

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN  
THE DUTCH AID EXPERIENCE

Evaluation of the Dutch Rural Development Programme executed on behalf of the Operations Review Unit, Directorate General International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Leusden, May 1990

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PART I

MACRO-ECONOMIC AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN SUDAN

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sudan faces an uncertain future. The collapse of democratic government, the continuing war in the south, the impact of recent droughts and floods and the poor performance of the economy have all contributed to this uncertain future. However, Sudan offers opportunity - it is the largest country in Africa and, as such, it is sparsely populated. Over 65 per cent of the land is suitable for crop or pastoral production.

### 1.1 General Characteristics of the Economy

Sudan suffers from five related structural problems that inhibit economic growth and that have produced decline in per capita income. Firstly, there is a highly distorted price structure that hampers investment in productive activity. Secondly, economic investments in the private sector is primarily devoted to commercial activity through trade net production. Thirdly, public investment has largely focused in the rural areas on the irrigated sector, creating regional disparities and depriving smallholder producers of capital agricultural investment. Fourthly, there is a problem that increasing aggregate demand, fueled by demographic displacement and rapid urban growth, has created inflationary pressures. Finally, at the macroeconomic level, there is a severe balance of payment problem which has led to increasing hard currency arrears. Tables 1 & 2 summarise the macroeconomic position indicating substantial decline.

The touchstone of the collapse of the national economy is probably the decline in food security. Sudan enjoyed record harvests in 1986/87 and 1987/88 but the underlying growth of cereal output is less than 2 per cent, a figure that is well below the growth in population and food demand. More importantly, variation in output is highly and increasingly unstable, a simple expression of the environmental constraints placed upon Sudanese rural development. The major growth in cereal output has been the horizontal expansion of mechanised rainfed agriculture, driven by the subsidised credit and price support offered by government. This expansion has produced export potential, at the cost of eroding the traditional pastoral and smallholder systems, by pushing mechanised monocultures especially in the east of Sudan. Agriculture has declined as a contributor to development and agricultural production is very variable (Tables 3&4).

Economic mismanagement can be traced to the early 1970s when a combination of nationalization and substantial public borrowing from foreign sources set in course a process that increases budget deficits, while limiting production opportunity. At the present moment, there is an inefficient parastatal sector which accounts for 50 per cent of GDP and 75 per cent of the exports. Most critically, the economy is now heavily service oriented - agriculture accounts for less than 35 per cent GDP and manufacturing for less than 7 per cent.

TABLE 1 Some Selected Macroeconomic Indicators

	1975/76	1981/82	1985/86	Annual Growth Rate (%)	1975/76	1981/82
Real GDP (LSd M) <sup>a/</sup>	5 965.1	6 721.0	6 247.6	0.5		
Population (Million)	16.6	19.7	21.9	2.8		
Real Per Cap. GDP (LSd)	359.3	341.2	285.3	-2.3		
Resources Gap (US\$M)	-528.1	-1 347.0	-636.0			
Current Acc. Deficit (US\$M)	-428.6	-1 290.0	-842.0			
Consumer Price Index (1970=100)	221.4	643.5	2 060.6	25.0		
Arrears (US\$M)	n.a	554.0	2 657.4			
Exchange Rate (\$/LSd)	2.87	1.12	0.37	-18.5		
Budg. Deficit (LSd M) <sup>3</sup>	-73.3	-800.0	-2 721.1			
<u>Memo items (as % of GDP)</u>						
Resource Gap	-10.0	-17.8	-8.1			
Current Acc. Deficit	-8.0	-17.0	-10.7			
Overall Budget Deficit	-4.0	-11.9	-12.7			

<sup>a/</sup> Constant 1981/82 market prices

Source: World Bank, (1987) Sudan Problems of Economic Adjustment.

TABLE 2 Gross National Savings and Investment <sup>a/</sup>  
(1975/76 - 1985/86)

	(as % of GDP)					
	1975/76	81/82	82/83	83/84	84/85	Estim. 85/86
<u>Gross National Savings</u>	15	8	8	5	5	1
Government	2	-7	-3	-5	-12	-11
Private	13	15	11	10	17	12
<u>Foreign Savings</u>	8	17	11	11	9	11
<u>Gross Investment</u>	23	25	19	16	14	12
Private Fixed <sup>b/</sup>	14	14	14	14	10	9
Government Fixed	6	6	5	4	3	2
Change in Stock	4	6	0	-2	0	1
Unpaid interest	--	3	2	2	6	5

<sup>a/</sup> Figures for 1981/82 - 1983/84 are from the Dept. of Statistics and 1984/85 - 1985/86 are estimates made by Min. of Finance & Economic Planning.

<sup>b/</sup> Investment series in the 1980s include residential buildings and repair while figure for 1975/76 does not.

Source: World Bank, (1987) Sudan Problems of Economic Adjustment.

TABLE 3 Sectoral Contribution to GDP and Growth Rates  
(1975/76 - 1985/86)

	(as % GDP)						Annual Growth Rate 75/76	Annual Growth Rate 81/86
	75/76	81/82	82/83	83/84	84/85	85/86	85/86	85/86
Agriculture	38	38	35	35	33	36	0.5	-
Manufacturing	7	6	6	6	7	7	1.6	-
Construction	5	6	8	7	7	5	1.4	-
Energy & Water	2	1	2	2	2	2	3.4	1
Services	48	48	50	50	50	50	1.6	-
GDP	100	100	100	100	100	100	--	--

Source: World Bank, 1987 Sudan Problems of Economic Adjustment.

TABLE 4 Performance of the Agricultural Sector

	1981/82	1982/83 <sup>a</sup>	1983/84 <sup>a</sup>	1984/85 <sup>a</sup>	1985/86
<u>Production Index</u>					
Irrigated	100	127	131	117	112
Rainfed	100	59	53	29	76
Livestock	100	101	97	81	78
<u>Yield Index</u>					
Irrigated Groundnut	100	116	108	117	95
Rainfed Groundnut	100	67	52	31	79
Mechanized Sorghum	100	71	53	22	70
Traditional Sorghum	100	71	47	37	61

<sup>a</sup>/ Drought years.

Source: World bank, (1987) Sudan Problems of Economic Adjustment.

1.2 Structure of Production

Economic performance has been poor - GDP has been falling by almost 1 per cent per annum and per capita income and consumption falling more rapidly to levels similar to those experienced at Independence. Both rural and urban poverty, as well as malnutrition, are widespread following on the collapse of traditional food security systems and health care structures. Investment, as a percentage of GDP, has continually declined since 1980 and infrastructure is in a serious state of disrepair. Inflation is officially calculated at 70 per cent per annum, although urban dwellers argue that the reality is that it is closer to 200 per cent. There is a large foreign debt which stands in excess of US\$ 13 billion on which the Sudanese government faces severe arrears even on interest payments.

The situation in the Sudan presents special difficulties. The early 1970s saw a large number of nationalizations, coupled with large scale public investment projects, supported by Islamic funds. This disguised a number of problems, including the overvalued foreign exchange, the weak tax base and the high rate of foreign loans supporting the increased government spending. The lack of economic policy meant that negative real interest rates were enjoyed and investment was pushed, particularly because of inflation, into real estate rather than production. The loss of qualified personnel to other Arab countries, where wage remuneration was considerably higher, led to a management crisis throughout the economy.

Tables 5 & 6 show there is considerable potential for rural development although planned investment per head of population is heavily skewed in favour of the north. Particular note should be made of the irrigated and mechanised farm sector which has expanded at the expense of traditional pastoral and arable systems.

1.3 Macro-economic Situation, 1973-88

By 1979, a deteriorating balance of payments situation forced Sudan to call in the IMF. The IMF package emphasised several factors including:

- 1) Price adjustment.
- 2) Strict demand control.
- 3) Restoration of price markets.
- 4) Investment in the production of foreign exchange earning commodities.
- 5) Institutional reforms, including the reform of government machinery.

In particular, the IMF emphasised the need to devalue the Sudanese pound, to restore competitiveness and to reduce the level of imports. Initially the programme worked well, until Sudan's economic performance deteriorated further beginning 1982- 1983.

TABLE 5 1983 Land Classification by Region  
(Millions ha)

Region	Desert	Water/ Swamp	Urban	Agriculture	Woodlands & Forests	Scrub & Semi-desert	Total
Northern	46.79	0.60	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.00	47.44
Eastern	5.70	0.00	0.04	2.20	2.75	3.52	11.87
Central	1.60	0.08	0.06	4.32	5.12	22.89	32.09
Kordofan	4.00	0.00	0.02	2.87	11.63	19.52	35.00
Darfur	27.06	0.00	0.02	1.31	17.69	3.56	48.21
Khartoum	1.10	0.00	0.09	0.05	0.01	0.85	2.00
Sub-total North	86.25	0.68	0.26	11.05	37.20	50.34	174.22
Percentage North	100	23	93	65	40	100	100
Equatoria	-	0.13	0.01	0.88	18.79	-	-
Bahrel Ghazal	-	0.12	0.01	3.16	18.08	-	-
Upper Nile	-	2.00	0.00	1.82	19.80	-	-
Sub-total South	-	2.25	0.02	5.86	56.87	-	-
Percentage South	0	77	7	35	60	0	0
Sudan	86.25	2.93	0.28	16.91	93.87	50.34	222.52
Percentage Total	34	1	0	7	38	20	100

Source: ESMAP Mission Report, 1989.

TABLE 6 Agricultural Investment requirements: the regional balance

Region	Eastern	Northern	Kordofan	Darfur	Central & Khartoum	South	Total
Population share	12	5	15	15	28	25	100
Investment share	26	8	11	11	24	20	100

Source: FAO, (1989) Temporal & Spatial Agricultural Development in Sudan

The reasons for this deterioration included ineffective policy decisions by the Numeiri government and continued high levels of private consumption without adequate increases in production.

By 1984, Sudan had a debt service obligation of US\$ 1.1 billion, equalling 125 percent of annual export revenues, which the government was unable to pay. By June 1984, the IMF rendered the stand-by agreement inoperative plunging the Sudan into a foreign exchange crisis. This was a combination of a liquidity and a solvency problem. The liquidity problem amounted to some 400 million US\$ which the Sudan was unable to pay the IMF in 1985. IMF conditionality demanded the payment of this amount before negotiations could begin on the solvency problem. The latter could have been solved by lowering the consumption of imported goods, and mobilising domestic resources for the investment in generating sectors. However, the abrupt introduction of Sharia Law to the Sudan, in 1984, greatly increased the problems of taxation. Budget savings from the public sector enterprises are hampered by the Sudan's management crisis - to date, imports have usually been substituted for effective management.

A further problem of importance was the over-valued exchange rate, resulting from a failure to adjust the exchange rate after periods of rapid inflation, such as the commodity boom of the mid 1970s. At the beginning of 1987, there were two exchange rates in Sudan; the official rate of SL 2.15 Sudanese pounds to the dollar, and the commercial bank rate SL 4.05 to US\$1. Oil and food were imported at the official exchange rate, representing a heavy subsidy to transport and food consumption, even though there has been some attempt to devalue and hold a single exchange rate. Because private transport and food imports are subsidies to urban consumers, the government is reluctant to remove these subsidies for fear of political unrest. Such subsidies, however, increase private consumption at the expense of investment in the public or private agriculture and industry. The donors of oil and food, Saudi Arabia and the United States respectively, hoped to align the Sudan with the moderate Arab countries by creating markets for their surplus delivered in the politically acceptable form of commodity aid - this strategy has come undone.

