangelands far from military units. Elements of the pre-colonial NRM arrangements continued to hold sway. Nonetheless, the colonial authority established the hegemonic right of central government over rule making, rule enforcement and revenues from these resource management functions.

Whatever democratic ideology the colonizing nation may have expounded at home, the model of colonial government is authoritarian and centralized, based on military and police enforcement. A level of administrative deconcentration was a financial and logistic necessity of colonialism, but the supremacy of central authority was unquestioned. After the second World War, the British and later the French experimented with limited devolution to elected local self-government, under strict colonial tutelage and in the context of absolute military authority. The set of institutional changes proposed and partially implemented in certain African colonies represented the first modern articulation of a decentralized governance structure. African

nationalist leaders in the 1950's vigorously supported decentralization as a means of building local political support. That these same leaders moved decisively to re-centralize power after independence should not be surprising in light of overall centralized colonial patterns of control, inadequate human resources and limitations of their legitimacy (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne; Mawhood).

With the transfer of authority to post-colonial governments in the 1960s, many statist institutions and colonial policies gained new status. Napoleonic prefectural systems of limited deconcentration complemented centralized constitutions which were influenced by the Fifth Republic in France. Without the military strength of European powers, the small experiments in devolution to local self-government introduced in the late stages of French colonial rule seemed to the leaders of newly independent states to invite regional and ethnic dissension while absorbing scarce resources. As a result, they were dismantled shortly after independence. In Senegal, for instance, municipal elections were eliminated shortly after independence and by 1963, executive power was vested in the President of the Republic (Mawhood; Campbell et. al.).

Senegal more than other Sahelian post-colonial nations has continued to experiment with decentralization, especially after enactment of the Territorial and Local Administration Reform of 1972 which aimed at devolving some authority to elected Rural Councils. In reality, however, little effective transfer of authority to lower levels of government has actually taken place (Rondinelli and Minis; Ba).

The Sahel is increasingly split into a modern, urban-based sector and a traditional rural one, with great disparities in their economies, access to social services, educational opportunities and sense of loyalty or identification.

Tempering this generalization is the reality that many people move back and forth between these sectors. Another profound division in society is that which separates the general citizenry from their autocratic rulers. Yet another division is that which pits rural producers against Sahelian governments. An observation concerning CILSS member Guinea-Bissau rings true for other Sahelian societies, namely that the major conflict is, "... not a split between rural and urban sectors, but a struggle between government and peasants over control of resources." (Galli and Jones).

Notable influences on the environment during the colonial and the early post-colonial period were pressured expansion of agriculture northward into areas of inadequate rainfall, a geometric increase in the number of cattle and a dramatic rise in the human population. In Mali, for example, the land area under rainfed agriculture increased by 80% in the 1950s and 1960s. The number of cattle in the western Sahel jumped by an estimated 500% in the 25 years leading up to the drought of 1968-1974. Also, the importance of a doubling of the human population in just 25 years cannot be overemphasized (Cross; BOSTID; OECD 1988).

In sum, many more people and animals governed by less effective control systems were straining to survive in an ecologically fragile region that was about to experience a deep and prolonged drought. We shift attention to the human side of this deteriorating situation to review how the colonial and post-colonial governments have tried to deal with their rural populations.

#### Attempts to organize in rural areas

Since NGOs as we know them today appeared on the scene quite recently, we might first review the somewhat longer history of forced and voluntary rural

groupings. One of the most socially disruptive policies was the forced restructuring of authority. Pre-existing governance structures were stripped of authority and replaced with a standardized hierarchy of appointed leaders directly under colonial control. From the standpoint of natural resource governance, this imposed system disrupted the customary framework required for settlement of disputes among resource users and for enforcement of orderly resource use.

Attempts to organize rural populations began quite early in the colonial era. By 1910 the French had obliged farmers in Senegal's peanut basin to form Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance, SIP, or native provident societies, in order to manage seed stocks. The SIP system of compulsory cooperatives was eventually imposed across the Sahelian colonies in the 1930s and 1940s, supposedly as an agricultural credit and food security system. In reality, SIP was a useful mechanism for tax gathering and political control. By the Second World War, groundnut growers in the cash crop areas of Senegal were organizing to defend their interests against the groundnut traders. This movement was eventually formalized and subsequently diffused, rendering it powerless (Snrech; Roberts; A.G. Hopkins).

Between 1945 and 1957 additional control structures of obligatory organization were added, such as organizing rural producers into cooperatives and creating urban consumer cooperatives to assure supplies for the colonial administrators. Food stocking continued under the guise of food security, while actually serving as a means of extracting grain from each peasant household to finance all those on the colonial payroll, including the imposed chiefs. Not surprisingly, there was widespread refusal to subscribe to these organizations of subjugation (SPONG).

One spontaneous form of popular association begun in the colonial era was

solidarity or mutual assistance groups among migrant workers from the same village or zone. A kind of self-help mechanism in the face of colonialism, such groups were often linked to Islam, though kinship and common home location were the major bonds. These urban solidarity groups facilitated remittances and exchange of information, and started a trend of committee formation in certain home villages. In more recent times, as African migration to Europe has expanded, especially from the Senegal River valley regions of Senegal and Mali, such migrant groups have become major contributors to development activities in their home regions (Ba).

Independence produced various attempts at government-managed organization of rural producers, mainly through cooperative organizations in rural areas. None of these were effective in the long run. A Senegalese government attempt in 1961 to organize broad-based popular participation through a national network of peanut purchasing cooperatives was successfully resisted by commercial interests. By 1963 the roles of the Senegalese cooperatives and self-help rural community organizations were limited to technical matters. Repeated attempts to revive government-sponsored cooperatives were made, including a major reform in 1983 creating a grand total of nearly 4500 cooperative sections in a national structure. However, a recent field study reported that most local sections are inactive and exist only on paper (Gagnon; République du Sénégal 1989b).

In Mali, a kind of obligatory collectivization took place when the post-colonial socialist-oriented government instituted a new trading system based on village cooperatives and associations of these cooperatives and attempted to abolish the old mercantile structures. Only parts of this new system were in place when the 1968 military coup ended the socialist experiment. In Niger, the National Credit and

Cooperative Union, UNCC, had some successes organizing peasants and producer peanut markets in the 1960s, but the political power of competing commercial interests eventually marginalized their operations (N. S. Hopkins).

The regulatory structure and rhetoric of cooperatives were often maintained after these early failures in formalized participation. A small number of these government-inspired cooperatives have been successful, and there are a few examples of functioning non-governmental cooperatives. To varying degrees, Sahelian governments abandoned even this veneer of a participatory aspect in rural development in favor of a large scale, top-down model of extension work and modernization. Because cooperatives are now generally perceived as failed, centrally controlled structures, the newer independent organizations in most rural areas no longer use this term. Groupement and association are the preferred titles for most rural organizations.

Just as the concept of cooperatives was discredited through official use in the colonial and early post-colonial period, governments have also captured and corrupted the use of such concepts as popular participation, mobilization and democracy, using them to describe undemocratic and unpopular policies, practices and institutions. Employed as catch phrases in governmental rhetoric on national development, these concepts have become tools of social manipulation (Langley).

The International Conference on Popular Participation held in Arusha, Tanzania, in February 1990 took back this vocabulary. The Charter of that conference proclaimed that popular participation should be measured by freedom of association, existence of democratic institutions, rule of law, political accountability, and decentralization of decision-making

processes, among other criteria. Still, like the corruption of "cooperative", the devaluation of "participation" as a concept is a loss in itself (ECA).

Cooperatives were not the only government instigated rural organizations. One organizing effort in Senegal initiated in 1954 and expanded by the post-colonial government in the 1960s centered around the proliferation of Centres d'Expansion Rural Polyvalent, (CERP). To support these agricultural modernization centers, villagers were encouraged to organize Rural Development Committees, and many communities did so. These rural mobilization committees were subsequently challenged for their position in rural communities in the 1970s by the youth movement of the dominant national political party, Union Progressiste Sénégalaise. The youth groups in turn were de-politicized over time and finally re-emerged as development-oriented associations (Ba).

One other government-based rural outreach scheme that began in Senegal and Niger in the 1960s and which is still in existence is animation rurale, or rural animation. Animation services were meant to raise awareness and motivate communities to carry out self-help projects. Animation services have run into many difficulties: getting technical services to cooperate, the perception of imposed activities and a lack of real institution building to ensure continued execution. Their effectiveness in many areas has been limited (Kane).

One observation to be drawn from this brief review of early attempts at government imposed or induced organization in the rural Sahel is that standardized approaches cannot take into account the complexity of local situations and needs. Another observation is that at a local level, national governments lose their ability to command involvement. People simply avoid or minimize participation in organizations or activities if they do not



perceive it to be in their interest. With those thoughts, we turn to the next actor to arrive in the Sahel, northern NGOs.

### The arrival of foreign NGOs

NGOs might be said to have made their debut during the colonial era in the form of Christian church sponsored activities. The churches' impact during this period was less intensive in much of the internal Sahel than in coastal areas of West Africa, but Catholic and Protestant churches were an important non-governmental element of the French colonial policy of assimilation, particularly in Senegal, Burkina Faso and southern Chad. Church programs in health and education tended to reinforce a non-participatory, authoritarian model of leadership, and contributed to cultural dependency as immortalized in the image of African children memorizing, "nos ancêtres les gaulois..."

On the other hand, small groups of church-related agencies in Francophone West Africa, such as INADES, Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social, began by the 1960's to provide leadership training in rural areas. These first tentative steps towards supporting autonomous rural organizations and these organizations' determined continuation of leadership training has resulted in many energetic rural leaders who are active in ROs today (Snrech).

The first big wave of international NGOs in the Sahel came as relief agencies in the latter stages of the 1968-1974 drought. NGOs were such a new phenomenon in some countries that protocols and procedures did not yet exist and had to be hastily established. When the first US NGOs were set up in Niger the government placed them under the tutelage of the Minister of Defense, apparently because much of the national

relief operation was carried out by military units.

Many of these international NGOs stayed in the Sahel to work with refugee and displaced populations, and to assist with the rehabilitation of the destitute after the drought emergency subsided. By mid-1970's, NGOs were an established part of the Sahel development scene, often engaging former volunteers from Peace Corps and other agencies as field staff. Their typical level of intervention was individual rural communities. Their activities tended to address the immediate needs of these communities, such as supplying agricultural tools and seeds, replenishing herds, deepening village wells and training in primary health care.

Some NGOs' experimental activities in NRM during this period, particularly in the areas windbreaks and reforestation, soil and water conservation, well digging and small scale irrigation, helped establish NGOs' reputation as innovators. This will be explored further in the section on NRM below.

A second wave of external NGOs arrived in the Sahel with the severe drought years beginning in 1983. Many long term development activities were temporarily abandoned for the immediate tasks of mobilizing massive famine relief efforts. In some Sahelian countries, such as Niger, the government was much better prepared than in the 1968-1974 drought, and coordinated the NGOs' participation. By contrast, Malian NGOs themselves played a major role in organizing and delivering food, supplies and services to the northern regions of the country.

International NGOs active in Mali illustrate the range of these organizations. They include well known larger NGOs with multi-faceted programs and multi-million dollar budgets, such as Care, Save the Children Federation, Foster Parents Plan, Africare, OXFAM, ACORD, Medecins Sans Frontière, World

Vision, Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès, and Centre Canadien d'Etudes et de Cooperation Internationale, Norwegian Church Aid and Helvitas of Switzerland. On the other extreme of size and scope are small or single purpose foreign NGOs operating in Mali. Examples include one NGO formed by a retired French couple who raise funds in the Languedoc region for community development projects in the area in Mali where they now live, an Italian NGO whose only project in Mali involves solar-powered water pumps, and an international NGO based in Amsterdam that focuses on south-south cooperation for food security (CCA-ONG 1989).

### The creation of national NGOs

The late 1970's and 1980's was a period of rapid growth of national NGOs in the Sahel. A very small number had been established earlier as charitable religious operations, such as Secours Catholique Malien and Eglise Evangélique de la République du Niger, founded in 1959 and 1960, respectively. By and large the national NGO movement in the Sahel is only a little more than a decade old, with some differences among the countries. On one recent inventory of 88 Malian NGOs, of the 69 whose founding dates are noted, 64 were launched since 1980. Burkina Faso shows an earlier start. Of 45 NGOs' whose founding dates are indicated on a similar inventory of 54 Burkinkabé NGOs, eight existed before 1970, 22 started during the decade of the 1970s, and fifteen were launched in the 1980s. In Niger, except for two church-related agencies and the Croix Rouge Nigérienne, all the other national NGOs are less than ten years old. Senegal may have the oldest NGO group. According to data collected in 1988, five Senegalese NGOs have over 30 years of experience. However, 60% of national NGOs were listed as being created in the last ten years (SCS 1991; Booth and Ly).

The impetus to form NGOs comes from many sources. In the 1970's it came in part from seeing the example of international NGOs that established themselves during and after the drought when funding was relatively plentiful. This process was repeated in the mid-1980s, especially in Mali, but also in Burkina Faso and Senegal. Some international NGOs established national affiliates, which have subsequently gained various degrees of autonomy. International NGOs that function as funders rather than implementers, such as OXFAM, actively support the emergence of national NGOs.

An increasing number of foreign-based NGOs depend on national staff in the Sahel. Certain northern NGOs have no expatriate personnel in country. By employing and training national personnel, these foreign NGOs are blurring the north-south distinction, at least among the NGOs themselves. For example, at a recent international NGO conference, the Sahelian NGO leaders selected as their spokesperson a Senegalese woman who is on the staff of an American NGO. In this case, the person was more important than her organizational affiliation. A possible down side to the employment of more national personnel by northern NGOs is the draining off or hiring away of some of the most skilled and experienced people who are also needed by Sahelian NGOs and other national organizations.

A major cause for the expansion of new NGOs is found in the failures of government-led development efforts. In some cases, retired civil servants who are frustrated and disenchanted with government beauracracy launch NGOs with the aim of working on development issue that preoccupy them. Some NGO leaders come from the ranks of Sahelian students who have studied abroad and return home determined to take a more direct hand in their countries' development than government service would allow them.

The example of Mali gives an impression of the growth and diversity of the Sahel NGO community. This impression can be obtained from reviewing the development of the NGO consortium, Comité de Coordination des Actions des Organisations Non-gouvernementales au Mali, (CCA-ONG). Launched in early 1984 as an ad hoc group of 22 NGOs concerned about the drought, the group counted 37 founding members at its formal constitutional founding two years later. Its 1986-1987 directory lists 45 members of which ten were national NGOs. By September 1989, CCA-ONG membership had grown to 83, plus another 37 non-member partner NGOs for a total of 120. 55, or 41%, of these 120 NGO members and partners are Malian national organizations. Perhaps one-half of all legally recognized Malian NGOs have joined the consortium and many newly formed NGOs are waiting government recognition. CCA-ONG's statistics are indicative of the rapid growth under way. Later, we will take a closer look at CCA-ONG's activities in the section on NGO solidarity (CCA-ONG 1987; CCA-ONG 1989).

The titles of many Malian NGOs indicate their sector or zone of intervention: Groupe de Recherche et d'Application Technique (appropriate technology), Association pour la Formation et la Réinsertion des Africains Migrants (training and re-integration of migrant workers returning from Europe), Association Pour la Sauvegarde de Tombouctou (preservation and restoration of Timbuktu), and Comité de Salut Public de Diafarabe (public safety of Diafarabe village). Several African regional NGOs are also active in Mali, for example, the Dakar-based NGO Appui à la Formation et aux Technologies en Afrique de l'Ouest, AFOTEC, and l'Agence Islamique pour le Secours en Afrique based in Khartoum. In terms of NGOs' involvement in natural resource management, a recent survey counted at least 56 national and international NGOs in Mali working in sectors directly

involving NRM. Another survey found that almost 80% of 150 NGOs in Burkina Faso are promoting NRM activities (CCA-ONG 1989; Booth; Painter).

Foreign aid is sometimes referred to as the only growth industry in the Sahel. This has led some observers to suggest that the proliferation of NGOs is little more than an opportunistic effort to capture a part of that market. The characterization is that of cynical government functionaries who set up NGOs on the side to moonlight for grants from donors intent on funding NGOs. There is a joke among NGOs about the new group, Association des Faux Paysans, faux meaning imitation or bogus. Undoubtedly some people are trying to take personal advantage of the current interest in NGOs. The vast majority of NGO or ROs leaders, however, are dedicated, hard working and scrupulous and they understand the value of their collective reputation. NGO communities have ways of policing themselves, and questionable agencies are usually identified as such.

Other criticisms of NGOs can be made. Some of these have to do with the youth and inexperience of these agencies and their leaders. The range of skills required to manage a small development organization is daunting and there is no school for NGO directors. One must somehow become proficient in program planning, institutional development, proposal writing and fund raising, development theory and methodologies, financial accounting, public relations, personnel management, and the technical specialties of the agency. All of these areas represent weak points for NGOs.

NGOs, both foreign and national, are also very susceptible to manipulation by donors who have their own agendas. Especially young NGOs that lack funds and experience often feel obliged to fit into activities selected by donors as a way of getting started. Once the pattern is established it is hard to break out into

more independent design and implementation modalities (Ba).

As an exercise in a training program on strategic planning, a group of Sahelian NGO leaders were put in the hypothetical situation of managing a new and financially weak NGO that has defined its mandate as improving agricultural productivity. This NGO had not been able to attract any donors to its basic program, but did finally receive an offer of funding from a foreign donor to manage a family planning project. Faced with the decision either to refuse this offer and continue looking for resources to work in agriculture, or to accept funding in a completely different sector, the Sahelian NGO participants almost unanimously elected to do family planning on the logic that this would at least get the NGO functioning.

Practicality, principles and opportunism interact in more subtle ways than this training exercise portrays. The result of fund raising imperatives for NGOs is often to pull the focus of planning and decision making away from the rural populations whose lives and livelihoods are at stake.

One other area of weakness for NGOs of all national origins is in their level of analysis. Too often the pressure to get on with tasks at hand interferes with the necessary data collection, analysis and documentation. For activities involving natural resource management, where detailed, site-specific data and analysis are essential, this oversight reduces the quality of NGO programming. It also reduces the quality of NGO discourse concerning the complex topics about which the NGO community has considerable knowledge (Painter).

To return to the larger context, the emergence of national NGOs has created a whole new segment in Sahelian societies in less than two decades. Enormous attention is now focused on these young organizations, attention that is often superficial and self-serving

by governments, donors and other development agencies. There is a great risk that expectations of national NGOs have been exaggerated way out of proportion to what they can accomplish. When they fail to deliver results rapidly in areas where others with far greater resources have failed for decades, NGOs may find themselves out of fashion like such former development trends as non-formal education, integrated rural development or basic needs strategies.

It is not that NGOs have sought star status. Rather, the current focus on NGOs is more a reflection on the development industry's continual need for new strategies. With that thought we return to the institutional actors that were introduced above, and take a closer look at how they relate to each other.

#### 4. Relationships among the Institutional Actors

We have briefly introduced four institutional actors. We have discussed certain aspects of colonial and post-colonial policies and the inception of NGO communities in the West African Sahel. Now attention turns to the ways in which the various actors relate to each other.

##### Governments - donors

The Sahel is one of the world's major aid recipients. Based on data of the mid-1980s, 25% of the gross national product in the CILSS countries is derived from foreign aid receipts, compared to under 6% for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Dealing with donors has become a major function of some governments. A total of over 700 official donor missions visited to Burkina Faso in a single year. This level of contribution and presence affords donors considerable influence with the governments they subsidize (Cross).

International donors have become a mainstay of Sahelian public sector expansion through financial support to large public-sector projects, to parastatal operations, and increasingly to the governments' operating budgets. The increase in centralized government budgets in the Sahel has dramatically outstripped the very limited expansion of their national economies. This has been made possible, in part, by non-project aid contributions from international donors to governments. This aid now accounts for over 50% of all official development assistance. The other factor that has made this disproportionate growth of the public sector possible is the revenue generated by the high level of taxation of farmers' incomes; this, in turn, has increased pressure on rural resources (OECD 1988).

Donor agencies have played a significant role in the development and maintenance of the highly centralized national structures that characterize Sahelian governments today. When working directly with government's technical services did not produce desired results, major donors attempted to decentralize their efforts by constructing parallel institutions. In Mali, donors split up the country, each funding huge regional parastatal agencies, such as Operation Riz Ségou, a rice-promotion parastatal or Operation Haute Vallée in the upper valley of the Niger River. In time these have also become bogged down and inflated bureaucracies themselves.

In some areas donors have identified past errors and tried to correct them, taking Sahelian governments in new policy directions. Having fueled the massive build-up of government bureaucracies and having financed government-controlled development programs over the years, donors are now attempting to redirect state involvement towards support of private and local initiatives. In Mali, for example, after \$20 million of support to a parastatal agricultural productivity project, AID is

now focusing on training and credit for private producer groups, and it is working through an American NGO to provide these services (AID).