A newly elected democratic government came to power, in May 1986, inheriting the crisis faced by the Transitional Military Government (TMG). A shortage of foreign exchange accelerated government control of almost all economic activities. The problem was, however, that public sector morale and finance had collapsed. The war in the south, combined with the problem of displaced persons in western, central and eastern Sudan, gave the incoming government a difficult economic situation. In 1987-1988 the government tried to implement more effective enforcement of controls to create conditions for an economic turnaround, reforms contained in the Annual Programme of Action (APA) (1987/88)- focused on demand management. Tax instruments, notably customs and regional taxes, were revised to increase public revenue.

The principle measure was the unification of commercial and official exchange rates at SL 4.5 to one dollar a 45 per cent depreciation. Fiscal performances in 1987-88 was broadly in line with the bench marks of the APA and allowed the government to begin building a Salvation, Recovery, and Development Programme.

## 2. POLICY

### 2.1 General Development Policy

The Salvation Recovery and Development Programme was an attempt to design a 4 year strategy (1988/89 - 1991/2) which aimed at fundamental changes in the management of the economy. It was essentially the statement on general development policy. There were broad proposals for decontrolling wholesale and retail prices, the establishment of a broad based indirect tax and a flexible exchange rate policy. Most importantly, there was a move to rely on price rather than quotas for regulating imports and a move to restructure the parastatal sector. By mid-1988, the Sudanese Government had reached agreement with the donors, including the World Bank and the IMF on lines of credit to implement the programme and the reschedule debt. Unfortunately, this programme was never implemented because of continuing discussions about the rate of the devaluation of the Sudanese pound and because of the impact of the floods in August 1988.

During the autumn of 1988 the attention of the Sudanese government was primarily focused on responding to the floods. By the end of 1988 they began to readdress the broader economic problems. However, sharp increases in the price of sugar and other commodities sparked widespread demonstrations which forced the government to retreat from its liberalising efforts. The government was dissolved and reformed to include trade unions who had been traditionally hostile to economic stabilization, but the reformed government did not last long. In June, 1989, a military junta seized power banning political groups and trade unions and purging the army and police. Under the military junta the economic situation worsened with inflation rising rapidly, the exchange rates again divided between official and commercial and the black market on foreign currency growing. Most importantly, there is severe pressure on the balance of payments where Sudan's interest payments are averaging 500 million a year. Total hard currency requirement before external assistance on settlement of arrears will run in excess of 1.5 billion US \$ a year from 1990. The military junta, realising the size of the problem, have tried to seek help from Arab sources, not the conventional agencies associated with western finance. As a consequence, they are increasingly tying Sudan's economic performance into a rigid Islamic structure, a move that continues to alienate both the south and much of the non-militant population in the north.

Meanwhile, Sudan has one of the lowest per capita incomes in Africa with, at the 1986 exchange rate, some US \$ 360 per capita, a figure that must be revised down to US \$ 150 per capita at

current levels of exchange. The total population is some 22 million of whom 5 million are displaced persons or refugees. Life expectancy at birth is estimated at 47 years with an overall population growth approaching 3 per cent per annum. There is little access to birth control facilities making population planning, for financial and religious reasons, difficult. Over 50 per cent of the population are beneath the age of 15 years.

## 2.2 Rural Development Policy

There is no formal rural development policy articulated by the Sudanese government.

## 3. GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

### 3.1 Government Machinery

Sudan is largely ungovernable despite the existence of government. The first reason for its ungovernability is that there has never been a political consensus on how the Arab and African traditions of the Sudanese people can be coordinated in a unitary nation state. Secondly, the size of Sudan would seem to require some form of federal or strong regional state structure which has never been effectively designed and implemented. Thirdly, despite attempting to produce a modern state structure for local government by disbanding traditional authority, especially in the rural areas, the net effect has been to destroy traditional lines of authority without substituting any modern equivalent. The consequence of these problems, especially when they are combined with the continuing situation of internal and external destabilization, has been to create government structures at national and regional level which are authoritarian - a situation which implies the role of the state is primarily a controlling, not an enabling, function.

At the present moment, there is a Supreme Military Council controlling the state whose membership is largely made up of the junta who led the June 1989 coup. Beneath the Supreme Military Council are a series of ministerial appointments, some of which incorporate civilians, as senior members of government. Permanent Secretaries (in the civil service), whose appointments are controlled by the Supreme Military Council, bear responsibility for administering development. At a regional level, despite rhetoric to the contrary, what remains of regional government structure is essentially local military control; this is especially true of areas where there is an influx of refugees. Native, or tribal, administration was dissolved in 1971. This form of administration relied on a hierarchy of lineage authority from Sheiks at village or camp level, though Oudras who led clans to the ultimate authority of the Nazir, the lineage leader of the predominant tribe in an area. The traditional system retains its authority in remote or pastoral areas but even there its formal dissolution has produced an ongoing level of insecurity and above all a fiscal crisis. The fiscal crisis largely emanates from the imposition of Sharia law under which the formal tax base of

regional government was largely dissolved and the Muslim community was expected to give part of their income to help the needy. Clearly such a tax base does not maintain the security function of the state. The security problems have been largely addressed by a national expansion of the police and other security services which, in turn, have become the unacceptable face of local government. Since 1981 there has been a demand for regional government in response to the alienation of the South the spread of armed conflict and parallel militarization. The existing form of local government derives from a need to eradicate succession not from a genuine desire to promote local autonomy.

### 3.2 Decentralization

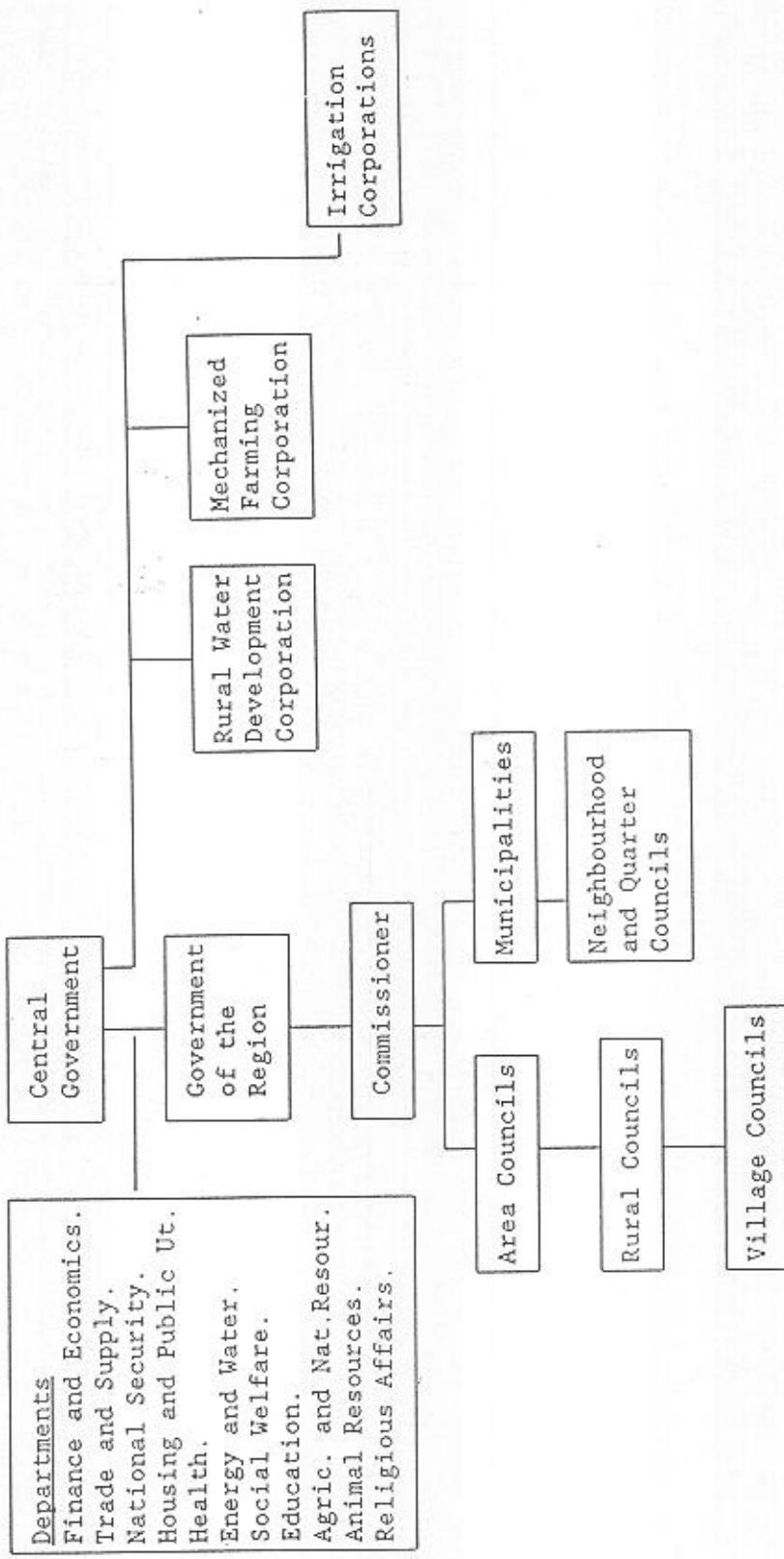
Regional government exists in theory with the provincial level as the first level of regional government. The second level of regional government is composed of Area Councils (between six and eight to a region) which cannot only promulgate local orders and by-laws but can also generate development plans and directly contract services. It is at this level that professional services (eg medical) are delivered by the State government. At the third level are the rural councils, with a grass root structure based on the village or camp council. Despite an emphasis on self-reliance in rural areas, for small farmers and non-farmers (particularly during the democratic government), the Area Councils, from which services were delivered, are too remote. Moreover, they totally lack planning and operational capacity as planning and development matters have continued to be dealt with by central government, not least because of the lack of government finance.

Against this background it is not surprising that rural development in Sudan is somewhat problematic. There is no rural development policy although government speaks of its intentions. There is no national planning capacity except that which is performed by the Ministry of Finance - a planning capacity that emphasises controlled accountability not development enablement. There is no effective local administration since the emphasis is on security not action. Despite this, the majority of the population continue to obtain a livelihood from rural production, combining farming with livestock production.

In such a situation, the traditional contrasting models of development - top down or bottom up - do not seem appropriate. The Government of Sudan simply does not possess sufficient resources to follow a top-down approach to rural development and whatever revenue resources do exist are devoted to the irrigated and mechanised farm sectors not smallholder agriculture. Nor does bottom-up, community led development seem to offer easy answers. Community services collapse beyond major towns; traditional authority structures have been reconstituted but are themselves threatened by increasing conflicts over resources, particularly land, as subsistence is squeezed, notably by an expansion of mechanised farming. But markets still thrive despite government price control. Above all, development occurs through a kind of rural osmosis, economic leakage, a trickle sideways process. Diagram 1 outlines the structure of government from national to local level.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Diagram 1



Source: Environmental Profile Kassala Province, Eastern Region, Sudan.  
 DHV consultants, 1989.