Donors' use of direct financial 'carrots' to lead governments toward economic policy reforms has had side effects on funding for activities relating to natural resource management. Increasing direct subsidies to Sahelian governments has meant decreasing donor investments in other areas. Current aid investments in rainfed agriculture, an area that is key to meeting food requirements, constitute only 4% of total official aid. The proportion of aid going to reforestation and environmental efforts is an abysmal 1.5% of the total, and this share is dropping (OECD 1988).

#### NGOs - donors

The NGO movement began as a charitable impulse, responding to disasters and providing social welfare services. NGOs from Europe and North America historically raised most of their funds from non-governmental sources, soliciting their monies from private foundations and the general public. When their major function involved disaster relief, public appeals concerning famine and other catastrophes periodically netted NGOs large amounts of discretionary funding. The general public, however, has proven far less interested in funding the slow, unspectacular and less guilt-absolving work of development.

With the change of focus from relief to long-term development, bilateral donors now provide the lion's share of funding for external NGOs working in the Sahel. Some American agencies have difficulty even meeting the minimum 20% private funding rule imposed by Congress to maintain PVO status for grant eligibility. Some Canadian NGOs are similarly strained to meet the one-to-five contribution required for matching

funds from CIDA. Given the dominance of bilateral donors in NGO financing, the struggle for control of the development agenda for the supposedly independent non-governmental sector is an immediate and growing concern (Hellinger, Hellinger and O'Regan).

Bearing in mind that the term donor in this paper refers primarily to governmental and inter-governmental agencies, it follows that the donors' major funding relationship has been with the governments of the Sahelian countries. This also means that in most cases these governments must approve or at least acquiesce when donors choose to channel resources through non-governmental agencies. While some bilateral agencies are less restricted in this regard, the funds of inter-governmental agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank are treated as allocations to the recipient government.

One result of this situation can be excessive government involvement in the allocation and management of funds intended for the NGO community. For example, when the World Bank wanted to set up a pilot project to fund NGOs in Togo, the government insisted that management responsibilities be within a ministry. The resulting bureaucracy has left the Togolese government in tight control of the funds, a situation resented by the independent-minded NGOs. The project has been virtually blocked by the government's apparent disinterest in NGO capacity building. Likewise, when UNDP decided to set up a fund for grassroots projects in Mali, the government insisted on controlling the money. Subsequent UN attempts to overcome mismanagement of this fund by establishing a separate unit were derailed by Malian officials.

Bilateral donor agencies have been somewhat less restricted in finding ways to fund NGOs. However, a major problem with these donors has been the administrative burden of making and managing quantities of relatively small

grants of the size that NGOs can absorb. One solution to this has been the development by donor agencies of "umbrella" projects that make a kind of block grant for NGOs, and sometimes award the management of this block grant to an intermediary agency. This intermediary or lead agency in turn makes a series of sub-grants to individual NGOs, and may also provide training, technical assistance and coordination services to the sub-grantee agencies. As this is an increasingly common funding mechanism, we will take a brief look at several experiences of umbrella projects in the Sahel.

### Umbrella Projects

Three AID-funded umbrella projects in the Sahel illustrate some of the problems and limitations of this funding mechanism. Two of the umbrella projects, the Partners in Development Project in Chad and the PVO Co-Financing Project in Mali, share the distinct features of funding only US PVOs to the exclusion of national agencies. Neither of these two projects employ external intermediary agencies and neither provided ancillary training or a high level of coordination among PVOs or NGOs. The projects were conceived basically as straight funding devices.

In the design phase of the Mali umbrella project, the AID mission in Bamako decided to exclude national NGOs from direct funding. Setting aside the findings of a comprehensive survey of NGOs that it had commissioned, the AID Bamako mission concluded that Malian NGOs do not have the capacity to administer AID grants. While the Mali umbrella project strongly encourages US PVO grantees to work with national organizations, Malian NGO leaders resent their exclusion from direct funding participation. The Mali project has yet to be formally evaluated. However, a US government audit of the Chad project criticized AID's failure to provide

coordination among grantees, resulting in decreased effectiveness. By retaining management of these two projects within the respective AID missions, rather than using intermediary agencies, many of the potential advantages of umbrella projects were forfeited (Otto and Drabek).

In Senegal, the Community Enterprise and Development Project was managed by an intermediary, a US non-profit firm. The project, based in Kaolack, called for national NGOs to provide loans to ROs for income generating activities. Several NGOs declined to participate, in part because they wanted to work with communities on more broadly defined activities that were not necessarily credit worthy, or they did not want to have the kind of loan agency relationship to ROs required by the project. What is more, few NGOs were previously active in the Kaolack zone and few national NGOs had experience administering credit programs. In the end, a minimal number of national and foreign NGOs received subgrants, but most of these NGOs required extensive technical training and assistance. The project experienced delays as NGOs had to set up operations and build relationships in a new area. Although the various participating NGOs grappled with similar technical difficulties in their sub-projects, they had very little contact with each other through the project. By the end of AID funding in 1990 relatively few of the ROs involved in the project were ready to negotiate loans from regular credit institutions as had been the aim of the project. In planning for a new follow-on NGO support project, AID has worked hard to involve national NGOs in the design phase in order to overcome some of the problems of the Kaolack project (Otto and Drabek).

One of the lessons to be drawn from these three projects is the importance of soliciting input from NGOs and beneficiaries for the design of projects that they are meant to implement. Other lessons include the importance of

facilitating information exchange among NGOs and of providing support services to up-grade NGOs' capacities. Another lesson or observation is that decentralization of authority does not always have a salutary effect. While AID Washington policy on NGOs in Africa encourages participation by national NGOs as well as US PVOs in AID-funded projects, a determined field mission with decision-making authority can override such policy guidance.

One further example of an NGO umbrella project is Solidarité-Canada-Sahel, SCS, which provides funding and coordination for Canadian and Sahelian NGOs in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Under the SCS project 30 Canadian NGOs involved in either development work in the Sahel or in development education efforts in Canada formed a consortium with national NGOs in the three Sahelian country. The main principles of this innovative approach include an integration of development and public education components, new partnerships among Canadian and Sahelian NGOs, and a particular attention to women's contribution in development activities.

In addition to innovative education programs in Canada, mainly in Quebec, SCS provides individual Sahelian NGOs with both institutional support and project funding possibilities. Partnership relations between Sahelian and Canadian NGOs are encouraged for implementation of larger projects in the field. Sahelian nationals hired by SCS coordinate in-country activities, while Sahelian NGO leaders are periodically invited to Canada for project planning sessions and to participate in public information campaigns organized by SCS consortium members. CIDA, the major funder of SCS, has allowed the consortium and its Sahelian partners considerable leeway in design and execution their program.

One other regional program that is an umbrella of sorts is the PVO-NGO Natural

Resources Support Project, PVO-NGO NRMS, which is managed by a consortium of three US PVOs. During the design phase of PVO-NGO NRMS, US and African NGOs were asked what they thought was useful in a regional support project. Their reply was a field-controlled, needs driven, flexible mechanism that encourages collaborative action (Otto 1988).

Operating in four pilot countries, this AID-funded project has devolved decision making to in-country groupings of NGOs that decide on small grants, training programs and other support activities. In Mali, the only Sahelian country in the pilot program, PVO-NGO NRMS works directly with the NGO consortium CCA-ONG. A task force of NGOs in Mali designed an innovative program with the help of project staff. Some 15 small grants have been made to NGOs for such practical, innovative activities as farmer exchange visits and the testing of new living fencing methods. The project also has funds for special activities, such as a training workshop held in Mali for NGO leaders from several countries entitled, "Building the Capacity of NGOs to Implement NRM Activities in the Sahel" and a pastoral sector assessment in Mali. PVO-NGO NRMS has been touted as a model for AID Africa regional support to NGOs (NRMS; Brown and Dakono).

These few examples suggest some of the themes in the donor-NGO relationship, in particular the control that bilateral donors often exert over their relationships with NGOs and the difficulties donors have in understanding how to work with NGOs. They also indicate what can happen when NGOs themselves are able to participate in setting the terms of engagement with donors.

UNDP, World Bank and almost all major donors now have offices to deal with NGOs and are trying to figure out how to work with them. Differences between donors and NGOs include their planning

horizons, operating styles, macro-economic orientation, and institutional cultures. One of the most difficult donor-NGO differences to bridge is that of scale. Donor demands for rapid and widespread impact clash with the NGO perspective that the spread of benefits can only come from replicating human-scale activities, not by preconceived, standardized, large-scale enterprises. In NRM in particular, the focus is on local involvement in researching and applying approaches that fit with local strategies, capacities and needs. Once an effective NRM intervention is developed, its diffusion will come if the right conditions exist. Government policies and practices are often a constraint to such diffusion, especially if the original success occurred within a project under an exceptional policy environment, i.e., one-time waivers or site-specific permissions (Otto 1987; Painer).

Donor-NGO collaboration is, in the words of one Sahelian NGO leader, like attempting a marriage between a camel and a mouse. Ironically, donors often express frustration at not being able to program all of their funds earmarked for NGOs, while NGOs, especially the newer national ones, are unable to secure basic financial assistance. Donors and NGOs can and do work well together. Many innovative NGO efforts in NRM are funded in part by bilateral donors. A key element to success in NRM projects is an acknowledgement that they are often experimental, meaning they might not yield the projected results. The potential of failure, even the right of failure, should be faced more candidly so that risk-taking and experimentation are encouraged. Donor-NGO collaboration seems to work best when activities evolve from NGO-community interactions rather than originating as donor-designed projects, although donors coordinated contribution to the overall direction can be useful.



## Rural organizations - donors

Donor relations with rural organizations have been limited for some of the same reasons that limit donor-NGO relations. ROs are even less likely than NGOs to meet donors' criteria for fiscal and administrative capacity. Unlike NGOs, ROs do not usually have the kind of capital city presence that reaches the level of most donors.

In the early years of the post-colonial era, donors and certain international NGOs contributed significant sums to various schemes to organize rural populations under the national governments' control. Some of these centralized efforts still continue, or have taken new forms under different development programs. However, the small size of individual independent ROs now emerging seems far beneath the scale of most donor programs.

The ambivalent or hostile attitudes of many Sahelian governments towards self-defined ROs make it more difficult for donors to work with ROs even if they wish to do so. Encouraging Sahelian governments to loosen restrictions on the formation and functioning of autonomous ROs is one vital contribution donors can make. This is also in keeping with the current donor emphasis on private initiatives and pluralistic societies. In some countries, donors are already doing this. More direct approaches, such as the suggestion to make the right to organize a conditionality of funding have not been accepted.