4. SOCIAL STRUCTURE4.1 Social Structure in the Rural Areas

According to the national census of 1983 the population of the Sudan was about 21.5 million. Over 80 per cent of the total population is composed of rural residents divided up into 132 tribal and sub-tribal groups, each living within defined boundaries. These groups are in many ways distinct societies with distinct social institution particularly the tribal leadership which is the link between the tribe and the government institutions. Although in recent years tribal leadership has been weakened as a result of socio-cultural changes or deliberately replaced by modern administration such as the presidential decree of 1970, much of the basic tribal culture and certainly the modes of resource management remain unchanged. Some of the demographic characteristics are shown below in Table 7. These were compiled from the Compendium of Social Statistics (1977), issued by the Department of International Economics and Social Affairs, UN, New York, 1980.

The main feature of the social structure revolves around the traditional structure of tribes and village life. In the irrigated settlement schemes, this structure has broken down and there is a paternalistic administration which seeks to maintain authority. In both the traditional and the modern sector, the family unit remains the production focus. Within the family structure, women have little control over land or access to credit, although they provide a significant labour input to agriculture.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Table 7

Indicator	Estimates and Projections				
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
Total population (million)	15.70	18.27	21.42	25.15	29.43
Population 0-14 years %	42.2	45.4	45.8	45.5	45.1
Sex ratio per 100 females	102.1	102.1	102.0	102.0	101.9
Urban population %	11.8	13.1	14.6	16.1	17.7
Population density/km <sup>2</sup>	6	7	9	10	12
	1970/75	1975/80	1980/85	1985/90	
Growth rate, %	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.1	
Crude birth rate	47.3	47.5	46.0	43.6	
Crude death rate	17.5	15.7	14.0	12.3	
Female life expectancy	49.9	52.6	55.2	57.9	
Male life expectancy	47.3	49.7	52.1	54.4	
Primary education %			49.0		
Secondary education %			19.0		
Tertiary education %			2.0		

4.2 Political Environment

The political environment of Sudan is dominated by the agricultural production system. The urban dwellers have two strong political traditions of liberalism and militant Islam-these traditions, frequently reflected through military rule-have dominated the last 25 years of Sudan's politics. While there is not a rural political party that can take on this urban power base, the rural unions, especially the Tenants Unions of the irrigated schemes are a counter-balance to this urban bias; the Communist Party has a strong tradition of organising within such schemes. The vast majority of the population, however, are beyond the political process because formal local government has collapsed paralleling the decline of traditional authority structures.

The essential characteristic for political organizations remains the rural/urban split but, within rural areas, the critical issue is land access. Traditional farmers have customary rights while modern mechanized farmers obtain a licence (demarcated) or simply claim land (undemarcated). In irrigation schemes, land is allocated through tenancies. Nomads have communal rights under customary law to range resources. Each system of land access has a formal and informal political structure built upon it.

At the present moment, there is no effective voice for political parties or for labour unions. There is a strong tradition of cooperatives but these are largely formed by the state to deliver inputs to and receive produce from smallholders.

4.3 Local Institutions and Participation

Given the current political climate in Sudan, participation is taken as a threat not as a necessary democratic requirement. Within government itself, there are conflicting responsibilities by ministry coupled with total overall control through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Decisions are centralized to MFEP despite a rhetoric that argues for regional autonomy. Within the regions, especially the border regions, control is through local military structures not local government structures.

There is a strong tradition of mistrust between government and NGOs. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the decision to allocate NGOs to sector activity rather than integrated rural development. This distrust is exacerbated when NGOs carry with them an ideology that is contradictory to that preached by the Sudan government. Sudan accurately reflects the central development problem of Africa - the collapse of local governments.

5. ENVIRONMENT5.1 The Environmental Context of Development

Sudan's bio-physical environment is, at the same time, a resource for and a constraint on development; it is the product of both successful and unsuccessful attempts at development. Deserts and semi-deserts cover about 56 per cent of the country in the north, yet the southern areas have more than 1000 mm of precipitation and have the remnants of lush moist tropical forests. To the east, particularly in the area of lacustrine Quaternary clays, the Nile and its tributaries form a significant and partly developed resource. The country has few minerals although there is oil reserves; in areas where moisture is available, environment related diseases such as malaria, yellow fever and schistosomiasis are endemic; in semi-arid areas, desert locusts are a recurrent problem. Yet the resource base is not so inadequate that the low level of development can be explained by limits of the biosphere. Environmental problems, including those of environmental sustainability, are conditioned partly by the nature of the natural environment but also by the appropriateness of management systems and the explicit or implicit modes of development which they articulate.

In many respects, Sudan's environment/development profile is similar to that of poorer sub-Saharan countries, but with additional problems created by a continuing internal war and the influx of more than one million refugees from surrounding countries.

A number of major Sudanese issues, with a bearing on development, may be identified: drought, desertification and famine, reduction of woody biomass, water management strategies and environmental sustainability are part of the agenda for development. Though the issues are treated separately, it is clear that all are linked and impact both directly and indirectly on the quality of life of the people of the Sudan.

5.2 Drought and Famine

A marked decline of rainfall since 1965 is well documented for the semi-arid areas of central Sudan. (Walshead and others, 1988). In White Nile Province, 1984 was the driest year recorded and 1965-1984 annual rainfall was 40 per cent less than 1920-1939; wet season length was reduced by 34 to 51 per cent of its 1920-1939 length. Other major droughts occurred in Sudan between 1910-1917 and 1940-1945. Several authors concluded from the study of 4000 years of climate that what are regarded as drought conditions are in fact typical of most of the period; the damp 1920s and 1960s are in fact anomalous. Development schemes must take into account the possibility that 'drought' conditions are normal.

Drier conditions reduce the flow of wadis and reduce the recharge of shallow aquifers and reservoirs traditionally used by rural people, causing reduction of crops, pasture and biomass. The Kordofan sand dunes from the Libyan Desert have moved south to threaten grazing land and wooded savanna. Even the damper southern areas of Sudan have been affected by drought, both directly by desiccation and indirectly through migration of pastoralists from the north of Darfur and Kordofan. Farmers were able to adapt to drought by adopting new varieties of crops which mature in 60 to 70 days rather than the 120 days of traditional crops.

Migration from the affected areas reflected drought but that migration reflected also the attractiveness of jobs in irrigated areas and the apparent advantages of life in urban areas, particularly the Three Towns.

Administrative mismanagement, shown in breakdown of wells, and lack of fuel for pumping, also contributed to the 'push' factor persuading people to leave. In some cases, environmental degradation seemed to cause migration but, in others, was irrelevant.

Famine may result from prolonged drought but a full explanation of famine entails consideration of human systems, which also contribute to desertification. This phenomenon, entailing alteration of biomass and soil erosion has been variously interpreted as the effect of inappropriate landuse, of resource mismanagement. Clearly, the problem is both environmental and cultural; the symptom is over-exploitation of biotic resources. Affected areas include a band up to 500 km deep across Kordofan, Darfur, the Red Sea Hills and the south of Khartoum. But the single most important cause of famine in Sudan is civil strife.

### 5.3 Woody Biomass

Woody biomass forms a significant resource for a wide range of purposes, both directly and indirectly. In fact, Sudan's economy is a biomass economy. Past intervention failures reflect a limited view of the functions biomass serves for most of the people. This is to an extent due to the fact that conventional accounting systems do not adequately estimate the contribution of nature resources to the economy of Sudan, let alone to individual households.

Non-consumptive uses of woody biomass include its function as part of the biosphere in environmental protection against soil erosion; in moderating the movement of water over and through the soil; in maintaining soil fertility - for example Acacia senegal fixes nitrogen and each Acacia albida tree generates about one tonne of fertilizer per year; it acts as shelter and generates a micro-climate for other crops. At a broader scale, biomass acts as a habitat for wild flora and fauna. The value of these functions

is not calculable in conventional economic terms, but is essential in maintaining environmental quality.

Consumptive uses are also varied. Wood is collected as a fuel-between 25 and 35 million m<sup>3</sup> per year. ESMAP calculates the kerosene equivalent at US \$250 million. Browsing and feeding to animals is calculated to contribute about 30 per cent of the total food input to domestic animals, and is particularly important in the dry season. Building and fencing materials, Gum Arabic, medicines, fruit, nuts, berries, honey and natural fertilizers are also provided from woody biomass. In times of famine tree products form a significant food for starving people. Trees are an integral part of the traditional rain-fed farming system as shade crops and as part of a rotation, either as bush fallow, or more formally in the gum garden system of Kordofan using Acacia senegal.

Indigenous Sudanic farmers and pastoralists are well aware of the value of trees; traditional landuse systems may help to preserve them. Indeed trees are an essential part of the survival strategy of some rural Sudanese. Wood fuel and charcoal use have been studied during the last 15 years because their exploitation has been perceived as a particular threat to wood supplies. ESMAP suggests that consumption will exceed allowable cut by 1992. Others have questioned this pessimistic view, but evidence from study of the Khartoum fuel sector suggests that pessimism is justified. The Khartoum market's effect on fuel has been observed to spread outward particularly towards the south. Between 1960 and 1980, the outer limit of exploitation has spread 300 km to nearly 600km. Future sources are likely to be in Kordofan and Darfur where an organised charcoal industry already exists.

Social/community/agroforestry are seen as essential mechanisms to achieve sustainable environmental development in Sudan. The aims are similar to those of earlier desertification management schemes, but mechanisms are bottom up rather than imposed. Villagers design, implement and manage their own forestry projects using indigenous environmental management skills, calling on outside help for money and technical advice only.

#### 5.4 Refugees

Of the ten million refugees in the world, more than two million are in Sudan, where they experience and create a set of distinctive environmental and social problems. Most of the immigrant refugees are escaping the effects of war and political persecution. Others, however, are more accurately described as environmental refugees, escaping the effects of famine, drought or locust invasion in Sudan or other countries. For a rich country to have an extra five per cent added to its population would be regarded as a major hardship; for a poor and underdeveloped country the effect is, at least locally, devastating. There have been a number of conflicts between refugees and local people.

Though migratory people have been normal throughout African history, political refugees are a new phenomenon. During the 1980s, the number of refugees has risen greatly and, by 1985, over 500,000 were living in a series of twenty temporary refugee settlements, many along the Khartoum to Kassala highway in East Sudan. Earlier refugees had found agricultural labouring jobs in this area, but the increased number of refugees made this impossible. With the intention of enabling refugees to become self-sufficient, the later camps have been considerably smaller, between five and ten thousand persons per camp. This has the advantage that refugees may be able to farm in the locality of the camp, but it also reduces the possibility of a major epidemic disease spreading. Land has been made available near some camps, up to ten feddans per family, and refugees many find temporary harvesting jobs on other local farms.

#### 5.5 Drought, Desertification and Famine

While the concept of desertification is a useful generalization to describe conditions in north and central Sudan, it is misleading to the extent that it conceals considerable differences in the processes involved and places too much emphasis on desert conditions. Deterioration to semi-desert conditions is more significant both for the area involved and the number of people affected. Recent analysis of desertification has suggested that the problem may have been seriously over-estimated due to extrapolation of the worst conditions as though they applied to whole regions. Furthermore, the permanence of the deterioration has been assumed: exclusion of grazing pressure may allow rapid recovery.

Anthropogenic causes of desertification vary spatially. Probably the most severe deterioration occurs near modern tube wells where pastoralists water their cattle. Here grazing pressure and browsing of trees is so intensive that an area of virtually desert conditions may extend for up to 10km<sup>2</sup>.

Increases in the area of mechanised farming, currently officially stated as over 5 million hectares, reduces the amount of grazing available, displacing pastoralists further south and into conflict with smallholder farmers. Initially, yields were high, but in the absence of fertilizer, yields fell, and the degraded land was abandoned, and new land taken; a semi-institutionalised form of desertification. In contrast, little attention has been paid to the needs of smallholding farmers. Smallholders suffer the effects of grazing on their fields and browsing of their tree crops. Any extension of cropping must be onto environmentally more marginal land, which demands higher inputs of labour and is liable to more deterioration and a greater probability of crop failure and famine. As usual, the poorer farmers pay the highest price for environmental degradation.

Government response to desertification in Sudan has been

organised under the Desert Encroachment - Control Rehabilitation Plan.

Elements of the plan include sand dune fixation, re-seeding and rehabilitation through enclosures, conservation of grazing using firebreaks, rainfall harvesting, shelter belts of vegetation, attempts to improve water supply by small dam construction, sedenterization of nomads, integrated planning of cropped land, and tree planting. Attempts to rehabilitate the gum gardens of Kordofan in an agroforestry framework have been keenly supported by local people; but attempts to deprive people of traditional grazing lands have been unpopular and led to inter-tribal conflict.

#### 5.6 Water Management

An old colonial hand, L.D. Stamp, felt able to generalise that "the development of Africa can be summarised in one word - water". Though more recent analyses suggest that the problem is not quite so simple, there can be little doubt that water is both a fundamental resource and hazard in Sudan. There are two linked but distinct aspects of water supply in Sudan; firstly, the provision of adequate amounts of safe drinking water and water for household use, and, secondly, the provision of water for supplementary irrigation in semi arid regions. Supply of household water is particularly problematic in rural areas and for pastoralists. All of the traditional sources are threatened by drought and desertification and may be much reduced during dry seasons.

In the Gedaref area, provision of water supply, partly used for irrigation, led to overgrazing and over-cultivation; the best sites, understandably, were developed first, so that subsequent developments were less cost-effective. When local authorities have accepted responsibility for water provision, especially through hafirs, local people have responded by showing less initiative in developing their own water supplies and maintenance of supplies.

In surveying irrigation in Sudan since independence one cannot be optimistic about the success of large schemes. Half of the four millions hectares of irrigation in Sudan have been developed since 1955 and production on the previously irrigated area has been intensified. This has been achieved at enormous cost, including US \$700 million from the World Bank alone. Due to a change of World Bank policies, the recent trend has been towards attempting first to rehabilitate and then to modernise existing schemes, rather than to develop new ones. Technically, the newer schemes such as the Rahad and New Halfa have been partial failures.

For political reasons, charges for water and land are not at economic levels; imported inputs of fertilizers and pesticides cost over half the value of the exported cotton; 88 per cent of the labour inputs to the scheme are from hired labour rather than provided by the share-cropping tenants; tenants are reasonably

housed but the 630,000 labourers and their families live in squatter settlements with contaminated water supplies.

Since the early years of this century, engineers have made plans to cut a new course for the Nile to the east of the Sudd-100,000 km<sup>2</sup> of swamp in which high rates of evaporation reduces the outflow of the White Nile. The environmental price of this scheme would be paid by indigenous people; the developed world would obtain cheap cotton. Again, the poor would be the losers.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

The macroeconomic and macropolitical summary of Sudan is bleak. Without structural adjustment and a re-focus of development effort on smallholder rural production, the development prognosis is sour. Such structural readjustment is not, however, possible in the current political climate which favours the urban instead of the rural area, the religious instead of the material success. In rural areas traditional structures have collapsed without any modern structure taking their place. Paralleling the collapse is the collapse of services to the rural population forcing them back onto a minimum level of household resources. Such levels of poverty exacerbate the rape of the environment but, again, it is the poor who lose out in this rush to destruction. Sudan remains a country where the majority of people are marginalized.

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PART II

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN - SUMMARY REPORT

Evaluation of the Dutch Rural  
Development Programme executed  
on behalf of the Operations  
Review Unit, Directorate General  
International Cooperation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Leusden, May 1990

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1. THE SETTING

The Sudanese people have three strong traditions that, among their many attributes, deserve comment. There is a rich intellectual tradition, a cosmopolitan outlook with a strong Islamic influence, a tendency to debate, scholarship and argument. There is another tradition of honesty, a tradition that broadly extends from family to government; and there is a third tradition that - like the other two - has echoes down two thousand years, a military tradition. In the right place, at the right time, these three traditions have their place. Without military discipline, where would irrigated agriculture be?

There is a fourth tradition which is much stronger, much more admirable and at times, much more dangerous. Sudanese people are kind, polite, generous. It is a dangerous tradition when development decisions have to be made, when Sudanese institutions have to be changed and the environment rebuilt in a country that is simply vast.

The Sudanese institutions, intellectual, government and military institutions - not the people in them - are hidebound. They are restricted by gate keepers, by too many competing authorities that cannot compete because they are parallel structures. Being kind, polite and generous means all survive but none prosper.

Rural development in Sudan is somewhat problematic. There is no rural development policy although government speaks of its intentions. There is no national planning capacity except that which is performed by the Ministry of Finance - a planning capacity that emphasises controlled accountability, not development enablement. There is no effective local administration since the emphasis is on security, not action. Despite this, the majority of the population continue to obtain a livelihood from rural production, combining farming with livestock production.

In such a situation, the traditional contrasting models of development - top down or bottom up - do not seem appropriate. The Government of Sudan simply does not possess sufficient resources to follow a top-down approach to rural development and revenue resources that do exist are devoted to the irrigated and mechanised farm sectors rather than to smallholder agriculture. Nor does bottom-up, community led development seem to offer easy answers. Community services collapse beyond major towns; traditional authority structures have been reconstituted but are themselves threatened by increasing conflicts over resources, particularly land, as subsistence is squeezed.

But markets still thrive despite government price control. Above all, development occurs through a kind of rural osmosis, economic leakage, a trickle sideways process. It is very Sudanese this "trickle sideways" model of development. It is about a conversation here and there, a project that re-establishes infrastructural discipline, an investment that explores new paths

of intervention, an institutional change. It is personal - it requires knowing people, thinking through game plans, taking sides. It is political, but then it is Sudanese. Above all, it demands flexibility both to respond and to initiate.

This flexibility is a nightmare for aid agencies. To guarantee success, those responsible for aid on the ground have to abandon, or hide, their operations from the stated goals, the reporting practices and the organizational procedures of their own agencies. What does not work in Sudan are tight agency procedures, formal requirements of donors and stringent cofinancing commitment. Flexibility is all, but it takes courage to operate in this development project "market" including institutional courage on behalf of the donor.

Such a claim is clearly outrageous. What proof exists to support the abandonment of accepted procedures? What kind of project purpose would be central to this brave new world of flexible programming where it is important who you know rather than what you know? But wait - it is not a brave new world - it is experience.

It is an experience of success which can be observed in the rural development programme, in the eight Dutch financed projects, that have taken on the macroeconomic and macropolitical problems and found microeconomic and micropolitical answers. Success is to be measured by how far projects overcame constraint.

In different places, in different projects, the Dutch Rural Development Programme has captured some elements of success. These can be built into a series of models of "best practice", a professional yardstick which can always be improved, within a Sudanese rural development policy and planning framework.

## 2. THE DUTCH RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN SUDAN

### 2.1 Dutch Aid to Sudan

Broadly the Sudanese receive Dutch Aid through four programmes namely Bilateral; Commodity aid; Food aid and the Rural Development Programme. These sectors account for 48, 17, 19 and 16 per cent respectively of Dutch Aid to Sudan. Table 1 provides an approximate summary of Dutch Aid to Sudan.

Table 1 Dutch Aid to Sudan

<u>Programme Area</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Bilateral Aid	Infrastructure	48
Commodity Aid	Purchase of Goods	17
Food Aid	Purchase of Food	19
Rural Programme Aid*	Rural Development	16

\* 1989 Rural Programme Budget is Dfl 17.2 million

2 Particulars of Rural Development Projects Selected for Evaluation

Out of some 40 projects which have been funded in the Rural Programme in Sudan, a team of local consultants has evaluated eight projects, examining how far the projects promote rural development. The eight projects are listed in Table 2. For more detailed information refer to Annex 7.

Table 2 Rural Development Projects Selected for Evaluation of Sector Programme in Sudan

<u>Project</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Funding Route</u>
1 Women in Development	Northern	Multilateral
2 Integrated Women's Project	Red Sea	Bilateral
3 Ethiopian Refugees	Kassala	NGO
4 Refugee Settlement	Kassala	NGO
5 Small Holder Credit	Kordofan	NGO
6 Locust Control	National	Multilateral
7 Forestry	National	Multilateral
8 Cotton Stalk Briquetting	Rahad	Bilateral

These eight projects reflect the objectives, priorities and approach of the Dutch Rural Development Programme in different ways. Table 3 gives a provisional summary. Annex 3 contains additional information on costs and measures of participation.

The FAO Women in Development project in Northern Sudan (project 1 on the list, see Table 2) focuses on selected income earning activities for rural women. The project expired towards the end of 1988 and has been running since that time on Sudanese funds.

The women's project in Sinkat in the Red Sea Province (project 2) was conceived as a training project in home economics. The project is situated in a remote area where women traditionally live in seclusion. The project expired but is kept running on countervalue funds. Through its implementation by Ahfad, the women's university, the project has contributed to Sudanese concepts of Women in Development.

Table 3 Matching selected projects with objectives, priorities and approach of Dutch Rural Development Programme

Project	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>Objectives</u>								
1. Sustained improvement of living conditions in rural areas	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)
2. Emphasis on activities that				+	+			
strengthen selfsufficiency of the population	+			+	+			
Income generation and production orientation	+			+	+			
Strengthen institutional capabilities				(+)	+	+	+	
through participation of people, notably women	+	+	+	+	+			(+)
3. Focus on disadvantaged groups (poor, women, tenant farmers, smallholders, landless ..)	+	+	+	+	+			(+)
4. Range of preferably small-scale activities	+	+	+	+	+			(+)
5. Preference for cohesive package of activities	+	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	(+)	
<u>Priorities</u>								
1. food production	+		+	+	+	+		
2. food security			+				+	
3. nutrition		+	+					
4. Primary Health Care		+	+					
5. (drinking) water and sanitation								
6. population issues								
7. credit and cooperatives	+			+	+			(+)
8. rural employment				(+)			+	+
9. institutional strengthening						+	+	+
10. participation and organization	(+)	(+)	+	+	+			
11. development of intermediate townships						+	+	+
12. energy					(+)		+	(+)
13. ecology								+
14. forestry								
<u>Approach</u>								
1. small-scale interrelated interventions	+	+	+	+	+			
2. 'capital extensive'	+	+	+	+	+			
3. in concordance with local structures and socio-cultural conditions	+	+	+	+	+			
4. preference for productive activities	+			+	+			?
5. use of appropriate technology				(+)	+			
6. a high degree of participation	+	+	+	+	+			

The Sudan Council of Churches refugee programme based at Gedaref in Kassala province (project 3) was set up as a relief programme. Its emphasis is on provision of health and social services. The lack of access to resource bases, notably land, is a major obstacle for this project to shift from relief to development. The Dutch contribution through the Rural development Programme was fortuitous and minor in relation to the total budget. Although the programme is run by a Sudanese NGO, little autonomy is allowed from Khartoum head office to the field.

The Qala en Nahal refugee project in Kassala province and the En Nahud project in Kordofan (projects 4 and 5) both started from a land resource base from which production is built to establish income generation opportunities. Both projects focus on small farmer, household level of production. The En Nahud project in particular is strongly linked to and controlled by the Sudanese in both a professional and institutional sense. The Qala en Nahal scheme is insecure in its availability of water and in depletion of land resources.