The non-project direct subsidy style of foreign aid has removed donors even further from involvement with rural populations. Institutional strengthening in the rural non-governmental sector has actually lessened as a donor priority under the conservative aid policies begun in the 1980s that target macro-policy reform (Derman).

Recently, however, donors have recognized the significance of such independent ROs, and are actively looking for ways to support them. Proof of this interest is demonstrated by the carefully orchestrated inclusion of RO representatives in a major regional conference sponsored by CILSS and Club du Sahel on local management of natural resources. This encounter was the May 1989 Rencontre Regionale in Ségou, Mali, on the theme of "la gestion de terroire villageois," which translates roughly as the management of village lands and resources. The CILSS/Club du Sahel process has been criticized for using these RO representatives to further a policy agenda at Ségou, but then not continuing to include them in the on-going debate on managing national resources.

NGOs were absent from the Ségou encounter, an omission that has hardly facilitated an integration of reflection and action among these institutional actors. There seems to be some recent indication that northern NGOs at least will find a place at the CILSS/Club du Sahel "près Ségou" discussions, but the debate remains essentially a donor-government dialogue with occasional input from ROs and NGOs.

In terms of direct financial support to ROs, most bilateral and inter-governmental donors are obliged to use intermediaries such as NGOs, which have the self-defined mandate and methodologies for working with individual groups of rural resource users. There are increasing exceptions among donors that are able to act creatively to get out from under their own institutional limitations. The European Community's FED is experimenting with direct funding to local organizations, and the official Swiss aid agency, Direction de la Coopération au Développement et de l'Aide Humanitaire, DDA, has had a program since 1983 working with over

80 community groups in Niafunké, Mali (Hochet).

### Governments - NGOs

During the first decade after independence, governments did not have to contend with NGOs to any great extent. In the decade of the 1970's, this changed with the arrival of external NGOs and the first stirrings of national NGOs. The 1980's have forced many Sahelian governments to deal with the growing presence of external NGOs along with rapidly expanding national NGO movements. In addition to the alternative power center that these new organizations represent, governments must face the fact that NGOs are increasingly favored by foreign donor agencies in development efforts. NGOs are perceived by governments as competing directly for donor funding.

Considering the monopolistic mentality towards political power in civil society that Sahelian governments inherited from the colonial era, the ambivalent to wary approach of governments to an expanding non-governmental sector is understandable. Sahelian governments may resent NGOs' very existence. They may feel threatened by NGOs' grassroots successes and popularity, particularly when contrasted with the broad perceptions of the failures of government, statist efforts (Ward).

Provisions of Sahelian governments for recognition and registration of national NGOs vary considerably, from rather routine registration practices in Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal to more complex in Niger and impossible in Guinea-Bissau. In the lone Anglophone member of CILSS, the Gambia, there are at least three possible routes to legal status for NGOs, the Friendly Societies Act of 1919, the Companies Act of 1955, and by direct government Decree.

In the case of Niger, there was no legal statute pertaining to the registration of development NGOs until 1990. The handful of Nigerien NGOs that have been founded in recent years have been obliged to seek legal status under a 1984 ordonnance concerning associations. While this ordonnance permits youth, school, religious, foreign and several other types of associations, its exclusion of development NGOs has been identified by the NGO consortium in Niger, GAP, as a major constraint on the emergence of national NGOs (République du Niger 1984; GAP).

A recent Niger government study on promotion of national NGOs agreed with this assessment and joined GAP's call for revision of the associations ordinance. The study candidly ascribed this legal void to a desire to control all popular initiatives and only authorize those that conform to prescribed policies. A recent amendment to the 1984 associations ordinance now covers NGOs, but this is far from the independent legal status desired by the NGO community. The NGOs feel that governmental preoccupation with adjustments in the legislative text must also be match with public announcements and discussion or build confidence in government policy changes toward NGOs (République du Niger 1990; Sidibé, Dakouo and Brown).

National NGOs are subjected to more governmental scrutiny than external NGOs, in part because NGOs might serve political ambitions. National NGOs do not enjoy the protection of a foreign diplomatic mission. National NGOs have been suspected of political motives in their work helping organize rural populations and providing services in certain communities. This concern is particularly vivid in Senegal, the one truly multi-party political system in West Africa; but it also applies in the Gambia when local elections are contested. Even under military regimes in other countries, NGOs that appear to encourage local communities to question authority or to create organizations

autonomous of government structures have been suspected of harboring political motives.

Development activities in a poor country cannot help but be a political matter. In certain countries with evolving political situations the risks for NGOs and ROs may actually increase. Decisions on where to work and which communities will get resources may become more sensitive. Multi-party politics will bring rivalries out into the open. In their competition for loyalty of rural voters, parties will want to take credit for NGOs' services, just as undemocratic governments have done for years. NGOs and ROs may be tempted to side with parties that take positions favorable to them. Community organizations formed for local development efforts can become a base for lobbying or for overtly political activities. NGO leaders and RO leaders certainly have the right to become politically active as individuals, and their voices need to be heard; however, this could have an effect on how their organizations are perceived.

While external NGOs have been accused of political interference in other parts of Africa, this has not been an issue recently between governments and NGOs in the Sahel. External NGOs, however, are often cited by governments for ignoring official channels, refusing to participate in regional or local planning, or carrying out what one Sahelian leader termed 'le développement sauvage', uncoordinated and unauthorized development activities.

NGOs are by instinct jealous of their autonomy and so frequently resist even legitimate government interest in their work. Suspicious of officials' motives and convinced that government efforts are generally ineffective, NGOs resist submitting the detailed reports required by the government. The most resistant national NGO leaders seem to be those who have come out of government service, or who have specific reasons to

interpret government actions as attempts to control NGOs.

An insight into NGO attitudes towards government involvement in their affairs is provided by the debate within the NGO consortium, CCA-ONG in Mali over whether government officials should be invited to sit on a CCA-ONG committee that makes decisions concerning small scale grants. Although the proposal called for just one government seat on a large committee that included other non-NGO people, and although those proposing this arrangement took pains to point out that the government could not control the committee's decisions, an acrimonious three-hour debate ensued. Speaker after speaker denounced the potential evils of allowing the government this foot in the door of NGO affairs, even as others half-humorously noted that the government had an absolute right to close down any national NGO at a moment's notice with no possible appeal.

Most government-NGO conflicts boil down to issues of control, control over the donor resources that governments now see diverted to NGOs, and control over the development agenda. Cases of expelling external NGOs or refusing registration to national NGOs are rare. In Burkina Faso the unit charged with controlling NGOs is the Bureau de Suivi des Organisations Non-gouvernementales, BSONG. In seeking to control the dynamic NGO community, the Malian government has tried several different mechanisms, most recently creating the Secrétariat Technique de Coordination des Organisations Non-gouvernementales. NGO activity in the Gambia is nominally coordinated by loosely formed organization called ACCNO, Advisory Committee for the Coordination of NGOs, but it has not met in several years. In Niger, which has the most rigid framework for NGOs, official control is exercised through a demanding initial registration procedure and a detailed system of approval at local, regional and national

levels for every project (Johnson and Johnson).

Some recent events in Senegal illustrate actions and responses between governments and NGOs. In 1989 the Senegalese government issued a decree setting out NGO intervention procedures, including the reporting requirements, coordination plans and the government's intention to visit NGOs and require them to account for their operations. To apply this decree new NGO observation units were to be established at the level of departmental and regional development committees. The NGO consortium in Senegal, CONGAD, worked hard as an intermediary between government and NGOs to convey NGO concerns and government intentions. Many NGOs took this decree to be another attempt to control them. This sentiment was only reinforced when a government restructuring in 1990 transferred oversight of NGOs from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior. Some observers took this to indicate more concern for security than development (République du Sénégal 1989a).

The conflicts in government-NGO relations should not mask other, more positive aspects of their relationship. On certain levels, NGOs are increasingly included in governmental deliberations, especially in areas where NGOs' expertise could be useful. On one level, NGOs influence on policy is formal. In Niger, for example, during the current governmental effort to develop a new Code Rural, leaders of NGOs have been asked to comment on drafts of the proposed code which covers such vital areas as tenure. In 1990 in Burkina Faso, NGOs were apportioned ten seats at the convention that developed the new national constitution. In technical areas, NGO participation is sought, especially on national committees coordinating activities in which NGOs are involved. Although this is not yet common, it has started to occur.

On another level NGO influence is informal. The western educated class in Sahelian countries is very small and thoroughly inter-connected. Great debates take place in social settings among members of this intellectual grouping who happen to be in government, university, NGO or private employ. Ties of family, village and school often run deeper than institutional affiliations. If NGO leaders are well known, if their families are well respected, if their school classmates or home town friends are well placed, problems can be handled and policies can be affected by means totally unavailable to outsiders. As one Sahelian NGO expert put it, "African administrations secrete subtle paths along which only their sons can venture without getting lost. Thus, the representatives of local NGOs steeped in the prevailing politico-social environment, are better able to find their way and to emerge unscathed from the brambles" (Sawadogo).

One other positive area of government-NGO relations takes place on local and regional levels when NGOs involve government technical personnel in their activities. Often marginalized by big parastatal projects, and chronically short of transportation and supplies, these technicians find in NGOs the means to travel to rural communities and a framework that needs their skills. NGOs also gain expertise that complements their community organizing skills. Such working arrangements, if more widely practiced, might have the secondary effect of bridging the distance and disjuncture that typify the relationship between government extension agents and rural populations. Unfortunately many NGOs still do not negotiate for such services (Mercoiret).

In many situations NGO resistance to local government coordination attempts is counterproductive. Although one can appreciate the NGOs' desire for independence of action, integration of

NGO activities with local government administrative and technical personnel is in the long run interest of the local communities.

In general, national NGOs consider their position vis-à-vis their governments to be tenuous. They do not yet enjoy a guaranteed, recognized place in civil society. Governments tend to act as if NGOs were a resource to be controlled, rather than a legitimate socio-professional segment of society. National NGOs do not enjoy the protection of a foreign diplomatic mission. They seem constantly aware of the possible accusation of attempting to undermine government programs or policies. External NGOs do not suffer from such direct concerns, but they too keep a watchful eye on changes in government practices. When the government clamps down on an NGO for some alleged violation, when a ministry official suddenly demands adherence to a previously ignored requirement, or when an NGO vehicle is commandeered by the military, word passes quickly. Concern for solidarity vis-à-vis governments is one of the principle reasons for NGO consortia, which are discussed in the NGO solidarity section.

#### Governments - rural organizations

As indicated by repeated attempts to organize rural populations, governments understand the importance of mobilizing rural populations, but they appear willing to sacrifice developmental goals for political ones. Governments seem to take the safer, if less productive path of building sterile, top-down local organizations rather than allowing or encouraging dynamic, self-determined structures among the rural population. Regardless of whether post-colonial governments have socialist or capitalist leanings, the tendency has been to exercise control over economic, political and social structures, from cooperatives to political parties to

women's organizations. Niger illustrates this tendency.