The projects on locust control, forestry and cotton stalk briquetting (projects 6,7,8) are all concerned with improving natural resource utilization. Project 6 and 7 focus on strengthening institutional capacity to build a strong pest control unit and to establish new models of forestry intervention. The briquetting project is a research and development project.

### 3. SUCCESS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

#### 3.1 Themes of Success

Project evaluations were used to explore the 'themes of success' between the projects. The aim of this analysis was to see how common themes of success emerged between the projects. The background to these themes of success was the evaluation team's discussion on project sustainability. Project sustainability was disaggregated to explore what maintained good projects - the themes of success list was a result of this disaggregation. Table 4 contains these themes and their relevance to individual projects.

## Box 1 Exploration of the themes of success

Extension	- that the project has successful outreach to rural people.
Professional Capacity	- that trained staff exist to promote rural development.
Smallholders/women	- that the focus is on rural production at a household level.
Access to Credit	- that formal mechanisms exist to promote credit within the project.
Income generation	- that the production focus facilitates an increase in household earnings.
Local Structure	- that indigenous power and authority relations are the basis for project control
Building on traditional practices	- that enablement comes from working with existing solutions not superimposing answers.
Stimulating new policies	- that successful project create and consolidate new thinking.
Experimental	- that a correct solution is not assumed.
Environmentally aware	- that there is due acknowledgement of the ecological disruption caused by development
Appropriate technology	- that by scale, cost and material use, the technology best fits the project design.
Feasibility study	- that there is a sound investment plan.
Learning from experience	- that lessons learnt be incorporated into project redesign.
Setting Clear Goals	- that targets are a necessary guide to evaluate project progress.



Table 4 Themes of Success identified in Project Purpose

<u>Themes of Success</u>	<u>Relevance in projects*</u>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
· Extension	+	+	+	+	+		+	
· Professional capacity	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
· Small holders/women	+	+	+	+	+		(+)	
· Access to credit	+	(+)	+	+	+			
· Income generation	+	(+)	+	+	+			
· Household production focus	+	+	+	+	+			
· Local structure	+	+	(+)	(+)	+	+	+	+
· Building on traditional practice	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
· Stimulating new policies	+	+			+	+	+	+
· Experimental	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
· Environmentally aware			+	+	+	+	+	+
· Appropriate technology			+	+	+	+	+	+
· Feasibility study	+	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+
· Learning from experience	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
· Setting clear goals	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

\* "+" indicates that the theme was considered relevant, whereas a "(+)" indicates that the theme was considered to have a restricted relevance.

The above table is a measure of the potential relevance - a measure of fit to the RD programme - rather than the actualization of a theme in reality. To what extent themes materialize is a measure of success. Table 5 gives an outline of the actual role themes played in the various projects.

Table 5 Fulfillment of the Themes of Success

<u>Themes of Success</u>	<u>Actual fulfillment in projects*</u>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
· Extension	!	!	+	+	+		!	
· Professional capacity	!	!	+	+	+	+	+	
· Small holders/women	+	+	+	+	+		(+)	
· Access to credit	!		!	!	+			
· Income generation	(+)	!	!	+	(+)			
· Household production focus	+	!	!	+	+			
· Local structure	(+)	!				+	+	!
· Building on traditional practice	+	!	!	(+)	+	!	!	!
· Stimulating new policies	!	!			(+)	+	+	
· Experimental	!	!	!	+	+	+	!	+
· Environmentally aware			+	+	+	+	!	+
· Appropriate technology			!/+	!/+	+	?	?	!
· Feasibility study	!	!	!	+	+	?	!	!
· Learning from experience	!	!	!	+	+	?	+	?
· Setting clear goals	!	!	!	+	+	+	?	+

\* A "!" indicates that the theme was not successfully carried through, or did not materialize to the full extent.  
 A "(+)" indicates a guarded positive assessment, for example when it is too early to judge.

It should be noted that rural development programmes based on settlements with access to land scored highly, that building institutional capacity figures well but that relief and projects on women in development do quite poorly. The team emphasises that this result is because the themes of success emerged from a discussion on sustainability which in turn, emerged from the goals of the rural development programme. Poor scores, therefore, could simply reflect that individual projects do not match the goals of the rural development programme.

.2

### Interpretation of Themes of Success

The themes of success cover an odd mixture of process and outcome, plus elements of sound project management.

The themes can be arranged in a more meaningful way. The characteristics of development projects fall into three categories, which we have summarised 'Investing in People', 'Thinking Ahead' and 'Institutional Strengthening' (Table 6). There are also negative findings reflecting on the non-sustainability of projects which we have grouped under 'Emerging Concerns'.

Table 6 Characteristics of rural development projects in Sudan

#### A. Successful Projects

<u>Focus</u>	<u>Content</u>
Investing in People	Household production Extension Credit/revolving fund Income generation Professional capacity
Thinking Ahead	Feasibility study Clear goals Learn from experience Allow for experiments Stimulate new policies
Institutional Strengthening	Local structures Professional capacity Control by Sudanese

#### B. Emerging Concerns

Recurrent Income	Revenue base Prices Access to land
Environment	Declining yield Population pressure Water

Taking each category and exploring the macro and microcontext, gives some feel for success.

## 2.1 Investing in People

The primary resource is the people involved in rural development from the smallholder to the professional. After all, all measures of development are people not things. The macroeconomic context is bleak - despite smallholder farming providing most employment (80 per cent), as well as contributing to economic growth (30 per cent GNP) and to exports (28 per cent), there is little investment in this sector.

Yet, from all the projects under review, a dominant theme of success is extension, whether it be formal or informal, government or private. Extension equals contact and, with contact, comes discussion.

Discussion has, time and again, focused on credit, on accessing capital to intensify production since it is from the intensification of small holdings, not the extensification of irrigation on mechanised farming, that development will come. The expansion of credit opportunity through local institutions and particularly the building of revolving funds within projects - is a striking success, freeing smallholders from the tyranny of the merchants and the problems of accessing capital under Shariah law.

Since Sudanese smallholders are no different from other African smallholders, in that they require off-farm income to maintain the reproduction of the farming household, there also is an emphasis of income generation activities outside of agriculture, activities that are needed to maintain settled agricultural households. Success is thus also measured by the ability of projects to offer non-agricultural income opportunities. The refugee projects, where settlement allows for the development of a range of service provision, are obvious examples of non-agricultural income opportunities.

Above all, given the loss of 300,000 professionals through emigration and the dismissal of the key actors in rural development through politics, success is measured by the development and the deployment of professionals who manoeuvre within the Sudanese political framework to ensure donor projects can work.

Extension, credit, off-farm income opportunity and Sudanese professionals - measures of success since they escape the macroeconomic and macropolitical constraints and deliver a livelihood on the ground.

### 3.2.2 Thinking Ahead

Thinking ahead appears a requirement in any project, and is not a prerogative of rural development projects. Good projects are carefully considered beforehand, and only taken up when deemed feasible. Feasibility implies coping with reality, coping with local institutional capacity, local cashflow problems and local environment. It also implies procedures to minimize risk and uncertainty while exploring new opportunities. And what are the criteria for this success?

Firstly, successful projects establish a purpose which extends beyond the project lifecycle, beyond the donor bankroll. The Sudanese experience of refugee programmes, unparalleled in Africa, has led them to emphasize development, not relief, so that populations are self-reliant when relief funding, always relatively easy to obtain, is withdrawn.

Secondly, successful projects have clean internal procedures establishing goals, monitoring performance and redefining purpose - successful projects have management. The ability to learn from experience and respond accordingly proves a major difference between projects. All projects had grown wiser over the years, but only few managed to match changes in thinking with timely changes in project implementation.

Thirdly, successful projects are courageous - they encourage experimentation. These experimentations range from encouraging local and professional autonomy to development of appropriate technology. Appropriate technology in this context centers around traditional practices. Ironically the refugee projects score high in this respect. Since their access to land is limited, they have to develop ways to get the most out of the resources they have. At the same time they have to demonstrate that traditional practices are economically beneficial and that declining fertility can be curtailed.

Finally, successful projects deal directly with government institutions, however inconvenient or obstructive these may be. This becomes particularly important towards the end of a project's life, when continuity of funding is at stake. Projects that have managed by that time to draw on government budgets, even if these derive from countervalue funds, are in a better position to survive.

### 3.2.3 Institutional Strengthening

Successful projects must be located in local structures - from such a location the project can subvert the structure but a successful project does not try to circumvent or usurp local structures.

Institutional strengthening is a difficult issue in present day Sudan. On the one hand nobody would dare to deny its importance. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that the institutions themselves are paralysed by an intricate setup of rules and regulations that seem designed to obstruct rather than to further development.

Institutional strengthening is meaningful if it creates a climate for policy change, creates an atmosphere for new programmatic action and create capacity for research and development. Aid can stimulate changes but it is the Sudanese people themselves who produce the changes. The one asset that is still there is the unfailing integrity of Sudanese professionals. This capacity needs to be nurtured and enhanced for better times to come.

#### 4 Concerns

For the future, there is the environmental challenge to leave our children's children productive opportunity. The difficulties of raising capital under Sharia law and the difficulties of lending against commercial land resources, mean that farmers find it unattractive to invest in landscape, in building the environment. It is a challenge that needs to be addressed with Sudanese solutions moving rural development from mining monocultures to more integrated landuse management.

Other concerns emerging from the evaluation of eight rural development projects largely relate to macro-economic issues such as pricing policies and other policies that work against the interest of smallholders.

#### Women in Development (WID)

##### 4.1 WID Component in Projects

Women are a special target group of the Rural Development programme; women are listed along with other disadvantaged groups such as landless and tenant farmers.

Two projects (project 1;2) on our list focus on women exclusively. Both projects are time expired and are now testing their sustainability. In the two refugee projects (project 3;4) women are addressed as a specific target group parallel to other mainstream activities. The last 'people focused' project on our list (project 5) addresses male and female smallholders and, in addition, has established a kitchen garden project for women. This project is a recent one.

In this brief analysis, the problems of WID will be assessed in the light of 'themes of success' identified for all eight projects. One glance at Table 5 shows that the themes of success appear to be rarely fulfilled in the women projects (1;2).

In the refugee projects as well, the women component would score badly when judged according to the themes of success. Some specific problems are highlighted below.

### 3.3.2 Women Projects - the Missing Criteria

Firstly, it appears that formal project planning, setting of objectives and monitoring of performance are generally weak. The shortage of professionally documented results proves an obstacle to the learning process and is a disservice to the cause of women in development. One could be positive and say, 'we are still learning from our mistakes'. However, one could equally well say that every failure is another setback to the cause of WID. It is important that such projects succeed so that they can demonstrate how things are to be done rather than serve as food for easy criticisms.

Secondly, the extension services provided in women's projects lack technical expertise resulting in poor selection of income generating activities and poor implementation of such activities. The methods followed tend to lack imagination and are often confined to home economics. In one women's project and in one refugee project, extension is best described as glorified entertainment. In the other women's project, extensionists were mainly occupied with collecting monies due from project participants.

Thirdly, criteria for success cannot be similar when the options open to women in project areas are incomparable - the life of a Beja woman in the Red Sea Hills bears no resemblance to that of a woman farmer in Kordofan. It follows that project models should not be copied from one area to another before assessing their feasibility.