Over the last fifteen years the Niger government has attempted to create an integrated system for popular participation in development which links village-level groups and Village Development Councils, through various levels of government to a National Council for Development. However good intentioned were the designers of this system called the Société de Développement, the imposition of a uniform framework for local organizations throughout the country has prevented local people from evolving institutions tailored to their particular local circumstances. This corporative structure and the controlling mentality of Nigerien government officials have not only rendered the Société de Développement marginally effective in rural resource management, but its continued preeminence as the officially sponsored national development institution has probably stifled the emergence in Niger of dynamic, autonomous ROs (Charlick; Johnson and Johnson; Thomson).

Beginning in the 1970s, the Sahel experienced a quantum increase in the number of ROs. The reactions of governments to the new wave of rural organizations differs widely. In general, statutes and legal texts relating to ROs are non-existent or inadequate, making it difficult for ROs to operate and evolve (OECD 1989).

Senegal and Burkina Faso seem to be the least restrictive. In the early 1980s, Senegal created a new, simple and flexible kind of organization called a groupement d'intérêt économique, GIE, economic interest group, which allows two or more people to set up and register quickly with the government. Many GIEs have been established, from modest rural community groups to sizeable partnerships. The catch is that the

registration fee to form a GIE may be beyond the reach of many poor people.

A different kind of organization sanctioned by the Senegalese government is the 'groupement de promotion feminine', GPF, which have spread rapidly as part of a government action plan in support of women. Some GPFs manage their own activities and finances; others function in various forms of cooperation with ROs. GPFs and village level entities based on sectoral initiatives of government and regional development projects, such as the primary health care committee, the soil management committee, and the committee to manage water supply, sometimes create confusion and lack of integration in community life. ROs in general have no recognized status with government sanctioned community structures. Likewise, they have no official relationship to the elected Rural Councils that have slowly spread across the country as part of the national decentralization reform begun in 1972. From the standpoint of communities with active, community-initiated ROs it makes sense to give ROs an integrated place on the Rural Councils which are typically controlled by elder, land-owning males. One proposal from a recent seminar on the role of peasants in the development process was that one-third of the places on Rural Councils be set aside for RO representatives in recognition of their socio-economic importance (Ba; Ba, et. al.).

As noted above, in the 1970s Burkina's government encouraged the launching of quasi-independent ROs called groupements villageoises, although many subsequently foundered without any outside assistance. During the four years that Thomas Sankara was in power following the 1983 military coup, a system of community-level Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, CDRs, was set up across the country. With supposedly elected officers and open membership, CDRs carried out government directives, organized labor

parties and served as channels for official information. Armed to defend the revolution, CDRs created new power structures in virtually every community as a direct challenge to pre-existing power structures. In 1988 CDRs were disbanded and replaced by Revolutionary Committees, with less of a security role. The populist and decentralization goals of the Sankara era are now muted. In this highly complex political situation, amid evolving government sanctioned rural organizing efforts, independent ROs continue to function (Baxter and Somerville).

For several post-colonial governments in the Sahel, part of their strategy to channel and manipulate rural development has been to take advantage of pre-existing social units. In Mali, the concept of a grouping called the ton has been coopted by the state, and transformed into a legal entity. These official 'tons' are now limited one per village and are potentially imposed on ethnic groups across Mali that never had the concept of a ton before. Likewise, in Niger the customary youth groups called samariya were coopted into the Société de Développement structure. Niger recently seems to be liberalizing its approach to independent local institutions, although the rural populations will need a lot of assistance to understand that such possibilities exist and to feel free to take advantage of them (Painter; OECD 1989).

In at least one CILSS member nation, Guinea-Bissau, there has not been any statute allowing legal recognition of independent associations. Groups of veterans who fought for independence in West Africa's only real war of colonial liberation have been pushing for the right to organize since independence in 1974. At first this demand for the right of autonomous organizations was deferred as a matter of socialist orientation. In recent years it appears to be a victim of turf battles among government

ministries, with the rural populations the losers (Galli and Jones).

Gauging the attitudes of ROs towards governments is difficult, particularly as there are few comprehensive studies of rural organizations in the Sahel. One clear, if indirect indication of the attitudes of rural populations' towards governments' attempts to create and control local institutions has already been noted in the failure of officially organized cooperative movements. Peasants voted with their feet in avoiding these imposed structures.

A glimpse of the attitudes of RO leaders was provided by the CILSS/Club du Sahel regional conference on management of village lands and resources in Ségou, Mali, in 1989. While donor representatives and government officials hammered out acceptable wording on the decentralization of authority and the importance of rural populations taking responsibility, the RO leaders in attendance made bold, direct suggestions. Why not retain local control over some of the tax money collected in each community for the people to set their own priorities and manage their own projects? Could donors put their resources directly at the disposal of ROs? Why not make the technical assistance personnel of government, such as agricultural extension agents, directly responsible to the people they are meant to serve? Could certain community-sanctioned ROs take charge of local management of natural resources according to local norms and needs?

Without using or knowing the vocabulary of decentralization, these RO leaders were proposing a variety of devolved and privatized solutions. In the report of the Ségou conference the ROs' logic for demanding autonomy was quoted as follows. "The work we do is actually for the country, and in fact we are the country." (OECD 1989).

Under pressure of debt and structural adjustment there has been a broad, if slow, disengagement of governments from the rural sector. While some governments can be credited with allowing the creation of autonomous rural associations, most have not done so with enthusiasm. Despite the emergence of farmers' organizations and increasing NGO support for them, a new relationship of trust with governments has not yet developed. A recent study published by CILSS/Club du Sahel finds governments far from forthcoming in the face of new rural structures. "What is occurring is a forced withdrawal of the Sahel governments, not a voluntary move to replace top-down development structures with a new type of organization and new farmer/government relationship." (Snrech).

#### NGOs - Rural Organizations

NGOs have played a major part in the current expansion of rural organizations in the Sahel. NGOs have worked hard in many cases to assist the evolution of local groups. There has also been a proliferation of ROs in some areas with the expectation that this would attract NGOs looking for local partners.

Since the early years of independence, a handful of NGO training institutions have played an important role in preparing thousands of farmers in the Sahel. INADES was cited already. CESA, the Centre d'Etudes Economique et Sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest training center in Burkina Faso is another. Now training of rural leaders is a normal part of most NGO projects. 75% of the NGOs in Senegal list training as one of their services (Booth and Ly).

NGOs provide other types of support to ROs as well. One is technical assistance in the form of an engineer to design a small dam, or a soil conservation expert to suggest anti-erosion techniques.

Organizational assistance to help with planning or advice on financial matters is common. NGOs often assist ROs with grants or small loan funds. Finally, NGOs may provide some political assistance to ROs, such as help with government registration or a kind of protection from intimidation and control by local or regional elites whose own interests may be inimical to self-organized local communities.

Unlike NGO movements in parts of Latin America and Asia, NGOs in the Sahel have not generally been involved in political consciousness raising with rural populations, especially not on the basis of class analysis. The limitation on freedom of expression and freedom of organization imposed by the authoritarian nature of Sahelain governments is a major factor in this. Also, African NGOs' dependency on outside funding sources, as well as the newness of the NGO movement have probably lessened the potential for such ideological discourse. This is not to denigrate significant work done by NGOs in such areas as legal services, improvement of women's condition, and advocacy for local communities' needs. Perhaps it is only in international forums that NGOs have been at liberty to take strong positions on issues like political freedom and structural adjustment programs (Mulyungi; ECA).

Perhaps the most severe critique of NGOs in terms of their relations with ROs is that many NGOs do not use genuinely participatory approaches when working with rural populations. Rushed by lack of time or money, ignorant of participatory methodologies, or simply unwilling to cede control of the development process to their would-be beneficiaries, NGOs may fail to practice the empowerment they preach. This charge has often been leveled against external development agencies, but it applies to both foreign and national NGOs. Like other members of the western educated classes, Sahelian NGO leaders are victims of inherited

autocratic models of leadership and elitist attitudes towards rural society. This is a legacy they must struggle to overcome in order to forge more equitable partnerships with ROs and communities. While not an insurmountable problem, it is one that deserves far more attention than it is generally given.

In the extreme, in terms of NRM, NGOs may become part of the problem of rural communities if they insist of pursuing external models of organization instead of recognizing and reinforcing the capacities of existing local management institutions. Where new structures are necessary they should evolve from a process of "invention" with the resource users involved. When an NGO is not promoting endogenous development, it risks undercutting community structures and it risks becoming little more than a conduit for outside resources (Djibo, et. al.).

This issue underscores the importance of strengthening community structures and ROs as ends in themselves, rather than simply as vehicle to accomplish project objectives. Consultation with ROs or communities is not the same as ROs or communities setting the agenda. This does not imply that NGOs must reinforce village structures regardless of whether they are representative of the entire community. Simply working through the chieftancy and community notables is often an inadequate method for reaching unrepresented classes or groups. For example, targeted organizing techniques are required in planning development activities meant to involve youth, women, displaced families, ethnic minorities, members of ex-captive castes or others who are left out of the typical patriarchal gerentocracy of many communities. However, NGOs may shortcut the painstaking steps of encouraging non-customary leadership in favor of approaching the visible village leaders for cooperation. NGOs seem more and



more sensitive to these issues and new approaches are evolving.

One result of not working enough on strengthening independent ROs is the phenomenon of dependent rural organizations which are created within the framework of an NGO's project for the express purpose of accomplishing its own goals. These ROs may function well during the life of project, but with the departure of the external supporting organizations, the rural structures may collapse. For example, village development committees established by a child sponsorship NGOs may have difficulty converting themselves into truly self-directed, self-defined institutions (Ba).

The problems of promoting ROs that are autonomous pertain to external NGOs, to national NGOs, missionaries, government services, foreign volunteers, and anyone supporting such local groups. National NGOs are typically managed by urban-based leaders, who often share with foreign NGOs a short-term programming focus that does not give high priority to strengthening RO independence. Donors may exacerbate the problem by requiring quick and quantifiable results from their funding, without great concern for local institution building.

Even with these shortcomings, NGOs have been a lifeline to many ROs, supplying them with their only link to outside technical assistance, funding and solidarity. Some NGOs, notably Innovations et Réseaux pour le Développement, IRED, Development Innovations and Networks, have made the strengthening of local associations their major activity. IRED now works with ROs and with associations of local groups in most Sahelian countries. It also has developed written materials for self-taught institutional strengthening. In collaboration with the Ford Foundation and the International Development Research Institute of Canada, IRED is doing a field study of ROs in four West African countries, the kind

of practical research which is sorely needed (Vincent and Campbell).

NGOs have begun to solidify their own institutional base and to become more sophisticated in their own conception of self-reliant development. They are coming to an awareness of their symbiotic relationship with autonomous ROs. It is in their own long term interest to encourage independent partners. Let us turn now to a consideration of mutual support within the NGO community.

### 5. Solidarity among NGOs: NGO Consortia

Given the complex and still novel position of NGOs in Sahelian society, these agencies have exhibited strong tendencies to group together for mutual support and protection. One reason for this is the historic and continuing dependency of national NGOs on their external counterparts for funding and technical assistance. Over 90% of national NGOs in Senegal count on funding from outside the country, the main source of which is from northern non-governmental organizations. Another reason is the need for NGOs to speak with one voice to governments in negotiating the terms and conditions for NGO registration and operation. Another reason is simply the long-standing habit of voluntary organizations to exchange experiences and cooperate. NGO consortia offices are also useful simply as a physical meeting place where northern and southern NGOs can meet and work together as equals (Booth and Ly).

One resource for the emerging national NGOs are NGO coordinating bodies that now function to various degrees in most Sahelian countries. These include le Groupement des Aides Privées (GAP) in Niger, le Secrétariat Permanent des Organisations Non-gouvernementales (SPONG) in Burkina Faso, le Conseil des Organisations Non-gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement (CONGAD) in

Senegal, and TANGO, The Association of NGOS in the Gambia. In Guinea-Bissau Solidami, a quasi-governmental body, coordinates and supports NGO activities.

These NGO groupings provide different services to their members, and each reflect the character of the NGO community in their country. For example, in Niger there were very few national NGOs until recently and GAP was essentially a club of northern NGOs for most of its existence. Now 14 of its 30 members are national NGOs and in 1991 it elected a Nigèrien President. In Senegal, where NGOs are particularly independent, CONGAD's role focuses on managing information exchange and on discussions with the government, although it has other functions as well. SPONG, which was over-shadowed for several years by the government's coordinating body, BSONG, has recently become revitalized by its members. Perhaps the most dynamic of the Sahelian NGO consortia at this time, and the one we will use as a small case study, is Comité de Coordination des Actions des Organisations Non-gouvernementales au Mali, CCA-ONG.

As noted earlier, CCA-ONG was started by concerned development workers during the drought emergency of the early 1980's. It was then known as CCAU, Comité de Coordination des Aides d'Urgence. As NGO participants were its most active members, CCAU took on the characteristics of an ad hoc NGO grouping. Soon CCAU became the conduit for considerable relief activity. Despite strong anti-bureaucratic tendencies, it began to take institutional form as it filled many needs. It was an informal training ground for unemployed young graduates hoping for jobs in development. It acted as a referral service for the endless stream of missions from foreign donors and NGOs, and it was the Bamako gathering point for delegations of rural Malians seeking cooperation.

By 1985 the emergency was subsiding, and the funding along with it. Nonetheless, NGOs had experienced the benefits of cooperation, had developed a network of relations with community groups in drought affected areas, and had seen the emergence of an national NGO movement. They decided to form a consortium which in 1986 became CCA-ONG.

In addition to the more or less standard NGO consortium activities of information exchange and coordination vis-à-vis the government, CCA offers its members a range of other services. Beginning with donated trucks and other vehicles driven across the Sahara during the drought, CCA now provides an inexpensive transportation rental service to its members. This is especially useful to the newer, smaller NGOs that could not otherwise move materials and people around the vast interior of Mali. CCA-ONG also cooperates directly with NGO support programs and Solidarité-Canada-Sahel is housed in its compound.

CCA-ONG has also tackled one of the most difficult and potentially divisive issues faced by NGO consortia: whether and how to manage grant funds on behalf of donor organizations. Building on the successful experiences facilitating grants to NGOs and community groups during the early 1980's drought, CCA-ONG recently established the Cellule d'Appui Technique et Financier, CATF, a Technical and Financial Support Unit. The unit's staff and management committee currently handles funds on behalf of Band-Aid. It also handles CCA-ONG's relationship with the PVO-NGO Natural Resource Management Support Project, PVO-NGO NRMS. CATF could be a conduit for other resources from donors and support projects, as such possibilities develop (CCA-ONG 1990).

Frequently CCA-ONG co-hosts training programs, workshops and seminars for NGO leaders. Two examples include the NGO Management Training program it jointly sponsored with Private Agencies

Collaborating Together, PACT, and the "Survival in the Drylands" Africa regional NGO workshop with International Institute for Environment and Development, IIED. This latter event in 1988 has led to an on-going Task Force of Dryland NGOs. In coordinating such learning and exchange opportunities CCA-ONG has had to be careful to limit its role, both to avoid competing with member NGOs that specialize in training and to avoid spreading itself too thin.

Among its innovative activities, CCA-ONG's central task has always been information exchange. Huge bulletin boards are full of news as is the weekly newsletter. Every Wednesday, NGOs' staff members gather after work hours to study special topics. Four years ago CCA-ONG launched a computerized information service for the analysis and treatment of information. SIS, the Système d'Information du Sahel has now spread to three other NGO consortia in Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal, with possible extensions to Chad and Mauritania. Its various data bases provide NGOs, governments, researchers, donors and others with information on NGOs, projects, technical matters and funding sources.

Five years after its founding, CCA-ONG is both strong and fragile. With the explosion of new Malian NGOs in recent years it has grown from a handful of founders to over 80 NGO members. Consortium members became aware of the importance of good leadership when an authoritarian board chairman caused great dissension before he was forced to resign. The possibility also exists of increased government surveillance, as CCA-ONG's successes make it more visible, and its new CAFT programs increase its liability. What makes the consortium strong is an absolute commitment to democratic procedures and the continuing perception of its members that the consortium is worth their investment in time and energy. The vigilant participation of its members is

the only assurance of its continued vitality.

## 6. Natural Resource Management

The major actors selected for this study and their relationships are now better known. We turn to face more squarely how these actors are working on local level management of natural resources. To do this we will briefly review some aspects of governments' approaches, and also consider certain theoretical and practical trends in NRM. We will then concentrate on the contributions of NGOs and their partner ROs. Principle observations are that the situation calls for creative experimentation in both technical and institutional areas, and that NGOs are providing considerable leadership in these areas.

### Governments and Natural Resource Management

One must bear in mind the direct linkage of today's policies to the conquering mindset of the colonial power. That centralizing authority declared itself proprietor of the Sahel's resources, returning only use rights to local communities from which it planned to extract a surplus of primary materials. Its legacy to the national elites who succeeded it as rulers of artificially demarcated nations was a subjugated population controlled by administrators, military and police.

After independence in 1960, levels of state control that a thinly spread colonial administration could only exert in principle, such as making and enforcing regulations on local resource use, were rapidly exceeded by the burgeoning national bureaucracies. The growth and integration of the modern Sahelian states allow them to claim and exercise more effectively the unique right to define and enforce rules

governing the use of natural resources in the public domain.

Since title property ownership under modern law is virtually unknown in the rural areas, most land and resources are considered part of the public domain. There is government intervention in the areas of taxation, collection of fines, issuing of permits and resolution of major disputes. Micro-management of many local resources, however, remains beyond administrative reach. At this level, fragments or whole elements of customary regimes of resource control have continued de facto. In part, this is a result of the governments' distance from scattered communities in rural areas. It is also due to the high costs in time, energy and money for local resource users of legally changing or challenging existing management arrangements that remain partially in place (Thomson).

In the area of enforcement, however, the modern state often comes into conflict with pre-existing resource management regimes. A typical case is the suppression by government forestry services of local community enforcement of customary penalties in forestry management. Groups whose customary forest use rights have been violated must appeal based on modern law to distant forestry agents, who in turn will keep all or most of the fines they impose, if indeed an accurate determination of guilt is made. Not only are fines and permits a major source of official revenue; in Mali salary bonuses for forestry agents are calculated on the level of fines they collect. This perverse arrangement creates strong incentives to impose fines as often as possible and to interdict the competing enforcement regimes of customary resource governance structures. As a result of continual and seemingly arbitrary fines by officials for forestry use, and the concomitant destructuring of pre-existing regimes for control, rural

populations have decreased incentives for compliance with either code.

Governments, assisted by donors, have also intervened in local resources use regimes by changing the configuration of resource availability. Such was the case in the 1960s and 1970s when thousands of new boreholes were drilled in grasslands where no waterpoints previously existed. No rule systems were in place for the intensive use of rangelands near these new waterpoints that suddenly became available for grazing. Pastoralist groups historically own and manage wells and so controlled adjacent grazing areas. Yet, none of these user groups could exercise even customary control rights over these new boreholes that governments installed without range management policies and regulations. The result in many locations is massive overgrazing around these "open access" waterpoints (Otto 1990).

The consequence of these superimposed tenurial frameworks is a chaotic and insecure scene in rural areas. Some resources previously managed as "common property" have been placed in the unregulated, free-for-all category of open access resources. For rural producers of all types, the lack of secure rights to the resources they use is a serious disincentive to invest in long term improvement.

Women are perhaps more vulnerable than all other resource users. They have found that they may actually lose the right to use certain lands if they make improvements, such as planting fruit trees, and thereby increase the value of the property. Similar fate has befallen stranger farmers whose improvement of land allocated to them on a temporary basis may be taken as an attempt to establish ownership.

The role that governments take in local level NRM is not uniformly negative. An increasing number of examples can be found of government services and their

agents supporting community initiatives at improved NRM. A recent study on decentralization in Mali provides case studies. In one community near Kayes on the Senegal River agents of the Service des Eaux et Forêts, Water and Forestry Agency, now back up the village's new woodstock management arrangements, and have sanctioned the local fishermen's management institutions. In another community, where protecting pastures from dry season bush fires is a major NRM issue, government agencies have been supportive of the local Bush Fire Control Committee. The Office du Niger, a colonial era parastatal agency that has managed a 55,000 hectare irrigation scheme for almost 60 years, is now changing its relationship with local communities in one sector. Relaxing of the parastatal's monopoly is allowing local men's and women's groups to play a role in rice milling and marketing as well as farming (Djibo, et. al.).

In another example the World Bank financed the Eastern Senegal Livestock Development Project. Over fifty grazing associations of pastoralists were formed to re-establish local management control of about a million hectares of grasslands under special legislation that granted long term rights to the associations. One more example, this one involving an NGO, is the experimental project in natural forest management near Niamey, the Forest and Land Use Planning Project. As part of a carefully worked out management plan involving a variety of user groups, the US NGO Cooperative League of the USA, CLUSA, assisted nine villages to form a cooperative that negotiated with the Niger government for the right to control firewood cutting and grazing permits in the National Forest of Guesselbodi. The Guesselbodi experience has since led several NGOs to attempt replication projects in other national forests (Bromley and Cernea; Heermans).