Lastly, women projects often need a wide range of inputs and interventions which calls for a multisectoral approach. The problem is, however, that women projects appear to have insufficient leverage to command the level of support needed for an integrated approach. (The women's project in Northern Region received staff secondments from various ministries. This arrangement, however, failed to develop into a proper integrated approach.)

We can only support statements voiced by various WID experts in Sudan, who feel that women are best served as regular participants of mainstream projects. Access to project components should then be monitored closely. Another conclusion would be that projects aiming for income generation right from the start are better received and are more sustainable. This is further discussed in Annex 5, Rural Development Theses.

PROJECTS AND MACRO ISSUES

Going back to our original list of project themes of success, each theme can, without difficulty, be set against macro-economic constraints and macro-political realities which would illustrate why success in rural development projects in Sudan is elusive (Table 7).

Table 7 Themes of Success and Macro-Economic Reality

<u>Project Theme of Success</u>	<u>Macro-economic Reality</u>
Extension	No small farmer focus
Professional capacity	System of 'gatekeepers' and parallel institutions prohibits enablement
Small holders/women	Centrally planned agriculture
Access to credit	Credit largely merchant controlled
Income generation	Administrative employment; Price Control
Household production focus	Corporate production
Local Structure	Decentralization in name only; Focus on accountability
Build on traditional practice	Management instruction
Stimulating new policies	Preserving existing practices
Experimental	Dogmatic
Environmentally aware	Mining resources
Appropriate technology	Profitable technology
Setting clear goals	Muddled policy and planning
Learning from experience	Blue print planning; Trusting book models
Feasibility study	Political priorities
Financial security	Revenue shortfalls

The macro themes all illustrate the inadequate focus of local rural development policies; macro-economic reality constrains local opportunity.

One can argue that extension is of vital importance in projects because the government has little focus on the small farm households, but rather on the irrigated and mechanised dry farming sector. The emphasis on professional capacity is an emphasis on enablement which professionals in government, frequently forced to focus on accountability, cannot easily match. This problem is exacerbated by the number of institutional blockages, normally parallel functions, that make it difficult to deliver development to people. Again centrally planned agriculture quite effectively delivers produce but not income to small holders - not least because the pricing and exchange structures work against small farmers.

Income generation only works when it is based on the rural production system, not outside it - administrative employment, particularly in the public sector, is not necessarily a productive task. The challenge is to focus on household not corporate development; building on local structures and common practice rather than central institutions which issue management instructions. And the challenge is to have courage to experiment, not to have the authority to be dogmatic.

Finally the macro themes touch on the planning and economic difficulties in implementing rural development in Sudan.

## SUSTAINABILITY

### Underlying Factors

Sustainability has been raised within the evaluation at two levels - at a macro level and at a project level. At a macro level, Sudan does not have a rural development policy and, more importantly, its rural investment is focused away from smallholder production. Consequently, donor emphasis on rural development is at loggerheads with government intentions. This conflict is increased because Sudan has refused to reform its budget and foreign exchange policy, to pay its external debts and to remove subsidies that favour the urban rather than rural area. Furthermore, the role of the private sector is largely limited to trade ensuring that the Sudan government puts itself in a Catch 22 in which it cannot produce but nobody else is allowed to produce.

The second series of issues that underlie sustainability - namely management, organization and local participation - are ones that are not coherently addressed by the Sudanese government. Internal administration has collapsed and experienced managerial personnel have left government moving to mechanised farming and trade or employment abroad. Within projects, the capacity for participation is minimal. One of the strengths of the Rural Development programme has essentially been to build institutional capacity and thus to develop policies that would allow government to break from its political Catch 22.

The third factor, finance, required for sustainability is only just beginning to be addressed. With donor emphasis on new institutional forms, projects are already beginning to create revolving funds to address problems of running costs, maintenance and depreciation. It must be said, however, that it is difficult to judge the success of revolving funds while donor monies are still available to projects - this is the case in six out of eight projects under examination in Sudan. Another interesting note is that four of the projects under review (projects 3, 4, 6 and 7) are jointly financed with other donors giving a "risk spread" investment but simultaneously pulling donors together to pressure the Sudanese Government for change.

Another issue that arises in debates on sustainability is the appropriateness of technology. Again, in the projects under review, technical parameters were relatively unimportant. In the one particular case, cotton stalk briquetting, the project was essentially an R&D project, not a development project. As such, it sits easily within the formal structure of Sudan's irrigation and research boards but uneasily in the community.

The socio-cultural factors that influence sustainability, particularly the involvement of local organization and the participation of women, sit well with the small area projects involved in agricultural production. There is, however, a tendency to seek to respect the local socio-cultural factors at the expense of production. As a consequence, if undue attention is paid to these factors, projects tend towards welfare rather than production. On the bottom line, production will transform socio-cultural factors rather than maintain them.

Critical to discussion of sustainability is the issue of the maintenance of environmental quality. In looking at both the projects and Sudan's trajectory of development, one would have to conclude that Sudan is forced to take the path that chooses development before environment. With economic growth there is a possibility for environmental protection; without economic growth there is no potential for maintaining the ecological balance. Again, the donors have taken a leading role in raising discussion of the minimal environmental damage that is compatible with economic development. This is a hard message to carry when there is increasing poverty in an arid and semi-arid area. Environmental Impact Assessment is still not a policy instrument and, although there is an increasing level of research and education about environmental issues, the undefined pattern of land ownership prohibits conservation and successful regulatory control.

Finally, there are external factors that prevent the pursuit of sustainable policies. Firstly, the external economic environment is one that would force Sudan through serious economic readjustment, accelerating the impoverishment of much of the rural areas. Current world markets do not generally provide adequate prices for the agricultural produce from Sudan's monocultures. As a consequence, there is a tendency to mine the soil resource in an extensive manner rather than seeking to intensify production by maintaining a wide range of landuse practices that would maintain biological diversity. Secondly, there are a range of internal and external political factors, lately taking sides in the global Islamic revival, which has meant that it has been impossible to separate external politics from internal policies. The consequence of this has been an increased escalation in national and regional conflicts which, combined with the increasing number of disasters that rise as marginal people are placed on marginal land, has meant that the cost of human displacement far exceeds any gains in economic development.

Sustainability and Themes of Success

How do project themes of success figure, when put in the perspective of sustainability of project results, as defined by the IOV reporting format? Are themes of success that emerge from project evaluations covered by questions regarding sustainability and vice versa? (Table 8)

Table 8 Themes of Success Set against Questions of Sustainability

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Addressed by Sustainability questions<sup>1</sup></u>
Investing in People	Yes (question A11; A15)
Household production	Yes (question A4; A5)
Extension	Yes (question A4; A5)
Credit/revolving fund	Yes (question A16; B8; B9)
Income generation	Yes (question A10; A16)
Professional capacity	Yes (question B20)
Thinking Ahead	
Feasibility study	
Clear goals	
Allow for experiments	Yes (question A4; A5; B13)
Learn from experience	Yes (question A4; A5)
Stimulate new policies	Yes (question B1; B2; B6; B7; B9)
Institutional strengthening	Yes (question B1; B16; B17; B18)
Local structures	Yes (question B2; B16; B17; B18)
Professional capacity	Yes (question B20)
Control by Sudanese	Yes (question B16; B17)
Recurrent income	
Revenue base	Yes (question A7)
Prices	
Access to land	Yes (question A3)
Environment	Yes (question B10; B13)
Declining yield	Yes (question B10; B13)
Population pressure	Yes (question B11; B13)
Water	

Project Results in the Light of Sustainability

All projects have been successful in one or another characteristic. No project, however, can be rated as sustainable under present conditions with the possible exception of project 5, which has not yet stood the test of time.

<sup>1</sup> Questions on (sustainability of) project results are "A" numbers; on 'sustainability per se' are "B" numbers; Numbers correspond with IOV terms of reference.

the women projects (project 1;2) have both expired, and are struggling to survive. Project 1 probably stands a better chance, because it has a better institutional rooting, and because income generating possibilities are there. Project 2 has, in a sense, fulfilled its objectives, but appears to have been extended beyond its useful life. Its objectives do not match those of the Rural Development programme and are out of step with current thinking on WID.

For the refugee projects (project 3;4) the concept of sustainability is a contradiction in terms. Refugees are not meant to stay, and -although reality may prove the opposite- either do they intend to stay. Project 4 has more options than project 3, but subsistence is squeezed even in project 4.

For project 5, it is too early to judge. Of all projects on our list it seems to have achieved the most (or manipulated the circumstances best) to create a chance of sustainability.

Projects 6 and 7 excel in strengthening institutions, and create possibilities for policy institutional and legal changes. The next round of investment, however, is necessary as both projects move to implementation controlled by Sudanese.

Project 8 seems unlikely to achieve its goal on a grand scale, but the technology it aims to promote may prove its worth in certain specific niches.

It is evident then that lack of sustainability can result from a low score on only one characteristic, while continuity requires a good score on most if not all characteristics. Moreover, sustainability requires projects to fulfil a range of conditions any of which are beyond project control.

Projects can however be designed in such a way that foreseeable mishaps are avoided. It is here that the quality described in section 3.3.2 as 'Thinking ahead' is a prerequisite.

#### CONTRADICTIONS

Evaluation experience indicates that both donors and government are, at times, engaged in doublespeak. Perhaps the clearest examples are those where projects claim institutional linkage but sought independence and where professional capacity in government was praised but simultaneously donors tried to obtain these professionals for their own projects.

Behind this doublespeak is a common problem - all actors are searching for the people who can create space to create economic growth.

While striving to put together all available evidence into clear cut models of success, at times one feels a model of contradictions suits the reality of rural development better than any other model. It is undoubtedly a pessimistic model, but it will serve to illustrate paradoxes, in our judgment, on what represents success in rural development. Table 9 contains some of the common doublespeak of project analysis.

Table 9 The Contradictory Models

<u>We say</u>	<u>We mean</u>
Traditional practices	Experimentation
Focus on poor	Income generators
Local institutional linkage	Semi-autonomy
Enhance government objectives	Create new policies
Enhance professional capacity	Pull best staff from government

#### CHANNEL OF AID

In order to judge the success of various channels of aid, one needs to be careful in defining what is meant here. The question 'Is aid better by multilateral, bilateral or NGO routings?' appears really irrelevant if it addresses only the channel of finance, not the actual implementing agency. Modality thus defined reflects donor accountability not Sudanese development.

In reality, the picture is confused: Multilaterals are steered bilaterally (projects 6 and 7), NGOs implement bilateral aid (project 2) and NGO's between themselves are vastly different in their approach and professionalism (project 3,4,5).

There is a tendency to suggest that NGOs might work best but this largely ignores the institutional challenge of Sudanese development, a challenge that requires building with government. While NGOs are flexible, they seldom have the financial or organizational capacity to influence substantial change. Their policies are driven by their metropolitan funders not local reality; their enthusiasm frequently outweighs their professional competence; their anti-establishment egalitarianism does not encourage economic growth and their legitimacy is weak. As a source of ideas, NGOs are valuable; as development agents, the verdict is unclear.

On the ground all modalities work if the project is well designed. And the basis of the design is simple. As outlined above, there appear to be broadly four factors to success namely:

1. Possession of a rural resource base especially land from which to build outwards.
2. Solid planning, monitoring and evaluation of programme components.

3. A willingness to restructure institutions to face new challenges.
4. Above all, participation and control by Sudanese.