In some cases NGOs have managed, often with donor support, to negotiate waivers on some government regulations that did not involve legislative or jurisdictional changes. Two examples from Niger concern NGOs' negotiation of a waiver of the forestry code regulation against mutilating planted trees. This was necessary in one case because repeated trimming is required to develop thick living hedges, and in the other because coppicing of windbreak trees is a regenerative technique for harvesting wood. The documents describing these examples from Senegal, Mali and Niger have several common threads. They all put strong emphasis on the key element of supporting the development of local institutions that are capable of managing the resources in question. In addition, they point out the essential government role of creating or sanctioning jurisdictional structures or granting the legal permissions that in turn give secure rights to the resource user groups (Djibo, et. al.; Bromley and Cernea; Heermans).

Such examples, few as they may be at this point, confirm Sahelian governments' interest in exploring ways of reducing financial and administrative burdens for local resource management. However, it would be a mistake to exaggerate these tentative and highly situational cases of governments negotiation and empowerment of local level resource user institutions. While some important pioneering efforts point the way to reforming the Sahel's complex NRM systems, the tasks of government restructuring and local institution strengthening loom large indeed. To consider the possibilities for such a transfer of responsibility and authority, we turn to recent developments in conceptualizing NRM in the future.

## Current trends in Natural Resource Management

In looking at NRM realities, we will first present a conceptual approach to the problems of the existing situation, and then see how current programs are dealing with NRM. The hopeful element in this review is that a program approach has recently evolved in the Sahel that may allow more forthright reflection and action on these intractable issues.

What is more and more recognized as a way out of this ambiguous mix of authority are negotiated institutional arrangements, guaranteed by the state, that secure resource use rights for all the various parties involved. This is the re-privatization of local resource management referred to earlier. The scale and scope of such arrangements depend on the resource or resources to be managed. For example, each plot or field within a large irrigated perimeter is most appropriately controlled by the immediate production unit, perhaps a family or a group of farmers. A management committee representing all production units might best deal with problems affecting the whole irrigated perimeter. Still larger units may be needed to coordinate efforts on the level of the entire watershed, or to control and maintain a dam if there is one (Thomson; Painter).

According to this perspective on natural resource management, interrelated governance structures and regimes at appropriate levels must be created, or, in cases where they already exist outside the legal framework, must be recognized legally. Such regimes will provide secure access to multiple and potentially competing users of renewable resources (Thomson).

Local and regional governance systems will involve a multiplicity of institutions with specific domains, and so will not be strictly hierarchical. They certainly

will not be standardized, as they must be designed for multifarious situations. To conceptualize this, one might consider that the debate is not principally between centralized and decentralized options. More complex, institutional arrangements are needed which are non-central. These arrangements of complementary scopes and sizes might be termed polycentric (Ostrom, Schroeder and Wynne).

Once re-privatization of local governance is achieved, and this is still a hypothetical prospect at this point, the role of the state will be chiefly that of guarantor. This includes assuring that local resource use agreements are respected and providing final arbitration when other conflict resolution mechanisms fail. To accomplish this, centralized power must become deconcentrated and devolved so spatially dispersed, government-sanctioned bodies endowed with the required authority are congruent with the local user-based governance structures. With this vision in mind, we turn to view what is happening in program activities relating to NRM.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the governments and their donors developed a new kind of regional approach to agricultural productivity called integrated rural development, IRD. Typically organized in large zones of operation, IRD projects offered standard packages of so-called improved production techniques, plus other activities like literacy, cooperative development, and economic activities for women. IRD projects were not really integrated and often failed to produce significant increases in productivity when few producers adopted the proffered packages. In part, these projects failed because they did not take into account the actual zone of operation, the varied income-producing activities and the risk adverse strategies of rural producers. In most cases rural producers had little if any input into the design of IRD projects. The 1983-1985

drought period led to a rethinking and a search for approaches that would combine conserving the natural resource base with improving agriculture (Painter; Otto, et. al.).

From this rethinking, a new approach has emerged in the mid-1980s, articulated in large part through a series of CILSS/Club du Sahel regional meetings. It is a rural development strategy known as Aménagement des Terroirs or Gestion des Terroirs Villageois, improvement or management of village lands and resources, which might be abbreviated AT/GT. The spatial basis for AT/GT interventions is the area that a given agrarian community uses for growing and gathering food and for other livelihood purposes, the terroir villageois. AT/GT is a global approach, concerned with the complex relationships of resources, their uses and their users. It is multisectoral and integrated in that it attempts to take into account all aspects of peasant production systems. AT/GT is participatory, stressing the importance of active inputs and voluntary action on the part of rural producers. (Painter)

An approach that is still evolving, AT/GT has its flaws. It can be biased against transhumant pastoralists whose annual zone of activity includes several territories far apart from each other which do not match the concept of sedentary village lands. Another problem with the terroir concept is that it does not recognize the larger "action space" which peasants exploit beyond the terroir itself, such as commerce or hired labor in locations perhaps far from the community in question. The AT/GT approach in practice has often inaccurately assumed socio-economic homogeneity in rural communities, whereas the reality of diversity means differing capacities and interests. To be involved in AT/GT requires considerable knowledge and application of social science research methods to facilitate careful collection, analysis and use of

data in a number of areas. These are not skills most NGOs have on staff which implies greater reliance on consulting social scientists. Like any program modality, AT/GT can become diluted or coopted as it becomes fashionable (Painter; Brown).

Although too new an approach to be evaluated conclusively, AT/GT appears to have a lot to offer if it is rigorously and creatively applied. Its small physical scale presents the possibility of bringing a critical level of attention and analysis to bear on specific problems. It would seem harder to obfuscate or ignore issues of tenure and resources users' security when analysis is focused on terroir villageois. AT/GT invites site-specific solutions designed with user involvement. AT/GT reunites the parallel objectives of optimum productivity and sustainable resource management. It highlights the fundamental importance of indigenous knowledge and the ensemble of peasant production practices. To the degree that governments are implicated in AT/GT, its cornerstone of voluntary involvement could represent a major, positive shift of strategy.

NGOs have increasingly attempted to adopt AT/GT approaches, as it matches their participatory style and community level of intervention. Actually, at this point it may be more accurate to note that NGOs are using elements of AT/GT approaches, as they come to grips with the complexity of this demanding methodology. We turn now to consider what NGOs have to offer this new approach and to NRM in general.

#### NGOs and natural resource management activities

Remembering that NGOs initially appeared in the Sahel in a drought relief mode, one can trace a progression in their involvement in NRM. As the immediate crisis subsided, straight

donations of food and supplies in refugee camps were replaced by assistance to people returning to their homes. Such assistance included seeds, tools, deepened wells and herd replenishment. A controversial practice begun in that era was food for work in which rural populations were fed in exchange for working on roads, anti-erosion projects and other public works. Some NGOs have continued for a long time in feeding and nutrition programs, especially relating to maternal and child health. A prominent example is Catholic Relief Services, which recently made a major conversion to focus on support of local institutions after decades of managing feeding programs.

Early NGO involvement related to NRM concerned horticulture and other kinds of food production on one hand, and a series of environmental protection activities on the other. At this stage few NGOs were systematically analyzing or trying to influence farming systems in an integrated fashion. In solving immediate problems these NGOs often developed techniques that were eventually widely replicated. From soil conservation and fertility improvement to stabilizing sand dunes to fuel-efficient cooking stoves, NGOs have participated in a number of striking small scale successes that show promise of having impact on much larger areas. NGOs contribute training and institutional strengthening for local organizations, practical research and dissemination of low-cost techniques in conservation and productivity, and other hands-on interventions (Shaikh, et. al.).

The most striking aspect of NGOs' work in resource management is not what they do by themselves. On the contrary, NGOs are most effective when they provide the linkages between government services, donors, technical resources, and the rural people. Unlike most other development agencies, NGOs have the flexible methods and mindset to work on a small scale. From this perspective, NGOs can carry out applied research,

working with communities on pilot strategies that may be applied elsewhere and have policy implications if successful (Scott).

Two examples illustrate NGOs' impact on agricultural productivity and environmental protection. On the productivity side is the dry season gardening program begun by Lutheran World Relief, LWR, in Niger in 1976. Faced with the paramount need for improved shallow wells, LWR developed a low cost technology that Nigeriens quickly learned and diffused. 237 wells were dug in the original eight sites of the LWR project. A number of other NGOs adopted the techniques so that more than 3,200 such wells were completed by 1987. An association of Nigerien well diggers, APRN, l'Association des Puisatiers de la République du Niger, was established as an NGO in 1988. APRN is now annually constructing hundreds of village and garden wells. The technology has spread to neighboring countries (Cottingham; APRN).

An excellent example of NGO impact on environmental protection (which ultimately enhances productivity) began in the 1970s with OXFAM's support to a soil and water conservation effort in the Yatenga region of Burkina Faso. After several years of participatory research with local farmers the technique of making rock bunds or diguettes was selected. These low bunds are installed at intervals along the contour of slightly sloping fields in order to increase rain water retention and infiltration on the hard crusted soil. One key piece of appropriate technology that was introduced was a simple water tube level to determine the contour line accurately so that the bunds would maintain the same altitude across the fields. Unlike many conservation efforts, no food aid or cash payments were made. By 1986 about 1,750 farmers in some 340 villages had been trained in the use of the water level and rock bund techniques, and approximately 2,400 hectares were treated with the bunds as of that year.



The techniques have now been spread far beyond the original project area by NGOs, other organizations and spontaneous adoption. Women have played a major role in the construction of bunds, and in some areas autonomous women's teams of bund builders are selling their construction services to other farmers (Bagre; Monimart; Reij).

The range of NGO involvement in natural resource management is indicated by the following sampling of activities. CARE, an international NGO, is a leading force in several Sahelian countries in the areas of NRM research and development, pioneering and disseminating techniques in agroforestry for soil and water conservation. In the Mopti region of Mali several NGOs and the Forestry Service led by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature publish and distribute a journal for school children on environmental issues. Two Burkinabé NGOs, SOS Sahel and Sahel Solidarité, are constructing anti-erosion check dams and bunds in ravines and surrounding areas of rapid run-off with villagers in No and Rounou. Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Veterinarians without Borders, is working with Tuareg groups near Timbuktu on the regeneration of bourgou grass, which had almost disappeared from the shores of the Niger River (Shaikh, et. al.; NGLS; Schmitt).