It is apparent, in Sudan, that the choice of channel matters enormously. The sector specialists play a crucial role in this respect. They know whom to approach for what type of project. A nation wide pest control project obviously benefits from a strong multilateral setup (with the Dutch sector specialist playing a key role in it). A more typical rural development project, such as the smallholder project in En Nahud, is well served by a professional NGO, with a strong regional base in the project area.

It is also clear that the attention given to a project by the sector specialists is a reflection of their interest in particular subsectors. Some projects that provide a challenge, are guided and promoted with zest. (Project 6 and 7 are good examples.) On other projects, the files are thin.

#### CONCLUSION

There is general recognition that Sudan is following a non-sustainable development path that is impoverishing both people and environment. Although there is no rural development strategy, there are elements of a strategy in abandoned plans and recent ministerial statements. The bottom line is the macro-economic position of Sudan, especially its debt position, which is partially a debt for high capital cost agriculture.

The evaluation team emphasizes the success of projects focusing on smallholders and enhancing institutional capacity. There are however, two broad concerns that focus on macro-economic problems namely the question of recurrent income and environment.

We would not conclude from this that the RD Programme is unsuccessful particularly in Sudan where bilateral aid is largely focused on infrastructural development and where the RD Programme allows a specific focus on rural development. The flexibility of the RD Programme offers real opportunity in the institutional context of Sudan. Perhaps if the RD Programme did not exist - a programme that allows exploration of rural development initiatives - someone in DGIS would have to invent it.

Projects work well because the Rural Development programme is flexible. The sector specialist at the embassy is innovative and knowledgeable. The sector specialist knows who can decide the action, where and when.

An expanded bilateral programme - given Sudanese experience - might not deliver rural development. Borrowing that well worn American expression, our opinion is that if the RD programme works, do not fix it.

PART III

ANNEXES

valuation of the Dutch Rural  
Development Programme executed  
on behalf of the Operations  
Review Unit, Directorate General  
International Cooperation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Leusden, May 1990

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Annex 1

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND SELECTION OF PROJECTS

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND SELECTION OF PROJECTS

The evaluation of the RD programme, in which ETC was hired to review the Sudan experience, was significantly different from any evaluation so far undertaken by ETC. In a deep sense, it was a privilege to work on the evaluation not least because it raised fundamental questions about the nature of rural development.

Our reaction to the evaluation methodology is positive and though we offer criticism, the criticism does not detract from our strong sense that IOV raised the right questions even if the emphasis was occasionally misplaced. The considered preparation of the briefing documents was a model of "best practice" that could serve future evaluations well.

Perhaps our strongest criticism relates to the theses on rural development. We feel that the theses reflect a "village life" view of rural development, a popular NGO vision that sits uneasily with the reality of investment in rural development. In essence,

it think it misses the mundane - the need to build and maintain institutional and professional capacity - by trying to capture the "flashy" political dimensions of development. The theses come from the academic debate, not the practitioners reality.

Secondly we found that the questions on individual RD projects "faced outwards" towards the RD evaluation rather than inwards to the individual essence of the projects themselves. This proved difficult - so much so that we felt it necessary to develop a more disaggregated methodology - not least because the projects themselves wanted to be "personally" reviewed rather than being simply pieces of data to a grander design.

This was especially true of the debate on sustainability where, while the seven-part definition was strong, it was at a level of abstraction that did not allow our Sudanese counterparts to work comfortably with the definition at a project level. To a certain extent, this was the justifiable challenge of the evaluation, namely to pitch assessment between project and programme in the context of Sudan.

Thirdly, we found the reporting requirements somewhat cumbersome not because of the repetition but because the framework detracted from the level of final analysis - the level of data requested did not match the level of analysis requested.

Fourthly, although the reporting requirements request details on participation and costs, this information was not readily available in "files" and difficult to trace historically.

But, and here we go back to our positive reaction to the overall methodological approach, the presence of the IOV team, particularly during the workshop reviewing the evaluation, was helpful and a necessary point of the whole process.

While we grumbled a bit about the time pressures imposed by the IOV presence - and it not good saying that we should not have taken any notice of IOV's presence - we shared problems in an open manner. We hope IOV learnt a lot as well.

#### SELECTION OF PROJECTS

We think we had an odd list. Firstly, the projects did not reflect the overall RD spending in Sudan, although they might fit a broader, global overview. Secondly, the two WID projects sat uneasily with the rest because of the relative lack of WID experience and the problems of WID in an Islamic society. Thirdly, projects 1, 2 and 3 had ended and personnel had moved, making evaluation different. Fourthly, most of the projects were not production focused, making it difficult to directly link RD programme to rural development and neither was there any typical service project such as a PHC or water supply. But, who knows what would have been the best projects to choose? IOV had a design and maybe we could have shared it more explicitly.

#### AND A FINAL NOTE

We found we were increasingly evaluating the sector RD officer who had been in Sudan for the duration of the RD programme. His influence on the programme was strong and he used individual projects to seek policy changes. Fundamental to the review must be an analysis of the functioning of the RD officer since, in a direct sense, the Embassy staff have a management function which can make or break RD initiatives.

QUALITY OF INFORMATION

QUALITY OF INFORMATION

"Never mind the quality - feel the width". In general, information was readily available. From the NGOs, especially CARE, the quality was high although ICCO's tended to be unfocused. From the multilaterals, there was extensive reporting but no real sense of the development process. And the bilaterals - well clearly there is a sense of trust between the Embassy and DGIS.

What is unrecorded is how project ideas emerge. This is clearly important since it allows identification of the critical actors in the process. DGIS needs to know whose judgement to back and whose to abandon.

What was disappointing was that the project evaluations, with the exception of projects 4 and 5, were unfocused and unable to provide a measure of progress. Perhaps DGIS should institute a model of project evaluation rather than continue to celebrate the idiosyncracies of evaluators.

Embassy files match DGIS files. Project agencies, again with the exception of projects 4 and 5, had poorer documentation and poorer data handling systems than the DGIS and Embassy files.

COSTS AND MEASURES OF PARTICIPATION

COSTS AND MEASURES OF PARTICIPATION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

## I. Comparative Costs

## A. Feasibility study

a) unit costs (DFL) n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. 600,000

b) IRR calculation n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. 7% n.a.

## B. Cost Estimates

a) total cost/area (DFL/lin<sup>2</sup>) 380 6000 60 1600 6000 1 3.5 2,400

b) cost/ population (DFL/cap)

i) total project cost 316 150 280 160 400 0.4 0.4 40

ii) Dutch contribution 316 150 24 160 400 0.1 0.4 40

c) cost/output n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. 3-5x marked price

## C. Sustainability

a) anticipated savings n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. n.a. 2% 0.5% 0.05%  
GNP GNP GNP  
(?) (?) (?)

b) local contribution 0 0 0 0 0 10% 0 0

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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I. Measures of  
Participation

A. Community

a) Local Control		*	*				
b) Local Consultation with Sudanese Control	*	*	*	*	*		
c) Local Consultation with Expatriate Control	*			*		*	

B. Institutional

a) Integrated with Local Government	*	*	*	*			
b) Integrated in Rural Development	*	*	*	*			
c) Part of National Capacity	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

LOCAL CONSULTANTS IN SUDAN

LOCAL CONSULTANTS IN SUDAN

The local consultants were selected and recruited as advised by the sector specialists based in Khartoum. It was possible to secure the services of local consultants of outstanding quality. Experienced female consultants, however, were hard to find for this assignment which required fieldwork experience as well as an ability to write professional reports.

The three consultants (two male, one female) represented some of the ethnic diversity of Sudan. Two were free lance consultants, while the third enjoyed a sabbatical year. Two consultants had longstanding and relevant experience on missions throughout the country.

The assignment to evaluate eight rural development projects, according to a tight reporting format proved a challenge especially for the more experienced consultants. It was an opportunity to apply similar concepts and criteria to projects which, at first glance, seem to have little in common. This acted as a stimulus to a higher conceptual level of thinking about rural development. Both local consultants and expatriate team members enjoyed this aspect of the work.

Travel was limited for the expatriate team members because of the obstacles imposed by the current regime. Time spent together in the field as a team was only a week, during which time one project was evaluated and two others were briefly visited.

The division of responsibilities, which was rather demanding on the local consultants, was well received, though uncommon. The more mature consultants were stimulated to utilize their considerable experience and through their knowledge of Sudanese rural development were able to make cross links with other projects. One of the experienced consultants also accompanied IOV on its field trip.

The willingness of local consultants to fulfil the assignment went beyond the call of duty. This was clear from, among other things, the way in which transport problems were solved. When even the black market had run out of fuel, public transport and informal contacts were used. All projects were visited, in the end, although the arrangements defy description ....

There were also disadvantages, which were partly inherent in the way the work was organized. One was the dependence on local consultants to finish their draft reports in time. The timetables for writing these reports were not rigorously followed. The result was that reports were insufficiently discussed and amended locally and final versions could not be written together as planned.

None of the expatriate team members were based permanently in Sudan, which would have allowed greater flexibility in the time schedule.

The Sudanese consultants tended to be thorough with a focus on facts and figures. Some draft reports thus ended up twice the required size, which called for heavy editing. Some reports needed more than editing and were basically rewritten, which was not so difficult since the facts were mostly there and the expatriate team members had by that time a good grasp on project content.

A comment one often hears is that local consultants tend to lack 'an ability for analytical thinking'. This cannot be substantiated from our experience in Sudan. The ability to phrase problems succinctly is certainly there, although critical analyses are often omitted from the reports, or are not phrased in the jargon of Western consultants.

In Sudan things get done by word of mouth. Knowing people, networking, is essential. One current characteristic of Sudan is that capable people in important posts lose their jobs. The local consultants therefore had less easy access to information.

One concern in drafting the reports was to what extent sensitive political issues could be raised. The reports by the local consultants avoided these issues altogether. This is hardly surprising in a country where imprisonment and corporal punishment are realities of day to day life, and where academics, in particular, live in fear of the unexpected and the unexplainable.

Local consultants, in general, gave more credit to project achievements than expatriate consultants. This can be attributed to the generous personality of the Sudanese, as well as to their better insight of constraints inherent in the projects. In project 8, there was a clear difference in judgement which could not be smoothed out. The expatriate opinion prevailed in the final version.

Concluding then, we feel that the approach chosen made for teamwork in the best sense - the capability of individual team members was fully utilized; a stimulating intellectual and social atmosphere in the team enabled a smooth division of labour and an intensive exchange of ideas. These team discussions were dominated by the problems Sudan is facing at the macro political and macro economic level - problems that affect the personal life of everybody, including the local consultants.

THESES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

THESES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENTTheir relevance in the Sudanese context<sup>1</sup>

We have tried to faithfully explore your theses on rural development contained in the TOR with reference to the Sudan experience. This note, and the accompanying diagram, lays out our problem which, stated simply, is that some of the assumptions do not apply to our examples, or only apply when interpreted in a limited sense.

Our impression is that the theses are derived from a special part of the rural development literature; that has inspired NGO's.

We also feel that other aspects, which are relevant for Sudanese rural development, are not addressed in the theses. We made an attempt in our summary report to list these in our 'themes of success'. It would be interesting to see if our list was relevant for other countries' rural development programmes as well.

Thesis 1 We find the first assumption that economic growth is a precondition for development in rural areas to be untestable at the macro level.

There is no evidence, at a macroeconomic scale, of economic growth - quite the reverse, there is per capita income decline. Much of the decline, is of course, hidden by relief and commodity aid, especially of food, and by the duality of exchange rates that allows government and merchants to capture surplus from the fixed prices to the farmers. Crude measures of well-being, such as life expectancy or infant mortality, are not declining and there is clearly a wide range of informal networks generating income opportunities. But, in general, no hard evidence to support Thesis 1.