Participatory methodologies that reverse the usual top-down framework of development have been captured in the concept of farmer first, although other labels include farmer participatory research and recherche-development. This method centers the research and the analysis on the rural producer. The farmer articulates the priorities, experiments and adapts technology. Extension is not imposed from above but is lateral, from farmer to farmer. NGOs have led the way in farmer first activities in the Sahel. NGOs have arranged for Malian farmers to visit soil and water conservation activities in Burkina, and for pastoralists

from Chad to see interesting work in Senegal. Groupe de Recherche pour l'Appui et Autopromotion Paysanne, GRAAP, based in Burkina Faso have developed techniques to aid communities' in their reflection and analysis of problems. World Neighbors built up a network of farmer-researchers in Mali who conducted field trials on short cycle millet and who eventually managed the diffusion of the best varieties (Toulmin and Chambers).

One of the most exciting techniques in this methodology, Rapid Rural Appraisal, RRA, is now getting some circulation in the Sahel thanks to IIED-London, IDRC, and several dedicated field workers. Its adapted name in French actually more descriptive than RRA, Méthode Accélérée de Recherche Participative, accelerated participatory research method. The RRA approach has also been adapted for use in NRM participatory research (Gueye and Freudenberger; NES, et. al.).

In terms of the thorny issues of security, tenure, government regulations and local governance of natural resources, NGOs have lots of practical experience. In many of their rural activities these problems are posed directly. The resolution of these problems within local communities helps create an experiential base for future user-based governance of resources. Examples abound, like when an NGO is involved in assisting pastoralists improve degraded pasture lands and finds itself advocating for priority use by the groups that invested in the improvements.

Dry season gardening, a common NGO-sponsored activity, shows the variety of tenurial issues that NGOs have faced. For instance, when NGOs work with a group of women on an agriculture project, negotiations must first establish the women's rights to long term secure use and to the benefit of their investments. To initiate a gardening project that involves drawing irrigation water from a seasonal pond that also serves

pastoralists, new agreements must be negotiated. Disputes that arise when foraging animals enter gardens and destroy produce have led to setting local rules. If a gardening project employs techniques of recession agriculture, i.e., progressively extending plots into a river or lake bed as water levels drop, such gardens may block established corridors used to move herds; again, NGOs support the groups they work with to negotiate new arrangements (Otto 1990).

These examples all point out the wide range of experience NGOs have in dealing with tenurial problems. A recent Club du Sahel mission to Mali asked CCA-ONG to help assemble NGOs to get their perceptions on tenure issues. The researchers were impressed by the thoughtful contributions from some 33 NGOs that responded (Crowley).

In terms of NGO experiences with use of the AT/GT approach, little published information is as yet widely available. A Sahel regional NGO conference on this subject is in the planning stages and will go a long way towards documenting developments to date. Two examples of NGO use of AT/GT point to the perennial tension between the long term focus of AT/GT approach and short term needs of the rural populations. If rural populations are preoccupied with the problems of survival, a commitment on the NGO's part to genuine participation may mean postponing resource use planning and environmental improvement activities that do not have immediate pay-back.

The Canadian NGO CECI was obliged to put off detailed studies in their Projet Amenagement de Terroir in Niger's Dallol Bosso area in order to meet local communities' pressing demands for fertilizer loans to increase food production. The Burkinabé NGO Action Sahel hoped to work with northern Yatenga pastoralists on locally-based management plan to address the breakdown in long-standing NRM

systems. However, local perceptions of the overriding need for more income generating activities led instead to a different first step: development of a Gramene Bank style credit program, Projet Banque Villageoise. Confidence and mutual trust within the local community and between community and NGO that develop in such short term activities (which may in themselves take years), will hopefully provide the relationship basis for jointly conceptualizing resource management on the decade or longer planning horizon of AT/GT (Painter).

Given the wealth of their experience in natural resource management, it is vital that NGOs individually and collectively deepen their knowledge and improve their capacities to carry out the systematic diagnostic studies required for AT/GT interventions. Also, NGOs need to document their work, analyze it, share it and contribute to the on-going policy debate as informed partners of rural organizations, governments and donors.

To make the transition to local control of NRM, all players must act decisively. Donors and governments must find the financial resources and the political will. Rural resource users will have to organize themselves to take on new responsibilities. NGOs must be prepared to contribute their full share in this effort. None of these actors can resolve the current crisis alone.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

Much as one might wish to end on a positive note, probity demands a candid assessment. Multi-party elections that preoccupy a segment of the urban population in some Sahelian countries cannot, in themselves, do anything about the deeper problems of power distribution over natural resources. Will elected governments of urban elites necessarily treat rural producers differently than unelected ones have? Moves towards administrative

decentralization, which is only one of many steps required for local resource management, has made painfully slow, uneven progress in even the more advanced countries. Given that decentralization works best when government legitimacy and policy direction are well established, the unsettled political situation created by changes in national government structures will probably not be conducive to accelerated transfer of NRM responsibility and authority.

A comment made about the potential for meaningful change which was leveled at Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, might well be applied to other Sahelian states. "It appears that the governments ... want it both ways: On the one hand they want more local participation, particularly in absorbing costs, while on the other hand governments are unwilling to effect a significant devolution of power to the local level in areas that are critical to natural resource management." (Painter).

A lot is happening in the Sahel, and it is difficult to estimate the velocity or final direction of change while it is occurring. One Sahelian NGO leader commenting in mid-1991, predicted that the Sahel's political life will be under completely different management in two year's time. It seems unlikely that its natural resources will experience such a transition in management in that time frame. Far from an idle waiting period, this is the time to press ahead with bold and creative experiments in user-based resource management, to focus energies on preparing rural communities and the organizations they sanction to exercise management responsibilities.

For the rural producers, a capital city coup or switch over to elections is no guarantee that they will have more secure access to resources or a better price for their surplus. Major donors and each national government have elaborate plans for the rural Sahel, but which of them calls in unequivocal

language, backed by specific investments, for the transformation that is required to reinstate local level management of resources? A lot of words have been said and written on this subject, but the Sahelian proverb reminds all: A loud noise will chase the birds but it will not make the millet grow.

We close with a word of caution to two sets of actors. Donors, take care lest you diminish the creativity, innovation, experimentation and independence that has made NGOs attractive in the first place. Mechanistic concern for financial stewardship must not blind you to other, more important measures of accomplishment. Millions spent trying to get the numbers right on macro-policy reform will not solve the crisis unless rural producers have the support to organize themselves, and the hope of secure resource use.

NGOs, avoid replication of top-down errors that you correctly diagnose in others. When money comes pouring in, with strings attached, try not to be easily seduced. Beware of those who view development as a competitive business and who would have you consider donors or government as your clients. Guard your independence, sense of purpose and spirit of service. Your connectedness to other NGOs and to the rural communities with which you work are true resources of the movement.

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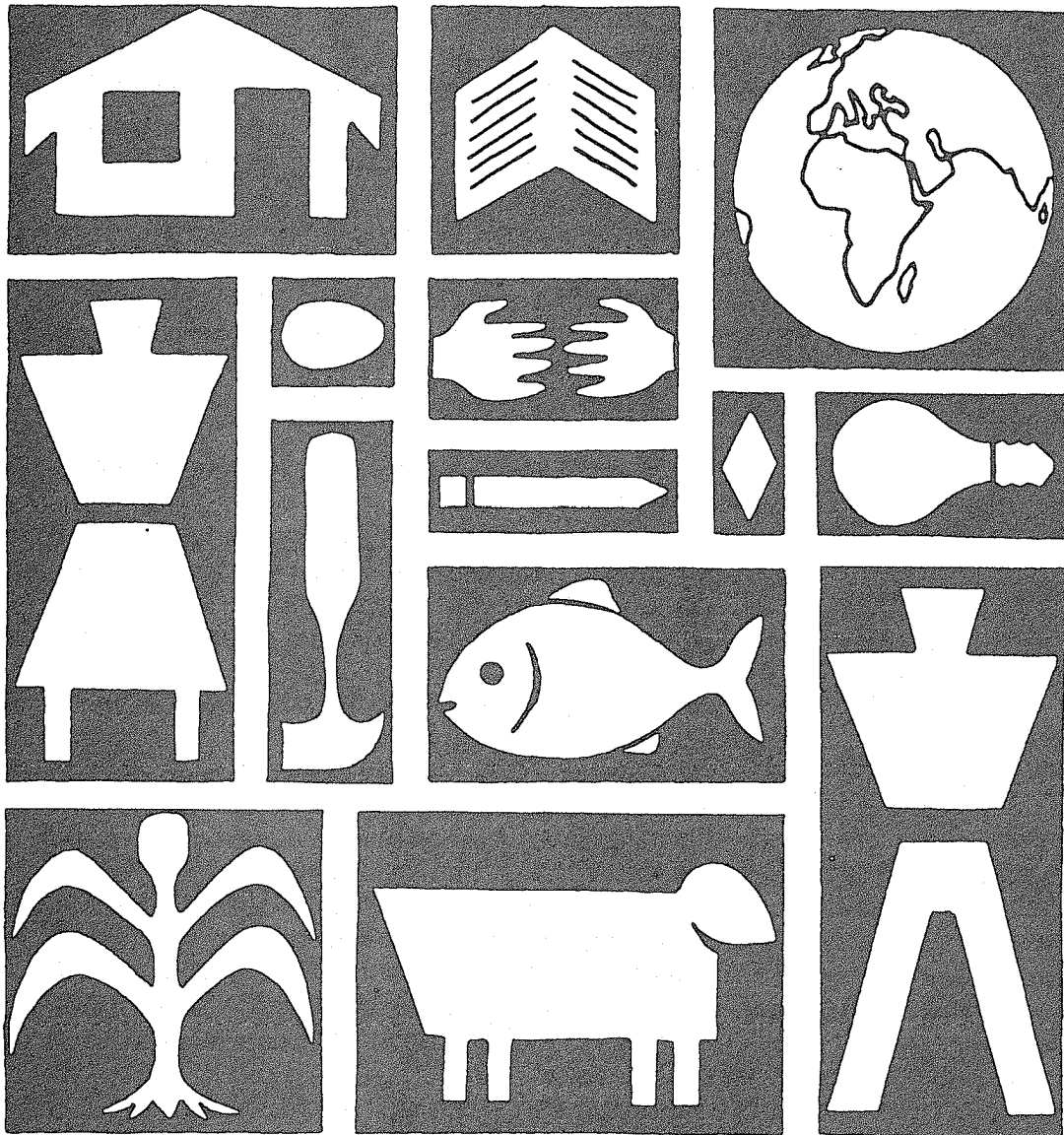
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