When we look at Thesis 1 at micro level, however, it is undeniable that income generation is the factor most related to a project's success in the list of eight projects we were given to evaluate. Had income generation been more secure in the women's projects, one would feel more positive about continuity of these projects. If income generation rather than relief had been given priority in the refugee projects, the position now would be less difficult.

However, one must admit that income generation and focus on the underprivileged do not go well together. "Sensible and humane solutions" are promoted by some NGO's.

<sup>1</sup> This note is an amended version of a letter handed over by the expatriate team members to the IOV team during their visit to the Sudan in January, 1990.

An example is the smallholders project in Kordofan (number 5 on our list) in which the choice of region and target group reflects a philosophy not to go for the impossible, but to aim for target groups in the lower end of the range.

One particularly attractive option is the use of revolving funds. When administered judiciously, these have the potential to benefit those who can be helped and at the same time to narrow the gap between poor and rich. (An example is provided in successful villages in project 1, while other examples abound in projects not on our list).

Thesis 2 states that access to resources is the predominant condition for poor people to benefit from rural development activities.

This is true. However, it is not clear what projects can contribute in this respect since they are rarely in a position to redistribute resources representing power and wealth in a more equitable fashion. At macro level there is no evidence of a focus on the poor. In terms of agricultural modes of production, there is still little investment in the small holder sector from which the majority of the population receive their income.

The thesis applies to women in a peculiar way. Women, in our Sudanese experience, do access resources. However, being women, they receive special treatment which tends to belittle them rather than make them fully-fledged members of the rural society. In the two women projects we were given to evaluate, the thesis applies only to the project that was concerned with income generation (project 1). It equally applies to women in the refugee projects (3;4) and it probably applies to women in the smallholders project (5).

The major characteristic of refugee projects (number 3 and 4), is a lack of access to natural resources. Their attempts to make the best of it, especially in the case of Qala en Nahal, is laudable. They are, however, operating in marginal conditions, which are not likely to improve and which, indeed, are meant to be marginal. Already there are strongly voiced complaints that refugees, in particular, are better off than their host populations.

The investment in public service - Thesis 3 - argues an improvement in living conditions in the short term, but in the end may benefit poor people less, cannot be substantiated in the projects we are reviewing. This is because there is no typical service project on our list. It did not seem useful to discriminate between poor and poorest refugees to test this thesis, not least because the local Sudanese argued that they were the poorest, but it was the refugees who received special treatment.

In passing, we would note the experience of the refugee settlements where too strong a focus on social services - a parallel to public services - can restrict movement to a production focus and absorb much money without generating income.

The general relevance of this thesis is obvious and well described, for example, in papers about equity in access and utilization of Primary Health Care services.

Thesis 4, stating that rural populations benefit from differentiation in the rural economy, is equally true but our projects provide no evidence. At macro level Sudan has little data to support this thesis; we can omit the south because of war, we can discount the displaced persons and refugees (?15% of the population, we cannot adequately identify land ownership, usufruct, mechanized leasing and traditional access, we cannot find figures for female headed households - but differentiation clearly exists.

On the bottom line rural-agricultural employment is the indicator of poverty, since the last option available to able bodied men is to work as wage labourer. This is routine practice in times of hardship, even if it implies long absences from one's home.

Pricing policy -Thesis 5- drives urban bias and government revenues through indirect taxation. It also drives the non-food agricultural economy, the difficulties in maintaining food security, the processes of deforestation and environmental degradation.

There are two separate price issues namely the artificial level of foreign exchange and the farmgate price. The farmgate price is beset by problems of level and timing which, in turn, increase farmer insecurity and allow merchants to capture profit. Project 7 (Institutional Development in Forestry) is really about pricing; Project 4 is successful because it concentrates on agricultural products beyond government control.

In terms of investment, the major investment is the subsidy to the urban poor across a range of goods - food, fuel, shelter - which is a political investment to buy off opposition.

Thesis 6 is difficult - at the institutional level there is true participation within the refugee projects but weaker with the host country. Project 5 is a useful experience including, most importantly, a participatory steering committee. At institutional levels, Projects 6 and 7 also show participation. Ironically, projects are judged successful by the Sudanese team if they are "semi-autonomous".

Regarding participation in the usual sense of community participation, there is no evidence that anything but lip service was paid to this concept, and that in reality projects reinforced local power structures.

Some comments to this effect were made regarding the women's project in Northern region (project 1), but these seemed to reflect incidental cases rather than a general trend. In the refugee projects project staff communicated mostly through local sheiks, who are the designated channels. In project 3, an extensive network of female primary health care workers was consulted in health matters, while project 4 had installed female village officers.

Thesis 7 on sustainability is intriguing. The macroeconomic circumstances deny this opportunity as do the continued religious - tribal conflicts and the collapse of formal governance. Infrastructure is permanently 'rehabilitated' and environmental problems grow. The projects are, however, aware of the sustainability challenge.

The truth of this thesis then is selfevident. Combinations of its four components are relevant to all projects with the possible exception of the briquetting project which is still in an experimental phase. The components mentioned, and some others, feature in the list of 'themes of success' identified during the evaluation. Projects do much better when they fulfill all these conditions, and vice versa - failing any of these conditions, continuity is at stake.

Thesis 8 which deals with the resilience of established social structures impeding improvement of the status of women is generally supported. In all five 'people focused' projects (1,2,3,4,5) there is evidence for this thesis, as well as in other Sudanese projects, not on our list. The practical implication of the thesis is that when the conditions cannot be fulfilled - as in one of the women's projects (number 2) - one should refrain from taking up such projects. Another conclusion would seem to be: do not invest in "Women Only" Projects.

Thesis 9 - Clearly the projects designing insitutional change are integrated into government, but those focused on small areas seem essentially integrated within themselves, not integrated with local institutions.

The advantages of the integrated approach is reflected in projects 3, 4 and 5 at household level (and projects 6 and 7 at an institutional level). Refugee projects are often given the full range of interventions deemed desirable, but in an institutional sense they are atypical for the Sudanese situation because they are enclaves administered under the responsibility of a special government body. This arrangement obviates the need to deal with various sectoral departments.

The range of interventions is implemented by different organizations, different external agencies.

The women's projects need an integrated approach, since the project components tend to cover a wide range of issues which is normally addressed by different government departments.

These projects appear to have an extra handicap in that they have insufficient 'weight' and therefore lack the leverage to get effective intersectoral cooperation. Even within projects 'women affairs' are a separate issue which makes it difficult for women to take part in mainstream income generating activities. (Both refugee projects had identified this problem, while the smallholders' project was taking steps to rectify it.)

Many of the theses are normative. Perhaps normative assumptions make for poor policy. We do not know - but we know some of them are not applicable to our projects. This does not mean we conclude that the RD Programme is unsuccessful particularly in Sudan where bilateral aid is largely focused on infrastructural development and where the RD Programme allows a specific focus on rural development. Table A1 contains an analysis of projects against IOV theses.

Table A1 Rural Development - IOV Theses

<u>Theses</u>	<u>Projects</u>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Economic Growth/Income								
Macro level								
Household level	+	+	+	+	+	+		
2. Access to Resources for poor	+		+	+	(+)			?
3. Equity of service provision								
4. Differentiation in Rural Economy								
5. Pricing Policy								
6. Participation								
7. Sustainability	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)
8. Women	+	+	+	+	+			
9. Integrated approach	+	+	+	+	+			

### THEMES, THEMES AND ASSUMPTIONS

While we are not likely to further add to the largely, there is one aspect in our approach to the methodology of the evaluation that was useful to comment on.

As explained above, the "theses" which we were asked to assess, only partially covered the full range of factors relevant to success or failure of our projects. What did prove to be helpful enough, was to distil what we considered were the essentials of each project in an open, brainstorming fashion and list these as our "project assumptions". This was achieved after the whole team had become familiar with the terms of reference and the written materials used on the project.

The "assumptions" were a reflection of the team's background in rural development and helped to tap the knowledge and experience of the individual team members. In addition, this exercise produced a stimulating atmosphere in which the team explored the rural development implications of the projects.

The assumptions were sometimes hilarious, or later proven to be far out the mark, but were not always quite what they derived from discussions with farmers and other available sources, rather than from the

### THEMES, THEMES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The value of "truth" of these assumptions varied per project. It was remarkable (although perhaps obviously hindsight) that, in well documented projects, team "assumptions" matched closely with the actual findings. Assumptions for ill-documented projects, however, had to be adjusted considerably, and this adjustment always turned out in favour of the projects. Project 2 and 3 serve as examples.

In one case (Project 16) team members using themselves were in disagreement. The business consultant, after visiting the project, refuted virtually all assumptions while others felt that his assessment, which was rather positive, could not be substantiated by the data.

Looking back on this exercise, after completion of the distillation, the "assumptions" became the backbone of the "theses of success", which were listed by the team while preparing for the debriefing. The debriefing took place in Khartoum in the form of a seminar for Interagency partners such as project staff, staff from headquarters and selected professionals from various ministries.

The "theses of success" thus reflect the common denominators of "assumptions" proven to be relevant, supplemented by other less predictable findings. This methodology avoids "trapping" or, as one can take not to "jump into conclusions" on the field visits only to confirm a prejudiced opinion.

THE EIGHT EVALUATED PROJECTS

## 1. Women in Development

Location: Northern/31 villages dispersed over Northern and Nile

Funding : Multilateral; DFL 1,900,000 (total 1,900,000)

Keywords: Women/Training/Livestock income

Duration: 1983-1988

Delivery: MOANR/FAO

## 2. Integrated Women's Project

Location: Red Sea/Red Sea Hills/Sinkat

Funding : Bilateral; DFL 600,000 (total 600,000)

Keywords: Women/Training/Home Economics

Duration: 1983 - 1987

Delivery: BBSAWS/Ahfad University

## 3. Ethiopian Refugees

Location: Gedaref

Funding : NGO; DFL 600,000 (total 7,000,000)

Keywords: Refugees/Services

Duration: 1985 - 1987

Delivery: SOC/ICCO

## 4. Refugee Settlement

Location: Kassala/Qala en Nahal

Funding : NGO; DFL 1,600,000 (total 1,600,000)

Keywords: Refugees/Agricultural Income

Duration: 1985 - 1987

Delivery: Acord/Novib

## 5. Small Holder Credit

Location: Kordofan/En Nahud

Funding : NGO; DFL 6,000,000 (total 6,000,000)

Keywords: Agriculture/Credit

Duration: 1987 - 1991

Delivery: CARE/ABS/MOANR

## 6. Locust Control

Location: National

Funding : Multilateral; DFL 2,300,000 (total 9,000,000)

Keywords: Locust Control

Duration: 1988

Delivery: FAO/Steering Committee

## 7. Forestry (Phase I)

Location: National/Rawashda

Funding : Multilateral; DFL 9,000,000 (total 9,000,000)<sup>2</sup>

Keywords: Institutional

Duration: 1983 - 1987<sup>1</sup>

Delivery: FAO/CFA

## 8. Cotton Stalk Briquetting

Location: Rahad

Funding : Bilateral; DFL 1,200,000 (total 1,200,000)

Keywords: Research and Development

Duration: 1987 - 1989

Delivery: BTG/REPOCO

Phase II (1988 - 1991)

Phase II : DFL 11,000,000 (total 11,000,000)